CHAPTER - III

A Bend In the Ganges
Manohar Malgonkar's novel, *A Bend in the Ganges* is primarily based on the events of contemporary Indian History between 1938 and 1947 which is the last phase of Independence movement. In this novel, Malgonkar depicts grippingly the real happenings of partition days and its horrors.

H.M. Williams rightly observes "In *A Bend in the Ganges* there is an extraordinary objectivity in Malgonkar's theme of the nationalist movement, the war and the partition."¹

The novel records the events that took place at the last stage of freedom struggle between Indian nationalism and the British colonialism. The most turbulent stage took place during World War II, when the national movement gained its momentum under the leadership of Gandhiji with the cohesive force of action like non-cooperation, boycotting foreign goods, Salt Satyagraha, Quit India movement and so on. Gandhiji waged his struggle with the Britishers with the weapon of non-violence. Malgonkar begins his novel with the post independent movement that was aggravated by the Second World war. As Professor K.S. Sreenivasa Iyengar observes,

"In this novel the role of the second world war in effecting radical changes in the affairs of men and nations is heavily underlined. The war certainly gave a sort of shock treatment to men, nations, continents, and when the war ended, the old order was no more."^2

The major theme of the novel is the clash between non-violence ideology and violent terrorism.

In the first scene the ideals of non-violence are exposed to public in the market square and Gian Talwar was attracted to this and embraced the creed of non-violence:

"Our weapons are truth and non-violence. Our war shall be fought only by peaceful means. Gandhiji has shown us the path. But make no mistake; our non-violence is the non-violence of brave, arising not from cowardice ..." (p. 2).

But this non-violence technique did not get through uncontradicted on the national scene of politics. The young men like Debi-dayal, Shafi Usman, Basu,

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Ahmed opposed this non-violence ideology and formed a team called "The Freedom Fighters" and resolved to fight against the Britishers with all possible methods of violence and terrorism. To them 'Non-violence is the philosophy of sheep, a creed for cowards'. To them freedom cannot be won through non-violence:

"It has happened nowhere; it cannot happen here! Gandhi, by weakening the spirit of men, making us all into sheep and cattle, will only nullify the sacrifice. 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. That is what non-violence will do to this country". (p.13)

The non-violence as envisaged by Mahatma was not proved to be useful as per the course of the events of the novel; and the violence and terrorism had overcome the non-violence. Mahatma himself was dubious about this non-violence ideology. It is clearly indicated in his own words:

"This violence, therefore, seems to be due mainly to our helplessness. It almost appears as if we are nursing in our bosom the desire to take revenge the first time we get an opportunity. Can true voluntary non-violence come out of this seeming, forced non-violence of the weak? Is it not a futile experiment I am conducting? What if, when the fury bursts, not a man, women or child is safe and every man's hand is raised against his neighbour?"[3]

The novel concedes the reality of violence and ineffectiveness of non-violence, but at the end, the violence proves to be self consuming and destructive. The theme of the novel denotes that, "nobody is exempt from the capacity of...

violence. Gandhi, the great apostle of non-violence might appear in the opening scene to convert Gian Talwar to his creed of non-violence but the theme that runs through the novel from beginning to end is man’s hidden capacity for violence often brought out by the destructive acts of others.

Gian Talwar, who was a staunch believer of non-violence and a follower of Gandhiji, turned against his ideology at the event of the murder of his brother Hari; and the hidden capacity for violence in him was brought out by this very destructive act. He accused himself thus: "Coward ..... Coward ..... 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 rabbit refusing to confront the hound?" (p.44)

Having become furiously violent and revengeful, Gian killed Vishnudatt, his brother’s murderer. After this event many violent and revengeful acts took place in the novel. Gian when he was a prisoner in Andamans, even beheaded the corpse of Ramoshi to obtain gold. Debi-dayal destroyed British plane. Shafi shot Debi’s mother. Debi and Shafi also became the victims of violence. Sundari broke Shafi’s head with Shiva statue. Much of hooliganism, holocaust, genocide and horror took place at the time of partition.

Hence, the novel concedes the reality and the capacity of violence, but it was proved to be self-consuming and destructive as a consequence.

