

Nailing Gandhi for Cracking India in Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges* and Raj Gill's *The Rape*

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Abstract: This article makes a comparative analysis of two canonical Indian English Partition novels—Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges* and Raj Gill's *The Rape*. It assumes that insofar as both the novels, configured after right wing history, look upon Mahatma Gandhi's doctrine of non-violence as perverted in the face of what they see as Islamic terror, they enunciate a view at odds with the nationalistic history of Partition and evoke an affect of revenge against the Muslims. It posits that while Malgonkar conspicuously encapsulates the Hindutva view of Partition through an unambiguous dramatization of an intense dialectic between violence and non-violence, and between V. D. Savarkar and Mahatma Gandhi to dexterously develop the theme of revenge, Gill bungles the transmutation since he dubiously hovers between a right-wing Khalsa view that calls for revenge and conversely a tempered, secular line accentuating forgiveness.

Keywords: Indian English Partition novel, Manohar Malgonkar, *A Bend in the Ganges*, Raj Gill, *The Rape*, right-wing history, Gandhi, non-violence, Islamic terror, nationalistic history of Partition, revenge, Hindutva view of Partition

R. K. Narayan's *Waiting for the Mahatma* (1955), Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956) and Balachandra Rajan's *The Dark Dancer* (1958) draw on the nationalist history of modern India. Like it, they elide the violence of Partition riots by crediting India's Independence largely to the non-violent campaign of the Indian National Congress under the charismatic leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. However, V. D. Savarkar's *Six Glorious Epochs of Indian History* attributes the success of the watershed event to a number of factors, most prominently the violent tactics of the underground elements including those led by the fire-brand leader, Subhas Chandra Bose (Savarkar 470-71). This book makes the violence of 1946-47 the subject, the object, the instrument and purpose of the Partition-marred Independence. Whereas in this view the privileging of the Muslims' barbarity on the Hindus and Sikhs becomes the *raison d'être* for revenge, Gandhi—the votary of non-violence—turns out to be a “murderer’ and ‘a traitor’” (editorials of *The Outlook* in 1947 qtd. in Sukeshi Kamra 94). The call for Muslim blood receives a great deal of emphasis in *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964) and *The Rape* (1974), both of which “do not cast Hindu-Muslim history in a roseate glow imparted to it by the romantic idealists/nationalist[s]” (Anup Beniwal 182) but dramatize the right-wing perceptions of Partition—the former coloured by Hindutva and the latter by Sikh ethno-nationalism.

This essay argues that, like the right-wing history which pins the blame of Partition on Gandhi, Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964) and Gill's *The Rape* (1974) nail the Mahatma for cracking India in 1947. It also shows that even as *A Bend in the Ganges* dialectically encapsulates the Hindutva view of Partition and conspicuously calls for

Muslim blood but still turns out to be a classy masterwork, *The Rape* hesitantly hovers between a right-wing clamour for revenge and, conversely, a secular line of forgiveness to end up as a structurally flawed artwork. Gill's tendency to draw on the language of Sikh ethno-nationalist historiography in the midst of justifying the Sikhs' atrocities on the Muslims only worsens his use of the prose of otherness, making *The Rape* a literary disaster. Whereas his effort to force a balance backfires, Malgonkar's unambiguousness helps him succeed as a novelist.

It is not for nothing that the two renowned historians of Indian English literature—K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar and M. K. Naik—do not even mention Raj Gill or *The Rape* in their books on the history of Indian English literature. But the pair of K. K. Sharma and B. K. Johri not only includes *The Rape* in the canon of Indian English Partition Literature but also rules that “the novel is a brilliant exploration of the theme of Partition. It not only narrates a touching tale of the times of Partition, but also presents some unforgettable scenes and sights of the great historic event artistically” (135). N. S. Gundur, likewise, takes the novel as an “authentic” rendering of “history” (155) but finds the novel “melodramatic” and its politics as not having been “transformed into an art form successfully” (154). Similarly, Beniwal too finds the narrative of *The Rape* not only “melodramatic at many places” (136) but also its rendition of the author's “anger” as “[un]sublimate[d]” (136). Although both Beniwal and Gundur mete out a comprehensive treatment to the novel, they do not hold it in high esteem, as does the duo of K. K. Sharma and B. K. Johri.

