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## Decoding Cultural Crisis among Anglo-Indians during Colonial Period in India: A Perspective from *Combat of Shadows*

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### Introduction

To understand culture is the basic requirement to interpret as well as re-interpret the historical progress of a nation and its people. India has always been a land of cultural diversity due to colonization. On one hand, culture acts as the binding force for the people of a nation but on the other one, it serves as a reason to devalue and underestimate other communities leading to cultural chauvinism. This paper discusses conflicts arising among Indians, British and Anglo-Indians as a consequence of cultural and racial interface during the colonial period in India, as portrayed in the novel *Combat of Shadows* by Manohar Malgonkar. Written in 1963, *Combat of Shadows* is a well-constructed novel, which recreates socio-political milieu of late 1930s in the Assam tea-gardens where much of its action takes place. The title of the novel symbolically represents the conflicting forces of love, passion, lust, hunting, politics at tea-gardens, life of Indian workers, Anglo-Indians and the British. In it, there is vivid description of hunting animals like tusker, python, birds etc. The action of the novel is set in the tea gardens in the north eastern province of Assam and the novel covers the period from 1938 to 1940. Henry Winton, the protagonist of the novel, is a young Englishman. A very important dimension of socio-cultural milieu is the racial encounter between the British and the Indians and the Anglo-Indians. This novel consistently highlights the cultural conflicts. For example, the protagonist of this novel, Henry has to encounter numerous characters who are Indians, Anglo-Indians as well as British. Malgonkar has created many interesting scenes which depict Henry's encounter and relationship with Indians and Anglo-Indians.

Along with the cultural conflicts, Malgonkar also skillfully portrays the dilemmas of the Anglo-Indian community in India in pre-independent India, as they interacted with the British and the native Indian community. These conflicts arising out of cultural and racial interface during the colonial period in India is portrayed in the novel *Combat of Shadows* by Manohar Malgonkar. This overlapping of cultures, i.e. Western style industrial society and the simple Indian life, led to inevitable cultural differences.

The political scenario at Assam tea gardens is also well depicted by the novelist, showing how the Indian workers revolt, demanding their own Indian man as their head of any Anglo-Indian like Eddie Trevor. On the other hand, it is also shown that the British officers instead such

as Henry Winton and Sudden Dart, never want self-rule by Indians, hence they always suppressing such unity among the Indians. These complex relationships between the Indians and Anglo-Indians, the Indians and the British, and the Anglo-Indians and the British, have been deftly delineated by Malgonkar in the present novel. There are many scenes in this novel which highlights the western lifestyle, prevalent during British period in India. Such scenes create an important dimension of the social milieu of that period. Malgonkar is able to re-create the exact milieu of such western life-style so because he was exposed to a wide and varied world rather than confining to his school and college education only.

Henry Winton the protagonist of the novel has good knowledge as well as a good collection of hunting material like shooting-guns, imported cartridges, binoculars and many more. He is one of the most reliable hunters of the British managers. He has been specially assigned the duty to kill one-tusked rogue elephant. Henry takes this job willingly but at the crucial moment something goes wrong with the cartridges and he gets confused. All this mess results in the death of Kistulal, the shikari who is trampled by the rogue elephant but Henry manages to make a good escape from the place. Henry's manager, a British official named Cockburn forces him to cook up a story to save his prestige which represents the prestige of all white men. Henry is greatly terrified due to this accident. Rumours abound about his failure. One person who nurses a secret grudge against Henry is Kistulal's son, Pashupati. He could never be convinced that his father's death was due to accident. He always suspected Henry's role. Not only this, Henry has to deal with a strike by the workers of his tea-gardens. However, after successfully dealing with the strike, he leaves for London. When he returns he is married to Jean Walter and his real story of confrontations start. He has to face many people with whom he did wrong in some way or the other. Thus the novel can be divided into two parts, one part narrating the story of Henry and his actions and another part narrating the reactions of his people towards Henry.

After returning to India from England, Henry first of all meets Ruby Miranda, his mistress before marriage and then Eddie Trevor, an Anglo-Indian, lover of Ruby and illegitimate son of Sir Sudden Dart. The novel starts moving around the characters of Winton and Eddie, who are a perfect study in contrast: the former so self-centered and calculating because of an in-built fear of failure, the latter so open-hearted and free and fearless being the perfect sport. Henry regards Eddie Trevor to be his competitor, whether it is as Ruby's lover or getting favours of Sir Sudden Dart or it is related to infidelity of his wife, Jean. Henry holds Eddie responsible for all the problems in his life.