James Y. Dayananda, Manohar Malgonkar, (Boston : Twayne Publishers, 1974), p.120.
In connection with the results achieved through non-violence Malgonkar himself says in his Author's Note to the novel:

"... what was achieved through non-violence, brought with it one of the bloodiest upheavals of history; twelve million people had to flee, leaving their homes; nearly half a million were killed; over a hundred thousand women, young and old, were abducted, raped, mutilated".5

Tekchand, an industrialist and Debi's father, also views the creed of non-violence as only a political expedient:

"Now he (Tekchand) could see that, as far as the people of India were concerned, Gandhi's message was merely a political expedient.... It seemed that the moment the grip of British power was loosened, the population of the subcontinent had discarded non-violence overnight and were now spending themselves on orgies of violence which seemed to fulfil same basic urge" (p.327)

The partition megalomania and religious hatred destroyed many people in the novel - Debi-dayal, Mumtaj, Shafi Usman and Radha, Debi's mother; and only Gian and Sundari had survived the peril.

There are other minor themes like sex affairs of certain characters, village family feuds over lands and properties in Konshet village, prisoners' life in cellular jail at Andamans, Bombay port blast do make the novel a popular one and enrich the artistic exploration of it. Malgonkar explored such themes, for his A Bend in the Ganges mostly relevant to history.

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5 Manohar Malgonkar, A Bend in the Ganges, "Author's Note".
The story of the novel begins with the twirling of the spinning wheel by Mahatma Gandhi in the market square. There was a lecture going on non-violence and Truth and there was an appeal to boycott foreign goods. Gian Talwar, a young college student, got attracted to this non-violence ideology and threw his imposed foreign dress into fire and became Gandhi's follower.

At college Gian made friendship with Debi-dayal, the only son of Dewan Bhadur Tekchand Kerwad, a big contractor. Debi belonged to a terrorist group called "The Freedom Fighters" who believed that "non-violence is the philosophy of sheep, a creed of cowards. It is the greatest danger to this country" (p.12). Gian comes out with his view on Ahimsa:

"'Ahimsa is the noblest of the creeds', ... 'There can be nothing more sacred. No man has the right to raise his hand against another .... I shall never do it. It takes greater courage; non-violence is not for the weak.'" (p.13)

The Freedom Fighters, Shafi Usman; as their leader, were all fervent patriots, dedicated to overthrow the British rule in India and to bring about Hindu-Muslim-Sikh unity. They destroyed Air Force Plane with explosives which were learnt to have been stolen from Kerwad Construction Company. Under the sabotage committed by Shafi, the British Officers raided Hanuman Club of terrorists and arrested the terrorists - all being Hindus only and muslims escaped. Debi was arrested and sentenced to life-imprisonment and was sent to Andaman Jail.

In the same period, Gian went to his native village and got involved in family feuds over land dispute and committed murder by killing Vishnudatt who had
already killed Gian’s brother. He too was given life sentence and was sent to Andamans. Here Gian met Debi in cellular jail. Debi was anti-British where as Gian changed his mind from Gandhian way and became pro-British. Gian was cooperating with the jail officer Patrick Mulligan as an "administrative spy" and this behaviour of Gian caused Debi for being brutally flogged on the latter’s attempt to escape from the jail.

When the second world war broke out the Japanese marched forward and captured Malaya, Singapore and Burma and they reached Andamans also. Gian escaped from Andamans during the war. Debi didn’t run away, but he made friends with ‘Brothers from Japan’. With the help of Japanese he was sent to Burma and from there to Kohima in Assam, where he was employed in a tea garden. At this stage, he heard about “Quit India” drive and felt thus:

“If only the terrorist movement had gone and flared up as widely throughout the country as Gandhi’s non-violent agitation seemed to have done, this would have been the time for the final assault on the British.” (p.263)

Coming back to India, Gian succeeded in getting a job in Debi’s father’s Construction Company in Bombay after telling lies of his friendly relationship with Debi in the jail. He was in love with Sundari, Debi’s sister and was longing for her and she too was drawn towards him. She had saved him once from the danger of Bombay port blast. But, later, when Debi had disclosed the realities of Gian, she began to hate him and rebuked him as "you a common thief", and "you were to me a male whore." (p.324)
From Assam Debi-dayal went to Lahore where he confronted with Shafi Usman in a brothel house and rescued Mumtaz from there. He went to Bombay along with Mumtaz and met Sundari, his sister. Sundari went to Duriabad to prepare the minds of her parents to accept the marriage of Debi with Mumtaz. Debi and Mumtaz were to follow Sundari after four days.

