

CHAPTER - I

HISTORICAL NOVEL

1.1 Historical Novel : Definition and criticism

I propose to discuss some of the most distinguished critics who have added to the growing corpus of theoretical considerations of the historical novel. According to John Buchan, 'The historical novel is simply a novel which attempts to reconstruct the life and recapture the atmosphere of an age other than that of the writer'¹ or Paul Leicester says about the historical novels, 'the historical novel, is one which grafts upon a strong, actual incidents or persons well enough known to be recognised as historical'². According to Arthur Touretelot: "The historical novel is simply a reconstruction of some segment of life in the past it creates, it breaths and it is circumscribed by the small things in the lives of the characters".³ Jonathan Nield believes that 'a novel is rendered historical by the introduction of dates, personages or events to which identification can be really given'⁴ Avrom Fleishman offers us a definition- 'The historical novel is a novel which is pre-eminently suited to telling how individual lives were shaped at specific moments of history, and how this shaping reveals the character of those historical periods.'⁵

We find all the above mentioned definitions have no fundamental difference in them, because all the critics have accepted that the historical novel should deal with some kind of past. There is a process to fictionalise history which gives birth to so many problems, since historical novel does not take place by mere placing of historical characters and events together. It is a subtle unification of history and the novel which is based on the basis of artistic qualities; its expression appeals to the emotions and intellect of the reader. In other words, the historical novel is essentially an imaginary narrative of the past in which the historically indentifiable dates, events and characters are involved. I think the most inclusive statement is made in this context in the New Encyclopaedia Britannica :

⁶ The historical novel is a work of fiction that attempts to convey the spirit, manners and social conditions of a past age with realistic detail and fidelity to historical fact. The work may deal with actual historical personages, as does Robert Graves' *I Claudius* (1934), or it may contain a mixture of fictional and historical characters. It may focus on single historical event, as does Franz

Werfel's Forty Days of Musa Dash (1934), which dramatizes the defense of an American stronghold. More often it attempts to portray a broader view of a past society in which great events are reflected by their impact on the private lives of fictional individuals. In the twentieth century, distinguished historical novels such as Arthur Koestler's The Gladiators (1934), Zoe Oldenbourg's Destiny of Fire (1960), and Mary Renault's The King Must Die (1958) exemplify an important function of the fictional imagination to interpret remote events in human and particular terms, to transform documentary fact with the assistance of imaginative conjecture, into immediate sensuous and emotional experience.' 6

We should ^{take} into account this comprehensive description of the genre. We find that the historical novelist has to work on two levels while fictionalizing history : (1) He has to act as a historian and (2) he has to act as a novelist or a creative artist. In this way the construction of historical

novel can be studied on the two levels :

- I. There is the recreation of the past itself, the recreation of historical atmosphere, collection and selection of historical facts and establishing co-relationship between them.
- II. There is the transformation of these historical facts into art by weaving and exhibiting the web of human feelings behind them and establishing the artist's point of view towards the facts, the age and its culture. Thus the historical novelist is equally concerned with history and the novel. The historical novelist is basically a novelist a creative artist, while maintaining the personality of historian and not a historian.

The historical novel does not merely describe the actual historical events as history does. The novelist's depiction of historical facts is incidental. It is the main concern of the historical novelist to deal with the dramatic presentation of the actual events and not with the actual events. He depicts the emotional character of the period, so he creates a certain period. In his depiction there are subtleties of the past human life. So H. Butterfield points out that the historical novel is a 'form' of history and not history proper he adds :

'If we find nothing else, we find the sentiment of history, the feeling for the past in the historical novel. On one side, therefore the historical novel is 'form' of history It is a way of treating the past '.7

Joseph Turner illustrates this point further, who believes that the historical novel as a literary form can not be characterized by setting out formal elements shared by both the disciplines. He gives reasons for this in the following way:

'First, because there is an inevitable circularity, if not a certain pseudo-empiricism, in such attempts at generic description : isolating common denominators restricts us by the large, to recapitulating an aprion definition. Secondly because formal properties may not be the genre's distinguishing characteristics, it is the content more than form, after all, that sets historical novels off from other fiction. finally and perhaps most importantly, because

the very diversity of the genre frustrates our range to generalize, and condemns our results should we persist to triviality. '8.

Turner pointed out the autonomy of the historical novel and has shown that it can not be compared with formal history. Turner stresses the content of the novel but we can say, the formal categories of the novel are equally important as form and content are not separable from each other, they are one.

While outlining the rise and growth of the historical novel Encyclopaedia Britannica observes :

'It (the historical novel) has at least three fairly distinct kinds. In one, where actual historical persons and actions are the basis of the novel, the work is really fictionalized history : Robert Graves Brilliant Roman reconstruction such as I, Claudius, for example. At the opposite extreme is the historical romance or period novel in which the past is used merely as an exciting and exotic back ground for adventures

.....quasimilitary in Dumas, Three Musketeers, sentimental in Margaret Mitchell's Gone with the Wind. Between the two extremes of antiquarianism and romantic fantasy is the historical novel proper, where, there is an authentic historical background, but where the chief characters and actions are fictional. Sir Walter Scott's novels are the classic models of the same and his example suggests that the success of the historical novel tends to be proportional to its closeness to the author's own time : Waverly (1914) deals with times that were just within living memory '.9

The Encyclopaedia Britannica under the heading the historical novel, includes all the three varieties : The historical actuality, the historical romance and the historical novel proper and asserts that the historical novel proper, a category is the real historical novel. The historical actuality means the fictionalized history which puts major stress on events and characters which are actual ; whereas the historical romance is full of imagination in which there is a sprinkling history. The writers of the historical actualities

regarded their work similar to that of the history writers and they took pains while establishing the authenticity of their characters and actions. For Example : George Eliot destroyed the first draft of her manuscript of Romola as there were numerous factual mistakes in the plot construction.

Bulwer Lytton who is one of the greatest personalities in the field of the historical novels and a close follower of Sir Walter Scott calls his novels in actual practice historical romances; but 'the term can be applied to his novels because according to The Encyclopaedia Britannica they are 'actualities', 'the fictionalized history'. In his novels, he created the great personages of the past epochs who were carelessly dismissed in the long and loose records. The historical actuality leans on the historical objectivity hence it is not the historical novel proper.

