PREFACE

Manohar Malgonkar, one of the leading Indian novelists in English, has been a prolific writer. Primarily hailed as a Maratha historian, he turned to fiction writing with a purpose—the purpose of pure entertainment. Yet his roots are in history and his fictional world traces the tensions of Indian political history.

Manohar Malgonkar's breadth of vision and commendable technique evidenced in the fictional and empirical modes of creation, yet he has received far less critical evaluation than his due. To date there are only two full length critical studies by Prof. Amur and Prof. Dayananda. Brief references could be found in the works of Prof. Srinivasa Iyengar, V.S. Naipaul and Meenakshi Mukherjee, besides few articles in the periodicals. Critics in general have acclaimed the appealing directness and sincerity of Malgonkar's narrative pattern and the authentic evocation of the turbulent years of freedom struggle in his novels, although they have reservations about his over ambitious preoccupation with dramatic effect.

A close study of Malgonkar's novels reveal that the major characters of his novels are marked with "an irresistible urge for fulfillment". The characters evince a certain measure of courage and maturity and struggle against the odds of life to gain a sense of fulfillment. This agonizing quest imparts the characters' vigour and force.

Malgonkar always had a good grip on the plot. He was no run-of-the mill writer. His language is crisp and easy and he creates a vivid picture for the reader, yet his works were popular with a large number of modern readers and not only discerning type. He was a man from an aristocratic background, favorably disposed to the Raj and to lap this Lieutenant Colonel in the Indian Army, who took up the pen to write a string of novels. In fact, he wrote 13 of them and each of them is filled with adventure, dare devilry and romance that can keep the reader glued to the book.

Malgonkar was a man of many distinct, impressive and splendid parts. He wrote interesting history, presenting a worms-eye-view of episodes, people and
events from a perspective that academics often ignore. He wrote several fine novels that captured the spirits of the times that they were set in. Historical accuracy, rather than history as a metaphor, is his forte. In this, he comes more in the tradition of a Meadows Taylor rather than that of a Kipling or a Rushdie. He wrote some fine well-researched history. Sea-Hawk is about the life and times of Kanhoji Angrey, the intrepid Maratha admiral. It is a balanced book written in a direct and utterly non-pedantic style that reminds us of George Orwell or Antony Beevor writing about Spain. The current ruling class in Maharashtra despite indulging in parochial hysteria has little genuine interest in its history. His novels are not social documents; they are autonomous works of fiction.

Compared with contemporaries such as Khushwant Singh, Kamala Markandaya and Mulk Raj Anand, he wrote on the conflict between the imperial power and Indians differently, and was often criticized for his positive characterization of the British. The socio-historical milieu of those times forms the back drop of his novels, which are usually of action and adventure, probably reflecting in some way, his own life. He has also written non-fiction including biography and history. Apart from history, the army and communal politics during partition, Malgonkar wrote of human relationship.

The pre-Independence Indo-English novels portrayed the faithful picture of freedom movement, the Gandhian ideology and its impact on society whereas the novels written after Independence emerge as an interrogation of the Gandhian political ideology, and a questioning of reality especially the complex response of specific men. The political aspect does not make Malgonkar’s novels dull, tasteless, or mere tracts masquerading as novels. His novels are more than merely political; they probe moral attitudes and human values. Malgonkar is a novelist with an accomplished technique. His novels, taken as a whole, tend to consolidate the proposition that he is a novelist endowed with a wonderful knack of weaving plots of singular originality. He is able to mingle fact with fiction and to record truths with elements of romance and adventure in his works.

The art of cinematography seems to have been influential in determining the narrative mode of Malgonkar’s fiction. The repeated use of flashback, the
quick juxta positions, the montage; all these are there; but they are apparently fused with the conventional chronological sequence. One of the technical devices Malgonkar resorts to rather frequently is starting a chapter at a point later in time than the end of the previous chapter and then bridging this gap in the narrative later by means of flashback or reminiscence. In his major novels, he makes use of his personal life and philosophy in an extremely readable text. His belief and convictions emerge as authentic after making sufficient discount to the entertainment value of the novel.