In the Punjab, the communal riots flared up during the partition event. This holocaust was started just three days before the 15th August, 1947. The trains that were entering the Punjab, now in Pakistan, were getting attacked torturing the non-muslims. This made impossible for Debi and Mumtaz to proceed to Duriabad in the Punjab, as Debi was victimised and Mumtaj was "carried away, naked and struggling, screaming at the top of her voice." (p.362)

At this cruel mass migration period in Pakistan, the two-way migration was taking place. The Muslims were fleeing to Pakistan and the Hindus to India. Tekchand, his wife Radha and his daughter Sundari were trying to join the convoy to India. Meanwhile terrorism was ablaze everywhere. "Mobs ruled the streets, burning, looting, killing dishonouring women and mutilating children ....." (p.326)

Gian rescued the Tekhand family in Duriabad by sending them to India by catching convoy. Shafi also came there to take vengeance against Debi and his family. In this violent clash, Shafi killed Mrs. Tekchand and Sundari killed Shafi. Tekchand was missing in the storm of violence. Gian and Sundari joined the convoy and left Lahore for India.
Thus, the novel traces the destruction of two families - Debi's and Gian's - during the Independence struggle and partition. "Violence is central in the life of each character and in the life of the nation".

The historical events - the last phase of freedom movement, Second World War, the partition of the country - have acquired some artistic flavour at the hands of the novelist.

The novelist: "turns once again to the turbulent years of the pre-independence phase of Indian History, but this time his intention is not merely to get down an objective record or to celebrate a set of passing values but to probe the ideology of Ahimsa, non-violence and truth - which the Mahatma offered to the world, not only as a political expedient but as a philosophy and a way of life".

Like Khushwant Sing's "A Train to Pakistan", Malgonkar's novel *A Bend in the Ganges* is exact about the events in relation to the partition period.

Let us analyse some of the incidents only to see how they have acquired an artistic flavour. A meeting is arranged in a market square where Gandhiji 'with charkha in his hands, sits on the dais silently. A young man is seen addressing the mob: "Our weapons are truth and non-violence. Our war shall be fought only by peaceful means. It is only renouncing all British made goods by wearing clothes out of materials produced in this country ...... we shall foster the economy of our own country" (p.2).

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Gandhiji observed silence on every Monday since 1925 and "in the silent year 1926 there were fifty two silent Mondays when Gandhi didn't speak .... Since this was not the best way to conduct conversation, the weekly day of silence gave him some privacy". He continued this practice throughout his life.

Stirred by Gandhiji's call, Gian:

"took off his dark-blue and yellow football blazer .... and flung the coat into the flames." (p.3)

This was so done by Gian at the call of the "Boycott Foreign Goods" movement which was resolved by National Congress Session in Calcutta in 1920.

There is a mention of historical incident with regards to giving titles to Indian prominent persons and big landlords by the British rulers. Gian's grand father was given a Raisahib title:

"The Big House had gone its own way ... its prestige enhanced by the grant of a British India title to the head of the house. At the time of King Edwards Coronation, Dada's father, Tulsidas, was created a Raisahib" (p.32).

This incident is related to the event of King Edward VII Coronation ceremony held in England in the year 1901.

On this occasion the British Government introduced a convention of awarding the titles like Rao Bahadur, Raisahib, Khan Bahadur and the like to

certain Indian feudal lords, Zamindars, noble persons, business magnets who were loyal to the Britishers with the ulterior motive of attaining their good sympathies and support."

At the time of Gian's visit to his village Konshet, there was a land dispute, grabbing of cultivated land of Small House by Big House. This was a main gossip among the villagers:

"It was the most dominant topic of conversation in the village, transcending Mahatma Gandhi's movement for the oppressed cultivators of Champaran, and later, the Salt March to Dandi, even the activities of terrorists in the Punjab and Bengal." (p.34)

Malgonkar mentioned three incidents here relating to Independence movement of India in this context:

a) Cultivators of Champaran: "Most of the arable land in the Champaran district was divided into large estates owned by Englishmen and worked by Indian tenants. The chief commercial crop was indigo. The landlords compelled all tenants to plant ...... 15 per cent of their holdings with indigo harvest as rent."9 Because of this, the peasants were the sufferers.

So Gandhiji fought against the English landlords for years. "Events justified Gandhi's position within a few years, the British planters abandoned their estate." (p.151)

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b) Salt march to Dandi is another important event in freedom struggle.

