CHAPTER 3
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MANOHAR MALGONKAR

In some of his novels Manohar Malgonkar has dealt with the theme of partition. His treatment is different from that of Chaman Nahal and Khushwant Singh in significant respects. In A Bend in the Ganges Malgonkar attempts to highlight the prominent features of and the basic differences in the thoughts of the revolutionaries and the Gandhites. Their views are representative of political concepts and two important ideologies prevailing during India's struggle for Independence. The emphasis throughout is on the interplay of the forces of religion and politics, though prominence is accorded to the revolutionary movement. Malgonkar views the partition of the country as a tragic finale of the separatist thinking of both the Hindu and Muslim extremists, failure of the Gandhian ideology and crooked policy of the English rulers.

In A Bend in the Ganges Malgonkar narrates a moving story of the troublesome times of India when the communal volcano awfully submerged the subcontinent. The partition was a ghastly episode of Satanic and catastrophic degeneration of humanity. The main objectives of India's struggle for freedom were the preservation and pursuit of peace and enlargement of human freedom, but the communal outbreaks of 1947 tarnished these goals. The novel is an action-packed drama depicting the turning point of the modern Indian history. It was indeed shameful that India, a propagator of peace and non-violence right from the Vedic Age,
witnessed such incidents on account of which neighbourly relations were thrown into shambles and people were mad to kill each other. Malgonkar gives a realistic picture of the communal frenzy that gripped India in August 1947. The propagators of the "Two-Nation Theory" spread hatred, conflict and rivalries among people of the two communities.

The bloody feudal strife that flared up in the novel between the Big House and the Little House over a piece of land ended in murder and jail. This domestic bloodshed, in a small village Konshet, plays a vital role in the story of the novel. As Iyengar observes, "Like a prologue to the main act this story of family feud suspicion, hatred, vindictiveness, murder — is to be viewed as the advanced rivalry, micro-tragedy foreshadowing the macro tragedy on a national scale in the year of the partition."

The story of the novel moves against the backdrop of a most unusual but authentic background — the feudal world of a small Himachal Pradesh village, the struggle for independence led by Gandhiji, the revolutionary terrorism, the Andaman jails, the explosion in Bombay docks, the achievement of freedom and division of the country, the tragic communal massacre and uprootment of millions of people.

In order to present a realistic social picture and political orientations of the 1940s Malgonkar chooses characters like Gopal, Tekchand and Hari. Gopal, a representative of the elites, had received western education. The hypocrite class of which he was a member was progressive but wanted social, political and economic changes under the British patronage only. This class

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was callous to the national struggle. Tekchand symbolises the sophisticated but orthodox society, which was more concerned about its own survival and was pro-British. Hari was a representative of fatalistic people dwelling in the villages, who were ignorant and alienated to the national movement. Thus, none of these classes had any important part to play in the fight for freedom.

The story of the novel progresses along with the development of the personalities of two young heroes, against the backdrop of India's fight for freedom — Gian Talwar, a Gandhiite and Debi-dayal Kerwad, a revolutionary. Though there were a large number of revolutionaries, the Gandhiites far outnumbered them. Gandhiji had cast almost a spell on a whole generation of India, the spell being the result of Gandhiji's magnetic personality and his experiment with 'Truth' and 'Non-violence' in every walk of life including politics and the freedom movement. His simplicity, his voluntary poverty, his unflinching faith in humanity and his unique bravery and fearlessness gave him a very high place in the hearts of people.

The revolutionaries too had influenced a large number of young people — specially the radical sections dwelling in the cities. These terrorists were also dedicated nationalists and had staked their lives and families because they were burning with sublime patriotism. But they were not able to gain popularity among the common man because the latter was not able to perceive the dialectics of militant nationalism.

The revolutionaries did not take into account the racial considerations. They stipulated that those who made common cause should
constitute one nation. Both the revolutionaries and the Congress protested against imperialism and pleaded for liberation of the Indian people. Though their goal was the same, their ways were different. A careful scrutiny would reveal the fact that revolutionaries could not gain enthusiastic popular support because Indian masses were more under the charismatic influence of Gandhiji, and that the revolutionaries and the Gandhiiites had vital differences on the question of interpretation of the ways and means for freedom struggle.

The two heroes of the novel, Gian Talwar and Debi-dayal Kerwad, stood for two different ideologies, i.e. non-violence and violence, respectively. Gian declared himself to be the follower of Gandhiji and a believer in the creed of non-violence but he was not an active participant in any of the programmes conducted by Gandhiji, whereas Debi, a believer in the institution of revolutionaries, actively pursued his goal. This uneven portrayal of the two characters presents:

The hiatus between these two level of perception and action, thus, unfolds the dialectics of protest in India and brings out the contradictions resulting from a situation in which communalism emerged as the most pernicious phenomenon . Malgonkar, thus, provides a parallel critique of Gandhian non-violence through militant and communal points of view.2

Gian Talwar is a glaring example of dual character and split personality. Though a Gandhiiite, he shows no particular adherence to Gandhiji's noble ideas of action and conduct; the rigidity of the social rule affecting his

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domestic life was so cramping that it dwarfed his mental growth. Moreover, he could not fully visualise the implications of Gandhism. Though he adopted Khadi, yet he longed for riches. Jasbir Jain aptly comments in this connection: ". . . he [Gian] can only see the immediate gain or loss and thus cannot acquire any perspective. Why, when he professes to follow non-violence, does he use it to camouflage his hypocrisy and economic need?"  

Gandhiji's reflections upon political events and social institution influenced a whole generation and dominated the political scene, for

The nature of identity, an average Indian seemed to be subconsciously searching for, appeared to be attainable through the image of simplicity, humanity and fearlessness that Gandhi epitomized in his person. His syncretic politics seemed to agree with the centrist tenets of popular expectations.

Gian, who hailed from the rural area of Himachal Pradesh, consigned his most valuable possession — his imported blazer — into the fire showing the zeal of a nationalist. But his involvement in it bore no deeper significance. His decision to accept Gandhism had no deep or profound effect in his conscience. He was swayed away by the conviction that non-violence was not for the weak and coward. The charismatic effect of Gandhiji had charged the atmosphere and Gian found himself repeating the slogan of "Victory to non-violence!"

Gian received an invitation from Debi for a picnic at the river-bed of Birchi-bagh. The picnic episode helps the novelist present two distinct ways

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in India's fight for freedom; the one of non-violence despised by the terrorists; and the other of revolutionaries rejected by Gandhists. Singh alias Shafi Usman incognito scathingly criticised Gian's decision of becoming a follower of Gandhiji. He believed, for certain personal and other reasons, that the political programme of Gandhi was not without serious snags and short-comings. He averred: "A million shall die, I tell you – a million? For each man who should have died in the cause of freedom, Gandhi will sacrifice ten. This is what non-violence will do to this country." He vigorously advocated terrorism as a suitable remedy against the tyranny of the British rule. Shafi sarcastically challenged Gian and asked him to name any country that had shaken off the foreign rule without resorting to war. He added:

'Freedom has to be won; it has to be won by sacrifice; by giving blood, not by giving up the good things of life and wearing white caps and going to jail. Look at America — the United States! They went to war. Turkey! Even our own Shivaji. Non-violence is the philosophy of sheep, a creed for cowards. It is the greatest danger to this country.'

Gian was unable to answer the question put by Shafi because he was not able to understand the arguments of Gandhi. Gian's infirm faith and lack of proper understanding of the ideology of non-violence rendered him unable to take any firm decision. Therefore, he remained inactive at the time of the strife between Hari and Vishnu-dutt. When he should have acted like a man he felt inactive.

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6 Ibid., p. 18.
He felt alienated in the hostile feudal world because of his association with the educated world. Since Gian's approach towards life was not creative, he failed to achieve a creative unity and synthesis of the feudal and the modern. He was unable to expose his feudal and orthodox ideas to the light of liberalism of Gandhian ideology, and later he was unable to confront the feudal forces on account of his urban attitude.

The cruel murder of Hari revealed to Gian the futility of non-violence as a way of life because he felt that he could have avoided the calamity had he interceded between Hari and Vishnu. This time Gian resorted to violence for the sake of brotherly love as he could not get justice because of the evil nexus between the police and the murderer. He began to question his own love for non-violence:

'Coward!... coward!' he kept accusing himself, fanning the flame. Was that why he had embraced the philosophy of non-violence without question—from physical cowardice, not from courage? Was his non-violence merely that of the rabbit refusing to confront the hound.  

This soul-searching and introspection made Gian kill Vishnu-dutt with the same axe with which Vishnu had killed Hari. When Gian went to the police station to surrender, he defiantly told the darogah: "I had to find the axe,'... 'You see, it was important that he should be killed with the same axe."

Gian embraced violence and took revenge for the sake of family pride.