Like *The Rape*, *A Bend in the Ganges* has received mixed reception from critics. According to Saros Cowasjee, E. M. Forster chose it as the best novel of 1964 (90) but, as reported by Shyam Asnani, Quarrtalian Hyder summarily dismissed it as a novel presenting “a ludicrous and contemptuous image of our [Indians'] Freedom Movement” (Asnani 71). Another renowned novelist, Khushwant Singh, however, hailed it as a model “of good writing by Indian writers writing today” (qtd. in Amarnath Dwivedi 68). At the heart of the sharp critical differences found in the novel's critical reception lies Malgonkar's representation of Gandhian non-violence. Critics anticipating the usual deification of Gandhi get disappointed at finding the novel's delineation of the “operation” of the “ideology of non-violence” on human beings as unsavoury (G. S. Amur 109)—a representation for which pro-Gandhian critics object to the novelist's objectivity: Asnani, for example, finds Malgonkar's belittling of non-violence as “being biased and influenced by his own [Hindutva] predilections” (91). Similarly, Sudha Sundaram points to the novelist's lack of objectivity in “show[ing] the failure of non-violence in Punjab, but not its success in Bengal largely due to Gandhi's presence” (37). N. S. Pradhan goes to the extent of chiding K. K. Sharma for interpreting *A Bend in the Ganges* as suggesting Gandhi's culpability in Partition as “a rather inept version of . . . [the] view” that rejection of the Gandhian concept of non-violence is the theme of the novel (149). While Malgonkar's indictment of Gandhian non-violence has raised some critics' hackles, it has gone down quite well among those who have approached the novel with an open mind. R. S. Singh, for example, lauds Malgonkar for “correct[ing] a lop-sided view of the history of the freedom struggle” (129). A. Padmanabhavan, hails the deviation from the norm—the courage to interrogate the Gandhian non-violence on the one hand and to spotlight the Terrorist Movement of the 1930s on the other hand—as the novelist's “unique distinction” (4). While including *A Bend in the Ganges* in the canon of Indian English fiction, Iyengar seizes the novel's deviation as “the shame and agony of the partition . . . the defeat of the hour of freedom” (431). D.

S. Rao, in a recent article praises the novelist's "meticulous artistry" of "raising" the novel's veering towards the need for "revenge" to "epiphanic levels" (108).

The deviation seems to have been actuated by Malgonkar's belief in the philosophy of the ideologue of Hindutva, V. D. Savarkar whose influence in the writing of *A Bend in the Ganges* does not seem far-fetched if one considers Malgonkar's choice of the title which refers to an episode in *The Ramayana* in which Ram, Laxaman and Sita pause at a bend in the Ganges to look back at the land of Ayodhya they were leaving (Iyengar 431). Apart from the reference to the *Ramayana*, some critics zero in on the constant presence of Lord Shiva inspiring revenge in the narrative (C. M. Mohan Rao 74; S. Z. H. Abidi 78). These critical observations reinforce the Hindutva angle of the novel. According to Bindu Puri, the novel carries an overtone of Savarkar's total disapproval of "the Gandhian reading of ancient Hindu texts and consequent understanding of the Hindu religion as revolving around *ahimsa*, *satya* and God" (155). Savarkar's avowal of Hindutva, which came as a rebuttal of the Gandhian ideology, constructs "a Hindu-centric conception of the Indian identity. That identity draw [. . . s] heavily from images of courage and valour in the ancient Hindu texts to build up a militant Hindu persona capable of facing the colonizer on violent terms" (Savarkar 156). Unlike the Gandhian interpretation of Hindu epics in terms of forgiveness and non-violence, epics such as the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, in Savarkar's interpretation, promote "virtues such as honour, dignity, heroic courage; and values such as war fought in a just cause and even terrible violence in the pursuit of 'rightful,' restorative vengeance" (162). For Savarkar, justice for the Hindus lies in redressing the balance—the wrongs suffered at the hands of the aliens whether the British or the Muslims. The reference to the episode of *The Ramayana* and the use of the Shiva symbol in *A Bend in the Ganges* should be seen as legitimizing the notion of taking arms for righteousness or *dharma*. G. S. Amur, however, takes the text's validity of the notions of violence and revenge as one of its "blemishes" (121), but his explanation turns out to be useful in understanding Malgonkar's use of Savarkar's "*Black Waters (Kale Pani)*," particularly "details like the secret khobri that Ghasita the Ramoshi . . . the flogging to which Debi Dayal is subjected" and the "blueprint for the Debi Dayal-Sundari-Gian relationship in the Dolkati-Malati-Kishan relationship" in *A Bend in the Ganges* (117). The use of Savarkar as pointed by Amur and the references to *The Ramayana* and Lord Shiva in a novel which has been almost unanimously interpreted as dramatizing the validity of violence and revenge bear out the influence of Savarkarism on Malgonkar who, to quote Asha Kaushik, places Gandhism "in a comparative context" in *A Bend in the Ganges*—right at the center of the debate between Gandhi and Savarkar (44).

That Malgonkar subjects the much-vaunted Gandhian doctrine of non-violence to a critical scrutiny becomes ostensible even from the "Author's Note," which he places before the narrative proper gets underway, and wherein he foregrounds his awareness of "the paradoxical and ironic turn" of the "Gandhian creed of non-violence" (J. Lalitha 36):

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, mutilated" (Malgonkar, "A Bend").

The cataloguing of the violence-related dynamic verbs here lends a serrated edge to the irony of the triumph of non-violence. In the narrative proper, Malgonkar further undercuts the non-violent movement. He identifies the relentless pressure exerted by the terrorists and the British reverses in the Second World War, rather than the Gandhian non-violent

campaign, as being the primary contributory factors to the attainment of freedom. The long Gandhi quotation in which the Mahatma himself doubts the efficacy of non-violence and which is placed before the "Author's Note" sets the mood of the novel: "What if, when the fury bursts, not a man, woman, or child is safe and every man's hand is raised against the neighbor?" The epigraph, manifesting Gandhi's self-doubt and self-questioning, sets the tone of the ineffectiveness of non-violence. Malgonkar, however, dramatizes the ineffectualness in a comparative way amidst the bloody backdrop of the Partition violence; his *tour de force* lies in interweaving an intense dialectic between non-violence and violence in the narrative-fabric of *A Bend in the Ganges*.