The world of Malgonkar is somewhat different from that of Bhattacharya. He established himself as a historical novelist as Nayantara Sahgal did with political happenings. His novels are an effective aid to an imaginative understanding of India’s recent past. Readability, raciness of language, and swift movement of story, suspense and a high level of thinking-these qualities go a long way to impart his fiction that credibility and authenticity which characterize a good work.

He wrote five English novels: Distant Drum (1960) Combat of Shadows (1962), The Princes (1963), A Bend in the Ganges (1964), and The Devil’s Wind (1972). His works of history are Kanhoji Anagrey (1959), Pears of Dewas Senior (1962), and Chhatrapatis of Kolhapur (1971). He wrote essays that were characterized by a stately prose style. He also wrote scripts for movies, short stories and many newspaper articles.

The present thesis makes an in-depth study of the theme, the plot, the characterization, the point of view, the technique and the language used in his five major novels. It is divided into seven chapters.

The first chapter "Introduction" traces the history of Indo-Anglian fiction from its starting to Malgonkar and the biography novels, short stories, history and other miscellaneous writings of Malgonkar. His art of characterization, delineation of major characters, mainly make characters and portrayal of minor and women characters have been analyzed. Malgonkar’s use of conventional linear plots and his talent in presenting well-knit plots are discussed. The writer uses the first person narration in his two novels to impart authenticity to the narration and
dramatic immediacy of experience. Malgonkar's use of vividly depicted various backdrops for his novels have been examined.

The second chapter *Distant Drum* focuses on the success and the process of self realization in an ideal Indian Army Officer in the British Regiment. It is a human story of struggle and success and final achievement of a goal. *Distant Drum* is read not so much as the story of an Indian Officer's growth and maturity but as an epitaph for the British Indian Army. As a matter of fact, it is the historical aspect of *Distant Drum* which has appealed to its reader, rather than its fictional content.

On one level *Distant Drum* is the story of one of the officers of the Regiment to live upto its code and on another a symbolic presentation of the Indian encounter with the British in the Army and its values for India. *Distant Drum* is not epitaph for the British Indian Army nor does it assumal in unblinking Anglo-Philia. It is a documentation of army life in its various aspects and a celebration of the army code as developed by the British in the Indian Army.

There are many themes in *Distant Drum* the Indo-British relationship at a personal level, the theme of loyalty and friendship, the love of Kiran Garud and Bina and chiefly the all enveloping theme of self realization, the initiation of the hero Kiran Garud. The main theme of this novel is the growth of the protagonist, Kiran Garud is an army officer who, throught out the novel remains loyal to his profession as a duty bounded soldier.

Malgonkar has been able to create a very realistic picture of the Indian Army in the theory of change-marked his the Second World War, the dawn of independence, the vivisection of the nation, the departure of many British Officers of the Indian Army, the division of the army, the quick promotion of the Indians to the higher echelons in the army, the Kashmir War the emergence of national spirit in the army.

All Malgonkar's characters display on unexpressed thirst for some human values which lie beyond the reach of outward differences of caste, creed, color and religion. The novel has a double movement, one in terms of present action and
another through the past reconstructed in memory. The first a circular and picaresque movement covers a period of about seven months from the middle of August 1949 to March 1950 and traces the sovered of the hero. Distant Drum is an auto bio-graphical novel by Malgonkar.

His craftsmanship, always competent, has attained the kind of sophistication, associated with the modern novel. He still prefers the closed form. Though Distant Drum has been described as a symbolic presentation of the Indian character with the British in the army and its value to India, it is mainly a story of self realization-an individual's growing awareness of himself and his surroundings and the development of an assertive and practical philosophy of life.