The argument Gian extended were to hide his own inadequacies. He not only failed to assess properly the deeper significance of the Gandhian

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7 Ibid., p. 50.
8 Ibid., p. 67.
ideology but also failed to "distinguish between courage and cowardice and later between integrity and servility, and between truth and falsehood." All his social and political ideas were conditioned by his orthodoxy. In the novel Gian does not emerge as a convincing symbol of non-violence because Malgonkar discredits non-violence and the concept of non-violence is not allowed to manifest itself in its full dimension. Malgonkar associates it with weakness and cowardice and he "treats Gandhism not as Renaissance, but as one of prevailing strategies to obtain independence and as an explicit ideology of non-violence."  

Non-violence does not always exert a superficial and temporary influence on people and is not necessarily associated with weakness. In fact, non-violence demands greater heroism and courage than violence, as one of the disciples of Gandhiji avers in the novel: "... our non-violence is the non-violence of the brave, arising not from cowardice but from courage, demanding greater sacrifices than ordinary fighting men are called upon to make."  

Gian's thoughts, however, abound in contradictions and inconsistencies. His ideas about Gandhism are vague, immature and irrelevant and betray a lack of profound and realistic understanding. His thoughts oscillate according to his needs. Unable to inculcate essential principles of Gandhism, he is unable to understand the implication and impact of Gandhism on day-to-day practical life. He regards Gandhism not

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11 A Bend in the Ganges, p. 8.
as a way of life but as a means to political ends. His baseless and capricious acceptance was doomed to fail because his involvement in it was never too deep. He interrogated himself; "Was it merely a moment of weakness — the heady glow brought on by an act of sacrifice, the reckless discarding of a much-valued blazer? Or the sight of a beautiful woman throwing away her fur coat into a fire?"  

Gian took revenge on Vishnu much against the wishes of his grandmother and abandoned his college education. But when he jettisoned non-violence he did not feel any qualms; violence rather proved to be an act of liberation because he freed himself from the fetters of pseudo-Gandhism. Gian’s life in the Andamans, where he was transported for life, was the story of his rejection of truth. C.M. Mohan Rao writes:

Malgonkar explores the influence of violence and non-violence on the nation and the individuals in his novel. A Bend in the Ganges, and shows how the hidden capacity of man for violence is brought out by the destructive acts of others. Non-violence is an ideal; violence is a reality with its roots in the human psyche.  

This statement holds good for the young terrorist — Shafi Usman and Debidayal Kerwad. Shafi’s hatred for the Britishers had its roots in the Jallianwala Bagh massacre where at the age of seven he was asked to identify the body of his father, whereas Debi’s traumatic experience at the age of thirteen, when he saw his mother about to be molested by a British soldier, made him hostile towards the British. Therefore, he joined Hanuman

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12 Ibid., p. 18.
Physical Culture Club, which was in fact a meeting place for the terrorists. The British rule, the one common consolidated enemy, gave the terrorists' ambitions against the colonial rule a shape and direction. All the young members of the club hated the foreign rule and "that was what brought them together, Hindus and Muslims and Sikhs, men of differing religions united in the cause of freedom as blood-brothers: the Freedom Fighters." The love for motherland was their religious obligation. They were aware that the Indians were deprived of their liberties to satisfy the imperialist ambitions.

The terrorist movement was active in Duriabad under the leadership of Shafi. The revolutionaries strongly felt that there was no conflict between Hinduism and Islam. Shafi encouraged the cultivation of cultural affinity by establishing Hanuman Physical Culture Club. He displayed a remarkable synthesis of apparently conflicting trends and currents. He himself wandered in the guise of a Sikh youth, and laid great emphasis on Hindu-Muslim unity, which he regarded as a legacy of India's long cultural history. He believed that the principle of tolerance and fraternity, and a composite culture had united Hindus and Muslims against the alien rule: "They themselves were the elite, having smashed down the barriers of religion that held other Indians divided; blood-brother in the service of the motherland." He saw the unity that asserted itself against the rich background of diversity in the country. In order to renounce the bonds of religion these young zealots

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14 A Bend in the Ganges, p. 68.
15 Ibid., p. 73.
used to take soup made up of pork and beef, because they all knew that the British were aware of the fact that Indians were not homogeneously religious and were using it as a pawn to divide them. To these young people the terrorist movement "...was the last gasp of those who wanted to carry on the struggle united. They were all willing, almost eager, to die for their motherland ..."¹⁶ They all believed that the people of India must have the same sense of oneness and belongingness to the country. Malgonkar presents revolutionaries' anti-British tone and proclivity to employ unconstitutional means. The extremists clearly constituted a break from the loyalist policy of the moderate congressites.

The political attitude of the revolutionaries was in accordance with the sanctions of secularism, which they regarded as an unfailing guide for action and as the final achievement of their long-cherished goal. This, ultimately, led to the union of diverse intellectual and religious forces in the country for a combined fight for national freedom:

They were all fervent patriots, dedicated to the overthrow of British rule in India. Anyone who represented that rule, British or Indian, was their enemy; anything that represented that rule was their legitimate target. 'Jai Ram!' answered by 'Jai-Rahim!' was their secret mode of greeting. The name of Rama sacred to all Hindus, and that of Rahim equally sacred to the Muslims.¹⁷

Debi, the only son of the business tycoon Tekchand, was an active member of the group of terrorists working for the liberation of their motherland. As a

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 72.
¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 71-72.
young boy Debi was very sensitive. He did not like the idea of destroying the ant-hill that had grown on their badminton court. To him German Muller, who tried to drown one of the four puppies because their mother could not feed more than three, was a butcher. But the shocking sight of the helplessness of his mother forced him to join revolutionaries. He had no reservation or hesitation in supporting any movement against the British Government. He helped the terrorists by supplying gelatine to them, which he had stolen from the godowns of the Kerwad Construction Company. Debi believed that there could be no healthy social, political and religious philosophy unless realities were faced boldly and with an open mind. He never had any misgivings about the veracity and efficacy of his views on nationalism. He had dedicated himself to the independence of his country, and the external form of religion to him was not of any substantial value.

Debi's unbreakable association with revolutionaries was because of his aversion to communal politics. He never approved of the communalism — whether of the minority or of the majority. Debi's was a real and deliberate involvement in the political struggle of his country. Terrorist activities gave him a kind of fulfilment and pleasure. When Shafi and Debi went to sabotage the plane the former noticed that

... Debidayal's face had assumed an almost frightening malevolence, as though he were gripped by the joy of some secret fulfilment much greater than the mere burning of a plane. His staring eyes reflected the speck of fire, his lips were pressed together in a hard black line. Shafi went on staring at the face, almost in spite of himself, observing the weird play of light on it — like someone looking on at a cremation, Shafi
thought: the face of the god of vengeance, gloating.\textsuperscript{18}

The mental make up of the revolutionaries was moulded by Western education, modern liberal forces, love for motherland and hatred for the Britishers. But the Indian national scene of the time revealed signs of sharp religious differences between the Hindus and the Muslims. Shafi was also able to read the dangers of the Hindu-Muslim rift. He knew that it was the mischievous doing of the British. Rejecting the fears expressed by Hafiz, Shafi asserted: "But this is just playing into the hands of the British. They want to keep the Hindus and the Muslims divided, so that they can go on ruling. Our only salvation lies in solidarity — that is the only way to oust the British."\textsuperscript{19} Shafi was opposed to the partition of the country not only on religious grounds but also on political and cultural grounds. He held that the scheme of Pakistan was harmful for Indians in general, and Muslims in particular, and would create more problem than solve them.

Hafiz attempted to prepare Shafi for a civil-war. Hafiz resorted to violence in self-defence and in extreme circumstances when there was no other alternative:

"That is exactly what we have to prepare ourselves for: a civil war. We have to think ahead, a year, two years from now, to a time when the British will leave this country, leaving our fate in the hands of the Hindus. Are we to sit back and take whatever indignities they have in store for us? We must hit back ten-fold. It is to that end that we must all work, must all recognize the new enemies: the Hindus."\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., p. 82.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., p. 91.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., p. 92.
Thus, Shafi's faculty of original thinking and independent judgement was
crippled by the fanatic leaders. He later displayed distrust in the
revolutionaries. He was on the horns of dilemma and could not decide
whether or not the entire system of communalism, formulated and developed
by fanatic leaders, should be discarded. His earlier political attitude was in
accordance with the sanctions of conventions of secularism. This formed the
preamble for the union of diverse intellectual and religious forces in the
country for a combined fight for national freedom. The second phase of
Shafi's career began with disillusionment about secular and nationalist
ideas. He was still under the spell of the forces of secularism and was not
ready either to identify himself with the poisoned and polluted Indian
conditions or to recognise territorial basis and claims of nationalism. But
later the earlier Shafi gets metamorphosed under the impact of Hafiz, and
Shafi accepted communalism as a reality as he came to recognise the
unalterable facts of Indian politics pertaining to the rise and growth of
communal hostility. Hate for the Britishers was the binding force and no
sooner did the British declare to leave India than the bond amongst
revolutionaries lost its strength. They wanted to die for their motherland
and for their Indian brothers when the movement was not communal. Now
they were on the neck of each other. Hafiz remarked:

'One or two! Are we to be satisfied with crumbs? We who ruled the whole country? Have we now
become dogs? And who are the one or two? Who — I ask you? Stooges — their own men. Muslims,
who are members of the Congress, renegades. Don't you know that the Congress will not have
any one who is not a member? That is what will happen here too. You will find a Congress ministry
— a Hindu ministry with a couple of Muslims who are obedient servants of the Congress. Even today, there are Congress administrations in eight of the eleven provinces. What is happening? They will not take any Muslim who will not join them. Jinnah has exposed them: 'The Hindus have shown that Hindustan is for the Hindus'. Now we Muslims have to look after ourselves. Organize ourselves before it's too late. Carve out our own country..."  

