Chapter 1

Introduction

India was for long known as the land of rajas and ranis and royalty played an important part in the history of India from the days of yore to the days of the Indian freedom struggle. So, quite naturally, many Indian writers have turned to royalty for fictional themes. Indian English literature now has a substantial body of fiction presenting historical personages who ruled various kingdoms, big and small. However, the corpus of Indian English historical fiction, when compared to other kinds, is lean.

The reason for this paucity can be traced to the Indian mindset. A.S.Panchapakesa Ayyar, acknowledged as the father of Indian English historical fiction, maintains that Indians have always lacked historical consciousness because of their temperament, cultural ethos and spiritual ideals:

Firstly, the ancient Hindus never attached much importance to political events. Wars and conquests they considered to be far less important than philosophical discussions.... A new thought interested the ancient Hindus more than anew conquest.... Not that wars and conquests were in any way wanting in ancient Hindu history.,» The
vast majority of the men, who really counted, the thinkers, worried little about these. . .. Secondly, the old Hindu Kings confined their wars to warriors, and never molested the priests, poets, philosophers, astronomers, physicians, grammarians and farmers. So the normal life of the country was not disturbed seriously by wars. ...

Thirdly, the political heroes left no permanent work behind. . . . The empires founded by Chandragupta Maurya and Samudragupta lasted but for a few decades, and what were decades in India’s calculation of time by Yugas and Kalpas?

Fourthly, India had a very high ideal even from the dawn of her history. Measured by that ideal, her historical heroes were found to be wanting. Ancient India’s great minds stuck to their ideal and scorned to record the achievements of these petty heroes or cherish their memories. The conquest of the three worlds was a famous ideal with them and sometimes it became even the conquest of the fourteen worlds. What were the conquests of Chandragupta Maurya and Samudragupta compared to these conquests? (Baladityci: A Historical Romance of Ancient India^ introduction viii-x)
Another reason for the paucity of historical novels in Indian English literature, as M.A. Jeyaraju states in his unpublished thesis “Indo-Anglian Historical Fiction: A Critical Assessment,” is:

Historical accounts of Indian events by British writers were generally partial and, in the case of more recent events, deliberately distorted. To the British empire-builders and their historians any Indian who baulked their grand imperialist design was a villain and a monster and maligning them was their patriotic duty (4).

As Indian nationalism struck root, developed and spread, Indian English writers sought to inculcate nationalistic fervour in the hearts of Indians. For this they needed to go back to India's past to draw lessons for the present. However, they could not write historical novels, because “the British-authored historical records of the usable past were incongruous distortions and the British caricatures of great Indian heroes had produced only schizophrenics” (Jeyaraju 5). So Indian English novelists went back to ancient ages, legends and folklore and wrote historical romances like T Ramakrishna’s *Padmini: An Indian Romance* (1903), which permitted them enough licence to entertain as well as educate their readers without falling foul of British laws. It was only in
1930 that the first Indian English Historical novel proper, namely, Ayyar’s *Baladitya: A Historical Romance of Ancient India* appeared. Several Indian English novels have appeared since then. The focus in these novels is generally on the protagonist, who is invariably a ruler and the preferred mode is biographical, so much so that the novels are generally named after the protagonists.

The *writing of such an historical novel, however, poses a problem for the historical novelist. History offers data on the public doings of historical personages. Information on their private *doings* are *scarce and carry very little authentication. So, it is a challenge for the novelist to reconstruct the private life of an historical personage by using the historical imagination.*

The Indian English historical novels thus produced include Ayyar’s *Baladitya* and *Chanakya and Chandragupta*, Vimala Raina’s *Ambapali*, T.N.Murari’s *Taj: A Story of Mughal India*, Jyoti Jafa’s *Nurjahan: A Historical Novel*, Bhagwan S. Giudwani’s *The Sword of Tipu Sultan*, Manohar Malgonkar’s *The Devil’s Wind: Nana Saheb’s Story* and G.D.Khosla’s *The Last Mughal*, covering the ancient the Muslim and the British periods of Indian history. There are also minor historical novels like Shehana Dasgupta’s *Sultan Razia: The People’s Queen*, Ayyar’s *The Legions Thunder Past*, S.Gopalan’s *Old Tanjore: An Historical Novel,*
One interesting aspect of these recreations of the past personages is the tracing of their upbringing or grooming for the historical role that they came to play in later life. This aspect is crucial, since it is widely acknowledged that the child is the father of man. The early background of the historical personages, the education and the training they underwent must have influenced their character and personality and thereby their future conduct. Hence the present researcher’s interest in the bringing up of the royal protagonists of Indian English novels. Hence the present study of royal bildungsroman in Indian English fiction. The study also considers the tutelage these protagonists received from their mentors, which also prepaed them for their roles in later life.