The third chapter Combat of Shadows discusses the situation as it existed in 1939-40. When the whole complex of Indo-British relations was in a flux, when the Independence movement was at its peak, and the British withdrawal from India was in the offing.

Malgonkar's main focus in Combat of Shadows is on Henry Winton and, though he presents the Anglo-Indian world from a closer and more intimate point of view than he does the Indians, who are more or less presented from the outside, it derives its function and meaning only through its impact on Winton's physical and moral life. Events and characters play a very important role in the evolution of the story of Combat of Shadows but Malgonkar's main concentration is on Henry. Every character and situation derives its function and meaning through its impact on Henry's Physical and moral life.

The novel Combat of Shadows throws sufficient light on the living conditions, aspirations, attitudes and activities of Anglo-Indians and their role in the novel is important. The epic movement of the novel requires the multiple points of view, as Malgonkar realizes in A Bend in the Ganges, but Combat of Shadows is mostly confined to Henry's point of view through on occasion. Malgonkar shifts it to Ruby Miranda and even assumes omniscient privileges.

Malgonkar's novel Combat of Shadows takes the reader to the North-Eastern Assam tea plantations. Against the back ground of the British officers and
the Indian Coolies and politicians engaged in the welfare activities of the workers
it shows how the two shadows of 'desire' and 'aversion' are always active to take
possession of the soul of man. The novel presents the picture of the tea plantation-
Britishers and the petty political leaders of the labourers.

Malgonkar's narrative techniques show competence and confident ease. His
creative achievement is evident in shaping his personal experiences with the
British and the Anglo-Indian into validly realized fiction. Besides its symmetry of
form, the poignant human relations depicted in the lives of Henry Winton, Ruby
Miranda and Jean reveal Malgonkar's great depth of understanding. But
Malgonkar uses this device of mixed dialect very skillfully for the convenience of
the western reader. The English equivalents are cleverly inserted in dialogues.

*Combat of Shadows* presents a panoramic view of various types of human
relationships but it finally shows the failure not just of Henry Winton but of any
man who cheats himself and lives in a false world of moral depravity. Therefore it
can be considered both as a sociological and moral allegory. There is a certain
poetic justice in the death of Henry. It is the just punishment that he receives for
the betrayal of human values.

The fourth chapter *The Princes* deals with the story of the disintegration of
the state of Begwad which covers the crucial period between 1932 and 1949,
beginning with the cracking up of the absolute power of the Maharaja and ending
in the final withering away of his power, is full and factual. It is the splendor and
the predicament of the princes who suffer their political and material ruin after the
India's independence. Malgonkar portrays the Indian princes in all their
complexity against the backdrop of Indian Independence.

*The Princes* is more of an auto-biography of the narrator's father, Maharaj
Hiroji of Begwad-than a novel. It gives a sympathetic and penetrating study of the
princes and the dilemma they faced with the dawn of independence.

The role of the princes in bringing about their own debacle is a major
theme in the Malgokar's princes. The novelist pays strict attention to historical
facts, the political background and rarely distorts truth for literary effect. Apart
from this theme, Malgonkar deals with the two more themes, the rising freedom struggle and the growing up of a prince.

Hiroji and Abhay are poles apart in several matters, especially in political matters. Abhay revolts against his father openly till he is forced to leave. His father proposes to raise the number of member of his council from three to six, one of whom is to be selected by him from among a panel of five names suggested by the other five. Both father and son take extremely opposite stands regarding the nationalist movement. Hiroji has nothing but contempt for the nationalists who are, according to him, goondas led by traders and lawyers. But Abhay has sympathy for the nationalists and condemns all his father’s political views.

Apart from the picturesque delineation of the prince, the novel can also be studied as an interesting treatise on the feudal attitude to love. The prince falls in love with Minnie. He is initiated into the searching, revealing, and intimate experience of sex. The Maharaja would allow her to be his son’s mistress but not his wife. But the prince’s attitude to love is just in tune with that of the old order which the Maharaja represents. For Abhay, Minnie is an object of lust and not of love. His approach is cold and business like. It is evident in the last love scene between them.

