Racial Discrimination In Manohar Malgonkar’s 
*Combat Of Shadows*

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**Abstract:**

The Indian English Novel has become abundantly rich with prolific writings and its contemporary themes and events of devoted and committed writers in the post independence era. The founding fathers of Indian English Writing R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and other writers like Nissim Ezekiel, Babani Battacharya, Kamala Markandaya and Kshuhwant Singh, depicted Indian lives and their views. Indian Novel in English has grown by leaps and bounds in respect of thematic variety and linguistic maturity. Some writers took up freedom, partition and the racism as source for their novels. Manohar Malgonkar is one among those writers and his second novel *Combat of Shadows* throws sufficient light on Racism (the encounter of Indo-Anglians). It also focuses on the living conditions, aspirations, attitudes and activities of Anglo-Indians and their role in the novel is prominent. The novel depicts the roots of racial and colonial discrimination lay in a social caste.

**Key words:** Racism, Aspirations, Colonial, Discrimination.

Manohar Malgonkar in his second novel, *Combat of Shadows* focuses on the living conditions, aspirations, attitudes and activities of Anglo-Indians and their role in the novel is significant. Tinapur’s railway institute is the symbol of the Anglo-Indians solidarity and culture is the centre of the life and activities of the Anglo-Indians. There is all the buzz and noise of a typical institute which has provision for the young people to play badminton in the central hall and for the elders to play bridge, bazique and rummy at tables placed on the stage. Every Saturday night the younger people dance while the elders sit on chairs and watch. Galas are held once a month when the band plays till late in the night. Games like housie housie and escalado are conducted for the people who do not dance. On a gala night a rum bar is run in one of the back rooms though they do not possess a license for it. The Tinapur railway institute members can dance any dance from the hala hula to the belly dance with great verve,
zest, abandon and skill. Henry, the principal character of the novel, does not like the dances of Indo-Anglians on the gala night. He thinks that it is very cheap, noisy and unrefined. It is something like the romping of drunken sailors with blind dated girls in water front joints.

Gala is something like ‘chichi’ and ‘honky tonk’ the currency of Pidgin English. The accent, the language and the speech of Anglo-Indians are different from that of a pucca sahib. It is true that Anglo-Indians have great difficulty with ‘th’ sound, most of them pronounce it as though it were soft ‘t’. But Eddie is an exception to it. Henry expresses his dislike, horror and disgust of the social life of his compartmentalized thinking; he is unable to appreciate the beauty of Ruby, the important female character, in the novel.

The Anglo-Indians keep up appearances and try to hide their poverty as well as their genealogy. They think of themselves as whole English and try to seek living kinship with the West and desperately struggle against separation from the sahibs and further assimilation with the Indians. Kai Nicholson says:

Malgonkar has, at least, described the inner conflicts of the Eurasian and in Ruby’s ardent wish to become and live as an English woman, the reader is in a position to notice a spark sympathy expressed by the novelist.

The racial conflict is brought out very prominently in Henry’s confrontation with Ruby and Eddie on one hand, Jugal Kishore and Gauri on the other.

Malgonkar, with his consummate and artistic skill, work out the symbols of the three inter-related racial groups and uses them to graph the pattern of Henry Winton’s fall. The first group comprises of the Indian characters-Jugal Kishore, Gauri, Kistulal, Pasupati and Sarkar who constitute the various points at which wanton as a tea planter confronts Indian Society. The rogue-elephant, with one tusk, is also an Indian symbol, represents Henry’s only encounter with the deeper aspects of Indian life.

Jugal Kishore, Henry’s Chief stock man and cunning enemy, who takes to politics and eventually becomes the Minister for Plantations, defines the nature of Henry’s involvement with India when he says, with an insight which only deep love or hatred can give:

“We all have our failings Mr. Winton. Your failing is that you cannot bear Indians; yet your tragedy is that you are doomed to work in this country” (Malgonkar, 107-108)

The only Indians Winton does not mind are people like the schoolmaster Sarkar, typical babus, and ideal subordinates, ‘grinning, Servile, grovelling, ‘totally in capable of hitting back’, on whom the business of the empire rested:or men like Kistulal the Shikari, who make themselves, indispensable by their professional skill and fit into the Englishman’s made of living in India. Jugal Kishore and Gauri create difficulties and offer challenges which he is not able to face.

One day Jugal Kishore requests Henry to appoint Gauri as the headmistress, in place of Ruby Miranda. Henry does not consider his request because it is indiscreeetly made, insults Jugle Kishore and then refers to the consciousness of the colour bar. After some time, he becomes a Congre Union and a minister of plantation; Sri Jeffrey, therefore must keep him on the right side and Henry has had some problem on that account. But, the forces of change and destiny are symbolized in the rogue elephant
that Henry goes to shoot and finds that the cartridges in his gun were dead and consequently Kistulal, the guide, dies. Then, on a second appearance it takes the toil of Eidde Trevor, this time schemed by Henry, and finally Sir Jeffrey manages to shoot to the rogue but the revenge is not over until Pasupati and Ruby connive to burn Henry alive on the shooting hunt. In the end it is Sir Jeffrey who survives because he knows how to compromise with the changing circumstances.

The roots of racial and colonial discrimination lay in a social caste. While the ruling race completely disowned them, partly as a strategy for keeping the myth of their superiority alive, and partly to avoid the eventual handing over the administration to the native whites or the mixed race, as it would have happened, had the Europeans continued to marry Indians and Anglo-Indians as they did in the early period of the British Settlement in India, it was ironical that the Anglo-Indian tended to identify himself with the British, and referred to England as ‘Home’. This was the cause of his rootlessness, his lack of identity, his alienation. Because, while Anglo-Indian always tried to woo the white races, he concealed an aversion for them which arose from the way he was treated. This Eddies tendency either to ‘cheek’ or to ‘Knowhow’, and Ruby even while aspiring to become a memsahib, despised the white man as ‘so conspicuously plain’ and ‘bloodless’. Unable to resolve the love-hate relationship they destroy one another. This is the theme of Combat of Shadows:

Desire and aversion are opposite shadows. Those who allow themselves to be overcome by their struggle cannot rise to Knowledge of reality.

Racial attitudes are very deep rooted and are the spring of much of social and political behavior. Ironically, the ruling whites could not even mix with the Anglo-Indians; they were invariably reminded of Kipling’s warning against Eurasian women. Ruby, torn between racial conflicts of Brown and White and having refused to fall ball into her own community, turns hysterical and is contriving to erupt her anger and envy.

References:
