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Religious Tolerance in Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges*

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Abstract:

Manohar Malgonkar, an Indo-Anglian novelist, short story writer, historian, hunter, and planter, wrote numerous works, including plays, literary articles, and film scripts. His work, though not large in number, compensates for its quality. In the 19th century, Indian English writing flourished with nationalistic fervor, influencing the socio-political conditions of the time and fostering a flourishing contemporary literature.

Keywords: Freedom fighters, nationalistic fervor, socio-political, harmony, religious

Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges* addresses communalism, a social issue affecting society and country development. Freedom fighters Gian Talwar, Debi Dayal, and Shafi Usman aim to free the country from British rule. Initially, harmony arises when Hindus and Muslims form the Ram-Rahim Club, despite religious differences. However, deep-rooted religious fanaticism threatens this unity, as Jai Ram and Jai Rahim are secret greetings.

The conversation between Hafiz Khan and Shafi Ushman shows the religious hatred:

“I am surprised at you” Hafiz
said with passion, his beady tor-
mented eyes, looking straight into
Shafi’s.

“we who once ruled this country
as conquerors shall be living
here as inferior citizens, as the
salves of the Hindus; unless we
heed the warning and stand for
ourselves.”(Manohar Malgonkar, *A Bend in the Ganges*, p. 90.)

Hafiz also reminds shafi of Dasahara riots in Bombay in which the police men shot down muslims picking them out.

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So under the grip at communalistic feeling Hafiz feels that it is useless to drive away the Britishers with the collaboration of the Hindus:

“with the leaving of the Britishers,
the Hindus will take over. They are
clever and cleverer than ourselves
in their trickery.(Manohar Malgonkar, *A Bend in the Ganges*, p. 92.)

The novel explores the rise of communal hatred and violence in society, with Muslims viewing Hindus as more dangerous than foreigners, and Hindus becoming suspicious of Muslim terrorists. The novelist also highlights corruption in society, such as influence, blackmail, flattery, and bribes. The murder of Vian's brother Hari is a prime example of corruption, as the police department fails to identify the weapon used. The novelist also examines the pressure to withdraw the case, leading to a breakdown of idealism and a realization of the unreality of non-violence as a way of life. Indian Judges can be bribed but it is a different thing with the English Judges:

Thank God, there is an english
Judge we can expect complete
fairness.(Manohar Malgonkar , *A Bend in the Ganges*, p. 55.)

The novelist explores the plight of women, particularly Debi's mother, who is subjected to cruelties, sexual exploitation, and harassment, highlighting her hatred towards Britishers through an attempted rape. The novelist describes this in the following words:

... In the bright, summer moon.
light he saw the enormous dark
figure of the soldier leaning
over the woman who' stood rigid
and silent against the wall.
The woman was his mother. He
had stared numb with shock
and fear and saw the soldier
fumble and then the man had
given a vicious tug at the
waist band of her sari and
there stood his mother against
the wall, her body bathed in
moon-light.(Manohar Malgonkar , *A Bend in the Ganges*, p. 69.)

In Malgonkar's novel, Debi is filled with revenge for the Britishers after an attempted rape. Subdari, her husband, seeks revenge on her husband Gopal, who prefers prostitutes. Sundari, who dislikes such behavior, avenges her husband by going to the

\seashore with Gian Talwar. Malgonkar provides realistic glimpses of Indian life through Shafi, Debi, Gopal, Sundari, and Malini, accepting relationships outside marriage, such as Sundari and Gian.

Works Cited:

Malgonkar, Manohar, *A Bend in the Ganges*. Hamish Hamilton, London, 1964