The master stroke of Malgonkar’s technique adopted in the novel, The Princes shows itself in his happy choice of Abhay, the Hero of the novel, as its narrator. The self-characterization of Abhay is the most dramatic part of it. Abhay both acts and narrates.

The Princes is a classic in more than one way. It portrays effectively not only the struggles of the princes to retain their position, and the ardent aspiration of the old Maharaja but also the emerging world of the young princes Abhay; not only the conflict between the nationalists and the Britishers but also the clash between the Britishers and the princes. Malgonkar has deftly managed both the double movement and the double vision. He successfully humanized his highly authentical historical and intractable raw material in The Princes.
The fifth chapter *A Bend in the Ganges* depicts one of the most violent periods in the recent Indian history, the revolt against the British rule. During India's struggle for independence, the two forces of Gandhiji and Subash Chandra Bose working for the same goal pulled in contrary directions, with the result that the ideals of their different ideologies came into conflict. The novel is a study of the anatomy of violence that crept into our national life.

*A Bend in the Ganges* with the theme of individual's quest for fulfillment in moral identity. The interest of the novel centres round the vigorous characterization but not in the dramatic effect created by the author. Malgonkar's characters have the force of life, and it is unjust to discount them of sketchy and confused. His characters represent the complexity of life, and compel the reader's attention with their intense quest for identity as self discovery. Both Gian and Debidayal's destinies are shaped by two factors, "the forces of history" and "the elements of their personalities." The novelist is interested in events and episodes for their news, value and sensation rather than for their effect on men and women. His sympathies are always with militant nationalism. In *A Bend in the Ganges*, Malgonkar by his artistic skill manages to hold the disparate material together. Apart from the fact that the action is too spread out and time span is rather long, there is also the problem of accommodating two protagonists, Gian and Debi, in the plot. The plot has a basic unity which singularly hold together, firstly by a series of sharp contrasts and correspondences between the two protagonists and secondly, through a carefully chalked out ever-recurring pattern of betrayal and revenge in the story.

*A Bend in the Ganges* incorporates and assimilates a number of historical individuals and incidents within its texture. Gandhiji appears not only vicariously through his speeches, as in the brief quote prefixed to the novel, but also in flesh and blood. It does not remain a mere chronicle. Going beyond a chronicling of the times along the lines suggested above, Malgonkar probes the political predicament of the masses and discovers the vulnerabilities in the psychological make up of an average Indian which rendered him passive. The novel reflects Malgonkar's
consciousness of the colonial experience by highlighting it in all human details by way of a chronicle.

Malgonkar’s *A Bend in the Ganges* concentrates upon the painful drama of the partition comprehensively. The novel depicts powerfully the horrible developments resulting in the partition, the triumph and tragedy of the hour of freedom. The bloody communal vivisection, which swept the country during the early days of our independence, is excellently presented in *A Bend in the Ganges*. The novel highlights the consequences of the partition, the division of the army, the fighting of friends and fellows joining the opposite camps.

Malgonkar in his novel *A Bend in the Ganges* gives a clear picture of the rural life of India and the life of aristocracy living in villages.

In a novel like *A Bend in the Ganges* focusing on the freedom struggle of India, Manohar Malgonkar’s attempt to intersperse it with love and sex scenes seems to create a façade of sensationalism, and to suggest that by means of this technique of adding spice to his dry stuff.

The powerful characterization, subtle nuances in style, the evocative descriptions and recreations of the milieu and the moment, mark this out as a classic of modern Indo-Anglian fiction, representing the lost generation.

In the sixth chapter *The Devil’s Wind*, Malgonkar himself puts it, is fiction, but it takes no liberties with verifiable facts or even with probabilities. It is not, as far as I know original history and discovers no new facts, but free from the compulsions of strict objectivity of historical writing and presented in the form of popular fiction, it may get a better hearing for Nana Sahib than the others have done, particularly because Nana’s story is presented here as he might have written it himself. It is doubtful though, whether Nana Sahib could have written his book in such fluent and forceful English as Malgonkar has given him.

