CHAPTER IV
MANOHAR MALGONKAR’S HISTORICAL NOVELS
FROM 1965-1973

(1) THE DEVIL’S WIND - NANA SAHEB’S STORY:
THE STORY OF THE FIRST INDEPENDENCE STRUGGLE

_The Devil’s Wind_ is Malgonkar’s fifth novel. It can be considered the first perfect historical novel of Indian-English Fiction. It deals with the story of Nana Saheb, the controversial figure of the historic Sepoy Revolt of 1857. It is historical in the sense that it is based on the most spectacular event in the Indian history— the so called mutiny of 1857. It is the historical novel in which most of the characters are actual, great men and women from history. Even the hero himself is the most important person of the history of those turbulent days.

The event of the revolt has been a source of many historical and fictional writings both in India and abroad. There are about fifty novels written by English writers on this event. Most of the novels and historical works have depicted Nana as the arch villain of the day, thus reflecting only the British point of view. A representative view of the British could be seen in Pattle’s comment,

“Few names are more conspicuous in the annals of crime than that of Nana Saheb, who achieved an immortality of infamy by his perfidy and cruelty of Cawnpore.” (235)
However, a few historians like Edward Thompson, RC Majumdar, Surendranath Sen have come to the conclusion that there is no dependable evidence to fix the responsibility of the genocide in the Sepoy Revolt upon Nana Saheb. Malgonkar in his endeavours to set the history in correct perspective undertakes to absolve Nana of the false charges. In the words of AK Sharma,

“Malgonkar attempts to salvage his image and absolves him from sins not committed by him.”

In an interview he tells us objects and genesis of the book:

“All history of India is written from the British view. Nana Saheb, the leading figure of the Mutiny, has historically been treated as a villain. In my book…I treat him as a human being. I write of him as neither a patriot nor a villain but rather as a mixed-up human being, like most of us are.” (The Ellsworth American)

Not that the Story of the Revolt has never been told from Indian point of view. Even in the British period hundreds of books written by Indian scholars were proscribed and burnt as they fearlessly exposed the colonialist’s cruelties and atrocities. Malgonkar, here, has dramatized the great historic event of our history, which the Britishers have been telling all through the decades as a mere ‘Sepoy Mutiny’. Contradicting this version, Malgonkar, with lot of patient research work and creative literary caliber, has laboured to prove that it was spontaneous explosion of accumulated discontent of Indian people. But with the help of native loyal soldiers by committing all types of crimes, they were able
to subjugate the then feudal princes and establish a reign of terror. The atrocities on the people were so inhuman that slowly but assuredly they aroused universal condemnation. Indian people’s spirit of wreaking vengeance went on growing with the passage of time. It was as early as the beginning of the 19th century, knowing well the indomitable spirit of the people, that the enlightened poets and fearless bards of the period started singing the songs of freedom, liberty and patriotism.

Malgonkar’s concern is; what makes Nana human, a compound of good and bad. He shows a keen sense of feeling for life as it is an acceptance of reality. He does not shrink to turn the history of Sepoy Revolt inside out to reflect on Nana’s role in it. He evokes the picture of 1857 with a concern for reality and transforms it into an art. Malgonkar has broadened our understanding of Revolt, taking an advantage of the novelist’s perspective, and also dealing into inner recesses of the mind that most historians find shy of entering. The novel is a meditation of history and it succeeds as a historical novel by being “a stimulus to the imaginative and critical faculties and an education in human sympathies”.

Certain significant moments of history or periods of national crisis have always been powerfully attractive to the novelists. Two periods of Indian history have powerfully appealed to Malgonkar’s novelistic imagination. It is these two periods of tremendous stress that he dramatizes and revives in his novels. In the first period 1857-58, an explosion occurred which led to savage acts on both sides and brought about the end of East India Company’s rule of India. The Sepoy Mutiny, as the British called it, or the First War of Independence, as the Indians called it, is the first effort by the new India to
shake off British rule. The mutiny caused the British to make India a crown colony and to assume direct responsibility for India through the British Parliament. The Devil’s Wind is the fictional treatment of this period. The second period- 1938 to 1948, which was far bloodier and crueler, occurred the great Independence movement of Gandhi, which succeeded in putting British policy and British conscience to a test. The Princes and A Bend in the Ganges chronicle this fatal decade of contemporary history, a decade of hope and misery, of terror and slaughter, of thousands of Indians and Pakistanis.

These two periods offered Malgonkar the usable past for fictional treatment, the past that helps us to understand our present world in all its complexity- political, social, economic and intellectual. Malgonkar’s primary concern is the consciousness of past in the present. Malgonkar shows man in time and place, shows him as both maker and product of history, shows him in his full and complex historical context, and above all, depicts him as a part of society in process. His characters even the imaginary characters, pass over into history as they are usually embodiments of forces of Indian history.

George Lukacs writing on history and fiction observes that true realism reveals man and society as complete entities. This precludes exclusive introspection or exclusive extra-version. Realism is, therefore, ‘a three dimensionality, all roundedness’, evoking human relationships in their fullness. Malgonkar does not exclusively give an isolated picture of Nana Saheb. He puts him in proper perspective against the historical background of Sepoy Revolt. His characters, both British and Indian, emerge with independent life. He depicts Nana’s relationship with the British officers and his commitment to the cause of country’s freedom and tries to place his actions justly under the given
circumstances. Although Malgonkar is not original in his historical facts, he adds imaginative insight to the established historical material for the clarification of Nana’s motives and his point of view. Amur says,

“He succeeds in restoring to the image of Nana Saheb its basic humanity.”

Like many historical novels, *The Devil’s Wind* is part fact, part fiction: a historical document and a work of conscious literary art. On one level, the novel presents the course of the Rebellion of 1857, especially the Rebellion in Kanpur. This is the historical narrative, or the public line of action. On another level, it is the story of Nana Saheb, the young nineteenth century prince who grows, ceases to be a spoiled prince, and emerges as one of the leaders of the Revolt. This is the personal narrative too or the private line of action. The two lines, public and private, are skillfully interwoven. The sense of history is derived not merely from the gallery of historical figures but from the close relationship of characters to their social and political background so that the reader feels that they could not have existed at any other moment or place of history.

Malgonkar has successfully integrated history and fiction emphasizing the relation between the course of public and private events. He attempts to give full objective description, plus subjective or emotional life of the main characters. He never fails to date happenings or mentions Nana’s age at the time of this or that event or to take place incidents in his personal life in relation to events of national history. He skillfully scatters historical background; information and explanation throughout the novel while at the same time letting
Nana Saheb tells us in his autobiographical memoir a good deal about his inward life—his ambitions, love, friendship and motivations. Malgonkar has shown the problem of how much knowledge he can assume on the part of the reader and consequently how much historical information he must provide. If he provides too much, the reader will be bored; if he provides too little, he will be confused. He passes information in a manner that at the same time does not in the least petrify or falsify Nana Saheb’s life that historians know. The picture of Nana’s life that he constructs is not consistent with anything historians know.

There are, then, two stories. The first is a candid, factual narrative of the events of Revolt of 1857. The second story, which underlies these events, is a fictional narrative, a kind of emotional history of the people of India, their hopes, fears, and desires; more specifically, the inward life of Nana Saheb, an account of what went on inside Nana, a nineteenth-century prince who in one fashion or another expresses what the revolt was all about is essence. All that is done is to show Nana’s private world’s links with the public world—his age, his assumption of leadership, escape, etc. the first story, the story of the ‘national past’ is already set and cannot be tempered with. It is documented history. The second story, the story of the personal past; permits the novelist to engage in imaginative speculation; it allows him to speculate with a freedom not accorded to the historian—who is a slave of documented facts, the most imperious of all historical masters—of all the intermingled miseries, ambitions, frustrations, hopes, rages and desires of man involved in the great revolt of 1857. It is undocumented ‘inside’ history. Malgonkar deals with the intimate undercurrent of Nana’s life, “the inward life”, stripping him of his external façade of personality, showing him in all his shivering moral nakedness and helplessness, in his secret world of instincts, love, fears and feelings. From this private world
the historian is usually barred, but the novelist’s chief strength lies in creating it. The important point is that Malgonkar does not depart from the factuality of history.

The historical theme of the novel is concerned with the revolt of 1857, its background, and its consequences. Malgonkar describes the genesis of the Revolt, the exile, and the deposition of Baji Rao II, the discontinuation of his pension and titles, the inhuman policy of annexation by Dalhousie, the animosity of the Indian princes, the introduction of cartridges, greased with fat of the pig and cow that was abominable to Muslims as well as Hindu Sepoys. He also explains the causes of the failure of the revolt.

The Revolt of 1857 was a momentous event. It marked a turning point in the history of British Imperialism. Its significance as a decisive event in the British rule in India has been adequately recognized by Englishmen in a series of historical accounts. History in its course tosses up villains and heroes. But not all of them are presented as they in truth were. Facts get perverted and distorted in the hands of the strong and rich to suit their own convenience. Thus heroes became villains and heroes. Nana is a victim of this deliberate distortion. His “Instinctive squeamishness” at the shedding of blood and “brahminical humanitarianism” were of no consequence to the British. The British have connected him with the crude barbarities and deliberately made him up into a monster of ferocity. Nana explains:

“Our revolt has thrown up a surfeit of British heroes but no villains to balance them against, and they needed villainy of the requisite magnitude to serve as a backdrop for heroism. How hollow would
Havelock’s victories have seemed if I, Nana Saheb, had not been their principal objective.” (244)

The British historians have presented the history of the Indian Mutiny from their point of view in their books as they were interesting in perpetuating the British rule in India than in the objective interpretation of the facts of Indian history. It was necessary for that purpose to disparage the Indian leaders and throw a sort of blanket over the valour, determination and aspirations of the Indians. So they glorified the British valour and projected the British officers as heroes but depicted the Indians as murderers and cowards. The British historians have given their own side of the picture and have consciously ignored the point of view about it. The observation of Jawahar Lal Nehru is quite relevant in this context,

“A great deal of false and perverted history has been written about the revolt and its suppression.” (236)

The same playing up of British valour and heroism is to be found in the English novels written by British authors on Indian Mutiny. This is why, Malgonkar does not agree with the view that John Master’s Night Runners Of Bengal is the best novel about the Indian Mutiny. In course of an interview with James Y Dayananad, he says;

“He (John Masters) writes about the Rebellion as though it were a mutiny. He writes about us Indians as the enemy, and he wanted naturally, the British ruler of the companies to be perpetuated whereas my viewpoint is so opposite in this novel (The Devil’s
Wind) at all times, that there was no possibility of any agreement, on our viewpoints, at least”. *(The Literary Half-Yearly 103).*

It is the quality of Malgonkar’s historical personage which is irrecoverable in historian and lends him a place of distinction among the creative writers of his day. The success of The Devil’s Wind both at home and abroad, no doubt, is due to his skill as a story-teller and to the fertility of his imagination. Despite the fact that the story is old, the readers are always kept in the state of suspense and are anxious to know what happens next. But the significant fact about The Devil’s Wind is that the fictional element is there to depict the inward life of Nana Saheb and especially in regard to determining his motives like the historical novels of Bulwar Lytton. So like The Princess, The Devil’s Wind is as much as a document of history as a work of conscious literary art. The historical elements have been used to fill in the lines where history is inadequate.