So long as the struggle was united and secular petty political interests did not affect their actions and ideals. The revivalist and orthodox forces were at least apparently suppressed. Revolutionaries incorporated the spirit of religious tolerance and understanding in their policies and movements. Therefore, it was painful to observe that the highly secular leaders sank to the level of cheapest fanatical and most ill-informed rustics. The conflict between the Hindus and the Muslims was characterised by the struggle for supremacy between selfish goal and political upheaval. The interest of revolutionaries was primarily political, and their interest in religion, not at all pronounced, was subordinate to the political interest. Later, the narrow religious interest of the fanatics were equally conducive to the task of creating a screen of suspicion as were imperial policies.

Modern and liberal leaders like Shafi were won over by the dominant political concepts of the day, which were unrealistic and medieval in modes of thoughts. The impact of communalism on all aspects of Indian life and thought was coupled with the struggle for supremacy. The political and religious differences, which were straining the relations between the two

21 Ibid., p. 90.
communities, were an outward manifestation of a deeper conflict, not peculiar to India or unknown to history:

... how long it could be maintained. The Congress and the Muslim League had come to a final parting of ways, with Hindus and Muslims separated into opposite camps, learning to hate each other with the bitterness of ages. Even their own leaders had begun to take sides. Hafiz had already written to him from Bombay complaining about the callousness of the Hindus towards the Muslims, suggesting that they should re-orientate their activities. How long would it be before the flames of communal hatred caught up with them? 22

In this gloomy mood Shafi felt a kind of resentment for Debi, who was gaining prominence in the circle.

Hafiz wanted to make Shafi realise the significance of canard and take up challenges of the time. He championed the two-nation theory, which was the handiwork of moribund nationalism and revivalism. Such propaganda produced its inevitable and unhealthy consequences. The latent Muslim feelings of hatred against the unbelievers sprang up and old Muslim religion of the sword reasserted itself and the exclusiveness was revived. Muslims were caught in the mire of two irreconcilable lines of thought, i.e. Islamic faith and Indian Nationalism. This resulted in the split among revolutionaries. Their frustration made them lack a sense of direction and aspiration. The clarion call of Hindu-Muslim unity lost its freshness and revolutionaries confronted with the realities of a new situation in which the movement was not anti-British. Hafiz tells Shafi:

'We have to organize ourselves — Muslims against the rest of India, if we are to survive. Organize, not

22 Ibid., p. 81.
so much to win freedom, but to protect ourselves from being swamped by the Hindus; emasculated, to become a race of serfs in a country ruled by idolators.  

This attitude symbolised a complete departure from the original ideals of revolutionaries. It was very painful to see the degeneration of revolutionary nationalists to the level of communal fanatics.

Shafi was won over by the communal politics of the day, but Debidayal could not comprehend the fast-changing scenario of the country. As a fervent patriot, Dabi disliked his father's pro-British attitude which led him to believe that the presence of the British was necessary to keep India away from a civil war:

He shuddered to think what the nationalists would make of the country . . . people who had not a single constructive thought in their heads and were nothing but agitators mouthing slogans. In the chaos that would follow the withdrawal of British authority, Hindus and Muslims would be at each other's throats just as they had always been before the British came and established peace.  

Tekchand lacked self-restraint and self-criticism, which took him away from his children — specially from Debi. He was unable to establish any kind of congenial communication with his children. Probably he was too obsessed with his business ideas. The complaint lodged about the missing gelatines turned out to be a nightmare for Tekchand himself. Debi-dayal was allegedly arrested for the same complaint.

The arrest of Debi revealed the fact that the communal poison had soured the old relations in the revolutionaries' circle. When the police made

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23 Ibid., p. 91.
24 Ibid., pp. 245-46
the raid only Hindu boys of Hanuman Physical Culture Club were present, for Shafi had deliberately kept Hindu boys uninformed of the raid. Debi was tried and transported for life to the Andamans. The rift between the two communities was quite evident. The captain of the ship, in which Debi was being taken to the Andamans, exclaimed:

'We knew they were certainly more than thirty in it. But we — that is the police, seem to have bungled it, rather. They operated from their club, a sort of gymnasium. When our men raided the place, only seven were there. The others had fled. It is rather funny, really; all seven were Hindus; not a single Muhammadan in the lot; which makes us think that there was some kind of a rift among them... ."25

The betrayal of Debi by Shafi revealed the fact that terrorist movement proved to be even a greater failure than the Gandhian movement, both of which deviated from their avowed goals and became fanatic.

What Debi really resented was Shafi’s abandonment of secularism, revivalism, courage and uprightness. He equally resented his father. For their ugly betrayal had come as a hindrance to the achievement of the national goal. He was perplexed whether he should limit his vengeance only upto Shafi or should avenge his father too:

Shafi and his father; how unlike each other they were. His father, haughty, superior, well-bred; Shafi emerging from the gutters, embittered, coarse. And yet it was almost as though they had combined to betray him, him and the others. If they had been spared, they would have been able to play havoc with the British war effort. What could not he and Basu and the others have done to cripple the British.26

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25 Ibid., p. 131.
26 Ibid., p. 156.
The hard sentence pronounced on him did not let his moral droop. His only wish in life was to go back to India and finish his unfinished work. In the Andamans, unlike Gian's, his spirit did not droop and he refused to salute the British officers. For this defiance he was given solitary confinement. There also he started fabricating plans to wedge a war against the British. There he realised that the call of the national loyalty was stronger than the urge to take revenge upon Shafi and others.

Gian, on the contrary, had no motive that could allure him to go back to India. His sole desire of life now was survival. His fascination for Gandhian ideals and his dream of liberation of India became a thing of the past. His existence remained the only concrete reality for him; rest of the things lost their vigour. He had no bright future or any binding force back in India. He himself had destroyed the roots of his family. Malgonkar has portrayed him as an inactive and impulsive boy. In the Andamans Gian's personality was reduced to the level of a cipher. His servile nature dominated his acts. His contact with the English masters brought degeneration to his character. He became an admirer of the English. He fully acknowledged the sympathy shown to him by the college principal, who had certified his character, and the English judge, who had given him only transportation for life to the Andamans instead of death sentence. He was unable to distinguish between individual and social interests. Therefore, instead of fighting for general good of India, he struggled to establish himself through servility of the British. Unlike Debi, he was inactive and satisfied.
with the life in the Andamans and was ready to spend his life among criminals and convicts.

The placid life of the Andaman jails became alive when the World War II started. Though no news papers were permitted yet the anti-British slogans started showing up in the walls. Mulligan, the jailer of the cellular jail, strictly proclaimed that anybody found writing anti-British slogans would be punished publicly. He suspected Debi and interrogated him but he denied the charges resolutely. Mulligan did not believe his words. Therefore, in order to catch Debi red-handed he made Gian a stool pigeon and gave him the police-whistle. Gian showed no qualms in working as a spy on his own fellows and friends.

One day when Balbahadur, the Gurkha head sentry, was taking Debi back to his cell after interrogation, the inhuman behaviour and cheap words from Balbahadur infuriated him and he jumped on the Gurkha sentry and disabled him with the stroke of scrotum kick. Gian, who was following them, witnessed the event and impulsively blew the whistle. This act won Debi immense popularity because he had hit the most despised man in the Andamans. One day while returning from their work Ghasita seriously asked Gian if he was willing to escape from the Andamans. Ghasita informed him that he had made all the preparations and the only thing they now needed was a third hand to join them to sail the boat. To repair for the crime he had impulsively committed on Debi, Gian narrated the proposal to him, but Debi could not believe him. When Gian swore of his earnestness Debi disdainfully said:
'But even if you were in earnest, let me tell you that I would willingly rot in a cell here rather than associate with someone like you and become free. You are scum; you are far worse than Balbahadur because he at least is openly hostile—you spout truth and non-violence. You are the sort of man through whom men like Mulligan rule our country, keep us enslaved; you are a slave working for the masters, proud of the service he renders, hankering after the rewards.'

Debi was not ready to associate himself with an intriguing and dishonest person like Gian.