The novel also refers to World War II. In 1939, World War II broke out and its effect reached India too. Eddie Trevor is continuously getting the favours of Sir Jeffery Dart, he gets promoted to the post of manager. Since he was adventure-loving, had good background of sports and had keen interest to fight, Eddie got a commission in British Army with the help of Sir Jeffery Dart, the Resident Director. And that was very annoying for Henry. Now Eddie is going to join Army and fight in the war but that was not the end of his interference in Henry's life.

Knowingly or unknowingly, Eddie was stealing everything from Henry's life. Even Jean Walter, Henry's wife, too, was impressed with Eddie's skills. Henry also gets to know that Eddie and Ruby would be getting engaged when he is to Chinnar at his usual visit. Henry is happy with his wife, Jean making every effort to keep her happy, but his blissful married life is interrupted by the sudden disclosure of his past. Though Henry loves his wife but at the same time he compares her every move i.e from her looks and dressings to her love-making process, with Ruby Miranda who was deep-seated in his mind somewhere. And to his surprise Jean ultimately discovered his innermost feelings. One day while cleaning the Gun-room for the guests, she found the silk stockings tucked inside mattress and there were other sources from where she came to know about Henry's relations with Ruby. Henry felt ashamed when the secret was revealed by Jean herself. Henry could easily see the anger and a tone of detachment in the behavior of Jean and that confrontation between him and his wife left an irreparable void between them. In this way, Henry annoyed another woman annoyed in his life and that was Jean other than Ruby Miranda.

Henry is suspicious about the infatuation of Jean for Eddie. Still Henry tries his best to mend up the crack in his marital life by remaining calm but in vain. Chances of reconciliation seem bleak between them and it was quite apparent from Jean's attitude towards him.

Jean's growing intimacy with Eddie is disturbing Henry from inside, though he tries to guard his feelings of malice before Jean. It was becoming intolerable for him to even think of that relationship, though he still used to think of Ruby and his past affair with her. When he goes to meet Sudden Dart to enquire about his commission in army, he gets a chance to have some words with Ruby who has grown more mature and beautiful enough to ignite old flame of love in Henry. He finds it irresistible to not to get intimate again with Ruby and that happens. They spent night together in the game-cottage.

Meantime Henry gets the news of the same tusker being seen in the hills, around his own tea-garden, which was left unshot by him due to defective cartridges and which also trampled Kishtulal to death. Sudden Dart orders Henry to kill that rogue as early as possible. It is now a challenge for Henry to kill that elephant. It becomes almost like a ritual for him to go along the jungle and trace the tusker. Once while returning from the jungle he is obstructed by Gauri on his way. She insists that he come with her to have a look at something at Wallach's Folly, a secluded place in the hills. Henry goes with her and what he sees is unbelievable for him. He is shocked to see his wife Jean and Eddie Trevor lying under a tree like lovers. He goes mad with rage.

And that sight makes Henry stagger through that hill and he gets his ankle fractured. Jean and Eddie also rush there. Henry tries to sound very casual at that moment by showing as if he is not even bothered about his injury. Henry expresses his inability to kill that tusker next day for which he has been planning since a week. During his conversation with Henry, Eddie suddenly proposes to take the half-done task in his hands i.e. to go for hunting the next day. And Henry readily agrees to hand over his task to Eddie explaining all the facts regarding the spot of the tusker. He also gives his gun to Eddie but very cleverly he does not give Eddie the cartridges he

used to carry with himself. Instead he gives Eddie the defected cartridges which were left over from his previous expedition. And this way Henry plays his trick and that is a well planned murder plan for Eddie Trevor because Henry wants to take revenge against Eddie for seducing his wife Jean.

Henry does all this as he feels cheated by his wife Jean. He wants to teach a lesson to his wife without giving her any idea about his plan. Rubbing salt to his wounds, Jean confesses her love for Eddie before Henry on the same day Eddie went for hunting. But this time Henry listens to her without any sign of sorrow or envy as he has already planned to get rid of Eddie. And when the news of Eddie's death, who was brutally trampled to death by tusker, is broken, Henry has to face his wife as well Eddie's father John Trevor. Jean was upset over losing her lover but Henry seems unaffected and undisturbed by his wife's confession. But he gets irritated by the confession of John Trevor who tells him that Eddie is actually the son of Sir Sudden Dart. John Trevor was Eddie's foster father.