*The Devil’s Wind* is also an autobiography because Nana Saheb narrates his story since birth in the first person. Malgonkar makes use of the first person narrative as an artistic device to reveal the motive of Nana Saheb behind all his actions both in private and public life. He says,

“This, then, is Nana’s story as I believe he might have written it himself.” (Author’s note 10)

Like Abhay Raj in *The Princes*, Nana Saheb, the first person narrator, is the central character in *The Devil’s Wind*. He is seen both as an actor and narrator, describing his experiences in retrospect but in character. The story
begins the quite primitive way of story telling technique. He was born in a conservative Brahmin family at Bithoor. His parents had named him ‘Dhondu’, which means a stone, a worthless object, in order to exercise a family curse of child mortality. As his horoscope predicted that he was destined to become a king, a respectful suffix was added to his name and he was addressed Dhondu Pant or “stone esquire”. The then deposed Peshwa Baji Rao II was attracted by the prophecy about the child and adopted him as heir in 1827, while he was only three years old. Thus he became the Peshwa’s heir. Nana Saheb tells,

“In me he saw someone destined to win back what he had lost”. (17)

He named him Nana Saheb after one of his Peshwa ancestors. So, all his life he was known by two names-Dhondu Pant and Nana Saheb.

Malgonkar describes the childhood of Nana Saheb in the background of social and political conditions of that time. Belief in the supernatural power and the practice of adopting heir particularly among the princess was the salient feature of social and political life of that time. Baji Rao II took special care of Nana’s education and training as a prince. He was taught English, Urdu, Persian and more particularly Sanskrit so that he might read Hindi scriptures in original. He was given training of riding, fencing and swimming from his very childhood. His fencing teacher was Tantya Bhatt who later emerged as one of the greatest heroes of Revolt. Mani was one of the several children of Baji Rao’s family who attended riding and fencing school with him. He was Baji Rao’s god daughter, whom he was bringing up to be Nana’s wife. Despite the fact that Baji Rao II took special interest in Nana Saheb’s upbringing, Nana had
nothing but contempt for him. He was ashamed of his father’s private life. Baji Rao had two major obsessions, the first is religion and the other being sex. His life was sickeningly filled with sex during the hours of darkness and with religion during the hours of day light. But his inclination towards religion was more because of fright than because of faith and devotion, as he was haunted with an ancestral ghost who would torture him with curses at night. The ghost used to say that life would end with his successor. If the successor cohabited with his wife, she would die. Baji Rao wasted a lot of money on religious works to exorcise the ghost. But the ghost stayed with him all his life, as his successor could not have marital relations with his wife.

Baji Rao changed his mind and got Mani married to the ruling prince of Jhansi. This was the first shock which Nana Saheb experienced in his life. As compensation to her, he was presented with his first concubine, Champa. He was initiated into the world of sex by her and had revealing experience of life in her company. Though Champa was not married to him, she was sincere and devoted to him. It was because of her sincerity that she became partner of his joys and sorrows, a nurse during his illness and a jester during his ill-humours. She became the mistress of his household. She bore him a daughter whom he called Gangamala. Even his second concubine was no less sincere to him in his public life. She took the sword during the Revolt and went with martyr’s way. He says,

“Fated to be unlucky with the women I married, I have been singularly fortunate in my mistresses”. (49)
He was always grieved at heart as his personal life was not happy, at all. His entire life had been wrapped because of the family curse. For it happened as the ghost said it would. The first two women he had married did not long survive the marriage. He had no desire to marry the third, as he was too kind to kill an innocent woman for a successor. But Baji Rao’s thirst for a successor was insatiable. And he had to give way to his pressure and marry Kashi, a South Indian girl. But he never lived as a husband to her. Only during ceremonies and festivals they would sit side by side as a man and wife and offer prayers together. Though she looked like another Maneka on this earth, he always looked upon her as a serpent in the closet and guarded against taking her to bed. Yet she was obedient and serviceable to him. There was almost a master and slave relationship between them. He would often squire with guilt at her unwavering loyalty and could not understand whether he was saving her from death by not sleeping with her or by the same token killing the women in her. He was tied to this problem with no solution by father’s excessive and unnecessary concern for a successor, as there was nothing worth succeeding to it.

This and several other misdeeds of his father had debased and defiled his life. That is why even his death did not cause him grief. He knew that he had to inherit a bundle of his father’s sins which was greater than his worldly possessions. He had no love and respect for him but he never showed disrespect to him during his life or even after his death. He went through the full ritual of mourning. He even announced that he would make a Mahadana. But he was shocked to learn that he could not give away the required land for the sacred purpose because he himself does not possess any. Even the land on which the ‘Wada’ stood belonged to him only for life. Than he realized what Baji Rao had
scuttle when he had run to British merchants for protection. Despite the fact that he did not accept the off land by Raghunath Vinchurkar whom Baji Rao had humiliated more than honoured, impoverished more than enriched, he was overwhelmed with his greatness. He saw the glimpse of that other India in which despite of its misery and sufferings had yet been a noble and richer land. He was equally shocked and disappointed at revelation of British pretentious generosity. The so-called honourable company rejected his claim for his father’s pensions and titles.

Lord Dalhousie, the then governor-general of East India Company, was an ambitious man. He seemed determined to clear India of Indian rulers. Like Rahu and Ketu, two mythological moon eaters, he went about swallowing kingdom after kingdom on the basis of the ‘Doctrine of Lapse’ of maladministration. The Doctrine of Lapse was an instrument of confiscation. The right of Indian rulers to adopt heir was severed by this doctrine. It was in the light of this doctrine that Nana Saheb was not recognized as the legal heir to Baji Rao. The Rani of Jhansi was not allowed to rule for the adopted heir, and her principality was annexed. Even Delhi was faced with similar problem. The Doctrine of Lapse created panic and rage among the Indian rulers. Zeenat Mahal, a prominent Mughal queen, was determined to teach a lesson to British. She got help of Ahmaddula Saha, Maulvi of Faizabad who came to be known as “Mad Mullah”. He spread and fanned rebellious ideas against the British both among the Hindus and Muslims by the circulation of ‘chapatis’ (baked cakes). The annexation of Oudh on the flimsy ground of maladministration was proved to be the last straw on the camel’s back. It left no doubt about their malicious intention against the Indian rulers. The policy of annexation followed
by Dalhousie resulted in political unity among the Indian rulers against the British. Revolt emerged as the only remedy for the political malady.

The introduction of a new cartridge, which was to be bitten to break upon before loading, added fuel to the fire. It was believed or rumoured that the cartridges were coated with the fat of pig and cow. It hurt religious prejudices of Sepoys and united both Hindu and Muslim Sepoys against the British. The cruel suppression of sepoys in Barrackpore for their refusal to accept the cartridge further infuriated the Sepoys elsewhere and proved as the match which lit the fire. On the 10th May, 1857, the sepoys in Meerut went on revolt and killed their officers. They broke upon the Bungalows and butchered their wives and children. Then they set for Delhi, Lucknow, Banaras, Allahabad and Kanpur. At that time Nana was in two minds. By the temperament he was non-violent. He shrank from the very idea of violence that lay ahead as he believed that all life – human, animal insect life – was part of a great single divinity. Besides, he had more friends among the whites than among his own kind. He says,

“Apart from my own retainers, Englishmen were the only people I had any intimate contact with. I did not wish them ill”. (128)

But at the same time he was fully convinced that the British had no moral right to enslave India. He was torn between his love for his country and his love for his English friends. But his love for motherland triumphs over his love for his friends. At once, like Brutus in Julius Caesar, he decides to kill all his Caesars for the liberation of his motherland, as freedom of motherland is far more sacred than friendship and even human blood.
Nana Saheb could not remain a silent spectator to the drama of national struggle for freedom. He joined hand with the sepoys and led them to the liberation of Kanpur within a few days. All the white families took shelter in wheeler’s entrenchment. He had no animosity against the English and did not go to harm particularly the women and children who were facing misery and starvation and entrenchment. He planned to dispatch them to a safe place across the Ganges. Despite all his precautionary measures, the disbanded soldiers of Allahabad and Banaras regiments opened fire at them and excepting some, who escaped, most were massacred at satichaura ghat. With his best efforts, Nana Saheb could save some wounded women and children whom he kept as prisoners at the Emperor in Kanpur as well as in Poona on June 30, 1857. Once again the Saffron banner of the Maratha was unfurled. The return of the freedom was celebrated all over the city. The English had been driven away from Poona, Delhi, Satara, as from Kanpur. But happiness proved to be a brief episode in the drama of his life of sorrow, suffering, struggle and sacrifice. As the British soldiers under Havelock’s Command had the advantage of overwhelmingly superior fire power and experienced generals. With the new rifle, the Enfield, they could shoot at Nana’s troops long before they came within the range of their weapons. He and his troops could not fight on equal terms. Besides, Azim says,

“They also had the contingent of diseased minds formed by loyal sepoys.” (242)

The Sikhs who fought on the side of British tried to be more brutal against their own countrymen to prove their loyalty to their masters. Nana Saheb was deeply grieved to see his own countrymen shedding their own blood
in order to be loyal to British. On July 17, 1857, the British flag once more flew over Kanpur. He (Nana Saheb) was fully convinced of the fact that,

“If the Ferozepur contingent had not fought on Havelock’s side and if the Indian camp followers had not vied with each other to tow his guns through the mud or to bring his ammunition and food in headloads, I, not Havelock, would have come out as the victor in the battle for Kanpur”. (244)

He was more grieved to learn that the women and children held prisoners in the Bibighar were slaughtered by butchers one day before the fall of Kanpur. It was Hussaini Begum who wreaked vengeance upon the white families for the acts of savagery and brutality of Neil and Havelock. But there was no time to think and regret as he had lost the battle. But he could not lose hope in victory as the Rani of Jhansi, Tantya Tope and Begam Hazrat Mahal, the queen of Oudh, had still been fighting vigorously against the English. He had a lurking hope in the return of tide in his favour. He took ‘Jal Samadhi’ in the eyes of all but went, in fact, across the Ganges to Chaurasi. On his way to Chaurasi he did save Eliza Wheeler, one of the victims of Satichaura ghat, from the cruel clutches of Nizam Ali’s wife. Within a few days he could gather a large number of troops and once again forced British soldiers to retreat. Kanpur remained under his control for few days. But he could not retain his victory for long. The fall of Delhi had already weakened the moral of his troops and the native soldiers. The so-called ‘loyal sepoys’ played a decisive role in British Victory. He was filled with anguish and disgust to see that slaves were assisting their masters to conquer their own motherland. It was such a state of degradation of its people.
Kanpur fell to the British for the second time. He was declared an outlaw with a prize of one lakh of rupees on his head. He had no alternative but to take refuge in Nepal, the only free and neighbouring country. During the period of hide and retreat he was shocked to learn that he was held responsible for Satichaura massacre and Bibighar tragedy. He was declared the greatest villain of country. He was himself grieved at what had happened at Satichaura ghat and in the Bibighar. He did not go to white wash the cruel acts of savagery by means of excuses. He says,

“Satichaura and Bibighar are monuments to our brutality. Look and be ashamed the world will forever admonish us. So long as the sun and moon go around, our noses will be rubbed in their drags.”
(219)

But at the same time he wants that the sad acts of savagery must not be separated from their causes and examined in isolation. As both were a form of primitive retaliation against the savagery of advancing column and have to be viewed in the same frame, as composite pictures. He says,

“If Daryaganj and the other villages had not been burned down as guilty villages, Satichaura might never have happened; and if Fatehpur had not been destroyed merely as a follow through to a victorious military action, Bibighar might never have happened.”(219)

But history sings the lore of victors. The victors do not wrong. The responsibility for all death and destruction lies with the vanquished. Nana
Saheb had to leave his country as an outlaw and take refuge in Nepal only because he had demanded freedom of his country. Malgonkar realized the anguish of his heart and lets the world hear the cry and cravings of his anguished heart in his novel *The Devil’s Wind*.