Bulwer Lytton declares :

'For the main materials of the three
Historical Romances I have composed,
I consulted the original authorities
of the time with a care as scrupulous
as of intending to write, not a fiction
but history. And having formed the
best judgement I could of the events

and characters of the age, I adhered faithfully to what, as Historian, I should have held to be time course and time causes of the great political events, and the essential attributes of the principal agents ' .10

In other words we can say his novels were not historical romances, though Bulwer Lytton called them so, they are the historical actualities and fictionalized history.

The historical romance is the other variety of the historical novel which forfeits its claim to the title of the historical novel, as there is use of romantic fancy. The romance writer used history very casually and relied on fancy mainly. There were many followers of Scott who used the past merely as an exciting and exotic background for the adventures they narrated in their novels. J. Simmons comments upon the excess of incidents and romantic fantasy in the novels of the historical romancers. J. Simmons points out :

'The strong lines of Ainsworth and James are all action and intrigue, rapidly developing and swiftly moving tales, depending upon the utilization of lost heirs,

~~lost heirs~~, incredible escapes, mistaken identities, fantastic coincidences and missing letters.¹¹

Scott's followers were mostly historical romancers who used all the devices of a romance-intrigues, complicated plots, coincidences, swift and moving tales, mistaken identities etc., and history in their novels. History lingered in their novels in the hazy background. According to G.H. Lewes 'the historical romance is a by word for fancy,'¹² so the historical romance can not be included in the category ¹² of the historical novel. E.A. Baker defines the historical novel as in contrast with history; he observes :

⁶To present and interpret facts is the historian's business; to summon up a past epoch, to show men and women alive in it and behaving as they must have behaved in the circumstances, is the labour and say of the genuine historical novelist.¹³

Baker points out that an age lives by the action and behaviour of its characters, the characters are of supreme importance in a historical novel, whereas events dominate in history. The historical novel creates characters and history deals with facts. In a historical novel the poetic truth

is more important than the factual truth, whereas in history factual truth is more important than the poetic truth. A historical novelist describes the actions of the characters that they must have acted out in the circumstances and not actually performed or might have or might have not performed but history is dull, dry and often uninteresting many times because of its loyalty to the factual truth. A historical novelist recreates the past with his living imagination. The historical novel draws its lively fascination from the fact. We find, Scott had this lively imagination, but his predecessors lacked it. E.A. Baker further adds :

'The importance of historical novelists before Scott was due to this entire lack of the historical imagination', 14.

Scott is a successful historical novelist who recreated the past from the dry bones of history. He revitalized the past in his novels successfully. E.A. Baker argues :

'The historical novel shall be just such a novel of manners as a contemporary might have written, though in language intelligible today', 15.

According to Baker, a historical novelist must know the people and how they lived and carried on their private and personal relations and concerns. A historical novelist can think of the people in a remote past and imagine all that had happened, all that had been learned and had changed man's very being in the past. Thus historical imagination is a prime necessary quality of a historical novelist.

A.B. Tourtellot welcomes the historical novel as 'the present discovering its own past'. He says, 'It is a hybrid form of art, springing from history and fiction just as opera springs from music and drama' 16. The historical element is more important than the fictional element in a historical novel. He adds :

'As a general rule, if you deprive the historical novel of its historical ingredient, you will have as little left as you would on stripping an opera of its music', 17.

Tourtellot lays emphasis on the fictional element in the historical novel, According to him , the historical novelist succeeds in stressing the historical element by concentrating on time, place and people, the three spheres. The historical novel is simply a reconstruction

of some segment of life in the past, it creates, it breathes and it is restricted by the small things in the lives of its characters. Thus the historical and the fictional these two elements create a historical novel. Tourtellot thinks the former as the superior, which demands more attention and the historical element as the result of reconstruction of past, description of the minute and insignificant and not because of the use of any prominent character or event. In other words, the historical novelist creates the atmosphere of the age of which he is writing; hence, he succeeds in his art of writing.

According to Hervey Allen, there is much confusion that surrounds the historical novel :

'This confusion arises from the misconception the historical novel is a kind a mule like animal begotten by the as of fiction of the brood mare of fact and hence a sterile monster.' 18

According to Allen, the historical novel is simply a door and the novelist leads his readers thorough it into other world than their own. Allen adds : ' It is not a door to a store-house of records and specimens of the past. The novelist is the portal of a theatre. Once the reader passes it

what he sees a going on the author not the actual past, but a drama arranged by the author about the past.' 19.

Allen remarks : 'The work of the historical novelist is an illusion and it is not a delusion.²⁰ The historical novelist is not constrained by the historical facts for creating an illusion, he alters facts, circumstances, people and dates and projects the psychological truth by altering literary and factual truth, Thus he produces more significant effect. The factual truth and philosophical truth - these two truths are found in a historical novel; and the philosophical truth is very important. The historical novelist upholds the philosophical truth by altering the factual truth. Being an artist, the historical novelist shapes his story from the meaningless data of facts into a form and a pattern in history. His book has a design which is related to the whole general pattern which he has chosen. There is a human meaning which is rich in emotional and philosophical values. Allen points out :

'Every good historical novel is a complete work of art and the artist mixes his raw colours, his facts on his palette; so that they will blend into the tone of his picture as a whole.'²¹

According to Allen, ' A great historical novelist never mistakes reality for reason'.²². Thus in a historical novel the philosophical truth is more important than the factual truth. The historical novelist invents a general design for his material as well as he shapes the material artistically and he gives the reader a more vivid, adequate and significant apprehension of past epochs than the historian who carries facts about them.