But the tragic end of Eddie Trevor is not the end of misfortunes for Henry Winton. Jean leaves the home and goes to Pune without having any word with Henry. He is left all alone with his fractured leg and his fulltime loneliness. Life to him seems gloomy and devoid of any adventure and the only person he could look upon was none other than his long lost love i.e., Ruby Miranda who is now working at Chinnar. Henry goes back in flashback and recollects his sweet memories of Ruby's love for him. He feels guilty for rejecting the love of Ruby back only for the sake of his career in India. It was not that he didn't feel love and longing for Miranda nor that she was an Anglo-Indian but it was out of fear of some disadvantage in his career growth that he rejected Ruby's love. But he makes up his mind to amend that mistake and decides he would propose to Ruby for marriage without caring about the world. He now eagerly waits for the recovery of his leg.

He wants to escape from his lonely and loveless life at Silent Hill and with all these thoughts he goes straight to Chinnar to meet Ruby Miranda. There he first meets Sudden Dart who has already killed the tusker in order to avenge the death of his illegitimate son Eddie Trevor. Sudden asks Henry to check the artificial moon at game cottage, situated deep in the jungle for which Henry readily agrees. Thereafter he meets Ruby Miranda where he expresses his desire to accompany Ruby at game cottage at night. She promises him that she would definitely turn up to him with dinner. Henry goes straight to the jungle assisted by Pashupati, son of Kistulal. Pashupati behaves somewhat strangely but Henry ignores it as he is looking forward for his meeting with Ruby. He anxiously waits for her and around 9 pm he receives a basket up, as the cottage is twenty feet above the ground. He starts calling for Ruby but there is no reply. What he finds in the basket is more than enough for him to get to know what is going to happen to him. He finds the same unexploded cartridge which was missing from the spot when he went on his expedition to kill the tusker along with Kistulal. He also finds a pair of blue gold and sapphire earrings which he had bought for Ruby from Calcutta. He now understands the whole plan set for him by Sudden Dart, to take revenge for the murder of his illegitimate son Eddie

Trevor, Ruby also seems to take revenge because Henry had rejected her love previously and then killed her lover Eddie, and lastly it is also a revenge by Pashupati who avenges his father Kistilal's death. While Henry is busy reflecting on the series of events that culminated into such an intrigue for him, he smelled paraffin burning and saw the cottage on fire. Whether he is finally able to extricate himself from this burning cottage is left to unexplained by the novelist. Thus this novel is open ended.

There is vivid description of gun-rooms and game-cottages in the novel. They appear to be co-related as both of them are being used to accomplish secret motives. As in the case of gun-room in the bungalow of Henry, he used to invite Ruby in that room beyond the prying eyes of everyone outside. The room is full of arms and ammunitions to kill wild animals. In the game-cottage, artificial moon is used to lure the wild animals and then killed by the ammunition of gun-room. It becomes the trap point of wild animals of the jungle as well as for the humans. Kistilal, Eddie and finally Henry become the victims of that Cottage. There is combat of power, love, intrigues, conspiracies, illusion, desires, racial struggle and so on. But all this combat is never open: it is the combat of shadows, some sort of shadow boxing.

As a brief summary of the novel shows, the action of the novel is set in the tea gardens in the north eastern province of Assam and the novel covers the period from 1938 to 1940. Henry Winton, the protagonist of the novel, is a young Englishman. He is serving in India as the manager of Silent Hill tea estate in Assam. He appears to be a strong, determined and very professional man in the beginning of the novel but gradually his complexities involving racial prejudice, inflexible thinking and his lack of understanding the people around him, start appearing which ultimately bring his tragic end.

A very important dimension of socio-cultural milieu of this novel is the racial encounter between the British and the Indians and the Anglo-Indians. This novel consistently highlights the cultural conflicts. For example, the protagonist of this novel, Henry has to encounter numerous characters who are Indians, Anglo-Indians as well as British. Malgonkar has created many interesting scenes which depict Henry's encounter and relationship with Indians and Anglo-Indians. As far as Henry's professional life is concerned, he is shown as a good manager looking after tea gardens and the labour. But the one person who has always been a problem to deal with is Jugal Kishore. Jugal Kishore is the chief stockman of Henry's garden and he is also the leader of the coolie-workers. Not only this, gradually he wins in the Assembly elections also and becomes a minister in the state government. Henry hates even to see Jugal Kishore, hence he always behaves rudely with him whenever Jugal Kishore has to talk to him. Jugal Kishore is also aware of this prejudice of Henry. Jugal equally hates Henry and always proves a trouble maker for him.