Malgonkar introduces the dialectic early on in Gian Talwar's encounter with Shafi masquerading as a Sikh and known by the pseudo name of Singh. Gian, attracted by Gandhi's non-violent campaign, wears *khaddar*, the rough homespun clothes of Indian peasants to proclaim himself as a Gandhian soldier committed to the cause of freedom. The dialectic is set into motion as soon as Singh startles Gian by accusing Gandhi of being "the enemy of India's national aspirations" (11). If for Gian a patriot is only one who is a follower of Mahatma Gandhi, for Singh even a non-Gandhian like himself qualifies as a patriot. If Gandhi, to Gian, is "like a god" who "alone can lead us to victory Through non-violence" (12), to Singh the Mahatma is a hypnotist who has done incalculable harm with "his hypnotic power [because there is not even] a single instance in history, of just one country which has been able to shake off foreign rule without resorting to war, to violence" (12). If Singh takes non-violence as "the philosophy of sheep, a creed of cowards" (12), Gian takes it as "the noblest of creeds . . . [which] takes greater courage; non-violence is not for the weak" (13). Debi Dayal, like Singh, believes that non-violence is a creed for the cowards. However, after his varied experiences and especially his perception of the mounting communal violence on the eve of Independence, he develops self-doubt. When he learns from Basu of the violence unleashed by the Muslim League, he tells the terrorist-turned-Hindu Mahasabha activist that "non-violence is perhaps the only answer" to the on-going communal madness (284). The activist, however, dismisses non-violence scornfully as: "merely a pious thought, a dream of a philosopher" (284). To Basu, the reality of the communal killings leaves no room for non-violence to succeed in such a surcharged atmosphere of somebody throwing "acid at the girl you loved" (285). He believes that recourse to non-violence at this time of Muslim fury will once again make the Hindus a slave race within weeks of deliverance from the British rule. Non-violence, according to him, is an ineffective weapon against "brute force," as that of "Hitler" (285). Basu believes that the popularity of non-violence among the Hindus will put them at the receiving end of the Hindu-Muslim riots: "More women will be raped, abducted, children slaughtered, because their men will have been made incapable of standing up for themselves" (286). In a world of mounting violence Basu sees Gandhi's reliance on non-violence and his fast-unto-death sit-ins in Bengal and Bihar as failing to avert the bloody Partition.

Basu's denunciation of the principle of Gandhian non-violence, which Dayanand James identifies with the point of view "of the violent revolutionaries or terrorists who had no faith in the Gandhian technique of nonviolence" looks logical (123). This perspective, which dialectically challenges the nationalistic position, recalls Savarkar's censure "of the doctrine of absolute non-violence not because we are less saintly, but because we are more sensible!" (Keer qtd. in Jyoti Trehan 109). Basu's dismissal of Gandhian non-violence echoes Malgonkar's own stance, for even in *The Men Who Killed Gandhi* which privileges

the perspective of the assassins, he foregrounds the Gandhian doctrine at the time of the naked dance of communal violence as being not only “a form of perversity” but also “the action of a saint bent on martyring his flock in a grand gesture of idealism” (Malgonkar, “The Men” 17-18). Malgonkar’s carping critique here recalls Hindutva criticism of Gandhian non-violence as undermining the Hindu hold on India and bringing shame to the Hindu Nation.

Malgonkar’s sharp tone and worldview in *A Bend in the Ganges* stem from Savarkar’s sophisticated discourse of Hindutva as found in his writings and speeches including *Six Glorious Epochs of Indian History*, wherein the Hindu ideologue’s political perspective, which approximates to the stereotyped notions of the impotent Hindu “Self” and the hyper-sexual, hyper-aggressive Muslim “Other,” finds virtue as a perversion, which is shown to have been injurious to the Hindu nation on numerous occasions. In this view, even the chivalrous attitude of Hindu heroes like Chattrapati Shivaji and Chimaji Appa to the daughter-in-law of the Muslim governor of Kalyan and the wife of the Portuguese governor of Bassein is condemned as a perversion because it did not permit a tit for tat action, that is, it did not allow them to avenge

the unutterable atrocities and oppression and outrage committed on us by the Sultans and Muslim noblemen and thousands of others, big and small. Let those Sultans and their peers take a fright that in the event of a Hindu victory our molestation and detestable lot shall be avenged on the Muslim women. (Savarkar 179)

Besides the Hindu attitude of chivalry to womenfolk, Savarkar also takes Hindus’ tolerance as perverted virtue. In this connection, Purushottam Agarwal comments, “the self-image of a tolerant Hindu is arbitrarily constituted and then, it is contrasted with the ferociously intolerant ‘Other’ and the tolerant Hindu is invited to become equally ferocious” (47-48). It is Savarkar’s philosophy of paying the Muslims back in the same coin, which is at odds with the political thrust of the Congress that makes him denounce the Congress, Gandhi and non-violence. Agarwal’s citation of Savarkar’s hagiographer Dhananjaya Keer’s following remark throws further light on the Hindu ideologue’s call for Hindu revenge of the Muslim atrocities in the context of the Partition violence: “He (Savarkar) said that Pakistan’s inhuman and barbarous acts such as kidnapping and raping Indian women would not be stopped unless Pakistan was given tit for tat [, which alone would make it appreciate] “the horrors of those brutalities” (Keer qtd. in Agarwal 43). It is this Hindutva logic which underlines Basu’s denunciation of Gandhi in *A Bend in the Ganges*. Gandhi deserves to be convicted because he advocates “a moral barrier for the construction of baser instincts as the valid political mode” (Agarwal 52). By thus contextualizing the novel’s indictment of non-violence in Savarkar’s call for revenge against violence unleashed by the Muslim League, Malgonkar contests the notion of sanity and moral value implicit in the deification of Mahatma Gandhi.