Jang Bahadur, the then Prime Minister of Nepal, proved meaner than even the village ‘Maong’, the lowest among untouchables in India, who preferred to be bitten by a mad dog rather than divulge the secret about Nana for winning even one lakh of rupees. Nana Saheb had to lose his wife to him and pay one thousand rupees for each day of his stay in Nepal by selling his ancestral Naulakha necklace. He was extremely grieved at the infidelity of his wife, Kashi, who preferred to be in the glitter of king’s court not in a hermitage with him and disgraced the honour of Peshwa. But the shock he had experienced at the deceit of his wife was overcome by the warmth shown by Eliza wheeler who preferred to lead the life of a hermit within his company rather than return it her fold. He was blessed with a daughter in her company, whom he named Mani after the Rani of Jhansi. They led a fully contended life for fourteen long years like Ram and Sita during their exile. He says,

“This surely was nirvana, a state of being freed from the coils of life. Once again there was a woman to love and a child to address me as father ……. I led a richer, more satisfying life than I had as the master of the Wada at, Bithoor.” (284)

He came back to India because of political instability in Nepal and performed the Sraadh of his father on his death anniversary. He was recognized by the priest Kashiram Pandey who gave him unexpected love and respect. He
visited the places of historic occurrences in Kanpur where the British had erected memorials for their own dead. He was grieved to read his name inscribed on the marble tablets as the murderer of women and children. He was held responsible for the acts of savagery of some berserk men and women. On the same principle, he feels that Queen Victoria should have been held responsible for the acts of savagery and atrocity of British soldiers. But history is written for the victors and by the victors. The voice of vanquished never gets room in the pages of history. With the help of Jaya Scindia of Gwalior, Nana Saheb leaves for Mecca with the hope that some day someone will erect a memorial for the Indian deeds. *The Devil’s Wind* is a step in, that direction in the field of art with the help of creative imagination; Malgonkar creates a memorial, as it were, to Nana Saheb and gives tongue to his point of view in *The Devil’s Wind*. It is also a souveneir to a man who laid down all he had done on the altar of his country and yet he was forced to lead his last days far beyond the bounds of his country in Constantinople. In the opinion of GS Amur,

“Malgonkar performs a useful task in representing the mysterious and controversial figure of Nana in the Indian perspective.” (125)

Malgonkar presents the story of Nana Saheb in authentic social, political and mythological background of India. Nana Saheb often alludes to the Hindi scriptures in course of narrating his story. He recites the Gayatri Mantra whenever he is in trouble to derive strength like a common Indian. He compares himself and Eliza to Ram and Sita, during their exile. His curse about his marriage reminds as of the curse of Pandu in The Mahabharat. He alluded to the Indian myths and legends and compares Lord Dalhousie to Rahu and Ketu, two
mythological moon eaters. It lends credibility to his narrative and restores to him his Indian identity.

Despite the fact that the story of Nana Saheb has been narrated from the Indian point of view, Malgonkar shows no favour of Indians and bias against the English. With the characteristic detachment of an artist, Malgonkar presents both the Indian and English view in his novels. If he decries the British for their acts of savagery, and atrocity, he also decries the so-called ‘Loyal Sepoys’ who were more brutal than their masters. If he compares Dalhousie to Rahu and Ketu, he also praises Hillersdon and Wheeler as their opposite numbers among the English and, above all, presents Michael Palmer as godlike creature on the earth. As Padmanabhan asserts,

“Nana’s relationship with Wheeler illustrates that personal losses do not interfere in friendship.”(54)

He gets heavenly bliss in the company of Eliza and compares her with Sita, an ideal of Indian womanhood. Bias and prejudices have been consciously kept out of the novel. Despite the fact that the novel is an autobiographical form, Malgonkar does not whitewash his lapses. He has succeeded in restoring to the image of Nana Saheb, its humanity and Indian identity. Here Malgonkar does not use history as a costume to cloth his modern character or try to impose his own pattern on recorded history. Dealing with the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 as it does, the distance of one hundred and fifteen years, gives the author a clear perspective of events and he is able to maintain a consistent and highly imaginative realism. It is remarkable also how the novelist has been able to maintain a balance in his narrative of the objective and subjective view-
objective, so far as the historical events are concerned, and subjective, in his imaginative recreation of intimate psychology of his characters, the India rebels and British masters. Manohar Malgonkar has attempted in his novel, *The Devil’s Wind*, according to Romen Palit, the correction of the gap in the historical presentation of a number British writers falsifying and totally distorting the facts regarding the sepoy uprising. Uma Parmeswaran says that neither Ramakrishna nor ASP Ayyar reached the level of art and skill that Malgonkar achieved in *The Princes* and *The Devil’s Wind*. In her own words,

“Manohar Malgonkar surely, is the consummate artist that the Indo-English novel can claim.”(210)

Malgonkar has equipped himself well to tackle this challenging subject. He found contradictory notes in the archives and had heard many stories about Nana Saheb in the Gwalior’s court in early years of the century from his grandfather, Mr. Babu Rao, who worked as a minister. In his interview with Prof. Dayanand he said he had spent two years on research and read over 150 books by both Britishers and Indians on this great Revolt of 1857. He had even checked out the weather of a particular day in 1857, whether it was rainy or cloudy, before writing about that day in *The Devil’s Wind*, but he does not let his patient research show itself in this novel. Prof. Dayanand comments,

“This is the secret of his success. Indeed, successful historical novels are like icebergs; there is more to them that meets the eye.”

(Manohar Malgonkar 141)
The historical information in his novels does not impede the progress of narrative. This novel of Malgonkar, like other novels, steers clear of the test put by Henry James. It is interesting, and at no point is the interest of reader allowed to flop. On the other hand, the reader at times feels that he is witnessing cinematography.

Malgonkar is an adept story teller like all other great story tellers and in this novel he employs both narrative and analytical methods. He not only depicts the historical events but also explains why and how they happened. He unfolds in this novel a grim and ghastly chapter of past and makes it live with the help of his immense narrative powers and imaginative interpretations,. He gives a vivid account of background and the Revolt itself, with its aftermath. He gives us a sense of what the past felt like, what it looked like, and what emotions drove people to decisions and actions. Here is history as ‘Heritage’ hallowed with nostalgia and national pride.

*The Devil’s Wind* is superb because it is the very warp and woof of history. History books have documented in detail the Sepoy rebellion of 1857 and every school-boy knows of Dalhousie’s ruthless annexations, the Mad Mullah’s machinations, and the pig and cow-fat in sepoy’s rifles that were the immediate cause of the outbreak, the massacre at Satichaura of the survivors of wheeler’s Entrenchment, who had been assured safe conduct, and slaughtering of one hundred and seventy five white women and children at Bibighar. More recent histories might highlight events unfavourable to the British that earlier historians had glossed over in deference to their rulers. But only a novelist of Malgonkar’s stature can give a faithful record of history and at the same time get into the minds of the men who made that history.
Malgonkar recreates the past with its vibrating life. But Asnani believes that the novel is

“in no case an objective and dispassionate study of neither history, nor does it bring to the reader’s knowledge any new and significant facts”. (95)

Though Malgonkar reveals the Indian point of view in defending Nana from the attacks of the British historians, one can not say that it is not dispassionate. Malgonkar points out the horrors committed by both - the Indians and the British. He brings out both the virtues and lapses of Nana Saheb. Best has rightly said that Nana is neither

“a hero nor an anti-hero, he is the king of ambiguous character Malgonkar delights in”. (826)

Malgonkar presents the arguments of Nana as Nana would have written it himself in a cogent way and thus fortifies what is historically true. The historical facts can be interpreted variously. Malgonkar has done his hardest to find the fusion of art and history. He uses his historical imagination to impart shape to the bare historical facts and brings out the essential qualities of Nana. The story of Nana Saheb illustrates his vision of life. *The Devil’s Wind* depicts a struggle between freedom fighters or the householders, on the one hand, the pirates and slave traders or the robbers on the other. Victory should have sided with the freedom fighters or the householders. But in *The Devil’s Wind* victory sides with the aggressor or the robber.
The novel illustrates and proves that truth alone is not enough for victory. Truth needs strength and greater than the holders of untruth for victory. Thus, *The Devil’s Wind* is more than a history book, as it reveals the novelist’s vision of life. As Indira Bhatt points out,

“Though the protagonist belongs to history and though Malgonkar makes no revolutionary departures from the historical facts the novel is not history but fiction, and a work of art as such, it gives a clear insight into the action Nana Saheb.” (19)

It belongs to the literature of power and is far superior to a history book which belongs to the literature of knowledge.

In *The Devil’s Wind*, Malgonkar has shown that though history is not merely the biography of rulers, the biography of a ruler throws light on the what, how and wherefores of historical movements and events.
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The publication of the novel of Manohar Malgonkar, *A Bend in the Ganges*, was a major event in the history of Indian English fiction. It is the fourth novel of Manohar Malgonkar and once again takes us back to the turbulent period of the independent India. It became immediately popular and successful. EM Forster found it one of the three best novels of 1964, and Richard Church in the review of the book in The Bookman compared it with Leo Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*, while the BBC London called it a very exciting story told with great skill. The novel is written on grand scale and depicts the Gandhian Era in all its manifestations. Here Malgonkar introduces a domestic tale of two characters against the background of the ten years of freedom struggle.

Like Khushwant Singh’s ‘*A Train to Pakistan*’ and Chaman Nahal’s ‘*Azadi*’, Malgonkar’s novel is exactly about events in relation to time and close to facts. All the three novels deal with India’s Independence and the holocaust that followed in the wake of the partition of the country. They seek to portray how mass passions were aroused during these fateful days that preceded and followed the sunrise of our Freedom. In addition to large scale arson and riots in various parts of the sub-continent, many a train during that terrible time were halted by armed bands of men, systematically killing the unfortunate passengers. All the three novelists take up this theme and portray conflicting loyalties and various forces at work during what Malgonkar calls one of the bloodiest upheavals of history. This offers potentialities of turning out gripping and powerful accounts of rioting and bloodshed, and Singh and Malgonkar
strive to present stories that despite their various merits and drawbacks, manage to rise above the standard of sensational journalism. As Dr. Chhote Lal Khatri comments,

“Both ‘A Train to Pakistan’ and Manohar Malgonkar’s ‘A Bend in the Ganges’ are successful experiments in artistically fusing the personal and historical perspectives in historical guise.” (39)

While graphically depicting the horror and futility of partition riots, Malgonkar gains in depth by probing the validity and ideologies of violence and non-violence and their relevance to life. The novel almost approaches the epic movement in its authentic evaluation of human tragedy. It takes us back to the turbulent period of the struggle for the Independent India. Panoramic in scope and epic in aspiration, the book, to quote Dr. Meenakshi Mukherjee,

“is crowded with events from modern Indian history beginning with the Civil Disobedience Movement of the early thirties and ending in the post-partition riots in Punjab. Between these two poles are packed all the excitements of two decades: the boycott of foreign goods, the secret activities of terrorist groups, the out-break of the second world-war, the Japanese occupation of the Andaman, the British retreat from Rangoon, the long march of evacuees from Burma, the Bombay dock explosion, the dismemberment of India.”(59)

The novel concentrates upon the painful drama of partition comprehensively and suggestively. It shows how the terrorist movement - a
symbol of national solidarity - designed to oust the British from the Indian soil, degenerated into communal hatred and violence, and how the emphasis from the struggle between Indian nationalism and British colonialism shifted unfortunately to the furious and malicious communal hatred between the Hindus and Muslims, throwing into shade the basic Indian fight for freedom from the British rule. The double conflict led to freedom and division of the country, but before it happened, a hell was let loose in many provinces of the nation.

The novel depicts powerfully the horrible developments resulting in the partition, the triumph and tragedy of the hour of freedom, the screams of victims renting the morning air, the dawn of freedom getting the sub-continent in the pools of blood, the barbarous cruelties heaped on men and women, catcalls of the crowd and innumerable women being carried away naked, struggling and screaming at the top of their voices, the Muslim fears of being ruled by the Hindus in the absence of the British rule in the country where they had been the rulers, their notion that the Hindus were more dangerous than the foreigners and ought to be their real target and their subsequent striking at them, their struggle for a safe homeland separate from India leading to the partition and the terror and pity for it- all these form the content of the novel.

Malgonkar owes the title of his novel to *The Ramayan*. Though the novel narrates the large scale of violence during India’s partition in 1947, the title very aptly signifies a very important turning point of the history of the nation. KR Srinivasa Iyengar in his book, *Indian Writing in English*, refers to the line, given in the Ramayan, in connection with the title of Malgonkar’s *A Bend in the Ganges*:
“At a bend in the Ganges they paused to take a look at the land they were leaving.” (431)

While the title refers to the significant turn of events in Ramayana, the story of the novel A Bend in the Ganges shows some proximity to another Hindu epic, The Mahabharat. First the feud between Little house and Big House reminds the feud between Kauravas and Pandavas in the Mahabharat. Secondly, there is another suggestion of the great epic in the bloody conflict between Hindus and Muslims during the partition of country in 1947. The large-scale bloodshed and violence certainly need comparison with the bloody war of the Mahabharat which lasted for eighteen days and killed thousands of soldiers on both the sides.

A sensitive novelist like Manohar Malgonkar cannot remain unresponsive to contemporary events. Being a close and honest observer of the freedom struggle, Gandhian policies and their effect on people being a down-right, straight-forward, uncommitted critic of man and matters, he could not but choose to deal with problem of non-violence and violence. A Bend in the Ganges holds up the mirror to the explosive problem of mankind and of nations and beyond all doubt, gains epic grandeur and universal significance. Richard Church remarks,

“A novel could not convincingly contain more violence than this tale of the sub-continent during the past quarter of a century. It is not likely that we shall be given more revealing, a more sanely balance, or a more terrifying account of those years. The paradox
of life is there, and out of it the author has made a work of art.”
(Quoted from Mehta 244)

Indeed, it raises many questions about Gandhi’s non-violence and truth, and at the same time, one can not be blind to the fact that it finally affirms and celebrates the victory of love over self-destroying violence. As SC Sood opines,

“What Malgonkar condemns is not the ideals and idealism but people’s superficial adherence to them.” (199)

Nevertheless, what is emphasized in the novel is clear from what Malgonkar has himself said in the Author’s Note,

“Only the violence in this story happens to be true, it came in the wake of freedom, to become a part of India’s history. What was achieved through non-violence brought with it one of the bloodiest upheavals of history.” (Author’s Note, A Bend in the Ganges 6)

Malgonkar explores the influence of violence and non-violence on the nation and the individuals in this novel and shows how the hidden capacity of man for violence is brought out by destructive act of others. Non-violence is an ideal; violence is a reality with its roots in the human psyche. Violence may be of different forms,

“Cultured violence, self protective violence, the violence of aggression, the violence of competition, the violence of trying to
be somebody, the violence of trying a discipline according to a pattern, trying to suppress and bully oneself, brutal to oneself, in order to be non-violent” (Murty 74)

Malgonkar exposes the ubiquitous nature of violence and its roots in his novel by analyzing the life and growth of three individuals going through the grueling mill of gruesome events.

Malgonkar attempts to pinpoint in the novel the inadmissibility of any ideology being valid for any the many unpredictable and inexplicable situations of life. Ideologies divorced from the reality of life become sterile and anti-human. Life in the rich variety refuses to be moulded into a neat framework of given ideology. Mahatma Gandhi was himself in doubt with his experiment with the ideology of non-violence. Malgonkar quotes the passage as the epigraph of his novel,

“It almost appears as if we are nursing in our bosoms the desire to take revenge the first time we get the 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, woman, or child is safe and every man’s hand is raised against his neighbour.”

Malgonkar also depicts man’s inner urge for violence or his hidden capacity for violence, often brought out by the destructive acts of others.
The novel opens with the ceremonial burning of British garments. The cries of ‘Boycott British goods’, Bharat Mata Ki Jai,’ gave expression to the fire of freedom that was burning in the heart of Indian masses. The ceremonial fire that raged in the market square was,

“Just one of hundreds of thousands fires similar all over the country”. (7)

Gandhiji himself appeared on the dais. He did not speak, it being Monday - his day of silence. Gian, a young student from the college, felt overwhelmed at the sight of the apostle on truth and non-violence. He was swayed away by the conviction that non-violence is not for the week and the path of Ahimsa is not for cowards. He threw away his blazer-his most elegant garment made of imported English material-into the fire and thus showed the zeal of a nationalist.

Gian, this student from Konshet with limited means, surprisingly received an invitation for a picnic on the old river-bed at Birchibagh from one of the important boys at the college, Debi-dayal, the only son of Dawan-Bahadur Tekchand, the elite of the town. He reached Kerwad house at the appointed hour, and was fascinated by Debi’s sister Sundari. Sundari took Gian to the museum – a pride collection of the bronzes. For a moment Gian became the Statue, lifeless, ageless, and unbreathing. As the spell broke, Gian found Sundari holding him by both the shoulders and her eyes staring with alarm. His announcement of becoming a follower of Gandhi was subjected to sharp criticism. Strangely, he was in the company of the terrorists headed by Singh-viz, Shafi Usman in disguise. The revolutionaries criticized Gian for being a follower of Gandhi, but Gian took pride in coming under the influence of that
hypnotic power because he fervently believed that Gandhi could lead India to victory. Singh’s agitated invitation to name any country that has shaken off foreign rules without resorting to war perturbed Gain but he declared a sudden defiance that Gandhi was a God. Singh cited some examples of America, Turkey and of Shivaji and affirmed,

“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 our country.” (18)

The picnic threw enough light on the two distinct ways in India’s fight for freedom: the one of non-violence; hated and rejected by the terrorists; and the other of revolution, dreaded by Gandhi and his followers. As the events clearly showed, it needed superhuman discipline to follow the path of non-violence even in the face of the strongest provocation, very soon, took to violence showing the hollowness of his defiant statements. Shafi - Usman in the disguise of a Sikh, talked of fight against the British, but very soon this flight changed its target - His own Hindu associates and the Hindus in general became the objects of his attack. The fervent advocate of shaking off foreign rule through violence ways degenerated into a narrow- minded communalist- siding a particular community against the other, and eager to have a bloody bath.

The bloody battle between the two closely related families - the Big house and the Little house - has an important bearing on the theme of the novel.
Vishnu Dutt was killed by the same Gian, who, a little earlier, had taken pride in proclaiming himself a true disciple of Mahatma Gandhi. As Padmanabhan opines,

“Through this part of Gian’s story, Malgonkar exposes the hollow sham of the Indians who simply professed to be non-violent.” (108)

The two houses in the small village were in an unwarranted struggle. All this was a pointer to the main acts of horror caused by the partition. As ‘Iyengar’ points out,

“Like a prologue to the main act, this story of family feud – suspicion, hatred vindictiveness, murder - is to be viewed as the advance rivalry, micro-tragedy foreshadowing the macro-tragedy on a national scale in the year of partition.” (433)

The terrorist movement was very active in Duriabad. It was an integrated group of young men hailing from different communities and provinces, and all were united in the sacred cause of fight against the British rule. The members of the club were nationalists and follow terrorists. Shafi Usman, alias Singh with his battle cry ‘a million shall die’, was the leader of the club. His close associate was an outstanding figure, Debi-Dayal. All young men despised the foreigners. As Manohar Malgonkar states,

“Debi hated the British; that was what brought them together, Hindus and Muslims and Sikhs, men of different religions united
in the cause of freedom as blood brothers; the freedom fighters”.

(68)

The “Ram and Rahim Club” stressed the need and the survival of national solidarity to oust the British from the Indian soil in the face of the hot wave of religious fanaticism that swept the country. To quote Malgonkar,

“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 their 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.” (71-72)

The Indian national scene of the time revealed signs of sharp religious differences between the Hindus and Muslims. But this group under the secular leader, Shafi Usman, remained unimpaired. The terrorist movement was the last shelter of those who wanted to carry on the struggle united. They were all willing, almost eager, to die for their motherland. They knew exactly that the religious differences were the root cause of country’s slavery and that the British played upon this weakness and continued to rule India by dividing the Indians into different communally antagonistic groups. All the thirty-seven members of the club kept themselves away from the fire of religious differences that burnt the country.

Meanwhile 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. Hafiz, the erstwhile leader of the terrorist movement, was won over by absolute and fanatic considerations. He now thought only on a particular line. The battle cry against the Hindus came to Duriabad with the cuttings from The Dawn, The Awaz, The Sulah and The Subah. He was now a strong advocate of Muslim point of view, a stooge in the hands of British, playing to their tune of divide and rule. In his secret meeting with Shafi, he very calculatingly tried to impress upon him the popular fear that in the absence of British rule the Muslim would have to live as the slaves of Hindus and their lives, property and religion would be in danger in the face of the overwhelming majority of the Hindus. Jinnah converted into an orthodox musalman, standing up for the safe land for the Muslims. Hafiz made it clear to Shafi that Hindus were a danger everywhere. The Muslims were the second-rate citizens in the Congress-dominated states. The inclusion of one or two Muslims in the government was a big farce. The Muslims were not safe in a Hindu nation, and hence they needed a separate safe state-their own homeland. Hafiz voiced the general Muslim view – the inevitability of the partition for the welfare of the Muslims – when he tried to dispel the feelings of national solidarity from the mind of Shafi Usman in a forceful religious fervor,

“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? Stooge our own men. Muslims, who are the members of the congress, renegades…. Jinnah has exposed them: The Hindus have shown that Hindustan is for the Hindus; now the Muslims have to look after ourselves. Organize ourselves before it’s too late. Crave out our own country.” (90)
The statement of Hafiz was a clear reflection of the mentality of the Muslim leaders and of their influence on the orthodox Muslim minds. He fanned hatred and ill will against the Hindus; who, he thought, by their hateful deeds in the provinces where they ruled, has paled Jallianwala tragedy into insignificance. The Hindus-dominated freedom was undesirable. He averred,

“We don’t want freedom if it means our living here as slaves of the Hindus. If we succeed in driving out the British, it is other Hindus who will inherit power. They want all of us ….. That’s what Jinnah is worried about. That’s what all of us are worried about”. (91)

Shafi read the danger of Hindu-Muslim rift, knew it to be mischievous doing of the British and felt that the only way to free the nation from slavery lay in communal harmony. Rejecting Hafiz’s call for reorienting the organization for a more sacred and indispensable fights against the Hindus, he insists that the salvation lies in solidarity – that is the only way to oust the British. Hafiz railed at Shafi and wanted him to change the tactics to cope with the newly cropped up dangers. He gave vent to the Muslim hatred for the Hindus at the time and stated that in the recent dassera riots in the congress-rulled state the police actually sided with the Hindus and Muslims were shooted down by picking them out. Shafi warned that such an action would retaliate. This, according to him, was a danger single for civil war. Hafiz attempted to prepare him wholeheartedly for such a consequence. This, he asserted strongly, was inevitable. It was bound to happen in the absence of the British rule. Infusing the bitter communal hatred in Shafi, he said,
“This 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 the country, leaving our fate in the hands of the Hindus…. It is to that end we must all work, must all recognize the new enemies: the Hindus”. (92)

Shafi, who had always striven for communal solidarity found it irreconcilable to prepare himself for civil war. He would prefer Gandhi’s Movement to a communal organization. This made Hafiz condemn Gandhi as a hypocrite, concealing violence in the name of non-violence.