Once Henry refuses to employ Gauri, Jugal Kishore's niece as a school teacher. When Jugal Kishore comes with his niece to see Henry with a job request, he gives a broad hint to Henry that Gauri would not only prove to be a good teacher but she would also serve Henry as

his mistress. Jugal tries to entice Henry by telling him, "...she is fully qualified, sahib. Gauri got her education in the Tinapur railway colony high school...I only wanted to say that if there was such service, my niece would be quite willing to..." (Malgonkar, *Combat of Shadows* 75).

Though Henry feels attraction towards Gauri due to which he once let her go free when he caught her stealing tea leaves from his garden. "...And for the first time he realized that she was an extraordinarily good-looking girl, with a firm, full figure which her skimpy garments did little to conceal...Damned attractive wench...spoke English too", Henry muttered to himself as though in explanation." (Malgonkar, *Combat of Shadows* 74). But Henry, due to his own race-consciousness and his contempt for Indians, bluntly refuses Jugal Kishore's offer. Henry is determined never to get involved with any Indian woman, no matter how tempting the offer is. This deep-seated mindset of Henry is easily read by Jugal Kishore when he taunts him, "We all have our failings, Mr. Winton. Your failing is that you cannot bear Indians; yet tragedy is that you are doomed to work in this country. You cannot even tolerate the idea of having an Indian mistress... a full-blooded Indian mistress." (Malgonkar, *Combat of Shadows* 64).

After being refused by Henry for the job of Gauri, Jugal Kishore cunningly twists this incident and spreads it all around the state by giving it a political colouring. Jugal openly challenges Henry regarding the power control over the coolie-workers of tea gardens. He proudly asserts before Henry that he has been elected to Assembly and he is the undisputed leader of Labour Union. All this growing power and popularity of Jugal is quite annoying to Henry. He can not stand him anymore. Henry knows that it is only someone like Jugal who can cook up a false story anytime. He has always been a troublesome man, always trying to get the coolies to become group-minded, forming labour committees, getting them into camps and discussing their living conditions and making them put up their demands jointly. It seems to Henry that Jugal is also aware of Kistulal's death because he accompanied Henry for hunting the tusker. Henry feels embarrassed and humiliated when Jugal openly taunts him for his failure as a hunter and his running away from the hunting spot leaving behind Kistulal dead. This confrontation between Henry and Jugal is well presented by the novelist showing Henry's arrogant nature and his ill treatment of the Indians:

"Will you leave this house at once!—before I have thrown you out?" shouts Henry.

"Mr. Winton...you have insulted me quite enough; you have humiliated my niece; called her a thief...it is so easy to be rude to someone who cannot be rude to you, Mr.Winton."

"Clear out of here, or I will have thrown you out.."

"That's is the typical British reaction to any difficult situation, isn't?...you live in India, eating the profits of the land, and keep throwing out the Indians themselves.

.... Your days are over, Winton; people like yourself and that lecherous dog, Jeffery Dart—ha ha!” (Malgonkar, *Combat of Shadows* 112).

As bitterness and conflict between Henry and Jugal escalate, Henry has to face a coolie-strike organized by Jugal Kishore. Jugal has tremendous control over the workers. At the gathering, as though in obedience to his commands not one of the coolie turns to look at Henry as he strikes the field. All of them ignore him so completely as if he was one of the Silent Hill cleaners or lamp lighters and not their manager. This insult cuts deep into the mind of Henry than any words of direct abuse would have done. All the coolies are listening to Jugal Kishore attentively without caring for anything else. Jugal is addressing the group in a voice charged with passion:

“It is high time we turn our faces away from the conquerors,” Henry heard Jugal Kishore exhorting them. And as though in obedience to his command, not one of the coolies turned to look at Henry as he skirted the field... “If only we stand shoulder to shoulder, those who hold us in slavery will have to quit. WE SHALL MAKE THEM QUIT!”

At the same time, Henry could not help feeling relieved that only about a quarter of his labourers had turned up to listen to Jugal Kishore. (128).

Henry notices many of the strikers standing in the courtyard and gradually their number increases from fifties to two hundred and seventy-eighty coolies. They want an Indian as their manager and not any English or Anglo-Indian one. They are shouting slogans. When Henry reaches the main gate, the strikers standing in the courtyard again take up their chant:

Chalejao; Chalejao!

Winton sahib chalejao!

Are we going to stand for Trevor?

Never, never! ... (133).

Outside, the mob at the gate had begun to shout once again:

Jus—tice !

Mister Trevor!

Never, never !

Jus—tice ! (134).