The Salt March, made by Gandhiji "in violation of the salt laws and raid salt depots". At this stage of the movement:

"he (Gandhiji) began his 24 day march to Dandi (a seaside village) on foot on 12th March, 1930 accompanied by seventy nine Padacharies" and "first Gandhiji performed the technical or ceremonial breach of the Salt Law by picking up the salt first."

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c) The activities of the terrorists in the Punjab and Bengal form another important historical event in the novel. Against the repressive and tyrannical measures of the Britishers, the revolutionaries, called terrorists have emerged throughout India and in the Punjab and Bengal they created a havoc. The terrorist activities in the Punjab —

"against the Colonisation Act which deprived the peasants of Lyallapur and other districts of fruits of the land which they have converted from barren areas into rich fields" and "the people of Bengal who had fought against the European indigo planters with their fish spears and bamboo clubs, were not going to be cowed down and they accepted the challenge."

These incidents quoted by Malgonkar with regard to the land dispute are appropriate to the contemporary political events.

"The Freedom Fighters" of Hanuman Club had become the most successful band of terrorists outside Bengal, with "an impressive record of achievements"

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Malgonkar has made a particular stress on this chapter "Angry young men" about the raise of terrorism and apathy towards non-violence, among the youngmen like Gian, Shafi, Basu and others enraged by the repressive measures taken by the Britishers. This refers to the situation in freedom struggle, when the non-cooperation movement, Salt-Satyagraha, non-violence ideology, Civil Disobedience Movement were facing certain setbacks due to different repressive measures and tyranny by Britishers. Many factors were responsible for the raise and growth of revolutionary and terrorist in the country. The infuriated educated youth of Bengal started violent methods against the British right from 1905 itself. Calcutta has been the den of revolutionary terrorism.

The Novelist says:

"They (terrorists) even suspected that it was a movement secretly supported by the British to strengthen their hold on the country; was not the Indian National Congress itself started by an English man?" (p.66).

This has connection with the Indian National Congress started by A.O. Hume in 1884. On his idea of Hume, Lord Duffrin, the then Governor General wanted that:

"Indian politicians to meet yearly and point out to the Government in what respects the administration was defective and how it could be improved. Agreeing to this suggestion, Hume planned a scheme for establishing the Congress to provide a constitutional channel for the expression of Indian unrest, so that it may not drift towards terrorism."12

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So the motive behind the starting of National Congress was to divert the minds of freedom fighters from terrorism to administrative counsels. There is every possibility to suspect the starting of Congress by Englishman for their ulterior motive of strengthening their position in India. Likewise, the non-violence movement, it was alleged, was supported by the Britishers to weaken the independence movement.

There is a reference to Jallian Wala Bagh tragedy in the novel. Shafi, the terrorist leader of the novel says:

"General Dyer ordered his machine guns fire. Within minutes, there were 379 dead and over a thousand wounded .... " (p.69)

All the relatives of the dead returning from funerals, were asked to "crawl on their bellies", "Every one had to go on all fours, like dogs !" (p.69).

This is a real ghastly event that occurred in the bloodiest annals of freedom struggle of India. The history states:

" ...... it was announced on 12 April evening that there would be a public meeting (of nationalists) on 13 April 1919 at 4.30 p.m. in the Jallian Wala Bagh. Neither General Dyer nor other authorities took any action to stop the meeting. The meeting started at the right time and there were about 6000 to 10,000 people present in the meeting ...... General Dyer entered the Jallianwala Bagh with armoured cars and troops."13 "In all 1650 rounds were shot .... approximately 379 people were killed plus 1137 wounded. ...... To add humiliation to hurt, General Dyer published his infamous "crawling order" after asking the relatives of the dead "to go on all fours."14

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The mention of this event in the novel is true and apt in the context of history, with reference to Malgonkar's mentioning of the incident with similar details.

Meerut conspiracy episode is mentioned in the novel:

"Debi-Dial's trial caused a good deal of stir .... They dug up the files of the Meerut conspiracy and made elaborate comparisons of means and methods." (p.111)

This has a bearing on the Revolt of 1857:

"On April 24, 1857 the incident took place in the Cantonment of Meerut .... 85 sepoys refused to touch the cartridges .... they were tried by the military court and sentenced for 10 years imprisonment. ....... Next day other sepoys forcibly opened the gate of the prison and released their colleagues .... on the same day when Col. Finnis was addressing the Sepoys, they shot him dead. With this began the Revolt of 1857 in its true sense."15

Some other causes are also related to this conspiracy.