The conversation between Hafiz and Shafi is of immense significance in that it reflected the Muslim line of thought before the partition of the country. It voiced the eagerness of a school that worked hard for having a safe-land for the Muslims. It expressed Muslim anxiety to be ruled by the Hindus in the absence of the British. It showed the conversion of the Muslims, who devoted themselves earlier to communal solidarity, into the fanatics propagating and working for the cause of the Muslims alone. Men like Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and Jinnah who first worked for the national solidarity and then become champions of the Muslims, were clearly ideal Muslims for Hafiz and Shafi Usman. Shafi’s shifting to Muslim considerations alone displayed the peculiar Muslim character that was lamented by Maulana Shibil, the celebrated professor of Persian at Aligarh University. It reveals the unfortunate, mean-Muslim mentality of preferring slavery under the Britishers to minority in self-government. Usman studied the situation.
The betrayal of Debi by Shafi was a glaring example of the rift between the two communities. As the poisonous seed of communalism beings to grow in the mind of Shafi and him, therefore, intentionally keeps Hindu boys of the Hanuman Physical Culture Club uninformed in advance about the raid of the club. Debi was arrested, tried and sent to the Andaman’s. From then on, it is a sordid story of Muslim fanaticism and Shafi is engaged in acts of terror, violence and communal disharmony. He double-crosses Debi and Basu who have come to meet him by giving advance information to the police about their whereabouts. The young British police officer suspected the rift in the terrorists when he explained their movement to the captain of the ship sailing to Andaman Island with Debi on it as a convict,

“The terrorists? Oh, yes; they are all over the place... 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 Muhammad in the lot; which makes us think that there was some kind of rift among them”. (131)

In Debi, the national awareness was supreme. He hated his father Tekchand and Shafi Usman who had betrayed him and his colleagues. He was keen to take revenge upon Singh showing clear signs of the rift between the two warring foes. Tekchand was also conscious of the Hindu-Muslim rivalry. He knew that the bitterness, existing between the two communities, would never permit them to live in harmony. He was one of those Muslims who felt presence of the British was necessary to keep the nation quiet and away from the horrors of civil war. However, his fears of the feelings of bitterness among the Hindus
and Muslims came true. He knew that after the withdrawal of British authority, Hindus and Muslims would be at each other’s throat just as they had always been before the British came and established peace. According to him the alternative to the British quitting India was civil war. Debi returned to India with the help of Japanese from the Andamans. The Quit India Movement had by now possessed the whole country by storm and acquired new dimensions. He came to Calcutta and met his old friend Basu who had been an active member of the terrorist movement at Duriabad. Now he was leading a miserable life in quivering poverty in a bustee with his mutilated wife and the two unkempt children. Basu, in his heart of hearts, nursed a great desire to take revenge upon Shafi Usman, the once solidarity leader, turned violently communalist. Debi was keen to see Shafi. He had a score to settle. Basu, too, wanted to see Shafi’s face when Debi confronted him.

Basu’s attitude explained the great rift between the Hindus and Muslims. Now the scene had completely and dramatically changed. The terrorists were made to flight among themselves. It was triumph of the British; their shrewd game of divide and rule bore fruit and succeeded in making the Hindus and the Muslims the die-hard enemies of one-another. Debi understood it and lamented this ugly and suicidal development. He regretted,

“It is almost as though just when they are on the point of leaving the country; the British have succeeded in what they set out to do. Set the Hindus and Muslims at each other’s throat. What a lovely sight!” (289)
Basu suffered the humiliation of his wife’s lovely face mutilated by an electric blub filled with sulphuric acid. It must have certainly come from the hand of a Muslim. The electric blub, filled with sulphuric acid, was the standard weapon of the Hindu-Muslim riots. The disfiguring of his wife’s face was exactly what has happened to the face of India – the mutilation of a race conflict.

The communal tension bred distrust. Muslims stood with Jinnah and worked for the division of the Country. The Congress was branded as a Hindu organization and was hated by Muslims. Before the actual partition, India was being disintegrated. Basu gave vent to the Hindu-Muslim attitude before the partition when he heatedly pointed out the developments from national solidarity to communal violence.

“What had been aimed against the British has turned against itself. And the ugliest thing it has bred is distrust. No Hindu can trust a Muslim anymore, and no Muslim trusts a Hindu. The country is to be divided. That is what Jinnah wants; that is what the Muslims want….. The Muslims don’t want freedom for India unless it means the carving out of a separated state for themselves.” (290)

Basu’s study of the situation reminded one of the arguments of Hafiz to win Shafi-Usman to the Muslim side. It expressed the popular Muslim notions of the time. The call of the Muslim League, with Jinnah as its spokesman, for a separate and independent state craved out of India was the burning subject of the Day. It celebrated the triumph of the British in alienating the Muslims from the national stream and in turning them into blood thirsty foes of the Hindus.
Basu thought of the horrors and chaos that awaited the exit of the British authority from the British sub-continent; the hardened attitudes would create an anarchy and blood-shed. He anticipated the slaughter of hundred thousand women, and the scene of complete rottenness. He envisaged this tragedy and remarked;

“The moment the British quit, there will be civil war in the country, a great slaughter. Every city, every village, every bustee, where the two communities live side by side, will be the scene of war. Both sides are preparing for it, the Hindu and the Muslim. The Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha are both Militants.” (290)

Basu wanted the Hindus to prepare themselves against the Muslims. The Hindu, he feared, would perish, if they failed to return violence for violence. He pointed out Gandhi’s fears and quoted his words that form an epigraph for the novel:

“What if…. When the fury bursts, not a man, woman or child is safe and every man’s hand is raised against his neighbour.” (291)

He warned the Hindus of the hazards of the doctrine of non-violence. He wanted them to rise, awake and strike. He defended the Hindu Mahasabha and affirmed that it was an answer to the wrong doings of the Congress.

The long Debi-Basu conversation pointed to the cruel ways that men in India were resorting to in the pre-independence days. The partition of country
looks imminent. The Musilm demand for a separate nations was at its highest pitch, and the violence was let loose among the Muslims and the Hindus and the vice versa. Both the communities were determined and defiant, and hence civil war was at hand. The cities and towns were riot-torn. The game of divide and rule was in full swing and was to attain its logical culmination. Basu, a terrorist and erstwhile member of the Hanuman Club, stressed the Inecessity of joining the rival camp in sheer self-defence. He had suffered and his sufferings, coming in the wake of Gandhi’s non-violence movement, made him despise the champion of non-violence; to him ‘an eye for an eye’ and ‘a tooth for a tooth’ looked the only answer to the situation.

Now Shafi was at peace with himself. He was aware of a sense of purpose and direction. He had change as the whole of India had changed. He now felt convinced that the Hindus and Muslims were traditional enemies and there was no possibility of their living together. The spell of provincial government had demonstrated it fully. Shafi nursed the popular Muslim notions that they were the superior race and that in the absence of British authority they would become the second rate citizens in the face of the overwhelming majority of the Hindus. He detested the Sikhs more than the Hindu. He felt it absurd to go about as a Sikh as he once did. Like many Muslims, Shafi detested the Congress. Freedom through the Congress did not mean anything to him; it was unacceptable. Shafi believed along with millions of other Muslims:

“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 vengeance of the
sheep. The Muslims would never agree..... They would never live in an India where they were only a tolerated minority.” (295)

For Shafi and innumerable Muslims, the demand of a safe home - land for their community was a great necessity. The absurd conception of a separated nation that Hafiz had given to him six years earlier appeared a reality. The Hindus were now to be eliminated. The flight against the British was now the fight was turned into Jehad, a war sanctioned by religion, a sacred duty of every true believer. Jinnah had shown the way, and so Shafi, Hafiz and others did not believe in disciplined constitutional means to achieve their goal. They believe in creating terror; the only way the Hindus were to be forced to yield. The Hindus would never concede their demands with grace. It was essential to draw blood to shed their blood. The Muslims were active in achieving their objectives in Rawalpindi and Multan and Bhagalpur. The Hindus were compelled to leave the districts. They were to ensure that no Hindu would remain in the part of India that was going to be theirs. The work, as long as the British did not show their back, was to be done secretly. Shafi was waiting for plunging into war with the Hindus at the right moment. He thought that Hindus were also planning to do the same. But he knew well that the Hindus would never be a match to the Muslims in the civil war. Assessing the Hindus he felt that they were pacifists at heart and have no comparisons for the Muslims in the civil war, not even the members of Mahasabha. Shafi only regretted the want of money among the Muslims. He remembers the days when Muslims were the rulers of entire country and were not struggling for just a portion of it.

In their bid to take revenge upon Shafi for his ugly betrayal, Debi and Basu came to Lahore. Basu felt, like Shafi, that the proper time to settle score
would roll in after the exit of the British. He asked Debi, who went into out of bonds zone to meet Shafi, not to pick a row with him right away. Basu feared Shafi’s concealed designs, and hated his erstwhile leader, but Debi did not feel any real hate for Shafi the moment he met him. He took Shafi sincerely and felt that the later had an inclination to be friendly with him. Basu saw things in their right perspective and suspected Shafi. He burnt in the fire of revenge. Debi felt that Shafi was genuinely repentant but Basu thought otherwise; he knew well how things had changed in the country during the last six years. The Hindus and Muslims no more stood united; they nursed hatred for each other. While Debi was willing to believe every word Shafi uttered, Basu found different meanings in him. His fears came true. The police was informed about Debi and Basu. The police raided the house; But Basu’s watchful care saved them from the hands of the police. Shafi’s attempt to get Debi-Dayal and Basu arrested by the police proved aborted and he stood exposed. Debi was disillusioned and he decided to pay Shafi back. Basu wrote a letter to the police about Shafi’s whereabouts and that was enough to take revenge. But that was not the way of Debi’s paying the enemy back. He went to the brothel and took away Shafi’s mistress Mumtaz. It brought him in direct confrontation with Shafi Usman. Shafi hurled at Mumtaz a broken electric blub filled with sulphuric acid, but Debi caught it in mid air and hurled it back harmlessly into the shadows where Shafi had stood.

The Debi-Shafi affair fully revealed how things had changed. Shafi concluded that friendly relationship between the Hindus and Muslims was impossibility. Debi, on the other hand, still thought of recapturing the warmth of old days, of the possibility of the Hindus and the Muslims working together and of regaining the lost leader. But he was very soon disillusioned. The disillusionment was the tragedy of the nation. The British game of dividing the
people of India into warring camps bore fruits. The demand of a pure state for the Muslims-viz, Pakistan, became persistent and fruitful. The division was complete and the communal hatred showed signs of a gruesome tragedy. Debi’s decision to accept the snatched Muslim girl, Mumtaz, as his bride pointed to his emotional blindness. But it clearly demonstrated the caste-free conscience of the two lovers. But Debi was duped and deceived by his erstwhile leader Shafi, who plunged himself whole heartedly into the communal fire that swept the country before and after the Independence and the Partition. But Shafi’s betrayal did not make him hate the whole Muslim race. He stayed secular amid the sounds of guns and slogans and accepted Mumtaz as his wife.