Henry has not only to face Jugal but also Gauri. Gauri too hates Henry vigorously. She turns on Henry, white faced and venomous, her eyes glinting with a burning, all consuming rage,

reminding Henry of a hooded cobra about to strike or on outraged temple goddess. “There will be no justice as long as the white men ruled!”... “I shall kill you for this, you white monster!” she hisses. (139).

Along with the cultural conflicts, Malgonkar also skillfully portrays in this novel the dilemmas of the Anglo-Indian community in India in pre-independent India, as they interacted with the British and the native Indian community. To understand culture is the basic requirement to interpret as well as re-interpret the historical progress of a nation and its people. India has always been a land of cultural diversity due to colonization. On one hand, culture acts as the binding force for the people of a nation but on the other one, it serves as a reason to devalue and underestimate other communities leading to cultural chauvinism. These conflicts arising out of cultural and racial interface during the colonial period in India is portrayed in the novel *Combat of Shadows* by Manohar Malgonkar. This overlapping of cultures, i.e. Western style industrial society and the simple Indian life, led to inevitable cultural differences. The unique racial and cultural groups of one country face difficulties in tracing their roots and identity in another country. In this context Lionel Caplan in his book *Children of Colonialism: Anglo-Indians in a Post Colonial World*, says, “...Considering the case of the Eurasians of India, or Anglo-Indian as they came to be designated, who are descendants of such unions, and still identified as a mixed-race and culturally composite community...” (Caplan 67).

The different aspects of cultural conflicts are depicted effectively by Manohar Malgonkar in his novel *Combat of Shadows* through both Indian and Western characters. The dilemma of Anglo-Indian is especially focused in the novel. The term, ‘Anglo-Indians’ or ‘Eurasians’ is used for the children of English (Irish, Scottish and Polish) residents in India with women of Indian origin. In *Combat of Shadows*, Malgonkar has vividly described the conditions of Anglo-Indians in India; their aspirations, their dilemmas and their contribution to the society during that period. With the changing socio-political conditions in India, in 1930s and 1940s as the result of World War II, Anglo-Indians were aware of the fact that they would soon lose their cultural identity, hence they geared up their efforts to develop permanent link with the pure ruling British as much as possible. But the pure British found it ridiculous and treated them mercilessly, not considering them of equal status. For example, Ruby, an Anglo-Indian character, tries hard to pursue Henry, an officer who is of British blood. She is ready to go to any extent to realize her dream, but Henry uses Ruby only as his mistress and never more than, that due to his racial prejudice.

There are other characters in the novel like Eddie Trevor, an Anglo-Indian, Jugal Kishore, an Indian labour, his niece Gauri, Jean Walter, wife of Henry, Sudden Dart, British Director of tea-estate, who are portrayed by Malgonkar to depict the differences and dilemmas among them. The novelist portrays the social and political conditions due to increasing conflicts and feelings of competition among Indians, Anglo-Indians and English.

The political scenario at Assam tea gardens is also well depicted by the novelist, showing how the Indian workers revolt, demanding their own Indian man as their head instead of any

Anglo-Indian like Eddie Trevor. On the other hand, it is also shown that the British officers such as Henry Winton and Sudden Dart, never want self-rule by Indians, hence they always suppressing such unity among the Indians. These complex relationships between the Indians and Anglo-Indians, the Indians and the British, and the Anglo-Indians and the British, have been deftly delineated by Malgonkar in the present novel. The focus of the novel is inter-racial relationships involving love, sex and marriage. The barriers which come in the way of forging amicable relationships among the people of different races are racial and cultural prejudices. These prejudices are the main obstructions responsible for the conflicts among the different races. And these conflicts result in fear, suspicion, pride, desire and aversion among the characters of the novel. The novel presents several racial encounters and the pitiable consequences of those encounters. The overlapping of cultures i.e Western Industrial society and the simple Indian life led to inevitable cultural conflicts.

The fear of rootlessness and the ongoing dilemma among Anglo-Indians or Eurasians is well portrayed in the novel. They strive hard to sustain their identity by marrying the race supposed to be superior i.e., Europeans, but most of the times their efforts end in frustrated state of mind, giving rise to confusions, anxiety and crisis. The principal Anglo-Indian characters are Ruby Miranda and Eddie Trevor who are surviving in the conditions of semi-poverty at Tinapur railway station. Both of them have been brought up together since childhood and they are in love with each other but the only thing that is coming in the way of their marriage is the financial insecurity of Eddie. The Eurasian community seems to be stuck between Indians and the British. Miranda family which represents the whole Anglo-Indian community, craves for permanent settlement with white race of sahibs, as it considers them a group superior to themselves. As B.P.Engade points out, "Eurasians arrogate to themselves the status of Brown Sahibs and prefer to remain superior to the Indians. They have run the risk of dissention due to innate contradictions of existence between two diametrically opposed poles." (Engade 20).