After capturing the Andamans the Commanding officer of the Japanese troops, Colonel Yamaki, sent for Debi. He tried to convince Debi that they wanted to help India secure her freedom through active resistance: "The Gandhis and Nehrus will never make them quit. The British do not understand passive resistance. They have not given in an inch to your Gandhi for the last twenty years. Look how much Japan has taken from them — in no more than two months . . ." Debi was supposed to violent, underground terrorist activities designed to demoralise the British. During his march from Burma to India he was disillusioned by pathetic conditions of the refugees and cruel, unsympathetic behaviour of the Japanese. The Japanese escorted him right up to Kohima and they gave him plenty of money to cripple the war nerves of the British. After reaching India instead of working for Japanese he chose to secure a job as an assistant stockman in Brindian Tea Company in Assam. The Burma experience had highly agitated him and had brought a noticeable change in his attitude:

27 Ibid., p. 198.
28 Ibid., p. 218.
He wondered whether all the exposure to what Gandhi had described as man's inhumanity to man had converted him to his doctrine of non-violence? Or was it just his feeling of revulsion against his fellow-Indians, men like Shafi, the Brigadier and Gian Talwar, that had made his spirit curdle?

He did not know the answer; the rights and wrongs were so inextricably mixed up; but he was conscious of some great change that had come over himself.29

There, instead of supporting Japanese, he preferred to lie low. He decided that till the end of the War he would postpone his settlement of score with Shafi and would stop his terrorist activities. The currents and cross-currents inside and outside the country obliged him to change his approach.

The "Quit India" movement was first dismissed by the revolutionaries, but it slowly gained strength. But the public was frustrated by the strict actions taken upon their leaders to suppress the movement; "It was almost as though the British had forsaken their proverbial restraint, and had suddenly decided to entrust the administration of the country to hundreds of General Dyres pressed into service to smash the national agitation."30 This act of the government made the non-violent movement drift towards violence. The government took hard measures to cripple and suppress the movement. But repression provoked retaliatory act of violence. All the leaders of national stature were imprisoned and the masses were left bewildered to search their own path. The British adopted sternest steps that enraged the non-violent agitators.

29 Ibid., p. 268.
30 Ibid., p. 283.
The changing nature of nationalist movement elated Debi. The British had turned the non-violent movement into a fierce violent movement by their stern suppressive steps. Malgonkar writes: "You could not keep the spirited men of a nation tied down for long to bullock-cart speed and to the vegetarian logic of the Indian National Congress." Debi thought this was the right time to give the British Empire the last blow. But he lamented his own inactiveness. He had kept himself away from the revolutionary activities for nearly two years. The cruelty of the Japanese troops he had witnessed in Burma, had made him lay neutral.

After the war ended Debi moved to Calcutta to see Basu and chalk out the future plan. Two years of introspection and pondering over rights and wrongs had made him uncertain about his choice of violence as a way of life. Through the character of Debi, Malgonkar has consciously and successfully attempted to explore the possibilities of violence and non-violence as ways of life.

When Debi met Basu he found great changes in the latter's attitude. Basu told him that the relations between the Hindus and the Muslim were so greatly strained that each community had practically arrayed itself in an armed campaign against each other. Communalism had taken deep roots in society. Debi-dayal could very well understand that the shrewd game of 'Divide and rule' played by the British was now yielding fruit. He assessed the situation: "It is almost as though just when they are on the point of

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31 Ibid., p. 284.
leaving the country, the British have succeeded in what they set out to do. Set the Hindus and Muslims at each other's throats. What a lovely sight!"  

Two years of meditation and introspection had made Debi liberal and he praised the policies and ideologies of Gandhiji, whereas Basu suffered the humiliation of his wife's lovely face mutilated by an electric bulb filled with sulphuric acid. This experience made him very bitter towards the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi. He believed that Gandhiji's philosophies were not only highly impractical but also suicidal to India. He asserted that Mahatma Gandhi had done irreparable harm to the Hindus and the philosophy of *ahimsa* would lead to destruction and extermination of the Hindus from the face of the world. He believed that the organisation of the Hindus into a united and organic nation was necessary to ward off Muslim aggression. Basu believed that years of subjugation and liberal policies of Gandhiji had made Hindus weak and emasculated, unable to defend their hearth and home, the sanctity of their temples or the honour of their women. Basu favoured the Hindu Mahasabha and its militant ways aimed at revitalising the Hindus. He believed that until the Hindu youth were again inspired with the ambition of Hindu Raj in their land of Hindustan, the Hindus could not put forth the best energy that they are capable of in the present struggle. He also felt that their fight was directed not only against the British but also against the rowdy and aggressive Muslims.

All ill feeling also grew among Muslims in India, who thought that they are Muslims first and Indians next. They held that free India was for

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32 Ibid., p. 289.
Hindus and their own salvation was possible only in a Muslim state carved out of India.

The Congress had been desperate to grab power and create an India ruled only by the Hindus so that they could ride roughshod over the Muslims who once ruled them. It was the vengeance of sheep. The Muslims would never agree. To them independence was worth nothing unless it also ensured freedom from the domination of the Hindus. They would never live in an India where they were only a tolerated minority. 33

Hafiz categorically stated that the Congress could not prove its claim to represent the Muslim emotions. The Congress leadership was suspected by the Muslims because it was not able to curb the growing influence of the Hindu Mahasabhaites. This further stimulated Muslims to protect their interests, and confirmed the suspicion of some Muslim groups that the swaraj in Congress's terms meant Hindu domination. "Now the fight was no longer against the British, but against the Hindus who were aspiring to rule over them. It was Jehad, a war sanctioned by religion; a sacred duty of every true believer." 34 It enabled the vested interests among Muslims to raise the spectre of Hindu domination and mobilise the common people to form a joint anti-Congress front. The spirit of chauvinism made the Hindus and the Muslims ill-disposed towards each other.

Basu and Debi went to Lahore to teach Shafi a lesson for his ugly betrayal. As Debi had remained unaffected by political fervour for nearly two years, his mind was still pure and could not believe that Shafi could deceive him out of ill-will. But Basu could very well read the fierce rivalry that

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33 Ibid., p. 295.
34 Ibid.
subsisted between the Hindus and the Muslims. He had witnessed all the changes and he told Debi: "... as far as you were concerned, the clocks had stopped; as though the Hindus and the Muslims were still united instead of nursing hatred for each other..." And ultimately, Basu's fear turned out to be true. Shafi again betrayed them by informing their whereabouts to the police. The second betrayal by Shafi made Debi realise that the old amicable relationship, that used to complement and supplement each other, had lost its vigour. Debi became painfully alive to the hard reality that militant nationalism had degenerated into religious obscurantism and had weaken the secular character of the revolutionary movement. Debi-Shafi relation, already strained over the question of Shafi's shameful betrayal, was further embittered by another betrayal by Shafi.

Without making any physical assault to Shafi, Debi decided to take revenge upon him. Therefore, he bought his mistress Mumtaz from the brothel. This act of Debi brought him in direct confrontation with Shafi, who unsuccessfully tried to disfigure Mumtaz by hurling an electric bulb filled with sulphuric acid. Shafi had deceived him twice but this did not make Debi hate the whole Muslim race. Though the only son of a rich Hindu tycoon, he accepted Mumtaz, a Muslim girl, as his wife.

After an unprecedented era of Hindu-Muslim fraternisation during the Rowlatt Satyagraha and the Khilafat and Non-cooperation Movements, there was a resurgence, on an unprecedented scale, of communal and reviverist forces.

The Muslim League provided organisational expression to the sentiments of the Muslims. Jinnah made vigorous demands in favour of a separate homeland for the Muslims. In the changed situation the idea of Pakistan, mooted earlier, now seemed a reality: "... the resolution of the Muslim League in which Jinnah had demanded the creation of a separate state carved out of India, had crystallised the issues."\textsuperscript{36} The Muslims believed that the Hindus "...would never concede their demands with grace. It was essential to draw blood, to shed blood, confront their adversaries with fire and steel, the prick of the spear."\textsuperscript{37} The leaders of both the communities believed that unity based on the principle of bargaining could never be stable, and therefore in order to establish their dominance the two communities plunged into a civil war.

Tekchand was not at all sympathetic to the political aspirations of his country, but when he was deserted in Pakistan after the withdrawal of the British protection he viewed the thing clearly. Tekchand felt that the violence that was spreading fast was not like the sporadic Hindu-Muslim strife. Whenever, the tension between the two communities mounted a lathi-charge was enough to control the situation:

But these riots, as he could now see, were different. These riots were occasioned by the cutting up of the country. A vast landscape packed with people was now being partitioned according to religious majorities: the Muslims in Pakistan, the Hindus in India.