Paul Leicester Ford observes that the historical novel is a very loosely applied expression and he points out

Superficially it is apparent that an historical novel is one which grafts upon a story actual incidents and persons well enough known to be recognised as historical elements. '²³

However, Ford rejects this line of demarkation, as it depends on the reader's knowledge of history. Mere introduction of historical incidents or characters in a novel does not make it historical, even most correct historical novels lack the historical truth. The events and characters in the historical novel must be typical, and not exceptional. In other words, the historical novelist must use the historical atmosphere. The historical truth of a historical novel does not lie in the use of actual incidents or real characters, but in

the use of historical atmosphere. Ford says :

'The great historical novel of the past has not been notable because of its use of historical events and characters, but because of its use of a historical atmosphere, such as Scott created in his Ivanhoe and Thackeray in his Esmond'.²⁴

Ford noted the fact that the lapse of time is necessary between the actual happening or the incidents and their presentation in a historical novel. According to a few critics and historical novelists, there should be a certain distance of time, needed to give the reader the detachment and the disinterestedness necessary for the historical treatment of the historical novelist's material. In this connection Orville Prescott observes:

'A historical novel is any novel in which action takes place before the author's birth so that he must inform himself about the period by study.'²⁵

Ford does not agree to this opinion that a historical novel must deal with a remote past. According to him that partisan feeling is a matter not of a generation, but of an individual.... and it is as easy for a fair-minded writer to treatment of contemporary events without feeling as those of a hundred years ago.²⁶

He points out to the American historical novel about the Revolution and the Civil War and adds that according to them the distance or lapse of time has nothing to do with fairness of view; this is the important thing they revealed about the time in a historical novel. Accordingly, the historical truthfulness is essentially inactive in the use of the historical atmosphere of the time chosen by the historical novelist. Ford further observes that if a historical novelist has a fair view of his own time, he can use the contemporary events of historical significance in his historical novel. In short, Ford's views encourage the development of the historical novel.

Brander Matthew condemns the very effort to bring historical authenticity in the material of a historical novel, He observes that one can not escape one's own time, country, nation and nationality, even Scott could not escape from them. If we try to create things fashioned like past, it will lack the actual life which we are living and it will be without the real life of the present. He points out :

'The really trustworthy historical novels are those which were a-writing while the history was a-making.'

He points out the superiority of Pickwick Papers to A Tale of Two Cities historically. He classifies the historical novels into two types : 1) The actual historical novel and 2) the novel where history is wholly and completely sub-ordinated. He found that all great historical novels belong to the second type and that a great historical novel possesses the same qualities which a novel of modern life involves. In other words, the historical novel is a conscious reproduction of the past and it is bound to involve pains-taking effort and create an impression of artificiality; hence, fidelity of facts is impossible, though a historical novelist tries laboriously. Brander Matthew's view is too extreme and admits the historical romances as the boundary line of the historical novel.

George Lukacs realises the difficulty in defining the historical novel; hence, he does not give any comprehensive definition of it. But he analyses the aspects of historical novel which interested him as a Marxist Philosopher. He analyses the historical novel as a form and Scott's historical novels and the historical novels of Scott's followers in Europe and U.S.A. who were inspired by the Marxist Philosophy. In his analysis there are some significant observations about the genre. He traces the origin of the historical novel to social and economic developments of the 18th century in his famous treatise the Historical Novel. He found the French

Revolution and the subsequent Napoleonic Wars created a mass movement that resulted in a new sense and experience of history. These events transformed men's existence and 'created a consciousness throughout Europe from the economic and ideological basis for Scott's Novels.'²⁸ Lukacs observed that Scott's novels arose out of the social and economical consequences of the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars. It is fact that the masses participated in them for the first time as the public army. Due to the bloodless Revolution of 1688, England had risen socially and politically, hence, she provided a healthy atmosphere for the rise of the historical novel. Lukacs says :

'Scott's historical novel is the direct continuation of the great realistic social novel of the 18th century'²⁹

Scott was a Romantic novelist it was a proper view regarding Scott; but Lukacs does not agree to this view. Lukacs observed that the subject-matter of Scott's novel was very close to the subject-matter of the Romantics. He describes the inner life, the morality, heroism, capacity for sacrifice and steadfastness peculiar to the age, he recreated and he infused historical authenticity in his novels by using the great historical personages at the centre and a major historical event and the description of the inner life, heroism etc.

Lukacs' analysis is penetrative and pains-taking. He adds a new dimension of the historical novel : The dimension of the political and social forces in its make-up. We are not sure about the view that Scott's novels were inspired by the socio-political events, but the late 19th and 20th century historical novels have been inspired by political and social events or forces. The novel arrived in the form of a historical novel during the 19th century and in India in the 20th century. The enthusiasm for political independence and the pride for national history are undoubtedly the sources of inspiration for the historical novelists in India. The novelists like Bankim Chandra Chatterji, Joginder Singh, H.N. Apte, Romesh Chander Dutt and other were inspired by these sources. George Lukacs,' analysis of the historical novel and Scott's historical novel is, therefore, relevant, as they consider the importance of the political and social aspect.

To study the American historical novel, we should refer to Ernest E. Leisy's book The American Historical Novel we come across one of the best analyses of the historical novel. Leisy poses the questions involved in a historical novel, he observes. :

'The historical fiction is concerned with historical truth whatever that is, whether such truth requires a spectacular historical figure or episode, is a matter of controversy, as to the question of whether the term includes novels written contemporaneously with the events'. 30

There are two questions raised by Leisy :

1. Is there the presence of a major historical character or event which is necessary for the historicity of the form ? and
2. Is there some distance of time necessary between the actual happening of the events and their depiction in the form ?

Leisy's answer to these questions is negative. Such questions are irrelevant. According to him, in a historical novel a good story should be well told, there should be a faithful presentation of history and the historical period chosen for the novel should be convincing. Leisy's analysis, is based on the study of the American historical novels. He adds further that Romanticism was replaced by Realism objectively and subjectively by the turn of the century. The modern American historical novel presents history and background more accurately than before and it blends them

with fiction, in a better way. He gives three types of modern American novel : 1) **The Historical Novel Proper**. i.e. **Death Comes for The Archbishop** by Willa Carther - this type of work integrates character and the historical setting ; 2) **The period Novel** : This type of work is concerned with the details of the hard working research of the author than presenting the whole life, and 3) **The Romance of adventure** : In such type of work, setting and character are subordinated to action, i.e. **The Count of Monte Christo**.