In the same way, in A Train to Pakistan we find amid this universal madness and communal frenzy, the simple, uncalculating and earthly love of a man for his beloved that asserts itself and averts catastrophe. Jugga, self-confessed ‘local-ruffian’ realizing that the attack on the train might mean danger to his Nooran, manages to slash at the rope with his Kirpan. As Singh describes,

“He went back at it with Knife, and then with his teeth. The engine was almost on him. There was volley of shots. The man shivered and collapsed. The rope snapped in the centre as he fell. The train went over him and went on to Pakistan.” (153)

The triumph of love, humanism, and faith in the innate goodness of man in a moment of crisis and challenge mark the central significance of both of the novels.
At the same time the developments and exposition of the guilt in Gian assumed significance when during the post-independence communal violence Gain redeemed himself at Duriabad by saving Sundari from being raped and murdered and helped her to come out of Pakistan. The scene at Duriabad at the time of partition, like those at many towns, was one of complete chaos and anarchy. Sporadic disturbances between the Hindus and Muslims were a common feature. They had almost become inevitable part of a festival. The regular disturbances were always sternly dealt with by the authorities. But the riots preceding the partition were different. They were the anatomy of partition and were the direct consequence of the unfortunate division,

“A vast landscape packed with people was now being partitioned according to religious majorities: The Muslims in Pakistan, and the Hindus in India.”(331)

The nature of the present riots was peculiar. Everyone was a participant in the furious drama of the blaze of hatred of the civil war. The atmosphere was one of utter disbelief and no one could be trusted to be impartial. There could be no looker on. The administration, the police even the armed forces were caught up in this fire of ill-will and hatred. Religious civil war was waged all over the country. It was a shameful tragic sight. Every village, town and city that was peopled with two communities turned into a battle field. Terrible happenings were occasioned by the partition. As Malgonkar confirms,

“Thousand of millions of people had to flee, leaving everything behind; Muslims from India, Hindus and Sikhs from the land that was soon to become Pakistan, two great rivers of humanity flowing
in opposite directions along the pitifully inadequate roads and railways, jamming, clashing, colliding head on, leaving their dead and dying littering the landscape.” (332)

Amitav Ghosh in his novel *The Shadow Lines* also refers to the trainful of dead bodies. Bapsi Sidwa, the Pakistan Parsi writer, in her novels presents the Pakistani side of the disaster. Specially, her novel *The Ice-Candy Man* portrays the similar feelings of Muslims and Sikhs in Pakistan.

The communal hatred, which resulted in the massive exchange of population, the mad killings, rapes and abductions, presented the cruelest and the most barbaric scenes. Animality in man becomes dominant and all values suddenly collapsed. Gandhiji’s fear had come true. The long awaited freedom brought only misery to the millions of people. The pre-independence scene was indeed ghastly as the entire land was spattered by the blood of its citizens. The escape from Duriabad was not possible. There was the danger of being cut to pieces on the road by the people, mad with hatred. Tekchand could never visualize such things in the twentieth century world. Gandhi became ineffective and irrelevant. The moment the British grip on India loosened the people of India discarded non-violence and turned to violence ways in their basic urge for it. Tekchand regretted for not having accepted his wife’s suggestion of pulling out of the troubled town a fortnight ago. He needed a car to drive out, but his chauffeur, Dhansingh, who had gone out in the car to bring his family to live with them, did not come back. He could not dare tell his wife what had happened to Dhansingh and his family how - they were brutally butchered. Dhansingh’s wife and children were dragged out and the children were stoned to death and then they poured petrol over Dhansingh’s hair and beard and
burned him alive and taken his wife away. The tragedy befalling the family of Dhansingh was not isolated affair. It was the destiny of millions of people shaped by the partition. The car had been turned into burnt out shell.

The stream of men, crossing the borders, presented a pathetic sight on the eve of Independence. Everything was in a bad shape. Sleepless nights presented fearful sight of fire, arson, wailing, weeping and roaring. Duriabad had turned into peculiar riot-torn town. Human cries became a familiar sight for Tekchand and members of the family. Even from their bedroom window, the red glow in the sky caused by the houses burning could be seen. The town was running without milk. All the saiwal cows were killed as they belonged to particular community. Suddenly life had become absolutely unsafe and insecure. Normal life was completely paralysed. No bank was functioning. The thought of the convoy, escorted by Army right up to the border on their way to Jullandur, was the only consoling feature of the whole drama. The expected convoy was not to be had easily. Already it was delayed by two days and there was still no sight of it. Tekchand was in great pain to see and imagine ghastly things. He faced a psychological crisis. The city was his, as it was of others. His family, like those of some Muslims, had contributed a great deal to beautify this town. But the changed circumstances had brought about unexpected ruin. It made him utter angrily to his daughter Sundari,

“That it should have come to this... After a life time spent in this part of India, in this town, and giving oneself to it and taking from it; letting one’s roots sink deeper and deeper... And what they are doing? Burning it down; and look at us waiting for police protection because its citizens want to finish us off.” (337)
Chaman Nahal too, in the closing scene of *Azadi*, describes with remarkable restraint, grace and delicacy, the vacuity in the minds of three occupants of a small room in the Kingsway refugee camp in these words,

“The three of them lay fully awake. Not being able to talk to each other and feeling restless about it. Sadness weighed on their hearts, and each felt stifled and crushed.” (*Azadi* 370)

The emotional separation caused by the partition was one of the most unfortunate developments in the history of mankind. Tekchand never wanted to be separated from the town of his ancestors. His attachment with the things at Duriabad made him scorn his wife’s fear. He was feeling a sense of guilty in misplacing his trust in the people of town. His outburst, analyzing why he could not pull out of the disturbed city at the suggestion of his wife was enlightening. He confessed to Sundari in this connection. But Sundari reminds her Abaji of his being luckier than millions of others who had to find shelter and work, for he could have money and house in Delhi. This made Tekchand realize that money does not make up for emotional attachment. The very thought of abandoning the place, he belonged to, was unbearable. He, in a moment of utter depression, cried out to Sundari, flinging up his hands in disdain:

“Money... Do you suppose all the money in the world will make up for this? My house, my bronzes... I could spend house just looking at them over and over again, feeling an inner peace, a religious exaltation, almost to be in the midst of all that beauty.”(338)
The agonizing experience of a sensitive man told the tale of horrid partition.

Tekchand went to the museum and found relief in the company of gods and goddesses who were like living creatures to him more alive than many people of his acquaintance. The psychic crisis in him was glaring. He was surprised at the beastly way the people had suddenly resorted to; religion and community had caused barriers among men and had turned them into foes of one another. He thought of the days beyond this temporary crisis. Better sense might one day drive people to realize their grave mistake of fighting among themselves. He felt that he was among his own people and the vicious and dangerous days of hatred would soon end. He thought of sending away his wife and daughter with the convoy and of his staying behind with his half gods of metal. However, the moment did not last long. He knew his wife would never go away leaving him behind. He remembered his son Debi who could have dealt with this situation in an appropriate and convincing way. He knew his duty now. He contacted the police inspector and inquired about the convoy. The police waited for the convoy of Muslims from Delhi to arrange a convoy of Hindus from Duriabad. The Hindus were now treated almost as hostages. The news of the killing of Muslims on the other side of border was disgusting. Violence bred violence, hatred, suspicion and confusion. Men had turned into brutes. Inhuman deeds became the order of the day. The inspector emphatically clears to Tekchand that violence could be returned with violence. However, a telephonic call from Sardar Avtar Singh, inviting them to his house, gave a great sense of relief to Tekchand. But the second call, by Sardar Avtar Singh, a few minutes later was horrifying. The house was put on fire and telephone line ran dead.
Debi’s attempt at reaching Duriabad along with his wife unfolded the scenes of train disasters that preceded and followed the partition. The trains consisting of a hotchpotch of passenger carriages, cattle wagons and timber flats and packed to maximum capacity, protected by military Jawans presented a pathetic sight. The train in which Debi travelled to Pakistan looked like a huge, dead snake with innumerable ants clinging to its body. Men, women and children were squeezed in windows and doors. These unfortunate people were going away from the land of their birth to a place unknown to them. Tragedy had befallen them. Now everything had changed. The Partition and freedom brought misery and misfortune to millions of people on both sides of the border. Malgonkar very powerfully shows the plight of the displaced when he describes the people being carried away to Pakistan in the train in which Debi was travelling,

“Here, they were the Muslims, the counterparts of displaced persons, on the other side, there were Hindus and Sikhs, both sides making for a border that was yet to be officially demarcated. They were, at the moment, stateless citizens, hounded out from the land of their birth as much by collective fear of racial massacres as by the actual outrage perpetrated upon them by erstwhile fellow citizens.” (354)

The poor people had fallen a victim to the whims of the politicians. Communal hatred, suspicion, the fear to be ruled by the majority and the careful propaganda of not to be ruled by the people who once were slaves led the partition and brought about mass movement of population. It brought untold misery to the millions of people for no fault of their own; their plight was
simply horrible. Tired, hungry, thirsty and sleepy people were travelling in the train. These people were on their way to Pakistan - the land that most of them had never seen, the land that promised relief to them, and the place that cut them from their environment. The brutal violence reminded Debi - Dayal of the often repeated words of Shafi Usman, the terrorist leader, *A million shall die*. Independence was only three days away, but the tide of violence, rape, abduction that swept the country destroyed thousands before the sun of freedom dawn upon the land. It puzzled as how the people, proclaiming brotherhood earlier had come to this state of affairs; and how the century old ties of fraternity were suddenly shattered leading to this upheaval. It was the failure of Gandhi and the success of the shrewdly propagated British policy of divide and rule. Manohar Malgonkar raises certain important questions about this unprecedented event leading to the mass massacre of people in the name of religion.

“After living as brothers over so many generations, how they had suddenly been infected by such Gandhi ever envisaged a freedom a freedom that would be accompanied by so much suffering and release so much hatred.” (355-356)

The thought provoking problem shows the hollowness of communal rage and frenzy. The whole land was torn to pieces as a result of gigantic convulsion. An unimaginable chaos had overwhelmed the country. The train services were seriously disrupted and paralyzed. All workers had run away for the safety of their lives. The movement of refugees was very slow. There was complete panic all around. Mumtaz and Debi had to camp at the Karnal railway station to catch the train; many perished in the attempt. The journey of Debi from Karnal
to Pakistan presented a terrible sight of general massacre. There was scene after scene of carnages. The previous night, a whole train loaded of refugees was massacred. The scene presented a gruesome sight. Debi was traveling in the guise of a Muslim. It was his Punjab, but now it presented a deserted sight. There was complete devastation. The journey of Duriabad seemed to be an unending process. It showed the great change between the past and the present. The heart-rending sights continuously reminded Debi of Shafi’s warning. Debi always loves this native province, the Punjab in all its moods. But this time it was in a quite different mood; it presented a scene of destruction on both the sides. The train stopped for hours on a station without showing any sign of moving forward. The emptiness of the station and the silence deepened the atmosphere of horror. The brutal picking up of the people for killing was sad and scientific. Appearance was not to be trusted;

“They made you take off your trousers to make sure that you were circumcised.” (360)

This was the unmistakable process of identification. Debi felt safe to Indian Territory, but things took a violent turn the moment he crossed the border.