Malgonkar shows the ineffectualness of non-violence as not only “macro tragedy on a national scale” but also “micro tragedy” of “family feud” at the time of Partition between two sharers (Iyengar 433). Dispute over the land of Piploda leads to the murder of Hari, Gian’s brother at the hands of Vishnu Dutta of the Big House. At the time of murder, Gian is with Hari, but he fails to save his brother’s life. Failure to save his brother raises doubts about non-violence in Gian’s mind: “Was that why he had embraced the philosophy of non-violence without question—from physical cowardice, not from courage? Was his non-violence merely that of the rabbit refusing to confront the hound?” (Malgonkar “A Bend” 44). Gian’s non-violence, which indeed camouflages his cowardice, “crumble[s] the moment

it [meets] a major test" (122). He kills Vishnu Dutta with the same axe with which Hari had been killed. As M. Rajagopalachari rightly remarks, Malgonkar has "deliberately shaped Gian in order to reveal with pitiless irony the gap between precept and practice" (58).

Malgonkar casts Gian as a foil to Debi Dayal, a member of the nationalist terrorist group headed by Singh. These two characters with "contrasting careers" make the readers not only look closely at their character-sketches but also scrutinize "the symbolic content" they represent (Amur 119). The contrast itself is founded on whether they live by a code or not. In this regard, Uma Parmeswaram comments: "Malgonkar seems to say that those who live by a code have the making of hero, while those who have no code are of an inferior mould . . . in *A Bend the Ganges*, Debi has a code, Gian does not" (333). Gian comes out at best as merely a pseudo-Gandhian, as one for whom the Gandhian movement is "merely a face-saving device to shelter his cowardice and poverty behind its tenets" (S. C. Sood 201). Unlike Debi who hates the English and fights against them with terror and violence, Gian holds all Englishmen in high admiration. Padmanabhan quotes historian Bipin Chandra to make the point that Gian's unabashed eulogy of the British is a case of an indoctrinated mind lapping up the propaganda that the British are the moral force of India—"the Mai-Baap [Father and Mother] of the common people of India" (Chandra qtd. in Padmanabhan 63). Gian's allegiance to the jail superintendent Patrick Mulligan makes him "the most despised man" in the Andamans jail where his lie gets Debi in real trouble and from whom he receives the despicable tag of a "scum . . . the sort of man through whom men like Mulligan rule our country, keep us enslaved" (Malgonkar, "A Bend" 192). While Debi Dayal always thinks of escape to wreak violence upon the English in order to force them to quit India, Gian entertains no desire of leaving the island since he thinks he has nothing to go back to. Circumstances, however, force Gian to return to India. After the return, he lies without scruples to make Debi's father give him a decent job and to come intimately close to his sister, Sundari who deliberately develops a sexual relationship with him to avenge her husband's affair with Malini. She calls Gian "a male whore" (324). The narrative shows Gian as a thoroughly negative character, as even the narrator reduces him to "a leper in a world of criminals" (182). The whole point of Gian's negative portrayal is to highlight the hiatus between his belief in the principle of *ahimsa* and his practice of it. Gian acts in complete violation of the principle, the practice of which "involves abstaining from physical injury as well as injury to the soul, as we might say; genuine *ahimsa* is incompatible with the demands of the ego. To use a person only as a means is to do him a moral injury" (Puri 167).

However, Gian's dash from Delhi to Duriabad to rescue Sundari and her parents from the looming attack of the Muslim rioters constitutes what Sood calls "only one of his moments of strength when he can redeem himself" (209). Critical opinion about this moment of strength varies sharply, with some critics taking it as a moment of glory for Gian while others condemning him for letting it go by. James interprets the climactic scene to project Gian as "'Initiation hero'" (123). Gian, according to him, "undergoes a change; he experiences for the first time "unselfishness," accepts the world for what it is and emerges as a triumphant victor over falseness" (130). Pradhan, likewise, endorses Amur's estimate that "'the Gian who survives is not the Gian who built his life on falsehood, but a morally regenerated individual'" (144). Disagreeing completely with the above assessment of Gian's character, R. S. Singh writes: "This seeming act of kindness was a calculated move to lay the trap for Sundari. Apparently, his success was symbolical of the triumph of the nationalist movement but, in reality, it was, as Basu evaluated it,

‘even a greater failure than the anarchist movement’” (130). Singh’s critical judgment gives inkling into the allegorical value of the rescue act as narrativized in the novel’s finale:

‘What’s wrong!’ a forlorn voice bawled at them. ‘Get a bloody move on! You there! You! — Gian Talwar!’ . . . For a second or two, Gian hesitated. Then he started the engine and threw the car into gear while Mulligan kept motioning him forward with his arm. Then, without looking at Sundari, he released the clutch. The Ford leaped forward. (Malgonkar, “A Bend” 376)