Avrom Fl< ishm in, in *The English Historical Novel: Walter Scott to Virginia Woolf*, says that the historical novelist, as “a recoverer of what actually happened,” occupies the same ground as the historian (4). In *The Idea of History*, R.G.Collingwood explicates the resemblance between the historian and the novelist thus:

Each of them makes it his business to construct a picture which is partly a narrative of events, partly a description of situations, exhibition of motives, analysis of characters. Each
aims at making his picture a coherent whole, where every character and every situation is so bound up with the rest that this character in this situation cannot but act in this way, and we cannot imagine him acting otherwise. The novel and the history must both of them make sense; nothing is admissible in either except what is necessary, and the judge of this necessity is in both cases the imagination. Both the novel and the history are self-explanatory, self-justifying, the product of an autonomous or self-authorizing activity; and in both cases this activity is the *a priori* imagination. (245-46)

Collingwood goes on to point out where the historian’s work and the novelist’s differ:

Where they do differ is that the historian’s picture is meant to be true. The novelist has a single task only: to construct a coherent picture, one that makes sense. The historian has a double task: he has to do this, and to construct a picture of things as they really were and of events as they really happened.... (246)

Fleishman explicates this difference from the historical novelist’s artistic point of view:
Both the novelist and the historian ... fill the gaps in the received data with imaginative ‘threads’ ... The historian tries to add sufficient ‘point’ so that only one ‘thread’ or hypothesis can fill the space between. The better historical novels fill in the threads where there is room for alternative hypotheses. ... The novelist goes a bit farther than inferentially necessary: some of the threads with which he fills the web of historical knowledge are inserted for the discrete data to be linked. ... We might compare the historical novelist to the restorer of a damaged tapestry, who weaves in whole scenes or figures to fill the empty places which amore austere museum curator might leave bare.

(6-7)

William Henry Hudson, in *An Introduction to the Study of Literature*, suggests that the historical novelist has to do more than the historian, because he has “to bring creative imagination to bear upon the dry facts of the annalist and the antiquarian, and ... to evoke a picture having the fullness and unity of a work of art,” since he has “to satisfy at once the claims of history and the claims or art” (159-61). To do this, the historical novelist requires a keen historical sense, which, as T.S.Eliot, in “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” says, “involves a perception, not
only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence,” and “is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together . . (49).

The historical sense is crucial to the composition of a bildungsroman, given the nature of the genre. In *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, M.H. Abrams defines the *bildungsroman* as a German term signifying a novel “of formation” or “of education” and says:

The subject of these novels is the development of the protagonist’s mind and character as he passes from childhood through varied experiences—and usually through a spiritual crisis—into maturity and the recognition of his identity and role in the world. . . .

In *A Dictionary of Literary Terms*, J.A. Cuddon says that the *bildungsroman* “describes a novel which is an account of the youthful development of the hero or heroine . . .

*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Micropedia* defines the *bildungsroman* thus:

*Bildungsroman* (German: “novel of educational formation”), class of novel developed in German literature that deals with the formative years of an individual upto his arrival at a man’s estate and a responsible place in society. . . .
The traditional tale of the folklore dunce who goes out into the world seeking adventure and learns wisdom the hard way was raised to literary heights. . . . The bildungsroman ends on a positive note though it may be tempered by resignation and nostalgia. If the grandiose dreams of the hero’s youth are over, so are many foolish mistakes and painful disappointments, and a life of usefulness lies ahead.

Since the publication of Daniel Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe (1719), English novelists have exhibited a partiality for the biographical, particularly the journey from childhood to adulthood. Such novels belong to the bildungsroman genre. The term was first used to refer to Goethe’s novel Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahare (c. 1794). Several literatures have adopted the bildungsroman and produced excellent specimens of the genre. English literature is rich in bildungsroman. Some of the well-known examples are: James Joyce’s Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, Henry Fielding’s Tom Jones, Charles Dickens’s David Copperfield and Great Expectations, D.H. Lawrence’s Sons and Lovers, Somerset Maugham’s Of Human Bondage. Some well-known examples from American literature are: Mark Twain’s The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, J.D. Salinger’s The Catcher in the Rye and Ralph Ellison’s Invisible Man.
The specific themes dealt with in the bildungsroman are: coming of age and apprenticeship, identity and the self, the journey (of life), love and Search for the meaning of life. Very often the protagonist (or hero) sets out on a physical or metaphorical journey, gaining wisdom from experiences en route, and returns to his original place. The American bildungsroman is usually a combination of the German bildungsroman and the Spanish picaresque, for example, Mark Twain’s *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and J.D. Salinger’s *The Catcher in the Rye*. In the English bildungsroman the protagonist is a poor (often orphan) boy who undergoes education and develops into a gentleman. Since Indians have a partiality for biographical narratives, the bildungsroman is quite common in Indian English literature. For instance, all the later novels of Kamala Markandaya are bildungsroman narratives. Most Indian English historical novels are also bildungsroman narratives.