Both themes of the decline and fall of the Maratha Confederacy and the outbreak and the failure of the revolt of 1857 have been skilfully interwoven with the personal story of Nana Sahib. *The Devil’s Wind* is also an autobiography. The
historical theme of the novel is concerned with the revolt of 1857, its background and its consequences.

The Devil's Wind deals with not only the historical aspect of the revolt but also with the life of the nineteenth century prince Nana who played a leading role in the revolt. Malgonkar shows Nana in all his moral nakedness and helplessness, in his world of instincts, loves, fears and feelings, his ambitions, friendships and motivations. His heroic fight against the times, the shock and defeat, he was subjected to had led him on the right path. Nana was highly religious and god fearing and a little superstitious too. He had a sound knowledge of music and dance. Nana had great respect for the old ideal world.

Malgonkar's novel The Devil's Wind presents a fascinating account of India's first struggle for independence. The novel dramatizes the historical events of 1857 with special focus on Kanpur. It presents detailed accounts of the life, rise and fall of Nana Sahib without taking any liberties with verifiable facts or probabilities. It is a serious and sincere effort to tell the story of Nana-Saheb the heir apparent to the late Peshwa from Indian points of view. By giving expression to the racial and cultural conflicts that are of perennial interest to the human kind through the immediate experience of the mutiny, he has achieved the ultimate goal of historical novelist.

Malgonkar by his art of storytelling successfully narrates a thrilling, exciting and heart rending story of invincible spirit of Nana Saheb. He decolonizes history by choosing the first national struggle for freedom as his subject and presenting it purely from the Indian perspective. He uses his fictional imagination to impart shape to the bare historical facts and achieves an integration of art and history. By his artistic skill Malgonkar successfully creates a historical novel.

The last chapter 'Conclusion' analyses the characterization, construction of plot, the various themes, the point of view adopted, the background depicted and the language used in all the five major novels of Malgonkar. It also summarizes the deliberations of the earlier chapters and establishes the achievement of Malgonkar as one of the greatest historical novelists in Indian English Literature. He is
conservative in his choice of traditional form of fiction as well as traditional form of English—mainly Victorian. He has handled bold and challenging themes, and his *dramatis personae* range from Governors and Viceroy and the top brass of the army to the meanest of the coolies and the aborigines.

His fiction shows that the Indo-English novel has come of age. His novels show maturity and fineness of storytelling. Gifted with the story-teller’s instincts, he knows how to function with verve and animation, with wit and detachment and keep the reader spell-bound. He displays a consummate skill of creating the authentic atmosphere by weaving the texture of his plot on epic dimensions with the aid of vivid portraiture, careful carpentry, subtle motivations, dramatic intrigue, humour, wit, irony, interpretations and razor-like shrewd and keen observations.

One aspect of this conformity is an appropriate use of the language by different characters of different levels education and of different nationalities. The other areas of this aspect are the narrator's point of view, the functional narrative or descriptive passages and diction. Authenticity and verisimilitude must be achieved, artistically speaking, so that there is no jarring note felt by the reader, either western or Indian. Malgonkar steers clear of these stylistic difficulties, and succeeds in putting across his themes and stories effectively.

The quest for fulfillment in the main defines the life pattern of Manohar Malgonkar’s characters. He is a true artist who creates characters who are interdependent to the incidents in fiction. But he does so with a purpose of giving moral values. It appears to be the reactions of his mind against some certain values. It also appears in favour of some other values.

Malgonkar has given his own vision of life. He believes in the ideology “to err is human”. But he does not believe in the luxury of mistakes. One cannot repeat mistakes. Once in enough, as the life is precious, perhaps, through this episode he also wants to suggest that polygamy creates complications in life and disturbs the balance in the society.