While Mulligan’s giving the driver’s seat to Gian allegorizes the British handover of power to Jawaharlal Nehru, “the final image of an obedient Indian (Gian) driven towards a free India by his former British jailer is certainly far from an image of pride or hope” (Gomathi Narayanan, “British Fathers” 217). Gian’s near paralysis, manifested in his sweat and his wait for guidance from Mulligan, anticipates Malgonkar’s candid treatment in *The Men Who Killed Gandhi* of Nehru’s indecisiveness and his looking for guidance from Lord Mountbatten as compounding the crisis in terms of the Partition victims, the appeasement of Pakistan and the Kashmir war that followed. His failure to save Sundari’s mother, whom Narayanan takes as “the ‘Mother India’ symbolism” (“British Fathers” 217) is tantamount to the dismemberment of Mother India through Partition and the (Congress) government’s abandonment of the fleeing Hindus and Sikhs from Pakistan. Looking at the ending as an allegory as it has been intended by Malgonkar, it is apparent that Gian hardly grows; till the end he remains what he is at the outset: a dubious, indecisive, servile and shallow person. Gian, unlike Debi who lives by a code and who stays steady in his convictions and determined in his mission of life, does not possess any code and he remains cowardly, unsteady and undependable till the end. Through Gian’s character, Malgonkar discredits the Gandhian philosophy of non-violence and truth by showing that these ideals are not practicable, as they are contradictory to the facts of life.

Malgonkar’s rejection of Gandhism in favour of the unremembered, uncelebrated but glorious and gallant freedom fighters that fought the English with terror and violence is symbolized in Debi’s positive portrayal. Debi is depicted as being steadfast in his conviction of violence as a valuable tool to take revenge. After utilizing it successfully to an extent against the British in return for the attempted rape of his mother, he utilizes it subtly but most satisfyingly by choosing to hit the lascivious Shafi where it hits him the most, that is, by buying his favourite prostitute, Mumtaz. In a civil war that was played out on women’s bodies, Debi’s method of revenge falls in line with the call for revenge as outlined in *Six Glorious Epochs of History*. Debi comes out as a martyr in the cause of Mother India—whether that cause is to oust the British or to fight the Muslim divisiveness. That Debi has been cast as a martyr becomes ostensible from the way Malgonkar describes his death, “investing the event with poetic and symbolic overtones. The last thing he ever saw was ‘the rising sun in the land of the five rivers on the day of their freedom’” (M. K. Bhatnagar 111). It is largely because of “Debi’s individual calibre, as a freedom fighter” that Malgonkar finds some cause for pride in the heroes of terrorism (Narayanan, “British Fathers”). By thus valorizing the terror and violence of the freedom fighters in contradistinction to Gian’s shallow practice of non-violence, Malgonkar celebrates their unnoticed heroic role in the Independence of India, and in this sense *A Bend in the Ganges* revises textbook history wherein the violent campaign remains largely absent. Malgonkar’s valorization of the violent campaign, however, does not mean that he is uncritical about it. Clarifying the novelist’s position on violence in *A Bend in the Ganges*, Cowasjee writes that for Malgonkar “violence is a fact of our existence—and we must

recognize it as such. In practical terms we may be no better off in doing so, but it would be, to use his own words, ‘honest and manly’” (91). *A Bend in the Ganges* suggests that since violence is a bitter reality, a willful renunciation or negation of it, as Gandhi sought to do, is nothing but a blissful blindness, which brings a bigger disaster than its bold cognizance. The valorization of violence in the novel functions as a shock therapy to the Indians lulled to the complacency of denial due to the hype of Gandhian non-violence.

Malgonkar, however, does show the terrorist campaign degrading from the level of national solidarity to communal hatred and violence. The terrorist campaign, as Ranjit Sen points out, did not “permit disunity. This ethical concept of struggle was the surest guarantee against partition” (230). But the disunity does come about through Shafi’s unethical betrayal of Debi. Shafi, after letting himself be convinced by Hafiz Khan that the Indian Muslims will be overwhelmed by the Hindu majority in the absence of the British, turns beastly and communal with such a fanatic passion which contributes significantly to the ferocity of the Partition violence which “changed the very hue of India’s struggle” (Rupinderjit Saini 108). It is in Malgonkar’s diagnosis of the disintegration of the terrorist campaign and in his portrayal of Shafi Usman that his othering of the Muslims is seen. H. G. S. Arulandrum summarizes Malgonkar’s description of the rise of Muslim communalism on the eve of Independence:

It was their [Muslims’] firm belief that they were born to rule and not to be ruled over. Unable to adjust themselves to the changing demands of history, they lingered in the aristocratic memories of the Delhi Sultanate and the great Moghul empire and were afraid, mortally afraid of becoming a minority-nobody in India. (14)