In Raina’s *Ambapali*, Ajat Shatru, the son of Samrat Bimbasar of Magadh is carefully groomed to succeed his father as the ruler of the great empire covering the major part of Bharatavarsha, and, in the process, his counsellor Vasakar does not hesitate even to play the son against the father. Ambapali, the foundling, is brought up in the palace of raja Chetak of Vaishali almost like a princess and becomes the gandharva wife of Ajat Shatru, but, as a Vaishalian, denounces him first and, after
becoming a devotee of Lord Buddha, renounces Ajat Shatru categorically, while her young son by Ajat Shatru, already a Buddhist bhikku, innocently renounces the crown of Magadh, when Ajat Shatru offers it to him as alms, both renunciations resulting from the tutelage Buddha.

According to Ayyar’s *Chanakya and Chandragupta*, Prince Chandragupta Maurya is a one-man Fourth World State living in disguise in Magadha. The only surviving member of the princely Moriya clan after the entire clan was treacherously killed by the usurping Navanandas, he is identified by the great scholar Chanakya and groomed to become a king and the deliverer of Magadha from the clutches of the Nandas. Chanakya tutors him in winning back Aryavarta from the Nandas and in beating back the mercenary hordes of the Macedonian adventurer Alexander. Ultimately, Chanakya guides him to the throne of Magadha in order to establish a *Ramrajya* governed by the principles enunciated in his *Arthasastra*.

According to Dasgupta’s *Razia*, Princess Razia is an important ruler, whose reign was a milestone in the evolution of Indian governance. Daughter of Sultan Iltutmish of Delhi, she is brought up specifically to succeed her father on the throne of Delhi. She becomes the ruler, but the period and the people are not ready for her and so she fails.
In Murari’s *Taj*, Crown Prince Khurram of the Mughal dynasty is trained to succeed his father Jahangir. Given the context in which he lived, military power and leadership were more important than anything else. It is this training that enables him to capture the throne upon the death of his father, in an ambience governed by the stark choice, *Taktya, Takhta* (Throne or Coffin), in defiance of the machinations of his step-mother Nur Jahan.

In Gidwani’s *The Sword of Tipu Sultan*, the bringing up of Tipu Sultan, the first son of Hyder Ali Khan of Mysore, is a classic exercise in the education of a royal offspring. Tipu’s early upbringing influences him significantly and accounts for his unique governance and rule over the kingdom of Mysore against the backdrop of the imperialist designs of the British colonisers.

In Malgonkar’s *The Devil’s Wind*, Dhondu Pant Nana Saheb, the adopted son of Bajirao II, the last Peshwa, never gets to rule a kingdom, but earns historical notoriety as the arch-villain of the British Empire during the first Indian War of Independence of 1857, belittled by British imperialists as the Sepoy Mutiny. He is brought up as a prince and he is expected to succeed his adoptive father, but the infamous Doctrine of Lapse promulgated by Dalhousie deprives him of the throne. However,
his upbringing gives the lie to the British persistence in projecting him as the butcher of Kanpur and helps to rehabilitate a great nationalist hero.

All these historical personages are presented in historical novels based on the scanty data available in historical records and local legends. After the East India Company became a colonizing power in India, the rulers and their offspring became virtual prisoners in their palaces and the upbringing of the young princes of royal households became the prerogative of the colonisers. This is not highlighted in historical records for the simple reason that there were no great kings or princes in Royal India during the colonial period. However, the general pattern of their upbringing aimed at emasculating the royal princes of India and turning them into abject British puppets. In his unpublished thesis titled “A Postcolonial Reading of Plantation Novels in Indian English Literature,” S. Thirunavukkarasu states:

Manohar Malgonkar’s novel The Princes, Kamala

Markandaya’s novel The Golden Honeycomb and Gita Mehta’s novel Raj. ... between them capture comprehensively the British imperialist strategy of subverting the princes of Royal India (and thereby its subjects): the son of a native ruler was taught by English
tutors picked by the British Resident, sent to a school chosen by the British Resident, then sent to the Chiefs’ College administered by an Englishman, taught to lose gracefully and generally brought up as a brown Englishman; the Viceroy’s approval of the succession to the throne was used as a power lever; and, when the youngster ascended the throne as Maharajah, he was virtually “enslaved” and “imprisoned” in the palace, completely under the control of the British Resident residing in the nearby Residency and backed up by the British-officered Garrison Force maintained under a solemn treaty guaranteed to maintain him as a British puppet in a Catch 22 predicament. (4-5)