The plight of Anglo-Indians is sensitively presented by Malgonkar through the principal characters like Ruby Miranda and Eddie Trevor. They desperately want to liberate themselves from their Indian connection and get the British status but ironically the British spurn them. Though both the characters are Anglo-Indians, brought up together in the same environment and are childhood friends but they have different opinions regarding the British. Eddie has little faith in the ways and policies of Englishmen, while on the other hand Ruby Miranda has always been fascinated by the Englishmen as she considers them to be the direct passport to her dreamland i.e. England and then getting the reputed status of the wife of an Englishman. Ruby Miranda, an ambitious Anglo-Indian girl, always craves for an English husband, in spite of her childhood love for Eddie Trevor who is also an Anglo-Indian. The psychology of Ruby has been well described in the novel:

The throbbing, compulsive craving of Anglo-Indian to seek living kinship with the West; the desperate, daily struggle of separation and alignment, the tight clutching of the tenuous, often imaginary strands of relationship with the sahibs,

the constant vigilance against further assimilation with the smothering, enveloping peoples of Indian soil...and then settling down in a cool, antiseptic, wholly English suburb and washing away the contamination of India and Tinapur. No effort was too much for the fulfillment of that constant, aching dream, no sacrifice too great—not even the sacrifice of the love of a man like Eddie Trevor.” (Malgonkar, *Combat of Shadows* 103).

Ruby is desperate to achieve this status. She represents the real psychology of most of the Anglo-Indians in India. Ruby tries to manifest her cravings for Henry, “The bare, surface manifestations of a more deep-seated, more widely spread cancer: the awareness of rootlessness, of not belonging, not being wanted, even of being despised in the teeming world of India.” (Malgonkar, *Combat of Shadows* 103).

For the fulfillment of this desire, Ruby does not even mind developing physical relationship with Henry Winton and sacrificing her childhood love i.e., Eddie. She even rejects the warning of her lover, Eddie to not to get involved with any British. He once warns Ruby of the consequences of her decision of accepting the job of the teacher at Silent hill which is actually an offer by Henry: “ The bloody English swine will give you a brat, he’ll have all his fun and then the bugger will drop you in the muck. That’s what he’s sending for you for, after coming and inspecting the whole lot you railway colony girls at the gala...” (Malgonkar, *Combat of Shadows* 98).

Another reason for Ruby to accept the job is because of the bad economic condition of her family which consists of six members in all. The novelist presents Ruby striving hard to cope with the harsh realities of life in India and also trying to seek the status of the British. Ruby is brought up among the Eurasians who follow and ape the European mode of behavior, be it their manners, dress or language. The Galas or parties are a part of their life, giving them an opportunity to mingle with the British officers. These ‘Galas’ used to provide a good platform for an uninhibited male-female contacts and relationships. When Henry saw Ruby at a gala of Tinapur Railway Colony, he was infatuated by her mixed beauty i.e. half Indian and half English. She, too, tries to impress all the British gathering, by flaunting her physical beauty, dancing skills, western style of clothing and English speaking. She does not even mind to smoke or drink.

Another Anglo-Indian character in the novel, Eddie Trevor, is a talented boy. He is good at hunting, riding and playing. He is a part of the National Hockey team of India and he has gone to Berlin for Olympics. Though he is jobless but he is very popular among the people of the state as well as among the British officers. He looks bony, pale faced topped with a thick mop of lustrous black hair. Since he is in love with Ruby, he does not like her decision of going to Silent hill. He is aware of the real intentions of Henry i.e to keep Ruby, as his mistress, he considers it an illicit and immoral affair. As the story progresses, the real identity of Eddie is also disclosed. Eddie is actually the illegitimate son of Sir Sudden Dart, Director of Tea Estate, with an Indian

coolie woman. Sudden Dart has bribed another poor Englishman, John Trevor to marry that coolie woman and accept the child. Though Sudden Dart does not marry the coolie woman and he never officially accepts Eddie as his son, yet he keeps on supplying good amount of money to John for a good upbringing of Eddie.