Leisy complements a few historical novelists who have mastered the art of writing. He shows the salient features of the historical novel : ' They (the successful novelists) have told an important story superbly, they have handled their documentary material lightly and intelligently ; they have characterised perceptively; and they conveyed the atmosphere of the period they undertook to describe. In short ' they have written good novels.'³¹

According to Leisy, the essential features of the historical novel are ; the superb art of story telling, an intelligent use of the historical material and sources , a perceptive characterization and a faithful re-creation of the the atmosphere of the period chosen for the story. For a successful historical novelist these characteristics are essential.

John Hersey, a war novelist, regards the novel of contemporary history as a sub-category in the broad group of the historical novel. According to him, the usual historical novel brings the past to life and throws light on the events of the past; but a novel of the contemporary history makes the reader face life of his generation and it throws light on the people who have participated in the events. Hersey analyses the historical truthfulness of this sub-category he observes.

'Those who participate in the events with which it is concerned, reading it, must be able to say, ' that is exactly how it was,' and at the same time, those who did not take part in the happenings, and who perhaps have not been able to imagine such happenings, must be able to say, ' that is how it must have been'.³²

In fact, the novelist of the contemporary history must be more careful than the ordinary historical novelist who has not actual witnesses to contend with, but the novelist of the contemporary history must have done more careful research than an orthodox historical novelist. The contemporary historical novelist must be selective and skilful in weaving the plot so that his more accuracy or factuality should not show off itself and it should not make mistake in the human study about which he has to tell. Such a novelist writes of

the contemporary events. 'in an honest effort to comprehend the forces of contemporary history.'³³ Hersey adds his novel is a conscious quest for understanding' and it is not merely a journalistic repertory. His theory may be untenable or distorted, but there is a historical justification in his 'desire to understand the shaping of events by the people and of people by events.'³⁴

There is the opinion that no considerable time-gap is necessary between the actual historical event and its delineation in a historical novel by a novelist, this is Paul Ford's contention, John Hersey upholds it indirectly, He points out that the historical novelist has largely succeeded in conveying the human truth and creating reality like the real which the modern media-newspapers, magazine, radio, T.V. etc. have failed to do. These media are the organs of fact. There is the superiority of the historical novel over these media, it is the answer to the view that the historical novel is out of date. The historical novel has capacity to convey the essential truth when the other novels are out of life. The historical novel is endowed with very desirable immortality.

Avrom Fleishman, a recent critic of the historical novel, made a brilliant survey of the genre from Sir Walter Scott to Virginia Woolf. According to him there are three

assumptions about the genre : (I) " There should be a time gap of 40-60 years (two generations)..... are liable to be considered historical, while those of the present and preceding generations (of which the reader is more like to have personal experience) have been called " novels of the recent past. " ³⁵(II) The material of historical novel should include a number of historical events from public life. The plot of it must include a number of historical events of public spheres like war, economic change, etc. The historical events are mingled with the personal fortunes of the characters and it should affect the personal fortunes of the characters. (III) There are many characters in the historical novel, but at least one character must be a historical personality. Such figure should be one qualified as historical. In historical novel there is a specific link to history; so, it is different from other novels. There is not merely a real building or a real event but there is a real person among the fictitious characters. A historical novel becomes historical when characters live in the same world with historical persons.

Fleishman points out that a historian and a historical novelist have a close resemblance to each other; both of

them try to resort to historical imagination and they evolve a coherent and whole picture. To support this, he quotes R.G. Colingwood :

'Each of them makes it his business to construct a picture which is partly a narrative of events, partly a description of situations, exhibition of motives, analysis of characters. Each aims at making his picture a coherent whole, where every character and every situation is so bound up with the rest that this character in this situation can not but act in this way, and we can not imagine him as acting otherwise. The novel and the history must both of them make sense; nothing is admissible in either except what is necessary and the judge of this necessary is in both cases the imagination'.³⁶

The historian and the historical novelist use imagination to fill the gaps in the received data and their imagination differs from one another's in degree but not in kind. Fleishman explains the similarities of aims between the historian and the historical novelist. He describes their differences of means by showing with Aristotle's authority,

that the historical novel is different from poetry :

'The poet and the historian differ not by writing in verse or in prose..... The true difference is that one relates what has happened, the other what may happen..... Poetry, therefore, is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history, for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular.' 37

According to Fleishman, the historical novel is a form of literature : the historical novelist uses the universals of Literature to interpret the courses of historical man's carrer. **Fleishman point out further :**

'The structure of a historical story must become a heroic (or anti-heroic) plot : the form of an individual's carrer.... and the individuals selected by the novelist for heroic status are not likely to be world-historical figures.... but typical men of an age..... whose life is shaped by world.... historical figures and other influences in a way that epitomizes the process of change going forward in the society as a whole.' 38

There is the general condition of a historical novel that the characters should be from the common strata of life; Fleishman does not agree to this view ; according to him, the heroes of the historical novel represent man in general, conceived as a historical being and subject to the forces of the historical age. There is the widely held view that the men of the present look back to the men of the past to understand themselves and not merely understand them. Fleishman accepts this view; but he desires that 'the historical novelist should rise above this inner-reflection between the past and the present and should write "trance-temporally, " rooted in the history of his own time'.³⁹ Fleishman adds :

'The universal conception of fate in an individual's career becomes symbolized not by the gods but by history.... and the historical novel attains the status of a modern epic in its view of the tragic limits and comic possibilities of man's historical life'.⁴⁰

We find in Fleishman's analysis that there is the combination of the historical imagination of the historian and the universality of the novelist in the historical novel. The historical novelist's imagination is like the imagination of the historian. The historian tells about what had happened but the historical novelist can only tell what must have happened.

The historical novelist aims at universality in describing the actions of its characters like a poet and a novelist, he follows the law of probability or necessity. Fleishman like all other critics of the historical novel avoids to define it because 'everyone knows what a historical novel is'.⁴¹

Fleishman only mentions the essential ingredients of the genre and writes about his main favourite concern that the use of the historical imagination by historians and historical novelists, similarities and differences. We find his analysis is mainly based on Collingwood's philosophy of history and Wilhem Dilthey's hermeneutic approach to historiography.

It is essential to know what Scott had said about the genre since the historical novel began with him. Scott describes the contrast between the romance and the novel. He points out that the Romance is 'a fictitious narrative in prose or verse the interest of which turns upon marvellous and uncommon incidents' and that the novel, on the other hand, is a fictitious narrative, differing from the romance, because the events are accommodated to the ordinary train of human events, and the modern state of society'.⁴²

Scott further found that some narrative would fit neither of these definitions, but will partake of the nature of both. Scott made the distinction between a romance and a novel,

which may be extended to the historical romance and the historical novel, because Scott was mainly interested in his own novels. Scott points out that a historical romance is a fictitious narrative which indulges in the marvellous and the uncommon, whereas the historical novel is fictitious in its plot. The historical novel observes the rules of the poetic truth, as the events have to be accommodated to the ordinary train of human events; The poetic truth-the law of probability must be observed carefully and obeyed meticulously in a historical novel.

After studying the various critical views about the historical novel as a genre, its various definitions and the important issues related with it, we find that there are certain characteristics about which many critics and the historical novelists are in complete agreement. However, there are some radically different opinions. Encyclopedia Britannica analyses the historical novel and sums up the characteristics as follows :

In a historical novel proper, ;there is the background which is historical and it is authentic scrupulously; (II) The Chief characters and the events are fictional or they are delineated fictionally, (III) The safest course to maintain the authenticity of the background is to remain as close to the author's own time as possible. In other words the historical

authenticity of the background is maintained by remaining close to the time of the author.

Most of the critics emphasize the historical atmosphere which is the most vital ingredient of the historical novel. Harry B. Henderson condemns some of the critics who examined the performance of the historical novelists as if they were historians. Henderson observes :

'One must start from the assumption that all true history involves an imaginative ordering of materials in an attempt at the re-creation of experience'. 43

In other words all time history involves an imaginative ordering of materials and it is an attempt to recreate the experience. The historical imagination has a great importance which is illustrated by the fact and it is compared to mere historical truth. Romola is an example of historical research but it is a failure as a historical novel. Scott's novels emerged as masterpieces in spite of their factual errors. While focusing on Malgonkar's imagination, we find that Avrom Fleishman's theory comes closer to Malgonkar's practice.

Contemporary history is almost all politics, Encyclopaedia Britannica does not take cognizance of the political element that accompanies history. Modern history is inseparably woven with the political-social forces of the age and time. A reference to the political aspects of Malgonkar's material is unavoidable, since he is primarily a novelist of the contemporary history.

There are diverse opinions about the contemporary history. According to some writers, a considerable gap of time is a necessary factor, whereas others do not agree to this opinion : John Hersey and Brander Matthews point out that only contemporary history has the true stamp of authenticity. Secondly, some writers disagree about the inter relation between the historical truth and the psychological truth in a historical novel, Some of them stress the historical and others emphasize the psychological and they mention that facts may be altered by a historical novelist if psychological truth justifies it. There is a confusion among some of the writers who consider the historical novel and the historical romance as belonging to one category. The details about the historical actuality and the distinction between the historical romance and the historical novel proper as given in Encyclopaedia Britannica seems to be commonly acceptable . It is inevitable and convenient to maintain the distinction for the study of the historical novel as genre.

1.2 Malgonkar as a Historical Novelist

Malgonkar is a historical novelist, his novels are as the historical novel proper. His novels have an authentic historical background in which we find the fictional principal characters and the incidents. Malgonkar wrote about the recent past hence his attitude to history is like that of John Hersey. Hersey points out that a contemporary historical novelist has to do more research than the orthodox historical novelist and he must be careful in selecting and skillful in weaving the material and plot, Malgonkar does exactly what Hersey suggests. Malgonkar sticks to facts carefully when he dealt with the historical events. Malgonkar practises the words of Paul Ford.

'It is easy for a fair-minded writer to treat of contemporary events in without feeling as those of a hundred years ago'. 44

Malgonkar selects the contemporary events and he weaves his story superbly and skillfully. Malgonkar treats the contemporary events like a historian; there is a cool detachment and impartial attitude in his treatment of the historical events. It seems that Malgonkar agrees with the opinion of George Lukacs that a historical novel emerges out of history, politics and social conditions of his time, his novels are the synthesis of these forces. We can say his

novels are nearly correct to Leisy's evaluation of successful historical novelists : Malgonkar is a superb story-teller who uses the historical material intelligently and carefully; his delineation of characters has perceptiveness and there is a recreation of the historical atmosphere of the recent past accurately, Malgonkar is a historian and an artist besides a historical novelist. There is the mixture of these three aspects of his personality because of these aspects his work achieved an artistic perfection and an individuality of its own. So he is a successful historical novelist who mastered these aspects of the historical novel.

Malgonkar's novels have the background of historical events of the recent past. The echoes of the historical events of the recent past are heard in the contemporary politics frequently, in Malgonkar's novels we heard them. The background changes in its nature, its share and its desired amount to the fictional plot from his novel to novel.

The fifteen years period (1937-1952) of Indian History was a significant period of the historical events : The Second World War, the Indian Independence, the Partition of India, Pakistan's aggression of Kashmir and assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, are significant historical events in the history of modern India, Malgonkar used the period (1937-52) in his first four novels and employed these

historical events in his stories. He gave them the proper authenticity due to his interest in history and his inclination as a historian. Malgonkar was faithful to the truthfulness of his material, he tells about it confidently :

'Though some would criticise my style, they don't criticise my historical veracity. I take great pains to be absolutely accurate.' 45

