



Various intertwined complexities of themes along with mood of partition in the novel '*A Bend in the Ganges*' by Manohar Malgaonkar

Ramen Goswami

(Research Scholar), Roll:02 (English Department)
Magadh University, Bodh Gaya, India

ABSTRACT

'*A Bend in the Ganges*' attains universality and marathon splendour. Malgaonkar depicts the deeper issues of human environment. The novel is symbolic of his art. In it he explores peacefulness, hostility and positive vision through the resources of a romantic novel. It is an image of his visualization of human nature. The other frequent element in the novel is theme of vengeance. It is forth work of fiction published in 1964. E.M. Forster choose it as the best volume of the year 1964. It stands out as an illustration of Malgaonkar's insight into human existence. It is a familial story of three characters against the background of the overwrought years of the Freedom Struggle. The novelist explores the dreadful and ineffectuality of the partition riots in the novel. He also attempts to identify the inadmissibility of any philosophy being valid for the many random and incomprehensible situation of life. It deals with the developed ideologies – i.e. passivity and brutality as the ways of life of Gian and Debi-dayal correspondingly. But finally they learn the unavoidable reality of life. They realise the ineffectiveness of such ideologies and they find real realization in the humanizing power of love. A group of people in the novel believes Gandhi's memorandum of non-violence as a mere political expedient.

Keywords: Separation, Viewpoint, Feud, Nationalism, Bloodshed

Plot of the novel

The book is divided into thirty six chapters which form three unceremonious parts. These parts cover the actions and incidents from 1937 to 1947. The narrative portrays the narration of Indian Freedom Struggle. The voyage from the nationalist association to Communal riots at the time of the Independence and separation of the country. The novel is full of exploit and quest, vengeance and aggression. The achievement has wide array and it remains epical and genuine all through. It is luminous recounting of the story. It is energetic, theatrical yet sensible. The novel begins with the Gandhian Programme of beacon of the British cloth and ends with the separation, violence and carnage. The novel moves ahead quickly. The novelist uses the tool of two heroes or 'an adversative pair of anti-heroes'. Gian Talwar, a young boy from a poor farmer family, has come to Duriabad for college studies. He becomes the admirer of Mahatma Gandhi. Debi-Dayal is his institution mate belongs to a rich refined family of Duriabad. He joins the radical movement against the British. Gian and Debi-Dayal are sentenced to life and sent to the Andamans for two diverse reasons. Gian realizes uselessness of his ideology of peacefulness and kills a murderer of his brother, Hari. Debi is betrayed by Shafi and is trapped by the police and sent to the Andamans. In the Andamans, Gian seems to be transformed a lot. He is dishonest and lies for the comfort of his life. He works for Mulligan and develops hostility with Debi. Debi is uncomplicated and devoted to his ideology, whereas Gian changes very habitually for comforts..

When Japanese seized the Andamans, both Debi and Gian returns to India. Gian wants to live relaxing life. He takes a job with Debi's father's business; loves Debi's sister also wins her love and at last leads the life as he requirements. On the other hand, Debi after coming to India first searches Shafi and takes vengeance by import Shafi's preferred Mumtaz against his betrayal. In fact he doesn't love her but Mumtaz's blameless love and care for Debi weakens him so he marries her. Unluckily both Debi and Mumtaz are killed by the Muslim gundaas while returning to Debi's parents at Duriabad. The book develops a vengeance motive throughout. The actions in the novel disgrace non-violence; they show its uselessness in context of a life circumstances. The book concedes the realism of violence but shows it self-consuming and disparaging. The novelist portrays the world of aggression and reprisal. He makes the aggression manageable by rising the vision of love..

Intertwined complexity of Themes in the novel

Manohar Malgonkar is recognized for his brave and challenging themes. 'A Bend in the Ganges' is known for its different themes – i.e. political, separation, ideology of peacefulness and hostility, vengeance and love, love and sex, quest for fulfilment breakdown, communal dissonance. All the themes are offered against the background of India's Freedom Struggle and misfortune of Partition riots. The novelist depicts the themes in relation to human environment. The philosophy of 'Ahimsa' – (nonviolence) and truth which the Mahatma offered to the world not only as a political expedient but as an ideology and a way of life..

Ideology of non-violence

The writer probes that the principles of Ahimsa-peacefulness, reality is not only a political expedient but a viewpoint and a way of life. Here peacefulness is the chief theme. Gian Talwar, a young student comes from Konshet village to the metropolis for his higher learning. He learns the ideas of Mahatma Gandhi's -peacefulness. He becomes the follower of Gandhiji and wears a Gandhian clothing and a sacred thread. He believes that reality and non-violence are the customs of life. 'Peacefulness is the non-violence of the courageous; arising not from weakness but from courage demanding better sacrifices than ordinary combating men are call upon to make'. Gian has friendship with Debi-Dayal, Shafi Usman and Basu but all of them feel right to a radical group. They make fun of Gian and his statement of belief of non-violence. Shafi comments – "Gandhi, by weakening the spirit of men, making us all into sheep and cattle, will only multiply the sacrifice. A million shall die, I tell you – a million! For each mad who should have died in the cause of freedom, Gandhi will sacrifice ten. That is what non-violence will do to this country.'