Malgonkar’s attribution of the rise of Muslim communalism to their psychology of being the conqueror of the Hindus and hence, as the narrative of *A Bend in the Ganges* puts it with reference to Shafi’s line of thinking, “unquestionably a superior race,” constitutes the Hindutva perception of the enemy Other (Malgonkar, “A Bend” 288). In this Hindutva perception, the whole Muslim history of India becomes “a catalogue of conquests and cruelty,” of the barbarism of the Muslims’ violent temperament and their perversely licentious character (Gyanendra Pandey 13). It is Malgonkar’s foregrounding of Shafi’s serpent-like deadliness, hyper-aggressiveness and hyper-sensuality which constitutes the thrust of the chapter, “To Fold a Leaf,” in which the villain is portrayed. B. P. Engade recaptures Shafi’s portrayal in *A Bend in the Ganges* in a way that reveals a total othering of the Muslims as barbarians, as “vultures and savages” that kept up to “the culture of violence, plunder and destruction that Babar [had] brought with him” (119). While the attack on Sundari and her parents lends credence to Malgonkar’s portrayal of Shafi’s character, it contrasts so clearly to Debi’s gradual love for Mumtaz whom he decides to even wed. The contrast forms an important part of Malgonkar’s overall design of pitting the barbarian against the civilized, of making the recalcitrant Islam that dismembered Mother India “with fire and steel, and the prick of the spear” look monstrously irrational (Malgonkar, “A Bend” 289).

With the enemy now being the monstrously irrational Muslims, *A Bend in the Ganges* sees the adherence to non-violence as emasculating the Hindus to the extent that they fail to stand up to the virile enemy. Despite the presence of Gandhi and the so-called civilized Britain, the Indian Independence turned out to be a bloodbath, subjecting millions of Indians to one of the worst barbarism the humanity has ever committed. When the barbarism grips the nation in its octopus-like tentacles, Debi Dayal asks pertinently: “Who had won, Gandhi or the British? For the British at least had foreseen such a development.

Or had they both lost through not having allowed for structural flaws in the human material they were dealing with?" (349). Debi's is "a fundamental question, and a legitimate one, raised by Malgonkar, which should serve as a corrective to the political myth of non-violence often projected as an unquestioned creed during the nationalist struggle" (Kaushik 46). Having thus questioned the effectiveness of non-violence in the wake of the barbaric brutality unleashed by the Muslim League, Debi's reflection on the alternative to non-violence in the same scene underscores Savarkar's influence on Malgonkar:

Yet, what was the alternative? Would terrorism have won freedom at a cheaper price and somehow still kept the Hindus and Muslims together? Perhaps not. But at least it would have been an honest sacrifice, honest and manly—not something that had sneaked upon them in the garb of non-violence" (Malgonkar, "A Bend" 349).

Terrorism may not have succeeded as a counterforce to communalism, but it would have definitely left the Hindus better prepared to fight back, to pay the brutal Muslims back in the same coin: blood for blood. To quote Kaushik again, the call for blood "is as much Malgonkar's answer as of Debi Dayal to one of the most vexing questions of India's nationalist history" (47). Malgonkar's valorization of the call for blood remains interwoven in the fabric of each major episode in *A Bend in the Ganges*. It is his unambiguous treatment of the theme of revenge, which in the words of Abidi, "gives a unity of focus to *A Bend in the Ganges* which it would otherwise have lacked" (78-79).

Unlike Malgonkar's open call for blood in *A Bend in the Ganges*, Gill's *The Rape* (1974), which finds a place in the canon of Indian English Partition Fiction, hovers between a radical political Sikh view and a fictional human view—with the aesthetic representation of the human dimension conceding the ground to the documentary representation interspersed with a flurry of politico-communal editorializing. The novel captures the Partition drama from May 1947 onwards and the fictional action gets underway with the Initiation Ceremony of the eighteen-year-old protagonist, Dalipjit. The ceremony, as the narrative stresses, is invested with "a special significance . . . a call to rise in faith and fight the Muslim tyrants and fanatics who were perpetrating the massacre of the non-Muslims" (Gill 11). Gill here evokes the Khalsa identity conferred upon the Sikhs by the tenth Guru, Gobind Singh. The bestowal, a corollary of the First Initiation Ceremony which instantly changed a meek sparrow into a predatory hawk, underscores "the charismatic power of the Guru in converting the motley crowd of peasants, petty traders, and merchants into fearsome warriors committed to a philosophy of religious war and establishing *dharam* or righteousness on earth" (Purnima Dhawan 6). Gill places this militantly masculinist commitment to *dharamyudha*—"a Khalsa that was staunch and unyielding" (Marcus Baybrook 34) both in the larger historical context of Sikh-Muslim conflict and in the immediate circumstances of Sikh-Muslim riots during Partition. By so doing, *The Rape*, right at the outset, seeks to mobilize Sikh solidarity against the Muslim Other. Beniwal interprets Gill's narrative move here as a "delineati[on of] the present Sikh predicament as an extension of the past, [and as an attempt] to turn both time and space (in the context of Partition) into communal entities and the Sikh history into communal history" (Beniwal 41). By thus interpellating his Sikh readers to Khalsa ethno-nationalism, Gill tells his story of the Partition violence in Punjab in terms that they can understand. The tactic of narrating the naked dance of violence in the Partition riots in the Sikh vernacular idioms dovetailing with their lived experience is aimed at making his insistent line of action for the Sikhs—an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth—sound cogent to them.