Malgonkar revived the memory his readers by writing of the historical events of the contemporary politics, he made a lot of research in his material, he studied all the important records, books, criticism available on it, hence he maintained the historical truthfulness. He had the attitude towards the presentation of his material like the historian's dispassionate attitude. Malgonkar tries to show areas of life carefully, he has intimate knowledge of life and he does not go beyond them. The cantonment life, the public school attitude of the British officials, the administration in Delhi during India's Independence, the corruption and indiscipline of the new administration, crumbling princely order etc., are the areas of Malgonkar who observed them very closely and had an intimate and great knowledge of them. These areas form the material for his novels. Malgonkar's principal characters in the novels are fictional, there is exception to them that is the characters in The Devil's Wind, his characters are creatures of his imagination, Malgonkar chooses the period

events those took place during the period; as a result of that many eminent political personalities involved in them like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, Mohmmad Ali Jinnah, Lord Mountbatten , etc. but Malgonkar very carefully denies their part in the action of the novels, we find Lord Mountbatten addresses the chamber of Princes in The Princes and Abhayraj is present in the gallery at this historical event. Malgonkar does not make historical capital out of it. There is the another scene in the novel in which there is the final meeting of Hiroji Maharaj and the authorities of the State's Department in Delhi which results into the merger of Begwad State into the Indian Union; Malgonkar does not tell about the chief architect of the merger whether Vallabhabhai Patel or Menon but there is an ordinary under-secretary tells bluntly about it to Abhayraj that Hiroji Maharaj must sign the Instrument and matter regarding merge of state and falling of princely order ends there. In his another novel Abends In the Ganges he shows a physical appearance of Mahatma Gandhi; the foreign clothes were burnt in front of Mahatma Gandhi. Malgonkar keeps Mahatma Gandhi in the background when it is a day of silence for Gandhi Malgonkar says about the characters in the novel.

'The characters even the ones shown as holding a particular office at a particular time, are fictitious'. 46

Thus Malgonkar very carefully and skillfully avoids the actual participation of any historical or political personality in the story of his novels. His characters are the creation of his imagination, they are fictitious. His next novel The Devil's Wind is a different kind of a case which is a historical actuality, not the historical novel proper and has the dramatic element of a fictional story. Its all characters are historical persons, Nana Saheb alone is fully delineated and other characters are merely sketched. There is the emphasis on Nana Saheb's private life and the confessional tone of the narrative. Malgonkar expresses his views ;

'In my book I treat him as a human being. I write of him neither as a patriot nor a villain, but as a rather mixed up human being, like most of us are '. 47

This approach gives Nana Saheb the fictional roundness that a character of imagination

For the first four novels; Distant Drum, Combat of Shadows, The Princes, and A Bend in the Ganges Malgonkar chose the period of Indian History from 1937 to 1953. This period belongs to the contemporary history and it was in the memory of Malgonkar's readers. He selected this span of Indian History and achieved the following objectives : 1) By making use of his private experience of this history, he achieved the historical truth of his material 2) He obtained it straight from the capital of his personal

experience so he used minimum romance in his novels.

3) There is indirect projection of his own interpretation of the historical events and political moments. Being a novelist of contemporary history, he unfolded, explained, discussed and argued about the authenticity of historical material successfully. Malgonkar has keen desire which allowed his imagination to function with the circle of historical authenticity of the period. The period chosen by is significant from another point of view; it is fully grown with political events and there is a political bearing to all the historical events of the period. So it becomes inevitable for one to escape from the historical events and one can not escape their political aspects who dealt with them. The political aspect is mixed with the historical inextricably in Malgonkar's novels. Malgonkar does not preach his political ideology or views through his novels. It appears that he lacks strong political opinions. He presents the political aspect, he is primarily interested in achieving the historical truth and hence he remains loyal to the poetic truth. In other words his novels are not political and he does not spread any political ideas nor he expose the life of any political personality. His political views do not interfere with the actions or emotions of his characters. His novels have a political aspect. Morris E. Speare says about a political novel :

'Political novel is a work of fiction which leans rather to ' ideas ' than to 'emotions..... where the main

purpose of the writer is party propaganda, public reform, or exposition of the lives of personages who maintain Government or of forces which constitute government'. 48

In other words, Malgonkar does not preach political ideology, his purpose of writing a novel is not party propaganda or reformation in the society and he does not expose any political personage in his novels, however his novels have a political aspect, in this sense M.K. Naik observes :

'They are a species of fiction in which action, characters and setting are all firmly grounded in politics'. 49

Malgonkar skillfully integrates his political views in his artistic plot construction, they do not stand in the way. Malgonkar found that the contemporary history was not presented to the people by the historians or the political leaders. Most of the Indians felt happy and believed in the superficial information about the happenings of their time. Though knowing the truth the knowledgeable persons kept a prudent silence or exploited their knowledge for their own interest. There was a lack of the historical sense among the contemporary Indians, Malgonkar observed these things carefully. He tried to create the historical sense and to remove the effect of wilful and purposeful misuse of history for selfish political motives.

As we know the first attempts at novel writing were invariably the historical ones, the regional languages began

the novel form with historical romances. Most of these pioneer novelists followed the track of Sir Walter Scott. The regional languages of India produced a number of historical novels, however, it is a surprising. The Indo-Anglian writers hardly produced a single historical novel proper, it might be because of the predominance of Gandhian politics during the twenties and thirties which kept the people engrossed more in the contemporary politics than the history of the remote past. R.K. Narayan's Waiting for the Mahatma, Kanthapura by Raja Rao, M.R. Anand's The Sword and the Sickle, Kandan, the Patriot by K.S. Venkatramani and Bhabhani Bhattacharya's Shadow of Ladakh are political-social novels which gave emphasis on the Gandhian values. Malgonkar wrote full-length historical novels on contemporary themes, he is the first Indo-Anglian novelist who wrote on such themes, and achieved a success as a story-teller due to his rich historical imagination. His novels are the excellent examples of the twentieth century emphasis on 'history evolving through the present and shaping the future'.

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In other words, his novels give the emphasis on the twentieth century view that history evolves through the present and shapes the future.

1.3 Malgonkar as a Historian :

Malgonkar wrote a historical work Kanhoji Angrey:

The Maratha Admiral, before turning to the professional writing as novelist. In this work, there are two aspects of his attitude to history. 1) He is interested in restoring historical persons to their identity and dignity, and 2) he has a relentless quest for the truth. When he was writing The Princes, he wrote another historical work Puars of Dewas Senior while he collected material for another historical works, Chhatrapatis of Kolhapur and The Men Who Killed Gandhi. Malgaonkar studied all the available documents, visited the historical places and discussed with eminent scholars and historians. In Kanhoji Angrey and The Men who Killed Gandhi Malgaonkar worked hard and tried to establish the historical truth about the careers of these persons.