This pattern is used by Malgonkar, Kamala Markandaya and Mehta to spin three absorbing as well as educative tales of the offspring of Royal India and to illustrate the subverting strategy of the British Empire. Malgonkar’s *The Princes*, Kamala Markandaya’s *The Golden Honeycomb* and Mehta’s *Raj* are period novels, in which the characters are “expository illustrations of the period rather than living people,” as Royal A. Gettmann defines in “Types of Novel” (218). As such, the royal protagonists of these three novels illustrate the several strategies
employed by the colonizing British imperialists to subvert the princelings of India so as to sustain their imperial sway.

In The Princes, Bal-raj Abhayraj of Begwad goes through the regular British princely mill, but, given his background, the traumatic experiences in his early life and the military training he undergoes, he cannot be deceived by sophistry and knows that Indian royalty under the British is a golden honeycomb. Given his well-known partiality for the past, both historical and otherwise, Malgonkar keeps his narrative true to the facts of history in illustrating the British template for the training of Indian princes. However, as a staunch nationalist, Malgonkar cannot desist from exposing the British imperialists to ridicule by implying that the British were only encouraging the latent lethargy and, in some cases, the venality of the princely tribe of India. In spite of it all, the protagonist of The Princes grows into a responsible Indian rather than a brown Englishman.

In The Golden Honeycomb, Maharajkumar Rabindranath is deliberately kept by his mother Mohini, the royal concubine, and his grandmother Manjula, the Dowager Maharani, out of the clutches of the British Resident and educated by a local Pandit with the result that he grows into a nationalist prince committed to his people and not to the
British suzerain. It is obvious that Kamala Markandaya deliberately fashioned *The Golden Honeycomb* as a *bildungsroman* to prove the efficacy of early upbringing in moulding the personality and character of individuals. The narrative and the text of the novel carry several hints that it is deliberately designed as a *bildungsroman*.

In *Raj*, Bai-sa Jay a does not even qualify for the special British treatment, but her father deliberately has her trained in *Rajniti* and all the skills required by a prince and these stand her in good stead later in life.

All the three novels prove that the royal households of India could have avoided the subversion of their princes if they had wanted to. It is Mehta’s intention to show that the native royal tradition was adequately equipped to take good care of the upbringing of royal offspring and that what the British designed and implemented in India was just an expedient policy solely intended to sustain their imperial sway over a populous country by subverting the rulers by catching them young and de-nationalising them. Maharaja Jai Singh could not prevent this catastrophe in the case of his son Tikka, but, since his daughter, Bai-sa Jaya, is outside the pale of the British power, he implements his own native system of royal upbringing in her case and thereby proves the superiority of the native tradition.
The present study analyses the upbringing of the princely historical personages Ajat Shatru, Ambapali, Chandragupta, Razia, Khurram, Tipu, and Dhondu Pant to assess how their upbringing influenced the formation of their personality and character and prepared them to shoulder the burden of ruling in the future. It also analyses the fictitious royal protagonists Abhayraj, Rabindranath and Jaya to ascertain how they resisted the pull of conformity and remained steadfast in their detachment and nationalist dedication.

The upbringing of the historical princes prepared them to occupy the throne and, during their rule, they drew on the learning during their adolescent years to rule competently and wisely. The upbringing of the three fictitious princes, namely, Abhayraj, Rabindranath and Jaya helped them to escape being subverted by the British imperialists and, when India was about to become a sovereign country, to take on democratic roles for the welfare of the people.

This thesis is organised as hereunder. The first chapter introduces the subject, defines the *bildungsroman* and lists well-known examples. The second chapter analyses the bringing up of three princely personages of ancient India, namely, Prince Ajat Shatru, Ambapali and Prince Chandragupta. The third chapter analyses the upbringing of two princely
personages of Muslim India, namely, Razia and Khurram. The fourth chapter analyses the bringing up of two princely personages of British India, namely Tipu Sultan and Dhondu Pant Nana Saheb. The fifth chapter analyses the bringing up of Bal-raje Abhayraj of Begwad. The sixth chapter analyses the bringing up of Maharajkumar Rabindranath of Devapur State. The seventh chapter analyses the bringing up of Bai-sa Jaya of Balmer. The eighth chapter sums up the study. A list of works cited is appended to the thesis.

This thesis has been written and documented according to the guidelines provided by the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* by Joseph Gibaldi, 6th edition (Chennai: Affiliated East-West, 2004).