Gill's penchant for Sikh revenge against the Muslims' perpetration of unspeakable violence against the community in Thoa Khalsa village of Rawalpindi district bears testimony to his hawkish approach. Unlike the personal narratives of the Rawalpindi massacre figuring in recent feminist reconstructions of the Punjab violence in 1947 wherein the thrust is on the human dimension even as it carries a critique of the masculinity of the violence perpetrated, Gill merely refers to the Rawalpindi riot, which reminds him "of the terror of Aurangzeb and the wrath of Nadir Shah" in a brazen attempt to spur "the frightened Sikhs and Hindus . . . [towards] a crusade after the Initiation and stem the tide of hatred, arson, murder and loot set off by the Muslim League" (Gill 11). He cites the barbarism of the Muslims against the Sikhs in Rawalpindi and Multan not only as the main reason for the Sikh's decision to stay out of Pakistan (29 & 64-65) but also as a justification for their call for Muslim blood—their resolve "not [to] sleep on a bed till the holocaust was over, till the death of every innocent was avenged" (30).

Gill also justifies the violent tactics of the Sikhs as their helplessness arising from the Sikh leaders "losing the game" (70). He is particularly harsh on Sardar Baldev Singh who, as he alleges, "did not even grasp the situation and was completely blank about what was happening around him" (70). He mentions that "a general trust and overconfidence was being reposed in Giani Kartar Singh and Master Tara Singh" (70). These two Sikh leaders were in the forefront of floating Azad Punjab Scheme, which, as Prithvipal Singh Kapur writes, "called for the detachment of Muslim majority states so as to create a new province in which the Sikh population was maximized and no single community constituted a majority in the proposed set up" (67). As Gill insinuates, the inflexible attitude of these firebrand leaders did not make solid headway because of the Congress's insistence on non-violence: "The Sikh community was caught in a dilemma. Its leaders were all out for fight and violence to have their way, but the Congress leaders were not caring much for the threat" (Gill 69). Let down by their leaders—both the Akalis and the Congress, the Sikhs in self-defence, maintains Raj Gill, "started preparing with guns and spears not to obtain what they were denied but to hold on to what they had, to meet the onslaught by the Muslims which they vaguely knew would break upon them and which was to be fought back if they were to survive" (70).

Gill's justifying Sikh violence against the Muslims as having arisen out of helplessness and the need for self-defence forms part of his strategy of othering the Muslims as barbarians. He falls back on newspaper headlines such as "Muslims perpetuate limitless cruelties. Women's breasts chopped off. Nude women made to lead a Muslim procession" (29). He describes the fall-out of the reprisal by the Hindus and Sikhs in East Punjab as inviting State atrocities on the evacuees in Pakistan:

Army tanks were used in Sheikhpur to mow down the non-Muslim population sheltering in the cotton mills. Armed forces connived at the general shooting of the Sikh and Hindu refugees awaiting evacuation in the Lyallpur camp. Police constabulary was employed in the senseless killing of the departing Hindu population in Jhang and Multan. (158-59)

The othering of Pakistan as a barbaric nation takes on a definite edge when Gill describes how Pakistan Army delayed the passage of the caravan for two days to "divest[...] men of the arms, women of ornaments and slaughtered the whole lot and threw them in the river where most of the bodies did not even submerge properly" (195). By so implicating the State of Pakistan in the victimhood of the evacuees, Gill anticipates Anders Bjørn Hansen in characterizing the Muslim-perpetrated violence qualifying as genocide

(Hansen 16-30). The othering becomes total when Kartar Singh tells Dalipjit that he does not believe his own Muslim servants even though they swear by their Prophet to affirm their loyalty to him:

Muslims are always disloyal, undependable. Their history is full of such instances. Did they not turn against their own Prophet? And the Mughals—dethroning the father, the brother. In fact these Muslims . . . are pigs, deceivers, and betrayers. (Gill 67)

Such a demonization of Muslims in general and the subcontinental Muslims in particular turns out to be a highly inflammatory description—a description in which the intolerable Other, to quote Stanley Tambiah's words, "is so exaggerated and magnified that this stereotyped 'other' must be degraded, determined and compulsively *obliterated*" (Author's emphasis. qtd. in Ashis Nandy, "The Invisible Holocaust" 320). Such a brazen use of the prose of otherness makes Gill's representation of the Partition violence crudely partisan. After objectifying the Muslims as the total Other, his deliberate attempt to match Muslim atrocities with Sikh-Hindu ones turns out to be an obvious artifice—what Veena Das and Ashis Nandy dismiss as "inauthentic literature" (88). Unlike the documentary representation of the violence in West Punjab, the language that Raj Gill uses to represent the violence on the Muslims in East Punjab shuns graphic descriptions and condemns the violence in only general terms. In an attempt to disown the memories and locate the violence outside normality—beyond the domain of the civilized society of the Sikhs and the Hindus—, he shifts the focus to the loss of the value of human life in a period of "witches' sabbath" (Gill 191).