According to Malgaonkar history is a continuous process, time is a continuous flow and the study of the past has a relevance for the present. He believes in them one can review the present in the light of the past, its glory and folly which can guide one's future. One can not study the present without the past because of its nearness to one. The reflection of rays of light from the past can illumine the present by revealing its harsh and ugly features. Malgaonkar thinks that India which is a newly independent country needs to study the recent past which is useful to face the problems of the present.

Malgonkar's background as a historian and his inborn interest in history helped him to remain authentic and objective in his historical works, so he is successful in creating the authentic atmosphere of history. Avrom Fleishman considers historical imagination is essential qualification for the historian and the historical novelist. We find this qualification in Malgonkar when we study him as a historian and a historical novelist; Malgonkar successfully employed the historical imagination in his historical works and historical novels so he mastered the genre, the historical works and novels so he achieved a great success both as a historical novelist and a historian.

1.4 Rise of the Historical Novel in English in India.

In case of the rise of the novel in English in India we find the social climate in the nineteenth century Bengal seems not much different from what it was in the eighteenth century England. The emergence of the middle classes took place first in Bengal because, the historical situation in Bengal was most favourable to the money economy. The rise and growth of a modern middle class during early British rule was oriented by the money economy. Many upper class Bengali families which constituted the urban aristocracy in the late 18th and 19th century were stepping down their positions and they remained as the middle class. This middle

class reaped the advantage of English education. The social climate of Bengal was powerfully conditioned by the rise of the middle classes, the spread of English education and consequent impact of western ideas and culture, the growth of press, resuscitation of Hindu religion, change of religious and moral values brought out by the great reforms of Willam Bentick and the teachings of Raja Rammohan Roy and the emergence of a rationalistic view of life - all these factors contributed to the rise of individualism in the socio-economic sphere. The Bengal Rent Act of 1859 as well as Lord Bantick's Act of 1829 to end Sati paved the way for the emergence of the individualist social order as against the traditional and social order. There was the emancipation of the women from the tyranny of customs and blind faith, it helped them to recognise themselves as individuals rather than a species. It threw open to them the doors of education. There was a substantial increase in female education in India which took place between 1871 and 1882.

It was Bengal that took the leading and initiatives in the direction of social reforms. Most of these changes took place in Bengal before they took place in any other part of India. There was the birth of journalism in 1818 and the growth of the news paper that favoured the evolution of new type of prose writing. The prose writing

was very much different from what had obtained earlier. Calcutta became the new economic Mecca. Many Bengalis from rural areas migrated to Calcutta, they looked for a new home and new life as a result of it they were cut off from the life and culture of the past. This led to the creation of a new culture, a new literature and a new prose. Works and writings of Raja Rammohan Roy helped the development of Bengali prose. Both the birth of prose and the birth of novel took place in Bengal and in Bengali language earlier than in any other Indian language. There was a group of men who studied 'European Literature and Science' in the Hindu college. The group studied the English literary forms especially the novel form. This group emphasised on the studying English Literature. In the course of time, the literary forms appeared in Bengali and novel was the most important of those forms. The novel in Bengal not appeared accidentally or as a result of blind imitation, it appeared due to the fast changing social order which demanded it. The rise of the novel in Bengali is of the great interest to the student of the Indian novel in English because the first novel in India appeared in Bengali and then in a number of other India languages and in English.

Bankim Chandra, Pyari Chand Mitra and Bhudeb Mukherjee were not only the pioneers of Bengali novel but also the pioneers of the Indian novel in English. They introduced the novel form in India as a result of it there is

the emergence of the novel as a form of literary expression in this country. Bankim Chandra is remembered even today as the father of Bengali novel and the first Indian to write a novel in English. His Raj Mohan's Wife was the first and only English novel which appeared as a serial in the Indian Field of 1864. Prof V.K.Gokak says :

'Raj Mohan's Wife will have to be regarded as an Indo-English novel and not an Indo-Anglian one'.⁵¹

The Indo-Anglian novel came into existence as a result of the joint influences of the Anglo-Indian novel and the Indian novel in the regional languages in India. The Anglo-Indian novel appeared regularly by 1850. The historical event of the Revolt of 1857, gave an inspiration to the Anglo-Indian novel. There was the historical nature of the most of Anglo-Indian novels : Meadows Taylor's Tippu Sultan (1840) which may be regarded as the first Anglo-Indian historical novel. It was the continuation of Sir Walter Scott's The Surgeon's Daughter, historically and artistically, the novel Tippu Sultan deals with the time of Hyder Ali, Tippu's father. Being a commissioned officer in the army of Nizam of Hyderabad, Meadows Taylor had a very intimate knowledge of these Muslim kings, their harems, fanatic religious faith and feelings, the intrigues in their court. The novel Tippu Sultan

gave name and fame to Meadows Taylor, Tippu Sultan became instantly popular and Meadows Taylor began to be referred to as 'the Scott of India'. 52

Tara, Ralph Darnell, and Seeta were the historical novels written by Meadows Taylor. The Revolt of 1857 gave a spurt to the historical novel and Meadows Taylor gave inspiration to the Anglo-novel so the historical novel became so popular. Even after the Independence the tradition of historical novel continued by Anglo-Indian novelists like Mollie Kaye, John Masters, Paul West and Robert Payne. John Masters wrote the novels Bhawani Junction and Nightrunners of Bengal. These novels of John Masters commemorate the Revolt of 1857. Robert Payne's novel The Tortured and the Damned reveals the inner story of the emergence of independent Bangla Desh in 1971, Mollie Kaye's The Shadow of the Moon (1957) deals with the Revolt of 1857 and his another novel Far Pavilions (1976) deals with the British Raj in India.

