

SYNOPSIS**THE CONCEPT OF HERO IN MANOHAR MALGONKAR'S
HISTORICAL NOVELS**

Manohar Malgonkar is an eminent Indo-Anglian novelist, a historian, a short story writer, a playwright, who also wrote a few literary and non-literary articles. He shot into limelight with his first novel Distant Drum (1960), and is today one of the leading Indo-Anglian novelists. The number of his works is not large, but their lack in quantity is compensated by their rich quality. His very first novel shows him as a man of refined taste who knows the art of story telling and plot construction and the art of keeping the readers spell-bound. Whether he is telling the story of Indian Army (Distant Drum) or is turning the pages of the troublesome days of the partition of India (A Bend in ^{the} Ganges) or is discussing the problem of the princely states after 1947 (The Princes), he has spontaneous knack of creating the authentic atmosphere and weaving the plots on an epic scale. In all these Malgonkar has a consummate skill. He brought to bear upon the art of story telling his vivid experiences in a number of spheres and his keen razor-like perception.

Manohar Malgonkar wrote the historical novels- Distant Drum (1960), Combat of Shadows (1962), The Princes (1963), A Bend in ^{the} Ganges (1964), The Devil's wind

II

(1972), and the historical work-Paurs of Dewas Senior (1971) Chhatrapatis of Kolhapur (1971).

His historical novels have on authentic historical background and the principal characters and the incidents they employ are fictional. For the first four novels Malgonkar chose the period 1937-53 of the Indian History. He was fascinated by the impact of Hitler's war on men, institutions, and attitudes. Moving from peace to war in 1939 and again from war to peace in 1945, he subjected things to a double shift of change and transformation. Malgonkar's novels are valuable documents of history and politics in India, conceived on a large scale. They are full of action, they are exciting stories. They present particular phases in our national life.

The ancient Indian aesthetic theorists conceived and prescribed certain patterns of Heroism which became the basis for the traditional hero in the world of literature.

Dhirodatta(firm & strong minded) Dhirodhata (brave, noble minded but haughty) Dhirasanta (brave and calm,) and dhirlalita (positive and reckless) that was the characteristic categorization of the Indian Classical Hero. Ralph Waldo Emerson defines Heroism as a sort of military attitude towards everything evil in the world; According to Mayne

III

'Heroism is a quality of being slightly larger than life. But more than being slightly larger than life, a hero has to be slightly larger than death'.

Of 'Heroes' Carlyle says. "These were leaders of men, these great ones, the modellers, patterners and in a wide sense creators of whatever the general mass contrived to do or attain." The Hero is person who is respected for his bravery, dignity, courage, and noble qualities. The Hero is the chief character in a work of literature. The Hero is always powerful, dominant, social, active and superior to his fellow beings. The epic heroes of the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Bhagavata were Divine Incarnations who not only assumed the ideal characteristics but also discharged the primary function of eradicating Evil, and enthroning Dharma (Religion). The Greek Tragedians-Sophocles, Euripides, and Aeschylus-served as models to the Aristotelian prescription, and their heroes attained spiritual Glory, although they fell owing to a fatal flaw. The University wits introduced new types of heroes. Shakespeare created an amazing variety of heroes : historical, romantic and realistic.

The concepts of Heroism and Hero are constantly changing. In modern literature, the concept of Anti-Hero is dominant. There is a great difference between a hero and an anti-hero. Curiously enough, F.R.Karl finds the anti-heroic

IV

type even within the works of Dickens. For M.J.Murphy, "A comic hero is an anti-hero". The other two types of hero given by him are a traditional hero and a tragic hero. The anti-hero is a powerless, an inactive, an introvert, a timid and an anti-social man, i.e. Jim in Conrad's Lord Jim, Bloom in Ulysses, and Stephen De dalus in A Portrait of An Artist As Young Man of James Joyce. Both the Traditional and the new concepts of Hero have influenced the Indian writers' treatment of Heroes in their work.

Malgonkar has made it clear that he will only write about people he has experience of, and these are the middle classes and hunters. These people have appeared in his novels as his favourite characters who might be called his Heroes. In fact most of them seem to be built on Malgonkar's succession of careers as an army officer, a Shikari, a Businessman, a planter, a conservative politician, before he came to fiction writing.

Thus Malgonkar's concept of Hero is not only based on history and tradition but also on his personal experience. The hero of Distant Drum is Kiran Garud, an army officer. In The Princes Abhay, the heir apparent, to the state of Begwad is the hero, Henry Winton's the hero of Combat of Shadwos. Gian is the hero of A Bend In Ganges.

V

The study of his novels reveals the fact that the treatment of Hero and Heroism is one of the techniques Malgonkar employs right from his first novel Distant Drum. I wish to comment on Manohar Malgonkar concept of Hero and also to elaborate his treatment of Heroes with reference to his historical novels Distant Drum (1960), Combat of Shadows (1962), The Princes (1963) and A Bend in^{the} Ganges (1964).