Every citizen was caught up in the holocaust. No one could remain aloof; no one could be trusted to be impartial. When men and women

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid. p. 295.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.
of your own religion were being subjected to atrocities, you could not be expected to remain friendly with adherents to the religion of the oppressor. The administration, the police, even the armed forces, were caught up in the blaze of hatred. Willy-nilly, everyone had come to be a participant in what was, in effect, a civil war.\textsuperscript{38}

Malgonkar seems to suggest that hatred for the British Empire served as the common cause to continue the fight together. But no sooner did the British hand over the power to Indian hands than the leaders vied with each other to grab the power.

The emergence of communal politics was also facilitated by the recurrence of communal riots in different parts of the country. Tekchand felt that the riots only generated a feeling of insecurity, undermined trust and confidence between the two communities, and damaged the syncretist tendencies in the countryside. The politicians, both Hindu and Muslim, exploited the fears and prejudices of their respective followers to warp political issues. They gave a communal colour to personal differences and tacitly encouraged revivalist groups to spread the virus of communal hatred. The effect of this was an increase in the number of communal riots, unscrupulous politicians thoughts not only to swimming with the current of communalism but also revitalising in ways more than one.

Tekchand could realise that the hatred had not sprung up overnight; it had been culminating under surface for years and now it had exploded in the worst form of mob fury. His wife, Radha, had suggested to him to leave Duriabad when she heard of and saw signs of the worsening communal

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., pp. 331-32.
situation. But "Tekchand had never imagined that such happenings could be possible, now, in the middle of the twentieth-century, after more than a hundred years of the sanity and orderliness of British rule, after thirty years or so of the Mahatma's non-violence..." The Gandhian principle had lost its grip among the masses. They had adopted it as a powerful weapon to fight against the mighty British Empire but the moment the British awarded India her freedom the masses abandoned the path of non-violence. The masses discarded non-violence overnight and now busied themselves with orgies of violence which seemed to fulfil some basic urge. Tekchand regretted his decision of not leaving Duriababad in time. His chauffeur Dhan Singh and his family were murdered cruelly and their servants, who were mostly Muslims, had abandoned them. The feeling of insecurity and the fear of being marooned among the hostile people brought the three members of the family together. They were trying to console each other but were not quite optimistic. Tekchand was feeling guilty of bringing his family to this critical juncture. They could have reached to safety if he had paid heed to his wife's proposal. Tekchand was in great pain as he saw the worsening condition of his beloved city. His mental agony finds expression in the following words:

'That it should have come to this!'... 'After a life time spent in this part of India, in this town, and giving one self to it and taking from it; letting one's roots sink deeper and deeper. There is a street named after my father, a library after me, a maternity home and a girls' school after your mother. This is my city, as much as that of its most respected Muslim families — the Abbases, the Hussains, the Chinais. I, my family, have done as much as any of them to make it prosperous and

39 Ibid., pp. 322-33.
beautiful. And what are they doing? Burning it down! And look at us waiting for police protection because its citizens want to finish us off.\textsuperscript{40}

The loss of property was not a big problem for Tekchand but leaving the things behind that had become a part of his identity was an agonising experience for him.

After marrying Mumtaz Debi wanted to visit his parents in Duriabad but the travelling had become excessively painful. The trains were running late because of skeleton railway staff. The passenger carriages looked like ". . . an enormous dead snake with myriads of ants clinging to its body."\textsuperscript{41} Merely a week ago they were the citizens of the united India waiting happily for the advent of the long-awaited freedom. But now they were refugees driven out of their houses by their erstwhile fellow-citizens. "They left behind everything they possessed; their lands, houses, cattle, their household goods. They also left behind scores of thousands of dead and dying, sacrificial offerings to freedom."\textsuperscript{42} Freedom was only few days away but mass migration and violence was in full swing. The preachings of Gandhi became obsolete and the beast in man raised its head. Debi was trying to interpret the situation: "Would terrorism have won freedom at a cheaper price and somehow still kept the Hindus and Muslims together? Perhaps not. But at least it would have been an honest sacrifice, honest and manly — not something that had sneaked upon them in the garb of non-violence."\textsuperscript{43} Mumtaz and Debi caught the train from the Kernal railway

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., p. 337. 
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., p. 354. 
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., pp. 354-55. 
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., p. 355.
station. Debi's travel from Kernal to Duriabad presented the ghastly scene of massacre. The land of five rivers that used to bubble with life presented a deserted look: "The land of the five rivers had become the land of carrion. The vultures and jackals and crows and rats wandered about, pecking, gnawing, tearing, glutted, staring boldly at their train." Though Debi was travelling in the guise of a Muslim, yet no sooner did the train reach the border of Pakistan than a sense of insecurity gripped Debi's mind.

On 15th of August the train came to a halt at the Pakistan border. Debi saluted the sunrise of their freedom but his blood coagulated to see the acts of horror committed on one human being by another. As suspected the train was attacked by the Muslim fanatics and they detected Debi along with other Hindus travelling in the train. The marauders abducted Mumtaz and fell upon Debi.

Shafi attacked the Teckchand family in order to take revenge upon Debi. Shafi wanted to abduct Sundari because her brother had snatched his girl. When Tekchand implored him not to touch the ladies of his house very viciously he asked: "Is that how you Hindus treated our women? Like sisters and mothers! They were raped in front of their own men; in Nabha, Patiala; in Delhi itself. Raped, mutilated — they weren't sisters then!" There followed a scuffle in which Radha, Sundari's mother, was killed by Shafi and Shafi himself got killed by a fierce blow made by Sundari with the image of Shiva. Thus, Gian purified his sins, regenerated morally and

\[44\] Ibid., p. 360.
\[45\] Ibid., p. 377.
redeemed himself by helping the family of Tekchand and by saving Sundari's life and honour.

Tekchand, Sundari and Gian joined the convoy heading towards India. But before the convoy could reach India Tekchand disappeared. His wife and his museum were part of his identity and he was unable to sever his emotional ties with them. The people of new generation who were in search of identity, like Gian and Sundari, marched towards a better future.

In *The Princes* Malgonkar does not portray the terrible picture of arson, carnage and loot that had crippled the lives of common men of the Indian subcontinent before and after the partition. Nor does he thrash the event from the same angle as he has done in *A Bend in the Ganges*. The characters of *A Bend in Ganges* are drawn from the common masses, whereas *The Princes* portrays the pompous world of kings, monarchs and princes. "Malgonkar found among the frustrated princes characters for the study of the impact of failure on capable persons. History here substituted Fate and the deposed princes symbolised men pitched against the inscrutable forces of the time."40 The story of *The Princes* is set against the background of a princely state — Begwad. It covers the span of nearly eleven years. Beginning with the political upheaval of 1938 the story ends in the year 1949 with the merger of princely states in the Indian Dominion. G.S. Amur comments:

The story of the disintegration of the state of Begwad which covers the crucial period between 1938 and 1949, beginning with the cracking up of the absolute power of the Maharajah and ending in

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the final withering away of his power, is full and factual.47

Abhayraj Bedar, the yuwrj of the Begwad state, decided to give up his role as an independent spectator and stand by his father, Maharaja Hiroji, at the hour of crisis. He moulded himself according to the traditional values that were very dear to his father. This decision was a direct result of the partition of the country and the open strife between the princes and the Government of India. *The Princes* depicts "... an important stage of the Indian national life when an ancient and viable Indian administrative set-up has been trampled down by us all in our zeal for the new spirit of democracy with little care for propriety and decency."48

The prologue of the novel pertinently refers to the proclamation made by Queen Victoria in the year 1858:

> We hereby announce to the native princes of India that all treaties and engagements made with them . . . are by us accepted, and will be scrupulously maintained . . .
> We desire no extension of our present territorial possessions . . . We shall respect the right, dignity, and honour of the native princes as our own . . .

This assurance given by Queen Victoria led the princes towards the deluding idea of perpetuity and safety of their states under the British patronage.

Abhayraj was critical of the attitude taken up by his father because he could envisage the beginning of the process of disintegration of the princely India. The agitation against the British rule in India had gripped the imagination of Indian masses and it was obvious that the British would,

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sooner, or later, award India her freedom. And it was even more obvious that the proclamation made by Queen Victoria would not be able to shield them from the rising tide of nationalism. Though Abhayraj, a sceptical spectator as he was, knew that the princely states were reaching their end but the uneven manner and the reckless speed with which these states were being abolished was quite shocking:

We were the princes; no one mourned our passing. We were a jest of history, a tribe that had lived long beyond its day because it had been carefully preserved in the strong chemicals of British protection. And when that protection was withdrawn and all of us were exposed to the harsh glare of the sun like frogs under an overturned slab, it was inevitable that we should perish.

I realize that it could not have been otherwise, and yet I cannot rid myself of a purely selfish sense of loss; and above all, I cannot help wondering at the suddenness of it all: one day we were ruling princes, the next we were frogs shrivelling under a burning sun.49

Abhayraj with his clear vision could see the inevitability of such an end, but as a son and a heir apparent he was not very happy with the way the disintegration was taking place.