This kind of callous and carefree nature of British officers was quite prevalent during their colonial rule in India. This kind of attitude of the British, seeking only sensual pleasure from Indian women devoid of any morality, had become the way of their lifestyle. It was quite normal for the British to enjoy uninhibitedly with women and then dispose them and their offsprings. This is apparent in the novel too. Cockburn, the Manager of Tista Tea Estate of Lamlung, advises Henry to live life in the same way. He entices Henry to take only carnal pleasures from Indian women and then get rid of them by throwing some money or job. He suggests to Henry:

“...he shall never get better value than a coolie woman--Phew! Absolutely unrestrained—like ...well its love making at its most volatile, earthy, if you like. You don't know what you are missing. And some of them are damned fine-looking too...bone-hipped and angular. Saw a Santhal girl, the other day who was a real stunner—she was luscious...” (14).

Cockburn even tells Henry that he could have any girl of his choice from his headboy named, Mansuram who works as a pimp:

“...They sort of expect it, you know. As far as they are concerned there is no morality involved; not in that class. The moment you browned-off, you pack them a little money, fifty chips or so, and everything is tickety-boo. It's a great life. Who'd want to get married –tied down, when you're nicely fixed up? Not me, no sir.” (14).

The result of such a casual illicit relationships was mixed breed born of Europeans and Indian women, Eurasians. The main reason for such type of relationships was the extreme poverty in the state which forced Indian women to go for physical relationship with any Englishmen. It was a way of life of the British to not bother about anything related to morality as Cockburn further smugly explain assures Henry:

“...if you do give them a brat, there is nothing to worry about really. Couple of hundred chips, and they will find a proud father. You'd be surprised at the number of bastards floating round the tea gardens...the managers invariably kept a bibi handy whenever they came inspecting—just in case...” (14).

This is proved by the example of Eddie Trevor who happens to be the illegitimate son of Sudden Dart, gets favours of Sudden now and then.

There are many scenes in this novel which highlight the western lifestyle prevalent during British period in India. Such scenes create an important dimension of the social milieu of that period. Malgonkar is able to re-create the exact milieu of such western life-style so because he was exposed to a wide and varied world rather than confining to his school and college education only. James Y. Dayanand writes in this regard: "Malgonkar learned not from his teachers at school and college but later from officials who were English-planters, army officers who were English-men. The box wallahs and the left-overs from the British days." (qtd. in Sharma 7). Malgonkar's childhood was happy and full of adventures. He himself took to shooting and hunting at the age of ten. After completing his university education, he took to hunting during 1935-37 as his profession. He organized big game shooting and the tracking of tigers for Indian princes. Though very soon he left this profession and became a wild life conservationist, his love for adventure appears in his novels like *Combat of Shadow* and *The Princes*.

In *Combat of Sahadows*, there is vivid description of big game hunting by the British. Special hunting competitions used to be organized during those days. The officials also took it as an opportunity to show their valour and talent through hunting. The protagonist of the novel, Henry Winton takes hunting the wild tusker as a challenge making every effort to trace and kill it. Though he cannot fulfill his aspiration, he has been shown as a lover of hunting games. The novel describes the special arrangements made by the British and their Indian workers, for hunting expeditions, such as availability of good shooting guns, arms and ammunitions, game cottages on the top of big trees to observe wild animals etc.

Another character in this novel Eddie Trevor has been depicted as a good sportsman. Many wild animals' hunting goes to his credit. This shooting talent of Eddie is the main reason for his popularity among the British officials as well as among the natives. On one occasion in the novel, he even impresses Jean Winton, wife of Henry Winton with his killing of a big 'python'. This proves to be good point for Jean's attraction towards Eddie. The account of hunting as one of the prominent pastimes of that particular period during the British Raj has also been recorded in the *ColonialHistory, Wildlife History* according to which in the Mughal and British India, tiger was hunted for prestige as well as for taking trophies. Tiger hunting had been a sport for centuries, but the number of tiger shot increased considerably during the British Raj due to the use of far superior firepower and an interest to hunt shared by a much larger number of colonial aristocrats. During the Mughal Empire, leisure was a luxury confined to the pleasures of the aristocracy. High cuisine and wine, garden parties, game hunting (shikar), animal fights, pigeon flying (Ishqbazi), archery and horse riding constituted imperial entertainment.