It was now the dawn of the fifteenth of August - the dawn of Freedom when the train came to a halt in Pakistan territory. In his heart Debi felt elated to greet the sun of liberty that was his dream. But his blood congealed to see the cruel acts of impending violence. The Hindus, travelling in elaborate disguises with the Muslims, were founded out and killed. Even children could not escape the wrath of communal frenzy. Debi, too, in the process was suspected and
detected. All the protests and pronouncements of mumtaz, his Muslim wife, who had forcibly accompanied him, proved abortive. He was stripped, naked, blinded and killed. His wife was snatched away from him. The last thing Debi saw the rising sun of the freedom. Shafi’s and his friends raided the house of Tekchand. Shafi’s intentions were clear. He wanted to snatch away Sundari in a spirit of revenge. They spitted insult on the gods in the museum. Tekchand implored Shafi not to touch ladies and insult gods. The utterance of Tekchand elicited Shafi’s strong feelings of revenge. He tried to settle the score - the atrocities Muslim women were put to in India must be avenged. There followed violent struggle. Shafi caught hold of Sundari, but was unsuccessful in his mission. Radha, Sundari’s mother, was killed. Gian and Sundari killed Shafi with the image of Shiva that was once hidden in the little house at Konshet and that was later sold by Gian to Tekchand. Sundari, Tekchand and Gian joined the convoy to pull out of Pakistan, but in the way Tekchand dropped out. He had a great sense of emotional involvement in what was left behind. Gian and Sundari returned to India. Obviously, the novelist reveals a sound historical sense; the unfortunate facts of our national tragedy have been artistically painted. The horrible consequences of partition are frankly stated. Millions of people became homeless, lost their belongings; fell victim to violence and insult, faced a new challenge and had to start all over again. This was how ‘the sunrise of our freedom’ found millions mutilated, but cheered and insulted and tens of millions dispossessed of all that they had owned and cherished and brutally thrown away on the other side of the artificial border between India and Pakistan. The novel portrays in a powerful way the freedom struggle of Indian nationalists, the mad and misleading in Asia, the bitterness brought about by the partition, the massive exchange of population and the cruel and shameful acts caused by communal hatred. The atmosphere of country became vacious and
hell was let loose. The novel dramatically depicts, in great detail, what is stated briefly in the Author’s Note,

“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 and mutilated” (6)

The world of Malgonkar’s fiction is vast and captures the massive flux of life in India in all its richness and variety. A Bend in the Ganges exemplifies this aspect of Malgonkar’s fiction to perfection. The panorama of life in India is painted in all its vividness. The placid life in Punjab town, the rolling fields of Gian’s ancestral village in the hills, the wild and primitive conditions at the cellular jail on the island of Andaman, the jet-set life styles of the rich in Bombay and the cataclysmic mob-violence at the end - all these create not only dramatic richness and variety in main plot, but also lend an epic dimension to the entire scene. In the words of Agarwal,

“Malgonkar is, as usual, most successful in narration of adventure and violence. The episodes of the Penal colony, the blowing up of the Bombay docks and bloody terror of communal massacres are told with graphic power.”(153)

Similarly, the action of the novel begins in 1930s and extends upon the dawn of independence in August 1947, thus encompassing the history of saga
depicting the movement for independence, the world war and the partition of India. In the words of KRS Iyenger,

“A Bend in the Ganges may be called an epic of the Gandhian era for depiction in a very comprehensive manner the various aspects of life - political, social and moral. If anything the novel gives, is the feeling that its creator is not only thoroughly read in the history of freedom movement but also has been a keen observer of the feverish happening of the Gandhian era.”(6)

The novel is conceived on a large scale and packed with exciting actions and breath - taking climaxes. It is a powerful story full of gripping and suspenseful events. Every event is dramatized brilliantly and the author, gifted with a wonderful knack of weaving plots of singular originality, has depicted the politico - social background with consummate skill and convincing emotional situations.

On the one hand, the novel tells the stories of young men and women during the time of national ferment - the story of Gian, Sundari, Debi, Mumtaz, Shafi, Basu, Gopal, Hari and Malini. It could also be regarded a documentary narrative, dealing with the violent rather than non-violent aspects of India’s struggle for independence. Gandhi appears only briefly in one chapter of the book. Malgonkar gives the impression that he has investigated the circumstances of actual events in the Punjab during the religious war of 1947. Like Hershey’s ‘Hirosima’ or Khuswant Singh’s ‘A Train to Pakistan’ Malgonkar’s novel is recurrently and explicitly exact about events in relation to him. He pays scrupulous attention to chronology. All characters except Gandhi
are fictional but the political situation and the events - Jallianwala Bagh, World War II, the Japanese advance in the east, the fall of Singapore, Quit India Movement, the communal disturbances and partition riots of Punjab - are real.

The stark realism of the novel, its exposition by the human catastrophe of the partition of India, is one of its predominant qualities. Fiction is simply the form or shape the novelist has given to documented facts and authentic events of the national past.

_A Bend in the Ganges_ seeks to provide an epic presentation of the whole struggle for Indian Independence and its aftermath. As Agarwal comments,

“A _Bend in the Ganges_ is panoramic in scope and epical in aspiration.”(153)

The novelist’s purpose of describing this period seems to be two-fold. The first is to introduce to the reader, as an objective chronicler, the basic ingredients of the political scene - the struggle for emancipation, the two parallel movements symbolizing two extreme cults - the cruel and non-violent, the injection of communal virus, the parting of the ways, the Muslim outcry for division, the Hindu answer, the Quit India’s phase and finally the removal of shackles, climaxed by the creation of two separate states India and Pakistan. The second intention of author is to probe into ideology of Ahimsa, non-violence and truth, offered by the Mahatma not only as a political expediency but also as a philosophy and way of life. As AK Sharma observes,
“A Bend in the Ganges, on the one hand, is a criticism of non-violence, and on the other hand, it discredits violence.” (85)

The mood and tenor of the novel, defined in the epigraph, appears to present the prophet in an act of self-doubt and self questioning. Malgonkar has been accused of being biased and influenced by his own personal predictions when he discredits non-violence that he identifies with weakness and cowardice of Gian who builds his life on a series of lies and conceits and is still allowed to survive with Sundari with safety and freedom at the end. This, as the critics believe, greatly damages the symbolical significance of the novel and renders itself as an unreliable document of the struggle for independence and the creed of non-violence. This only show that the critics have failed to bear in mind the warning in the Author’s Note that,

“Only the violence in this story happens to be true…… nothing else is drawn from life. The characters are…. (all) fictitious.” As Ambuj Sharma points out, “Though at places the novel appears to be anti-thesis to Gandhi’s theory of non-violence and passive resistance, but if we look carefully into the cortex of the novel, it does not clearly indicate the utter failure of Gandhi’s theory of non-violence.” (115)

He further writes,

“It will not be irrelevant if we sum up the novel by calling it as a practical manifestation of Gandhi’s theory of non-violence.” (119)
One must also not lose sight of the fact that the novelist is primarily a story teller, a deft novelist, not a chronicler or a historian. *A Bend in the Ganges* records not a jest in history, but one of history’s meanest affronts with a great wave of terror, the slaughter of thousands of Hindus and Muslims.
WORKS CITED


(3) CHHATRAPATIS OF KOLHAPUR:
THE MARATHA HISTORY

Indian history is the major theme in the works of Manohar Malgonkar. Malgonkar unlike others often dealt with historical themes. His fictional and non-fictional works reveal sound historical sense. History as the theme of creative fiction seems indeed to exercise a special fascination for him. Malgonkar’s historical books testify to his deep interest in Maratha history and to his gift as a seasoned and accomplished story-teller.

Malgonkar’s Chhatrapatis of Kolhapur (1971) deals with the rise and fall of the Marathas between Chhatrapati Shivaji (1627-1680), the founder of the Maratha Empire and Chhatrapati Shahi Maharaj, the present chhatrapati of Kolhapur, lie three centuries of history. It is essentially the story of their rise and fall their great achievements and a world of faded dreams. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Marathas challenged the Mughals and the British alike for supremacy over the whole of India. The once-powerful Maratha Empire was the principal power that the British overthrew to gain control over the entire subcontinent. Between 1775 and 1818, the British fought three wars - in 1775, 1803 and 1871 - that finally shattered the Maratha confederation and led to full British Supermacy.

The term Maratha is used to denote the kingdom founded by the Maratha Leader Shivaji in the seventeenth century and expanded to the status of an empire by his successors in the eighteenth century. The term is also used, often loosely, to designate the entire regional population speaking the Marathi language. The Marathi-speaking region of Peninsular India extends eastward
Malgonkar’s book of history *Chhatrapatis of Kolhapur*, focuses on rulers of larger princely state, hundreds of miles south of Dewas Senior.

Malgonkar’s mother tongue is Marathi. He lives in Marathi speaking area and concentrates in his historical writings on Maratha history. On asking him, why he focuses on Maratha history rather than Indian history, he answers in one of his interviews with James Y Dayananda,

“There are two answers to this question, both connected. First, Indian history is so vast. You know, you can begin from almost 5th century BC. So, one has to specialize only to get a background. So I believe the second and connected answer to your question is that I like to know my history, to read my history as far as possible in the original and there are a great many documents in Marathi on the Maratha history, which has confined my territory to Maratha history. And then again, I don’t consider myself to be a student of the entire Maratha history. I just perhaps have chosen a corner, a small area of Maratha history itself. You can’t say I will delve into all Indian history, because even you would not be able to read the books in your life-time about that time in history.” (Manohar Malgonkar 70)

Shivaji (Shivaji Bhonsle, 1627-1680), the founder of the Maratha kingdom, was the son of Shaji Bhonsle, who was in the service of the Muslim kingdom of Bijapur. Fearless and adored, Shivaji turned against Bijapur and Mughal rulers after his father’s death. He plundered their territories with his
small Maratha Army and in 1674 crowned himself at Raigarh as an independent sovereign or Chhatrapati (Chhatra- “Umbrella” or “Conopy”, pati- “Master” or “Captain”). From 1674 to 1680, he worked tirelessly and laid the foundation of a compact and independent kingdom in western India.

Kanhoji Angrey (1669-1729), the Maratha admiral, called the ‘Pirate’ by the English, dominated the west coast between Bombay and Goa in the first years of the eighteenth century. Malgonkar’s “Kanhoji Angrey Maratha Admiral : An account of his life and his battles with the English” (1959), deals not only with the achievements of this brilliant Maratha Naval Commander but also with his relations with Shivaji’s successors - Sambhaji (1680-1687), Rajaram (1689-1700), and Tarabai (1700-1708). Malgonkar calls this book of history “An historical biography”. When Shivaji Chhatrapati died at Raigarh on April 3, 1680, he left two sons, born of different mothers, as successors, Sambhaji and Rajaram. Sambhaji was twenty two years old, Rajaram ten. Sambhaji succeed Shivaji but was executed by the Mughal emperor in 1687. Rajaram was proclaimed Regent in February in 1687 but was whisked off a fort kingdom founded by Chhatrapati Shivaji between the descendants of Sambhaji and Rajaram. The former regined over the Satara Branch and later became the founders of Kolhapur Branch. Malgonkar’s “Chhatrapatis of Kolhapur” is a history of this Kolhapur branch of the house of Shivaji - a branch very much neglected by historians who have been preoccupied with the Satara branch. At Poona power passed in the eighteenth century to a line of Brahmins serving as Peshwa (Prime minister). During the decline of Maratha fortunes the office of the Peshwa became hereditary and the line ended in Nana Saheb, one of the leaders of the Indian mutiny of 1857. “Puars of Dewas Senior” is also a contribution to the history of the Marathas. The kingdom of Dewas was
founded by two Maratha brothers who came into Malwa with Baji Rao in 1728. EM Forster visited Dewas senior in 1912-1913 and in 1921 and wrote about its Maharaja Sir Tukoji Rao III and his son Vikramsinharao in “The Hill of Devi” (1953). Maharaja Vikramsinhrao Purt, the heir apparent to the Maharaja of Dewas senior, became the ruler of Kalhapur state as Chhatrapati Shahji Maharaj in 1947. Since Independence Dewas Senior merged in Madhya Bharat on June 27, 1948, and Madhya Bharat became part of Madhya Pradesh state on November 1, 1956. Kolhapur state too, was merged in Bombay state on March 1, 1949. All the princely states lost their identity after independence.