The Pearl Harbour episode, also finds a place in the novel. The Japanese commander says:

"The enemy from a thousand miles away had sprung into action. Pearl Harbour was flattened. Indo-China, Malaya, the Dutch East Indies, Crumbled like mud houses" (p.193). "The Japanese have taken Rangoon" (p.195). "We have already liberated the people of Malaya and Burma from the British. And Indo-China from the French, and the Dutch empire from the Dutch." (pp.210-211)

These historical happenings, quoted in the novel, happened in their true sense. Look at the description of world war II in the books on history:

"Germany launched an attack in June, 1941. In December, Japan came into the war with a surprise attack on Pearl

Harbour (7 Dec. 1941) ... in the Asian theater the early successes were all in favor of Japan. Philippines, Indo-China, Malaya, Singapore and Burma were already conquered. The Japanese forces occupied Rangoon in March 1942.\textsuperscript{16}

Even in Malgonkar's novel these historical incidents run in a similar manner.

Debi-dayal, an assistant in the tea garden, has seen one day "the walls of the small bazaar of Silent Hill estate were covered with thick black slogans ..... "Quit India"\textsuperscript{(p.263)}.

It is again a reference to a great historical movement in India's freedom struggle. It so happened that the National Congress had taken a stern action against the British after passing the "Quit India Revolution" on 8th August, 1942. The gist of it denotes that the British rule in India should be withdrawn immediately. "In case the British rule is not withdrawn from India " ........ "A mass struggle on non-violent lines under the 'inevitable leadership' of Gandhiji would be started."\textsuperscript{17}

On this, a wider publicity was carried throughout the nation.

In the last chapters of the novel, Malgonkar has given the heartrending description of the ghastly scene of the partition.

"In this partition holocaust", says Mangonker in his novel "Tens of millions of people had to flee, leaving every thing behind; Muslims from India, Hindus and


\textsuperscript{17} A.P. Srinivas Moothy, \textit{History of India's Freedom Movement}, (New Delhi : S. Chand & Co., 1987), p.139.
Sikhs from the land that was soon to become Pakistan" ....... "As a background to this great two-way migration, religious, civil war was being waged all over the country ...." ....... "Gandhi himself had long ago feared it might" (p.326). "How many more men and women would have been killed by that time (by 15 Aug.1947) ....... how many women abducted?" (p.349).

Larceny, looting, abduction, rape, murder, mutilation - all played havoc in this partition event. Lahore city and some parts of the Punjab alone are described in the novel.

In the annals of history, we shall see the same ghastly scene of Lahore:

"Lahore, the city that should have been the gayest spot on the sub-continent, was a scene of devastation. Capt. Robert Atkins who'd led his Gurkhas into the city at sundown, found his camp besieged by pathetic, frightened Hindus, clutching babies, ........ they begged to be allowed inside the protective circle of his soldiers. Almost a hundred thousand Hindus and Sikhs were trapped inside old Lahore's walled city, their water cut, fires raging around them"18.

"The words came welling-up, but my mind could only conceive the awful picture of Lahore in flames"19 says Nehru.

Among the novels of Malgonkar, there are three novels which are purely historical and the rest are romantic and entertaining novels. The three historical

19 Ibid., p.251.
novels do contain historical events and incidences relating to the periods of Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 and post-independence movement of India.

In *A Bend in the Ganges*, all the events tally with the history, but not all the characters in the novel are historical figures. The figures are introduced in the novel as symbolic characters assimilating the historical figures, as created by the novelist.

Gian Talwar, the hero of the novel is attracted to non-violent movement of Gandhiji as many other youngsters were convinced to follow the creed in the history of freedom struggle. Malgonkar has created this character to describe Independence Movement of India, Non-Cooperation movement, non-violence movement, terrorist movement and the partition scenario.

Though Gian Talwar was introduced as a patriot committed to non-violence ideology and supposedly dedicated to have been a staunch follower of Ahimsa of Gandhiji, his belief in the creed did not last long. He changed his mind when his brother was murdered and he could not win back his property in the court. Such a trivial material cause changed his mind and he began liking English Officers, just ignoring his belief of non-violence. He cooperated with Patrick Mulligan in Andamans Jail. With such weak tenets Gian cannot be called a real hero. Debidayal though opposed to non-violence, and embraced terrorist movement, is a real patriot. He is partial to violence and terrorism by means of which he would like to drive away the British.