Initially Gian follows Gandhiji and peacefulness but during the family dispute he learns its uselessness. Then he turns to be aggressive and vindictive. The family dispute between 'The Little House' and 'The Big House' results in the tragic assassinate of Hari at the hands of Vishnu Dutt. In return Gian murders Vishnu Dutt as vengeance. He realises that faith of peacefulness is just a biased expedience. It can't be a viewpoint of life. Similarly Tekchand, Debi-Dayal's father views the dogma of peacefulness is only a political expedience. 'Gandhiji's message is merely a political expedient that for the bulk of them it has no deeper significance'.

Violence and Revenge

Violence and revenge are the leading themes in the novel. Each incident in the novel is prearranged on the idea of revenge and hostility. They are the innermost motives. Every personage nurses a kernel of violence and revenge in his heart and in the course of time uses it as his missile. In family quarrel Hari realises only hostility alone can regain human dignity. He sacrifices his own existence for the land. Then, Gian's requirements to take revenge of Hari's murder by killing Vishnu Dutt, the killer of Hari. All the chief characters in the novel Debi-Dayal, Ramoshi Ghasita, Sundari, Shafi Usman nurse vengeance motive in their mind and when occasion occurs they use aggression to seek completion. Sundari takes retribution on her husband by doing the same what her companion has done to her. Debi-Dayal buys and later on loves and weds Mumtaz only to injure Shafi. As a result Shafi throws acid on the countenance of Mumtaz but instead of Mumtaz, Debi burns. Then Shafi spreads the venom of socialism in the society and plans to vengeance Debi by kidnapping Sundari but fails as Sundari throws the sculpture of Shiva towards him and Shafi is murdered. In this way impracticality and creed of peacefulness become worthless before human intuition and human behaviour. The action of the novel moves from personal quarrel to national massacre which illustrates absence of peacefulness. The reality of hostility reaches its climax in the separation holocaust.

Mood of Partition

The novel treats the difficulty of Indian patriotism against British Colonialism. But soon the disagreement between Hindus and Muslims becomes stern. Communal dissonance becomes the reason of violence. The joy of liberty is overshadowed by the disaster of Partition. Debi- Dayal, the protagonist, takes a train to Pakistan to relinquish his parents. Through him the most horrendous accounts of collective riots are portrayed: "..... how the sunrise of our freedom found millions done to death mutilated or shamed, and tens of millions disposed of all that they had owned and cherished and brutally tossed on the other side of the new artificial border India and Pakistan."

The face of humankind is blackened by the disfigurement, mass murder and ethical degradation. Events of fighting, bloodshed and atrocities are the outcome of the separation. The officials and technicians are full of activity in the immigration. Mobs rule the streets, ablaze; prowling, killing, dishonouring women and mutilating kids, even animals sacred to the other community became the lawful targets of reprisals. The entire terra firma is being spattered by the blood of the fatalities. The roads are heartbroken with dead bodies. Gian Talwar, Debi-dayal, Sundari, Shafi Usman, Mumtaz, Tek Chand, his wife Radha- all of them are caught up in the public holocaust. The division brings the enormous exchange of Muslim and Hindu populations. Freedom Fighters of Pre Independence India such as Debi, Shafi, Basu are rehabilitated into the fanatics. Paradoxically they cause their own obliteration. The division has raised many questions which have no answers. Debi-Dayal is brutally killed by the Muslim rioters. His wife Mumtaz is removed from him. Thus communal brutality follows Freedom as its Fellow-traveller.

In another occurrence the face of Basu's wife is overcooked with sulphuric acid filled in an electric bulb which is the infamous weapon of Hindu-Muslim feud in those days. Basu's wife's face is representative of what has happened to India. The cause behind the attack is Muslim fanatics trust Basu has joined Hindu Mahasabha. Thus the novel is the objective surveillance of history particularly of Partition of India. The title of the novel itself signifies division from something or somebody, to drawn from the Ramayana. "At a bend in the Ganges, they paused to have a look at the land they were leaving". It symbolizes division, partition and sufferings that follow..

Quest for fulfilment

The novel is concerned with the theme of individual's pursuit for fulfilment in moral uniqueness. It is a political and truth-seeking allegory. Gian and Debi-Dayal represent two different philosophies of life. Gian accepts the path of peacefulness and reality. But in his communication with a vital event in life, he castoffs his values and kills Vishnu Dutta, the killer of his brother. The happening changes his life and principles completely. For example,

while in the Andamans and consequently outside the jail he leads a crafty and fraudulent life full of lies to get him to a relaxing position. Towards the end he affirms the meaning of his life through an act of magnanimous love born of deep understanding.