The three books on Maratha history (Kanhoji Angrey, Puars of Dewas Senior, and Chhatrapatis of Kolhapur) cover over three hundred years in 1200 pages and deal with details of the life of kings and their battles and establish the reputation of Malgonkar as a professional historian.

Kolhapur began as an independent kingdom in 1710, became a semi-independent princely state under the British in the nineteenth century, and merged into Bombay state in 1949. Between Shivaji I (1700-1714), its first Chhatrapati, and Chhatrapati Shahji Maharaj (1947), its twelfth and present Maharaja of Kolhapur lie two hundred and fifty years of history of twelve Chhatrapatis. It is essentially the story of their rise and fall, their great achievements and faded dreams.

Kolhapur was established as a result of the dispute that arose over the claim for the kingdom of Chhatrapati Shivaji between the descendants of his two sons, Sambhaji and Rajaram. Sambhaji’s descendants reigned over the Satara branch as we have seen Kolhapur’s present Chhatrapati is the former
ruler of Dewas Senior, Vikramsinharao Puar, who became the ruler of Kolhapur in 1947. The two ruling families came together earlier in 1908 when Tukojirao Puar III, Vikramsinharao’s father, married Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj’s daughter, Akka Saheb, the Kolhapur princess.

Kolhapur, the capital of the Kolhapur kingdom for nearly two and a half centuries, forms the heartland of the south-western portion of the Deccan. When Shivaji, the founder of the Maratha Empire, died in 1680, he left two sons, Sambhaji and Rajaram, but no decision to his successor. A struggle for power began in Rajgarh, the capital. Sambhaji had himself proclaimed king. Aurangjeb, the Mughal emperor, had come to the Deccan with a vast Army to crush the Marathas. He captured Sambhaji, inflicted barbarities on him, and killed him in 1687. Rajarm, Sambhaji’s step-brother, was proclaimed regent. He was only seventeen years old. He made a dash to the fort called jinji when Raigarh was attacked by the Mughals. Augangzeb ordered his commander Zulfikar Khan to proceed to jinji and to take the fort. Rajarm had himself proclaimed the Chhatrapati. Three men helped Rajaram to save the Maratha kingdom, Ramchandra Amatya, Santoji Ghorpade, and Dhanaji Jadhav. A secret understanding took place between Rajaram and Tarabai, a courageous and astute woman, who played an important role in founding the Kolhapur dynasty. Tarabai fought the Mughals, defied many advisors, and refused to accept Sambhaji’s son, Shahu, as the Maratha king, and set up her own son, Shivaji I (1700-1714) as the real Chhatrapati. For fifteen years, Tarabai dominated the Maratha history as regent. From her headquarters at Panhala, not Satara, the real capital of the Maratha kingdom, and her son was proclaimed as Shivaji I of the Kolhapur Dynasty. Shahu’s kingdom was ruled from another kingdom, Satara.
Sambhaji I (1740-1760) became the ruler after a coup which removed Shivaji I and Tarabai from power in 1714. Sambhaji carried on Shivaji’s war against Shahu and his Peshwa Balaji Vishwanath. On November 30, 1725, and April 13, 1731, there were two treaties between the warring cousins, Shahu of Satara and Sambhaji of Kolhapur, which put an end to their hostilities by a division of territories. The treaties recognized the two separate kingdoms and established the dividing line between them – the river Varna. North of the line was Shahu’s kingdom; south of this line was Sambhaji’s kingdom, Kolhapur. Sambhaji I died in 1760. The great battle of Panipat in 1761 rocked the very foundations of Maratha power. Shivaji II, a young boy, was enthroned as Chhatrapati in 1762. Jijabai, Sambhaji’s wife, preserved the Kolhapur Kingdom from becoming extinct. After her death in 1773, Durgabai conducted the affairs of the state on behalf of the still youthful Shivaji, who assumed full control of the affairs in 1779. Shivaji II died in 1813, leaving thirteen wives, six daughters, and six sons. Sambhaji II became Chhatrapati in 1813 at the age of thirteen. The period of disintegration of the Maratha confederacy and the takeover of the East India Company had begun. Kolhapur’s effort was directed towards extracting the most advantageous terms from the British who had now become the unchallenged masters of the land. The British flag was hoisted even on Peshwa’s place in Poona. Kolhapur ceased to be a kingdom. It was now a princely state, dependent on the British. Its borders were guaranteed by the overlords, the East India Company. Shahaji I became Chhatrapati in 1821. Now the British began to intervene in the internal affairs of Kolhapur and they forced the Chhatrapati to accept their own nominee for a chief minister. A British garrison also came to Kolhapur. Shivaji III (1838-1866), the next Chhatrapati, was only a boy of eight when he became Chhatrapati. For the thread ceremony, performed in 1839, Kolhapur minted for the last time its own coins. The East
India Company took complete control over the coinage after 1839. The East India Company, which at this time before the mutiny of 1857 was mercilessly abolishing one state after another was inclined to abolish or annex Kolhapur but did not do so. Kolhapur was to continue as a princely state; however the British decided to keep a British military force permanently in Kolhapur.

During the *Great Revolt of 1857* there was an uprising in Kolhapur in the form of an insurrection by men of the 27th Native Infantry. The Chhatrapati’s brother Chimsaheb was one of the leaders of the Revolt. The British officers took refuge in Residency. On July 31st, the 27th Infantry began to loot and go after their officers. By August 10, the British force was augmented by the arrival of a squadron under Lieutenant Kerr. The mutiny was quickly quelled by the British with additional reinforcements from Bombay. Colonel G Le Grand Jacob kept up the climate of terror secretly deported to Karachi. In 1863, Shivaji III was invested with ruling powers; however, his chief administrator had to be acceptable to the British. Three years later on August, 4, 1866, he died. Rajaram I was adopted as the successor in 1866 when he was sixteen years old. In May 1870, Captain West and the Maharaja set out for a trip to Europe and there Rajaram died in Florence after a short illness on November 30, 1870. He had spent more than four months in England. The British political agent in Kolhapur, Colonel Anderson managed the day-to-day administration. Shivaji IV became the Chhatrapati after an adoption ceremony in 1871 at the age of eight. Colonel West now became Shivaji’s guardian. Shivaji was conferred ‘*knight commander of the star*’ of India at a special durbar on January 1st, 1878. Later, the prince is said to have shown signs of mental derangement. He was kept segregated from everyone. On December 25, 1883, Shivaji IV died.
in Ahmadnagar as the result of injuries at the hands of his keeper, Private
Green.

Once again the question of finding a successor arose. Yashwantrao was adopted and given the family name of Shahu Maharaj in 1884. *Chhatrapatis of Kolhapur* ends at this point even though the new Chhatrapati ushered in Kolhapur’s most progressive and prosperous years. Kolhapur remained a princely state in the framework of British paramountcy for another sixty-five years and was integrated into Bombay state in 1949. And at last, Kolhapur like many princely states vanished into the vast totality of India.

*Chhatrapatis of Kolhapur* made the knowledge of Maratha history accessible to English speaking world for the first time. The history is based on Malgonkar’s research and scholarship. No doubt Puars of Dewas senior and *Chhatrapatis of Kolhapur* are in fact works of collaboration. *Puars of Dewas senior* is primarily based on Mr. V Gujjar’s ‘Sansthan Dewas Thorly Pati Puar Gharanyanchya Itihas’ in Marathi and the collection of papers published by him on the history of Puars. Gujjar’s book on Chhatrapati was also an important source for Malgonkar’s *Chhatrapatis of Kolhapur*. Mr. SM Garge’s ‘Karveer Riyasat’, also in Marathi, is the principal source book for Malgonkar’s *Chhatrapatis of Kolhapur*. Malgonkar depended also for his historical writings or what he calls ‘history circle’, a study and discussion group with Shahji Maharaj as the presiding officer. Here at these long sessions every single fact was checked and cross-checked. Colonel Dinkar Karkar did the maps for *Puars of Dewas Senior* as well as for *Chhatrapatis of Kolhapur*. 
Malgonkar’s books of history are important for what they reveal about his scholarly interests and intellectual preferences. They testify to his deep interest in Maratha history and to his gifts as a seasoned and accomplished story-teller. Critically, he can be ranked alongside the famous historians like Sarkar, Gibbon, or Churchill. Malgonkar’s works of history often seem to be defending the princes. Nevertheless, his works have more than transient worth as they make the knowledge of Maratha history accessible to the English-speaking world for the first time. To quote Padmanabhan, “He has made Indian history and consciousness intelligible to us in a more vivid and striking manner.” (136)

These books invite us to meet Admiral Kanhoji Angrey, the rulers of Dewas senior and of Kolhapur, and help us to understand their achievements and failures in the long history of India. Stylistically, too, these books are of interest for they show a novelist’s way of dealing with formal history. Malgonkar finds in the Maratha history and interesting tale that needs to be told in English without, as far as possible, distorting historical facts. His history books, in this sense, read like novels. It should also be noted that Malgonkar has always regarded history and fiction as closely interrelated. He himself has moved from history (Kanhoji, Angrey, 1959) to fiction (Distant Dram, 1960) and back again history (Chhatrapatis of Kolhapur, 1971) and fiction (The Devil’s wind, 1972). In one of his interviews with James Y Dayanand, he explains,

“To my mind, history and fiction have not only many elements in common, history now forms the basis for most of my work... I think the bonds of all fiction are these facts; and the facts are
fantastic in Indian history, as they are in any history.” (Manohar Malgonkar 87)

He has done work both in professional history and historical fiction. In Malgonkar’s opinion history should be approached through both of these ways in order to get a balanced account of a particular period. On asking by James Y Dayanand, should one turn to both formal history and historical fiction? He answers,

“I think historical fiction is a good way of making people swallow history. Sometimes history seems too dry for the average reader, at least the way it is written by most historians. I take pride in saying that when I write history I make even history certainly readable. After all there are characters in it; they have feelings. Sometimes one is handicapped by the subject. Both my books Puars of Dewas senior and Chhatrapatis of Kolhapur are commissioned works; they were not books I would have chosen to write. After all someone paid me a lot of money to write these books, and I was limited by the characters and the nature of the subject.” (Manohar Malgonkar 88)

Not only has Malgonkar based some of his incidents and characters on the available recorded historical material but has evinced keen interest in setting the record straight, as he has perceived truth of the matter, trying to bust the canards. Malgonkar’s great achievement is that he has succeeded in offering his own explanation against the official version, to correct the historical aberration.

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