Initially, Abhayraj was critical of the attitude of his father, who lacked vision and insight into the changing circumstances. The whole country was raging with patriotism but he foolishly fed himself with the medieval idea of the divine right of the princes. He told his son: "...there will always be a Begwad and there will always be a Bedar as its ruler, so long as the sun and the moon go round."50 His mode of thinking was medieval in spirit and

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50 Ibid., p. 17.
therefore he only partly conceded the demands made by the Political Department to introduce the concept of a responsible government in his state. He was hostile not only to the British rule but was even more hostile to the Indian National Congress because it talked of the merger of the princely states into the Indian Dominion. For nationalists he had only contempt. He had great resentment for both the British and the nationalists:

The British were our traditional enemies, for they had taken our kingdom by treachery. But that was long ago, and he had become resigned to their domination. The adversaries of the moment were the nationalists, out to grab whatever the British had spared by resorting to treachery far greater than the British were capable of — by subverting the loyalty of the people towards their rulers.\(^{51}\)

In the elections held in the British provinces the Congress had emerged as the major political party but Hiroji Maharaja closed his eyes to the fact. The strife between the Congress and the British revived his hopes of getting back their old state. He wanted to take advantage of the clash between the two parties. He also dreamt that by extending help to the British he could win the safety and enlargement of his state boundaries. And the help extended to the Empire during the World War II made him and other princes believe themselves the saviour of the great British Empire.

Abhay and his father were among those who witnessed the demission of the glorious tradition of the princes. Abhay was fully alive to the fast-changing situation but Hiroji Maharaja was still deeply rooted in the values

\(^{51}\) Ibid., pp. 13-14.
of princely world. Abhay even joined the War to break the traditional pattern of life but, ultimately, came back to his old princely world. He liked his state Begwad, the Bhils, the forests, the rivers, the hills and above all, his heritage but he was aware of the fact that "In the process of democratisation and man's fight for his rights . . . kingship was going to end sooner or later."\(^{52}\) But Maharaja was not a detached spectator. "The Maharaja was still in full sympathy with and loyal to the responsibilities imposed on him by his predecessors. He deemed it his duty to preserve if not extend his territory."\(^{53}\) The two different attitudes adopted by the son and the father ". . . indicate the possibility of the clash between Kingship and liberal humanism, traditionalism and modernity."\(^{54}\) The clash, however, did not take place because at last Abhay totally identified himself with his father.

The Naval mutiny in Bombay catalysed the process of political changes. The British Cabinet Mission arrived in India to settle the conditions for transfer of power. The announcement made by the British Prime Minister that the princes would not act as a "positive veto on advance" came as a shock to the princes. The Cabinet Mission stated clearly that after the transfer of power there would be no continuity of relationship between the Empire and the princely states. The princes lamented and protested against this declaration, but their voice was lost in the welter and confusion created by the Hindu-Muslim riots. Now they had only one choice left and that was to participate in making the new constitution by joining the

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\(^{53}\) Ibid.
\(^{54}\) Ibid.
Constituent Assembly. That was a great defeat for them because they were thrown at the mercy of the nationalists whom they had despised and distrusted. Abhay could very well appreciate their pathetic condition.

They were like ripe mangoes in late May, all ready to fall, and some were downright rotten. All it needed was for someone to come and give the tree a shaking. They would all drop off — good and rotten alike.\textsuperscript{55}

The strife between the princes and the nationalists did not gain any prominence because the split between the Congress and the League had resulted in the vivisection of the Indian subcontinent along the communal lines and the country was facing a horrible time. Thus the problems faced by the princes were thrown into disregard because

All eyes were pinned on the communal conflict that raged throughout the country. There had been mass killings in most of the major towns. The process of dividing the country, of tearing apart what had grown together and taken deep roots, was already taking a toll. The road to freedom was red with blood.\textsuperscript{56}

The situation was precarious. Abhay felt that the Viceroy was not in a position to give any guarantee categorically. He told his father that after the departure of the British their problem would have to be sorted out with their successors. He further told his father that the framing of constitution could not be held back because of the princes. Abhay was progressive-minded whereas his father was medieval in spirit. Very firmly he declared that after the departure of the British he would declare himself independent and would form a third force to confront the Congress, which was actually

\textsuperscript{55} The Princes, p. 244.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., p. 250.
working to finish them. Therefore he refused to join the Constituent Assembly. But when some princes defied the idea of the third force they were left at the mercy of the Congress. They were forced to accept the formula known as "The Instrument of Accession". The princes were asked to hand over departments of Defence, Foreign Affairs and Communications to the Union Government. The Minister for states had declared that the Congress was no enemy of the princely order and that the government had asked nothing more than the British had under its control throughout their rule. But the princes did not have any faith in the assurances given by the Congressites. Hiroji Maharaja projected his fears in the following words:

'It is all a matter of interpretation,' he told me. 'They are all clever lawyers. They can do anything they like under the guise of these concessions — take control of our states at any time, on any pretext. Just by making out they are protecting us from attack.'

On 25 July 1947 the Viceroy called a meeting of the Chamber of Princes and assured them that their acceptance of the Instrument would provide them all the "practical independence they could possibly want", and that there would be "no encroachment on their sovereignty." After this assurance Hiroji signed the instrument.

The country had been divided along communal lines and as a corollary to this the subcontinent was raging with the winds of disruption. In that chaotic situation

The authorities had to do what was best suited to the overall interests of the country according to their lights, even if it meant retracting step by step

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57 Ibid., p. 262.
the solemn pledges given to the princes. Wholly absorbed in stemming the tide of anarchy, they had no time to shed tears over the fate of oysters, however docile they had now become.58

The situation disillusioned Abhayraj because he had thought that by signing the instrument they had only replaced their treatise with the British crown.

But with the advent of freedom also came

The rumblings of the long war for self-rule and its accompanying evil, the vivisection of the country, went on unchecked as though a chain reaction. For the next thirteen months within the Indian states there was neither the old order nor the new democracy, only a mounting chaos. The most natural targets of the people's still unappeased hunger for universal liberation were the pockets of states ruled by the same old princes, virtual relics of British imperialism in the land of the free.59

When Abhay decided to stand by his father, Maharaja Hiroji had resigned from activity and had his moment of realisation. "Actually, the roles are reversed. It is the father who is now the ironic spectator. . . ." 60 He, in fact, took an evasive attitude. Instead of dealing with complaints made against his administration, he preferred to go for tiger shoot. When Abhay criticised his withdrawal from activity he was told : "'Don't you see, Abhay, that we are all going to be finished off soon? We might as well spend whatever time is left to us in doing the things we enjoy, for they will not be with us for long.'" 61 Once the process of disintegration started it went on unabated. Kanakchand Dhor, Charu Dutt and Maharani created great troubles for the Maharajah. Kanakchand Dhor, a cobbler boy, forgot all the obligations

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58 Ibid., p. 266.
59 Ibid.
60 Amur, Manohar Malgonkar, p. 83.
61 The Princes, p. 271.
made by Abhay and Maharaja and chose to remember only the horse-whipping by Maharaja. He created every possible trouble for Hiroji. Charu Dutt, a son of Maharaja from a harlot, opposed him on personal grounds. And Maharani chose to go to Pakistan with a palace officer, Abdulla Jan. Moreover, the defiance shown by the petty officials in Delhi were enough to make him realise that his days were over. After enjoying political supremacy and holding plenipotentiary powers the princes were all of a sudden aligned with the common masses and it was a hard fact to bear.

The Maharaja, who possessed qualities like "... moral uprightness, unstinted faith in the values of his forebears, and the singular confidence to run the state single handedly..." has been juxtaposed with Kanakchand, ". . . a puny and corrupt supporter of people's rule . . . ." Abhay had extended all kinds of help to Kanakchand for his education, but education could not change his mean and vile nature. As a leader of the Praja Mandal, the counterpart of the Congress in the princely states, he cruelly acted as a medium for the merger of Begwad state into the Indian Union. The Praja Mandals were formed to fight for the cause of the downtrodden against the monopoly and misrule of the princes. But Kanakchand was spiteful, malicious and corrupt. He chose to show ingratitude to the Maharajah and tried to soil his name from the public platform. Though Kanakchand pretended that he was fighting against the

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63 Ibid.
monarchy and was working for the cause of downtroddens, in fact it was his personal fight against Hiroji.

'What is it that you want, Kanakchand?' I asked.
'I want nothing, nothing for myself. I stand for the people, the downtrodden people of this state, for their birthright. . . .'
'That is all nonsense, and you know it,' I said.
He was quiet for a while, but his eyes smouldered.
'Yes, I suppose I do want something for myself. I want revenge. I want to wash away the insult of poverty ... the shame of untouchability.'

When Abhay noticed that unworthy, petty leaders disguised as followers of Mahatma Gandhi were trying to vilify the position of his father out of jealousy and revengefulness, he decided to come back and stick to his father. Kanakchand was obstinate and drunk with power. He refused to pay attention to the warning given by Abhay and continued to create troubles for Hiroji. He alleged that the Maharaja incited his tribal people to rise in an armed revolt against the Indian Government, although the revolt was spontaneous.