Debi-Dayal follows the path of cruelty. He is betrayed by his mate Shafi Usman. He is suffered and disgraced at the hands of the British establishment in the Andamans. His sympathy for Mumtaz transforms him and compels him to re-examine the philosophy of his life. Though Debi-dayal and Gian have their distinct natures and differing ways come to apprehend the same factor- confirmation through love. In this course of time Gian survives and continues to produce while Debi-Dayal becomes a victim of the Hindu-Muslim riots. Gian is ready to give up everything for the sake of his Sundari likewise Debi sacrifices his life for the sake of his love for Mumtaz.

Sundari, a different important character in the novel achieves completion in vengeance. She is a woman with her information's. She can't stand insincerity and falsity. Her high regard for her brother Debi-Dayal distances her away from her husband, Gopal who despises Debi's indulgence in terrorist activities as shameful acts. She doesn't like his flippant attitude to marriage. She uses Gian in seeking implementation in revenge on her spouse by laying down with Gian at the shore and calls her husband to see. It is a death-blow to their nuptials. She is fierce in her act of carnage Shafi with the idol of Shiva. She is inflexible in her quest for completion in revenge.

Narrative Technique in the novel

The author is a brilliant narrator of the legend in *A Bend in the Ganges*. He is an viewer of the historical events of the time. Therefore the recounting is valid. He narrates the measures so superbly that the novel has become an admirable piece of storytelling. He uses a quickly moving narrative for an epic portrayal of the intricate forces which lead to the Partition tragedy. He mirrors the intensely rooted caste prejudices in the Indian civilization. He uses the third person narrative technique. No doubt the storyteller of the story is the writer himself. He presents the genuine rural world. He is also keen in the surveillance of the human nature and presents changing trends in the society. The achievement moves forward quite swiftly.

Setting of the novel

The exploit of the novel is set at dissimilar places. Most of the action takes place at Duriabad in West Punjab, the most susceptible part of the country during the time of Indian Freedom Struggle. It is the place where Gian comes for learning, the plots are made and implemented adjacent to the British but during the public riots after Partition it becomes the land of death. It is the place where Debi workings for the Freedom of Nation and is killed heartlessly. Andamans is another place where the action takes place. Similarly the setting changes from the Andamans to Bombay, to Duriabad – some part is set in Lahore. Thus the novelist makes the action to move from village to the metropolis and to village. The novelist portrays the country India luminously.

Debi-Dayal as the protagonist:

Debi-Dayal is another significant character in the novel. He is a central character. He is a man of his own philosophy. He represents the philosophy of violence. He is an passionate nationalist terrorist. He is betrayed by his companion Shafi Usman. He undergoes anguish and disgrace at the hands of the British authorities in the Andamans, collaborates with the Japanese and comes back to India. He is the only offspring of Diwan Tekchand of Kerwad family. He becomes a radical. His choice of aggression is purposeful. He trains himself in the art of hostility. When he was a boy saw seen two Scottish armed forces trying to rape his mother. His individual emotion of revenge turns into the ideology of separatist terrorism against the British. After coming back to India he joins a Tea Company in Assam as Kaluram and leads a inert life withdrawn from government. His journey of life is from hostility to non-violence. Blameless love of Mumtaz transforms him. His compassion for Mumtaz transforms him and forces him to think again the standpoint of his life. After returning to India, he searches of Shafi Usman. He goes to Lahore and finds him in a brothel in order to settle his explanation with Shafi. He buys Shafi's keep Mumtaz and wishes to marry her. But there arises the shared hitch in their wedding. The fury of communism breaks out and while on their way to Duriabad, both Debi and Mumtaz are killed by the extreme Muslim rioters.

Conclusion:

However, Malgonkar never maintain hostility as a way of life. He affirms the charge of love as transcending all barriers against the environment of horrid communal riots. Love transcends violent behaviour and peacefulness – the genuine and the fantastic. Love brings about independence and realization to the folks. The novel is quite true in the portrayal of the historic surroundings of the Indian Freedom Struggle. It also examines the sleaze of the romantic freedom fighters in the background of communal loyalties. The novel is chiefly concerned with the theme of individual's mission for fulfilment in moral individuality. There are some characters in the novel which are used to disclose the richness of life. They are sensible and multifaceted but can't be branded as good and bad. They stand for the complexity of life and they have strong quest for individuality or self discovery..

References:

-
- Malgonkar Manohar : A Bend in the Ganges, Delhi : Orient Paperbacks 1964
 G.S. Amur, Manohar Malgonkar, New Delhi: Arnold-Heinemann India, 1973.
 James Y. Dayananda, Manohar Malgonkar, Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1974.
 Rajagopalachari M.: The Novels of Manohar Malgonkar, Delhi; PrestigeBooks 1988.
 More D.R., India and Pakistan : Fell Apart Jaipur; Shruti Publications, 2004.