Dalipjit, however, cannot disown the memories; he is caught in a dilemma: whether to dissociate himself from the sabbath or to forget and forgive or to commit suicide. The vacillation between revenge and forgiveness continues right from the Initiation Ceremony in which he says he had participated "to join Jasmit (his beloved) in taking an oath of their abiding love" (14). Loyalty to his family and obligation to his community demand him to bay for Muslim blood but the emotion of love forbids him to do so. The emotion of love ultimately prevails over his equally strong other two emotions, thereby not only persuading him to forbear the provocations of his bugbear, Santokh, but also making him recoil from taking Muslim lives on two occasions—the first time sparing the throat of Jalal and the second time the head of Leila's father. Dalipjit's capacity to show humanity at such junctures makes K. K. Sharma and B. K. Johri see Gill as "fervently plead[. . . ing] for forgiveness and appear[. . . ing] to echo Shakespeare's message in *The Tempest* that virtue lies in forgiveness, not vengeance" (Sharma and Johri 135).

The theme of forgiveness in *The Rape*, however, remains muted under the weight of the narrator's call for Muslim blood "as a pure fraternal gesture towards those belonging to their religion and community" (Gill 208). Even Dalipjit's capacity to forgive turns out to be as fake as the phoney balancing of the violence in the two Punjabs: ". . . the angry man that he is, Dalipjit does not dwell on the need to forgive. He merely decides to forget, wipe off his past and alienate himself from the polluted generation" (Narayanan, "Indo-Anglian Novels" 46). As the narrative of *The Rape* states before the evacuation, Dalipjit remains "lost in vicarious thoughts of participating in riots, leading his people safely through the carnage and killing a hundred thousand Muslims in chastisement of their fanaticism" (Gill 146). The suppression of the urge for revenge, which manifests in Dalipjit's vicarious participation of the genocide of the Muslims, also shows up in his imaginative killing of Mahatma Gandhi. In his semi-conscious state while recovering

from the pneumonic fever, Dalipjit claims to have killed Gandhi because of his hatred of the Mahatma for the latter's betrayal of the Sikhs and Hindus residing in the West Punjab. Like Godse, he holds Gandhi guilty of Partition in which "the guts of the innocent [became] the offering, the blood of millions, the oblation to the independence which was thought to have been won without the sword and the fire, with non-violence, understanding, and by turning the other cheek to the enemy" (129). The imaginative parricide of the so-called Father of the Nation does not come all of sudden. Right from the beginning, Dalipjit shows his strong disagreement with Gandhi's "fakir's ways" (25). His aversion represents the anger of the Sikhs in the West Punjab at Gandhi's double game and his "incomprehensible, implicit antagonism of their community" (69). In this connection, Chittrabrata Palit quotes historian Michael Edwards who "concludes that 'after independence, the orthodox Hindu political parties were to attack Gandhi violently for having played a double game and it was such attacks which led finally, though indirectly, to his assassination by a Hindu extremist in January 1948'" (Palit 58).

By paralleling the protagonist on the lines of Nathuram Godse, Raj Gill undermines the message of forgiveness with which he interweaves the fabric of the narrative at the end by underlining "that the cycle of revenge must be liquidated through love, sympathy, kindness, understanding, restraint and forgiveness" (Sharma and Johri 135). It is precisely Dalipjit's motive of revenge, which faces a definite roadblock from Gandhi's policy of non-violence, that makes him criticize the Mahatma's absorption in the "spiritual world to [the extent that he does not] realize the practical implications of things gone wrong" (Gill 241). The criticism echoes Godse's pinning the responsibility for Partition on Gandhi, who, according to the assassin, "wanted to protect his personal saintliness, if not leadership, at the cost of the country" (qtd. in Palit 59). *The Rape* fails as literature: it remains structurally flawed with the theme of forgiveness suddenly seeming to win out at the end while consistently losing its ground all through the narrative in its tug of war with the theme of revenge. With the motive of revenge remaining to the extent that Dalipjit has to turn a Nathuram Godse, the strong streaks of mercy and forgiveness in the protagonist seem to have been superimposed.

Unlike Raj Gill, however, Malgonkar gives a sophisticated treatment of the theme of revenge by aesthetically transmuting his rejection of *ahimsa* through an intense dialectic between violence and non-violence, between Gandhi and Savarkar. In so far as both Malgonkar and Gill look upon Gandhi's doctrine of non-violence as perverted in the face of what they see as Islamic terror, *The Rape* and *A Bend in the Ganges* enunciate a view at odds with the nationalistic (Congress) representation of Partition. The cumulative lesson emerging from these novels is not to believe in the treacherous Muslims and to tolerate no more any intolerance to the Hindus and the Sikhs—a message that is music to the ears of the Indians holding right-wing views. Such a narration of history, which enacts the construction of an internal enemy, in the words of Sankaran Krishna, "has corralled our entire future into a box labeled 'the Unfinished Business of Partition'" (194). But both *A Bend in the Ganges* and *The Rape*, in obvious deviance from Krishna's liberal line, strongly suggest the adoption of violence to finish the unfinished business of the Partition of India. Malgonkar, who takes cognizance of revenge in Hindu scriptures, legitimizes it in *A Bend in the Ganges* not only as an ethic but also as an aesthetic of proportion and balance vis-à-vis the rampaging Muslims at a highly surcharged juncture in Indian history. On the contrary, Raj Gill's call for excessive revenge against the Sikhs' traditional *bête noire* in *The Rape* turns out to be a feeble substantiation done in a Khalsa ethno-nationalistic sweep

and when he becomes aware of the extremism, he hastily tries to temper it with an emphasis on forgiveness. Malgonkar's artistic control of the theme of revenge becomes so striking compared to Gill's glaring lack of it.

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