While Anglo-Indian writers like Meadows Taylor got inspiration from Sir Walter Scott and they introduced the historical novel in Anglo-Indian fiction. Bankim Chandra Chatterji launched the historical novel in Bengali with his Durgesh Nandini (1865). It is the curious fact that the novel began with historical themes in most of the Indian languages. Bankim Chandra was considered as the Scott of Bengali,

he wrote Raj Singh (1881) and Anand Math (1891), Kishorilal Gosami wrote Labangalata (1891) a historical novel. Chandrakanta is a novel written by D.N. Khatri in Hindi. These two novels are considered as the first historical novels in Hindi. C.V. Raman Pillai's Marthanda Varma (1891), Dharmaraja and Ramraja Bahudar were historical novels in Malayalam. Galangnath's Kumudini (1913) is also a historical novel in Kannada. Hari Narayan Apte wrote Gad Alaa Pan Simha Gela (1906) a historical novel in Marathi. R.B. Gunjekar's Mochangad (1871) is also a historical novel. The first historical novel in Oriya is Padmamali (1888).

Rajani Kantha Bordoloi wrote historical novels in Assamese, he was influenced by Sir Walter Scott and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. Thus the early historical novels were written in Indian languages, they were historical in content and Walter Scott was the inspiration to the novelists; but these novels suffered from one obvious handicap. They appeared at a time when the novels in the respective languages were themselves of an infant stage and no great realistic social novel was produced in any of those languages, Meenakshi Mukherjee observes :

⁶ While Scott's realistic social novel was itself the direct confirmation of the great realistic social novel in the eighteenth century, the novel in India made its first appearance in most of the Indian languages as historical romance and did not have its foundations in a tradition of social or political realism as did the great historical novels of the West'. 53

Meenakashi Mukherjee further points out that this historical beginning of the Indian novel :

'It is interesting to note that the novel emerged at different times in different regions of India but almost everywhere the first crop showed a preoccupation with historical romance'.⁵⁴

Hence it was that most of the so called historical novels of the quarter century following the publication of Raj Singh could not out grow the limitations of the historical romance. For instance Kalki's Parthipan Kanavu and Sivakamiyin were the famous historical novels in Tamil, they were compared to the novels of Scott but they were romances casted in epic moulds. Again no good historical novel is produced even by the , Anglo-Indian writers. Bhupal Singh observes :

'A very large amount of Anglo-Indian fiction consists of books illustrating some phase of the history of India, past or present. Most of these books have one characteristic in common, if they are good history. They are bad novels and if they are good novels they are bad history . Most of them imitate Scott or Bulwer Lytton and have no higher aim than that of reproducing picturesque scene or sensational incidents. In character drawing, both historical and imaginative, they are poor'.⁵⁵

This may be two sweeping generalisation, some of the novels of the Anglo-Indian novelists like Meadows Taylor and Annie Floora Steel may not answer to this description. Prof. Bhupal Singh himself observes again with reference to the novels of Mrs. Annie Flora Steel :

'These novels are romanitized biographies. It is the humanity of the great Moghul emperors that Mrs. Steel emphasizes in these romances'.⁵⁶

The lives of the Moghul Kings were themselves romantic and called for a romantic treatment in fiction. The business of novelist is to humanise, to give living human embodiment to historical character and to make great historical trends became tangible in purely human terms. When a novelist does this, he produces neither 'bad history' nor 'bad novel' some of the historical novels of Anglo-Indian writers as well as Indo-Anglian writers may be judged from this point of view. It will show that their work is not mere a romance but a historical novel of the first order.

There are Bankim Chandra Chattarjee, Romesh Chander Datt and Sardar Jogender Singh who wrote historical novels. It was only Jogender Singh who wrote a historical novel originally in English while the novels of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Ramesh Chander Datt were translations of novels originally written by them in Bengali.

They were the pioneers of Bengali historical novels as well as the historical novel in India. English translations of the Indian historical novels in Indian languages gave the first model of the historical novel of significance to Indian fiction in English.

Thus Indo-Anglian novel is the foster child of the Anglo-Indian novel and the novel in Indian languages; it began its career with historical romances. Ramkrishna wrote Padmini in 1903, G.K. Ghosh wrote The Prince of Destiny (1909) and S.K.Mitra's novel Hindpur (1909) etc., were the first Indo-Anglian historical novels. A.P.S. Iyer's Baladyta (1930) and Jogender Singh's Nur Jehan (1930) were the historical novels. In 1933, The Unveiled Court was written by Umrao Bahadur, it was a historical novel. The novels before Mulk Raj Anand's Untouchable (1934) were historical novels. Uma Parameswaran explains the cause of this historical beginning of Indo-Anglian novel in the following words :

'The historical novel is the first genre to have been attempted by South Indians..... The reason why this was the first genre to be assayed is probably that the novel, with its emphasis on characterization, is an import into India where the usual prose form was a sort of travelogue that combined the narrative elements of a Decameron with the didactic elements of an Aesop's fable. Thus, the historical novel, combining as it does action and moral codes at a simple level, would naturally appeal to an early writer'

When social realism and political nationalism emerged in India, the pure historical stream disappeared slowly from fiction and it merged with them. After 1933, Indo-Anglian novelists looked at the contemporary world and the recent past. Indo-Anglian novelist does not go to the past for his themes and sources. The historical theme disappeared from the fiction when social problems arised and political movements started.

There are some Post-Independence novels which combined the historical, the political and the social aspects. for instance ; Mulkarj Anand's The Sword and the Sickle, K.S. Venkatramani's Kandan, the Patriot, R.K. Narayan's Waiting for the Mahatma, Khushwant Singh's A Train to Pakistan, K.A. Abbas's Inquilab, Malgonkar's A Bend in the Ganges and Chaman Nahal's Azadi. In these novels the historical aspect is very thin but the political and social aspects are powerful and dominant than history. Malgonkar is not exception to this. Malgonkar revived and honoured the historical element through his historical novels, hence credit goes to him. P.P. Metha calls The Devil's Wind, 'The first great Indo-Anglian historical novel.'⁵⁸

K.R.S. Iyengar proves wrong to underline Malgonkar by calling him as an indigenous John Masters, he observes.

' Malgonkar is not an indigenous John Masters; nor is Distant Drum an Indo-Anglian variation of the Anglo-Indian Bhavani Junction. There is, on the contrary, an authentic quality about Malgonkar and his novel that can stand scrutiny without reference to the Master's recipe'. 59

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