The ruling party was desperately in search of excuses so that the merger of the princely states could be accomplished as early as possible. They helped the Praja Mandals to make agitation against the princes and when the princes tried to check the terrorist activities of the Mandal the government lamented the deteriorating condition of law and order. Thus, the government's attitude revealed the sad plight of the princes. The

64 The Princes, p. 274.
Maharaja knew it very well that it was all a move made to swallow the princely states. He adopted a detached attitude.

The Praja Mandal workers, led by Kanakchand, were making vigorous demonstrations against the misrule of the Maharaja. But they failed to bring the primitive Bhils to their fold. The Bhils were still loyal to their ruler as the dialectics of democracy and people's rule were beyond their imagination. Therefore, the clash between the Praja Mandal workers and the Bhils was inevitable. The media exacerbated the condition by magnifying the horrors of the mishap. The Chief Political Officer, who had replaced the British Political Agent, declared the Maharaja incapable of maintaining law and order and asked him to make a request for adequate police help from the Western Province. The command made by the Chief Political Officer was a definite sign of the greed of the Congress to merge the Begwad state in the Padmakashal region. Supported by the Congress Kanakchand declared that the Mandal was determined to take over the administration of the state.

The Maharaja was ready to hand over the administration to the elected representatives of the people but Kanakchand knew it very well that if there would be plebiscite the Mandal would be defeated badly. Therefore, he adopted a militant posture to achieve his goal. Abhay, too, was in favour of transferring the administration to the elected body of people and retaining the position of the Maharaja as a purely constitutional ruler. He realised "... that it was already too late for us to catch up with the times; that the times had rolled on, leaving the princes gasping for breath like fishes left by
the floods on the sands of the Kamra. For as there was no way out except total extinction.\textsuperscript{65}

Abhay persuaded his father to hold elections and transfer the power to the elected representatives. But the Mandal people reclined to contest the elections. And showing defiance towards the Maharaja they forcibly captured the Administrative building. The Maharaja had yet not handed over the power to any other body and it was unbearable for him to see the flag of Bedars dishonoured. He climbed the steps of the Administrative building majestically, determined to remove the flag of the Praja Mandal and to hoist the flag of Bedars. And ultimately, the government declared that it was taking control of the Begwad administration without the ruler's consent. Thus last blow was dealt to the princely state of Begwad. The government snatched all the property and power from the Maharaja. There was nothing more for the Maharaja of Begwad to do as the ruler of the state. Only the formal act of surrender remained to be completed.

The government's decision to dissolve the princely state of Begwad was very shocking for Hiroji. He felt very dismayed and sorry not because he had been dethroned but because with the merger of the state the tradition of the Bedars had come to an end. He had experienced the feeling of being a ruler. He told Abhay: "Better to have ruled and lost, for it is a great feeling — being a ruler. Not just the ruling part, perhaps, but somehow being a ruler. Not just the ruling part, perhaps, but somehow being a part of

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid.
an unbroken past." He was a true monarch and instead of witnessing the ruination and ramification of princely tradition he preferred to commit suicide.

After the death of the Maharaja Abhay ascended the throne but soon he abdicated his titles and privileges in order "... to the fulfilment of personality in the realisation of human relationships and the affirmation of traditional values." It was Abhay's tragic destiny to see the sad demise of his state and "Abhayraj's highest moment of awareness of his identity as a prince has a strange coincidence with the disappearance of his princely inheritance itself." Abhay wanted to spread the light of education and the spirit of democracy in his state in a clean and healthy way but for despicable politicians like Kanakchand the settlement of personal score was more important than the process of democratisation. This attitude of petty politicians forced Abhay to come back to his traditional fold for the sake of family pride.

Because of his liberal attitude Abhayraj had a fine understanding of the national situation. Though he was very much attached to his father, yet he could not support his conservative attitude. Though himself a prince, he took the whole process of dissolution of princely state with a democratic spirit.

It is this understanding which makes this character noble, and the novel at the same time a significant one making an objective appraisal of the situation when the princely order was dissolved in the white heat of our strong national

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66 Ibid., p. 298.
67 Amur, Manohar Malgonkar, p. 80.
68 Ibid., p. 84.
fervour which brought for the country, freedom and for the people, democracy. 

There is no getting away from the fact that more than any other issue Kashmir has been at the heart of the divide between the neighbours, arousing visceral emotions on either side of the border. For Pakistan, Kashmir's membership of the Indian Union is a continuing refutation of the two-nation theory which is at the basis of its existence. For India, this very reality is a proof of its secularism, the credo of its freedom movement. Pakistan has always sought parity in status with its larger neighbour and accused India of having hegemonistic ambitions. India, on the contrary, has viewed Pakistan's efforts as an artificial attempt to overcome inequalities, which are but facts of life, by methods which have only succeeded in creating insecurities all round. In Distant Drum Malgonkar has depicted this abominable partition aftermath.

A Bend in the Ganges begins with India's fight for freedom and ends with the bloody vivisection of the subcontinent. It deals with the problems faced by the common men before and after the partition. The Princes describes the merger of the princely states into the Indian Union. Whereas Distant Drum proceeds to present the ironic reward of India's freedom struggle, it meticulously describes the division of Indian army and gives a detailed picture of the Delhi riots.

Though Malgonkar does not elucidate the reasons for tragic vivisection of India but the incidents of partition horrors are strewn here and

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69 Sarma, Nationalism in Indo-Anglian Fiction, p. 263.
there in the novel *Distant Drum*. He pays little attention to the effect caused by partition on the Indian society; attention is geared to effects caused by the partition on Indian Army. The reference to the partition of the Army can be found in the first chapter of the novel called "The Smell of Horses". Lieutenant-Colonel Ayub Mulla was one of those few Muslim officers who had decided to stay in India instead of serving in Pakistan:

Ayub Mulla, with his hawklike features and insolent gimlet eyes which, although his family had lived for five generations around Lucknow, bore testimony to his pathan ancestry, was one of the few Muslim officers who had stayed on with his regiment in India when the army was divided at the partition of the country. 70

Through a number of events like Kashmir's invasion, Delhi riots, division of army and emotional segregation of friends Malgonkar introduces the painful aftermath of the partition. He has also created characters like Rawal Singh and Barkat Ram to show the effects of the partition on individuals.

Though the partition had shattered the lives of millions of people, yet it came as a boon for men like Rawal Sing. Though his family itself was dislodged from Pakistan, yet instead of being kind and helpful towards the refugees he took advantage of their pathetic condition. Against the army rules he rented his bungalow to a refugee family for the exact amount of rent of his bungalow. He bought buffalo from the cattle pound at a very low price during the days of communal riots when cattle pounds were bursting with unclaimed cattle.

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We do not get any direct reference to the dissolution of the princely states into the Indian Federation but through the conversation of Barkat Ram (the second son of Maharajah of Tilkatta) and his servant an idea of the aftermath has been introduced. Like Abhayraj of *The Princes* he, too, was progressive-minded and liked to be recognised and treated as an army officer and not as a prince. When his old servant called him 'huzoor' he told him:

'I am no Huzoor', . . . 'Grandfather certainly was and father may have been. But even if the princes hadn't been finished off, even in the old order, it would be wrong to call me 'Huzoor'. These are the days when you take people for what they are, irrespective of what their families were in the past. I am just an army officer, if you insist, a 'Sahib', but never a 'Huzoor'."\(^{71}\)

But the old servant was not prepared to be converted to Barkat's way of thinking. He belonged to the old generation who had grown up in tradition where all the members of the family were huzoor.

There was something pathetic about it all, Barket felt at times. A vast number of people had not grown used to the new order. It was no use arguing with them. Facts meant nothing to them; often tradition stood towering above facts, above reasons—inviolable.\(^{72}\)

Like Abhay, Barkat Ram did not retreat back to his traditional values; rather he cherished a healthy contempt for it.

The novel is a chronicle of Kiran Garud's "... initiation into the code and his success in living up to it in a variety of circumstances and

\(^{71}\) Ibid., p. 47.

\(^{72}\) Ibid.
The narrator hero of the novel, Colonel Garud, was posted to the 2nd Satpuras on the Kashmir front. His Brigadier, Swarup Singh, warned him against the commander of the enemy battalion 37th Baluch. It was a disconcerting experience for Kiran Garud, for he had been asked to be careful of the man who had not only saved his career by keeping his name away in Bob Medley's suicide case but had also saved his life in the Delhi riots. Swarup Singh had warned him:

"You see, the enemy battalion facing you is, as I told you, the 37th Baluch, and they are commanded by a man who is reputed to be one of the most daring and capable officers in the Pakistan army. You can never tell what sort of tricks he'll be up to — chap called Abdul Jamal."

The reference to Abdul Jamal took him back to the days when they had been together at the military Academy in Dehradun, at the 4th Satpuras in Raniwada, in the first Burma campaign and in the Delhi riots.