G.S. Amur says:

"Through Gian, Malgonkar attempts to discredit the value of non-violence and truth as incompatible with the facts of life and
this is where the mischief occurs. Debi-dayal has the making of the hero and he turns out to be an effective instrument of violence. Gian weak and un-heroic, can only be an ironic symbol of non-violence .... The novel pays a greater attention to Gian than to Debi-dayal but it is latter who is more satisfying symbol.  

A Bend in the Ganges is a novel of tragic events. It begins and ends in violence. But Malgonkar, with all his aesthetic quality of depicting a story, has made an artistic recreation of certain situations in his novel.

On the river bank of Birchibag at Duriabad the beautiful 'green flash at sunset' is very artistically described as "somewhere high up in the Himalays, near the source of the rivers four hundred miles away, the fierceness of the sun had caused the vast piles of winter snow to melt." (p.5) There, Debi, Gian and others met in that favourite spot for swimming and picnicking. This is an example of artistic recreation.

Malgonkar depicts a rustic atmosphere with an artistic fervor. In the words of a critic "Malgonkar evokes vividly the rural atmosphere of Konshet. His description of the villagers gossipping on local issues and nation-wide political issues, the cause of the domestic feud between the "Big House" and "Little House" - evoke the spirit of village life without the touch of simplistic sentimentality. His depiction of Jaora feast and the naked dance of the Jaoras provides the weird and primitive urge for life and continuity as a contrast to the life of negating violence."  

The depiction of the convicts and their song adds some beauty and colour to the novel. Ramoshi, Ghasita regular convicts in Andaman "were already learning the prison song" and they sang it. Some other convicts forget their pains for some time and join the chorus. Even in the critical situations, pathetic and ghastly events like repatriation of Burmese refugees, Gian's escaping event from Andamans, Bombay dock explosion and tragic events of partition do convey an artistic moulding to the situations. In the words of K.R. Sreenivasa Iyengar: "The Princes and A Bend in the Ganges are but bolder experiments in artistically fusing the personal and historical perspectives in fictional terms."22

Though Malgonkar dealt with the serious issues of freedom struggle, non-violence movement, religious clashes and partition holocaust, his concern mainly is with art with which he imbibes the themes with artistic recreation. In the words of Dayananda:

"Eventually, it is the art of Malgonkar, the formal qualities of his art, that we must deal with and not his politics or his class."23

G.S. Amur while giving his opinion on Malgonkar's works says:

"The deliberate separation of styles and modes - an interesting feature of Malgonkar's art and a limitation - seems to be part of his literary traditionalism and Malgonkar's themes are extremely thin and they are worked out in mood of total relaxation."24

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"A historical novel must recreate history" writes a critic. "The novelist must command a wide knowledge of history and must have the talent needed to relegate history .... what about The Princes and A Bend in the Ganges? I would say they are. They recreate history in the same way Scott's Old Morality and The Heart of Midlothian do."  

A number of critics have extended their remarks and appreciations towards the novel:

"In A Bend in the Ganges, E.M. Forster observes, Malgonkar introduces a domestic tale of two characters (Gian and Debi) against the background of the freedom struggle. Like Khushwant Singh's A Train to Pakistan, Malgonkar's novel is exact about events in relation to time and close to the facts."  

G.S. Amur in his essay on the novel writes about the criticism of Robin White: "Robin White has criticised A Bend in the Ganges ... He says:

"In trying to cover every thing Mr. Malgonkar inclines to sketchiness arousing interest in one thing only to pass on abruptly to another so that the effect is one of superficiality". This view is unjust to the thoroughness with which Malgonkar explores the different areas of experience presented in the novel ... the effects he creates is one of intensity and not of diffusion. This is as true of the rural tragedy he presents in the early chapters of the novel as of the cataclysmic events of the partition which forms the substance of the closing ones."

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Writing about historical facts authentically incorporated in *A Bend in the Ganges*. Manmohan K. Bhatnagar says:

"....... a historical interpretation is more likely to be a retrospection or justification of events that have taken place (in the novel)" ....... *A Bend in the Ganges* incorporates and assimilates a number of historical individuals and incidents within its texture."28

Commenting on the novel A.N. Dwivedi writes:

*A Bend in the Ganges* became immediately popular and successful. E.M. Forster found it one of the best novels of 1964, and Richard Church in his review of the book in "The Bookman" compared it with Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, while the B.B.C. London called it "a very exciting story told with great skill. The novel is written on a grand scale and depicts the Gandhian era in all its manifestation."29

Professor Amur has observed in this connection: "Richard Church has drawn our attention to the epic movements of the novel but it is also important to note the epic dimensions of the world that novel offers. This distinguishes *A Bend in the Ganges* from Malgonkar's other novels."30

*A Bend in the Ganges* does not merely tell the stories of young men and women during a time of national ferment - of Gian, Sundari, Debi-dayal, Mumtaz, Shafi, Basu, Gopal, Hari


and Malini. It could also be regarded as a documentary narrative dealing with the violent rather than non-violent aspects of India's Struggle for independence.31

Commenting on the criticism by Dayananda, M. Rajagopala-chari writes:

"History and story may seem to move apart in A Bend in the Ganges, as Dayananda believes, especially when the political upheavals and communal riots match ill with the small domestic area within which the characters move."32

Reviewing the novel `A Bend in the Ganges K.R. Sreenivasa Iyengar writes:

"Malgonkar's model (A Bend in the Ganges), however, is neither the Mahabharatha nor War and Peace. He aims, not at exhausting the subject with an overwhelming mass of detail, but at the random sampling of something of the horror of event - the horror, the pity and the futility .... the macro-tragedy on a national scale in the year of the partition."33

With regard to the chapters of Andaman Jail, G.S. Amur writes:

"Malgonkar brought to the novel a first hand knowledge of the Andamans which he visited during the Second World War, but his account of the life of the convicts of the Cellular Jail and his description of the Joara feast


owe quite a lot to the .... V.D. Savarkar's Black Waters."34 Malgonkar himself speaks of his A Bend in the Ganges as "felt experience", "Many of the situations I have described in A Bend in the Ganges, I have myself witnessed. And that part of Indian History I have lived through."35

A.N. Dwivedi writes in his essay:

"This powerful story (A Bend in the Ganges) tries to highlight the truth that freedom is a hard-earned trophy, and that when it came to India, it was attended by violence bloodshed and betrayals."36

A Bend in the Ganges, though basically starts with the movement of freedom struggle, it ends with religious conflict - a communal civil war erupted during the partition. The macro-tragical events of partition episode dominate the entire historical theme of the novel.

The element of historical theme in its factual perspective is apt and superb. The non-cooperation movement based on non-violent ideology, "The movement was suspected in May, 1933 and completely withdrawn in May 1934 and Gandhiji himself withdrew from active politics."37 Hence, in the novel, the

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result of non-violent attitude attained by Gian Talwar is quite relevant and analogous to historical realities. Gandhiji himself admits: "Thus non-violence, seems to be due mainly to our helplessness"\(^{38}\) and it is true that a man's hidden capacity for violence often brought out by the destructive acts of others. This is proved in the communal hatred emerged in the wake of partition and the hidden capacity of violence took its opportunity.

All the historical incidences that find a place in the novel are apt and chronologically presented. Malgonkar has achieved his genuine depiction of historical realities into the themes of his novel accurately.

Malgonkar seems to be partial to the Britishers in the novel as he does so in respect of Maharajas in *The Princes*. In the novel he has attributed several tenets like honesty, integrity and justification to the Britishers. "The Judge is an Englishman .... a real fire-eater but just". "Thank God there is an English Judge ... we can expect complete fairness" (p.38), "Patrick Malligan, strict but just ... he was reputed to be strict and just ......, was not that all British Officials were-strict, but just?"(p.49). "He (Gian) had admiration for British Officials" (p.122) "the British deliver truly humane justice"(p.122) "the British were always to be judged by their own code of conduct"(p.131). These statements by the author would certainly assert that he has some soft corner for the Britishers.

The remarks of Meenakshi Mukherjee, in this connection are pertinent. She says: "Malgonkar mostly takes Englishmen as paragons of honesty and integrity, and occasionally accuses Indians of lack of sincerity and sense of justice" cannot altogether be overlooked.

Malgonkar, like a historian, has recorded the event of the partition of India and its impact on the country. As a creative artist, he recreated and also infused a perennial circarama of the vignettes of life into contemporary history. In his 'The Devil's Wind', he provides with a credible historical backdrop and also creates a true historical hero in Nana.