In September 1947, when army was in the process of being divided, Kiran Garud came to Delhi and stayed with his friend Abdul Jamal. Actually, he had come to Delhi to attend the farewell parties to be given in the honour of army officers who chose to serve in Pakistan, but the eruption of riots disturbed the plan. Though Abdul chose Pakistan, he was unaffected by the reactionary and the communal forces and his gestures were still very friendly towards Kiran. But unlike the friendship of Abdul and Kiran, the old fraternal ties between the officers of the two communities lost its

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73 Amur, Manohar Malgonkar, p. 47.
74 Distant Drum, p. 213.
warmth. A clear divide was visible between the Hindu and the Muslim officers:

The partition had already created a barrier; lifelong ties between Muslims and others — Hindus as well as the British who were still there in large numbers — were already broken. Muslim officers in the mess had begun to foregather in tight, estranged clusters to carry out interminable discussions in hushed undertones. Any collective celebration would have been grotesquely out of tune with the mood of the times and would have been regarded with suspicion by both the Hindus and the Muslims.\textsuperscript{75}

The mood of the city was charged with suspicion and hatred. People of both the communities acted like wild beasts. Delhi was placed under curfew after the outbreak of communal violence. Abdul and Kiran, being army personnel, moved about freely in the riot-torn city, which bore a horrible look. In the middle of the twentieth-century the barbarous acts committed in the name of religion were unimaginable:

For two weeks, there was a reign of terror, when man's most barbarous instincts prevailed without check. Both Hindus and Muslims spent themselves in ghoulish enormities unknown to primitive man, allegedly in retaliation to each others doings — all in the name of religion even in the name of God !\textsuperscript{76}

Kiran had a first hand experience of war, but this experience of "fight-to-the-finish" civil war was far more appalling. Though Malgonkar has not dealt with the reasons that precipitated the tragedy, incidents of partition horrors are strewn here and there in the novel. The city echoed with the booming of guns and went red as the flames of fire leapt high. When Abdul and Kiran

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., pp. 218-19.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., p. 218.
reached Connaught Circus it "looked like a Hollywood ghost city, eerie and deserted."\textsuperscript{77} Near Darya Ganj a tonga had been overturned and "The pony was still harnessed to it and was flailing the road with its legs in an effort to get up. There was a gaping dark hole in its stomach through which the guts trailed out in a tangled, blood-soaked mess."\textsuperscript{78} And near Kashmiri Gate "In a triangular yard surrounded by a low brick wall, were a hundred or so corpses, thrown anyhow, piled in grotesque postures one upon another. A few ugly vultures with bare featherless necks were busy tearing at the bodies."\textsuperscript{79} In a house two or three hundred riot victims were huddled together, many of whom were severely wounded and were moaning and groaning. Some of them needed immediate medical aids but they were not willing to go to hospital.

Though Abdul had decided to go to Pakistan yet like a true soldier he worked zealously and tirelessly to help the riot victims. The prevalent mood of the city was one of vindictiveness, but Abdul was not affected by the communal contagion. He was untouched by the prevailing communal hatred and very well understood the sensitiveness of the changed situation. Therefore, when he saw Kiran climbing the steps of a mosque he stopped him and risked his own life instead. Kiran had beaten a Muslim ruffian and had taken him to jail because he was trying to molest a lady. This act of Kiran's made the Muslim fanatics bitter and in order to take revenge upon Kiran they laid a trap for him. But instead of Kiran, Abdul himself went...
inside the mosque and there his fears turned out to be true. The hooligans were awaiting Kiran to hack him to pieces. When Abdul inclined to side with them they jeered at him "...for siding a Hindu and a Kafir and for standing with one who was reported to have killed a true believer that very morning. Surprisingly, during those days of communal hatred and riots he was saved from Muslims by a Muslim officer. It spoke of the code of the regiment and of the unbiased, harmonious relation of Kiran and Abdul."80

Neither Kiran nor Abdul felt that one was a Hindu and the other a Muslim. They were merely people in uniform working tirelessly and zealously to help the riot victims. Soldierly duty and not the communal consciousness was supreme in them. One community was inflicting every imaginable horrors upon the other, but the two friends found peace in each other's company. Had they not worked together the experience of riots could have been even more unnerving and appalling for them. Their clear conscience and training as soldiers proved to be a liberating force from communal orthodoxy.

The changed political equations nevertheless propelled these two bosom friends in the opposite camps. This sort of dissipation of the old team of army people was an unpalatable aspect of the partition's aftermath. Bertie Howard deplored this tragic cleavage: "Pity the old team had to be broken up like that..."81 When Abdul chose for Pakistan neither Kiran nor Adbul had anticipated the role history was going to play in their lives. The enmity

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80 Sharma and Johri, The Partition in Indian - English Novels, p. 59.
81 Distant Drum, p. 147.
between the two countries actually brought the two friend in direct confrontation with each other. They were posted against each other on the Kashmir front.

Kiran's life and career was indebted to Abdul but regimental loyalty demanded the sacrifice of private loyalties. Kiran's mind was very clear about his duties. He was determined to "... defend his position as best as he could, and when it came to the question of attack, he would lead his men into it without any other thought in his mind except the thought of winning."82 His sole object was to win the battle and keep the flag of his nation flying high. He knew that soldiers could not behave like common men lamenting and sticking to their past and making a mess of sentiments and loyalties.

"Loyalty to the nation is considered supreme by soldiers, but friendship is in no way ignoble in their life."83 Therefore, the two old friends decided, after the declaration, of the cease fire, to meet under a bushy tree in no man's land. Though in the past they had been very close friends, yet the old association was fossilised by the forces of history. Now the two soldiers bore the weight of loyalty to their respective nations and with this realisation a gauche feeling crept between them. They were aware that "You had to hide your feelings behind a screen of inanities, remember to keep your voice dry and unemotional, concentrate on the non essentials. The subject of private debts was a taboo."84 Both of them wanted to end the meeting quickly

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82 Ibid., p. 231.
84 Ibid.
because they knew "... every moment would only increase awkwardness and artificiality." Malgonkar himself had worked as a soldier, which enabled him to successfully paint "... the feeling that arose from the clash of personal and regimental loyalties." The challenges that the soldiers of the two countries faced after 1947 were bigger than those faced by them before the partition of the country because they had to bury their personal sentiments and feelings for the sake of an ideal code of conduct. The two friends met, but

They did not talk much, and than only of hollow trivialities for almost any subject that came to mind appeared taboo. Their relationship had to be subjected to new scrutiny. They may have been the best of friends and comrades-in-arms, but now they were enemies, and from tomorrow they would be at best, non belligerent adversaries. You could not talk about the present, or the recent past, about friends or places, or even about yourselves. You could not ask questions lest your motives be suspect.

After meeting Abdul Kiran felt the burden of the new bitter realities. The very formal meeting made him aware that "The very essence of friendship, frankness had been completely drained off."

Kiran had risked his reputation and career. His Brigadier chided him for fraternising with the enemy. This act could have ended his career, but his friend Spike Ballur, who understood and appreciated his act, saved his career.

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85 Distant Drum, p. 238.
87 Distant Drum, p. 238.
88 Ibid., p. 241.
In the three of his novels, *A Bend in the Ganges*, *Distant Drum* and *The Princes*, Manohar Malgonkar has treated the tragedy of partition and its aftermath. But only in *A Bend in the Ganges* he has treated the theme comprehensively. In the other two the theme of partition is not the core of the novels.

In *A Bend in the Ganges* Malgonkar shows how the terrorist nationalism degenerated into communal rioting and the Gandhian ideals were lost in the welter and confusion that came along with the partitioned freedom. *Distant Drum*, is about the army life, and the Burma War. The novelist shows how the army people succeed in living up to the new conditions in order to achieve an ideal code of conduct. Malgonkar depicts Kiran’s efforts in a number of difficult situations that came as hurdles to his soldierly duties. *The Princes* depicts the passing away of the traditional princely tradition, and "...the theme is worked out in terms of a dynamic father-son relationship." 89 The narrator hero of the novel was desperately in search of his roots in an age full of upheavals and crises.

In all the three novels Malgonkar has very tactfully maintained the historical accuracy — India’s fight for freedom under the leadership of Gandhiji, the perspective of terrorist nationalism, the communal rioting and the division of India (*A Bend in the Ganges*), chronicles of a Regiment (*Distant Drum*), and the history of degeneration of princes and kings (*The Princes*). His novels are "...about people who are thoroughly human and...

89 Amur, *Manohar Malgonkar*, p. 15.
reveal a structure of values deeply rooted in Indian ethos.\textsuperscript{90} The protagonists of his novels — Gian Talwar and Debi-dayal Kerwad (A Bend in the Ganges), Kiran Garud (Distant Drum) and Abhayraj Bedar (The Princes) — are deeply rooted in Indian tradition and are successful in matching up the values of their respective surroundings in a variety of circumstances.

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., p. 18.