The British were passionately fond of hunting and pursued this sport in its different forms, especially the tiger hunt and the trapping of wild elephants, but they also hunted with trained falcons and leopards, owning no less than nine hundred hunted leopards. They enjoyed the excitement and exertion of the actual hunt as a means for exercise and recreation, for training the eye and quickening the blood. In the succeeding British Period, the English were keenly

aware that as royal beasts and masters of the jungle, tigers had been closely associated historically with Indian rulers. But more than emulation, tiger hunting was the symbol in the construction of British imperial and masculine identities during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The British had great pretensions to becoming successors to the Mughals during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, in order to attain such power, they had to outdo regional powers, such as Mysore's Tipu Sultan, who also employed the tiger in his symbolic arsenal. Among other uses, the tiger or the tiger stripe (babri) was used as decoration on his throne; on the uniforms of his soldiers; and on his coins, flags, and arms. Here, then, the tiger has a different meaning than in the British Mughal tiger hunts the British sought to emulate. The symbolic meaning of Tipu's Tiger was the emblematic triumph over the British. Therefore by killing tigers the British were also symbolically staging the defeat of Tipu Sultan and other Indian rulers who dared to get in the way of Britain's imperial conquest of India. Akbar's successor Jahangir's Memoirs is replete with accounts of his hunting expeditions.

Tigers also represented for the British all that was wild and untamed in the Indian natural world. Thus, the curious late Victorian and Edwardian spectacle of British royals and other dignitaries being photographed standing beside dead tiger carcasses depicted the staging successful conquests of Indian nature by "virile imperialists".

Tigers, according to East India Company, were danger to the Indian society as their presence often caused "the passage of the Ghauts (Public Baths) or Public Roads become...imminently dangerous to Travellers" (East India Company Revenue letter June 1826). Tigers also inflicted "serious injury on industrious husbandmen" and often destroyed their cattle and crops. The British blamed the Rajas, Zamindars, and other landed elites, generally perceiving them as lazy and indolent, and took tiger hunting into their hand for the protection of natives. They encouraged Indian hunters for killing tigers. To destroy tigers, the Raj also offered financial rewards to hunters – Indians as well Europeans – who killed them. All this milieu is reflected in *Combat of Shadows* also when Eddie gets promotion in his job, being elevated to the post of stockman because of his hunting skills.

While the British hunted tigers to emulate the Mughals as well as to dominate India's natural environment, the greatest attraction for this sport for many of these hunters was due to its masculinity. Hunting for the Raj was central to the development of all-important victorious trait of "character". For instance, Bengal Army Captain Henry Shakespeare pleaded with the parents in the preface to his 1860-hunting memoir that they encourage their sons to partake in big game hunting so as to keep them "out of a thousand temptations and injurious pursuits". He argued that hunting was an "innocent, manly, and useful" activity that would not only keep their sons "fit for their duty as soldiers" but would also prevent from "taking to the game table, or to an excess of test firing, rioting...debauchery" and other "frivolous pursuits or effeminate pleasures". During the British rule, tigers were killed by the natives for their safety, although the strategy was primitive. A Madras judge reported a case in 1815 when over 700 villagers from his district "formed a circle round a Tyger" and killed it by spreading it (East India Company Report).

Indian villagers also used traps involving nets, which were inefficient with chances of tigers to escape. The most effective method by the natives was however the use of poisoned arrows to kill tigers.

The British during the initial period before the advent of high-velocity hunting rifles, adopted the strategies either by waiting for it overnight sometimes very uncomfortably in *manchans* constructed in tall trees, usually fifteen to twenty feet above the ground, or else to beat for the animal during the middle of the day (when it would typically be asleep) while riding elephants. During this latter type of hunt, several Indian beaters on foot would bang drums, crush cymbals, and play other noisy or "discordant" instruments, as well as shoot blanks from matchlocks, all to rouse a frustrated tiger at British hunters, who shot at it from atop their elephants.

Similar description of the "game-cottages" has been given by Malgonkar in his novel *Combat of Shadows*.

The game cottage of the Highlands clubs was a sturdy wooden built high up in a tree, and it overlooked a patched of forest which had been converted into a combination of water-hole and salt-lick...How much rock salt, how much jaggery, how much pounds of powdered monwa flowers, and how much common Highlands earth went into the mixture that was assiduously poured over the water hole every other week, was known only to the officials of the Highland Club. They say that Jim Corbett had been called up to give advice, as well as one of the game wardens from Kenya. The fact remains that the mixture was highly successful, and the salt-lick attracted game in quite implausible numbers throughout the year...

Once you were in the cottage, you were separated from the world as though transported to a different planet. The nearest human habitation was Chinnar, at least a mile and a half away as the crow flew; your contact with the earth dependent on two frail looking ladders. There was nothing but the jungle round you, dark and impenetrable. (Malgonkar, *Combat of Shadows* 26-27).

In this way, hunting, the war of men on animals, finds abundant place in the novel. Apart from tigers, other animals such as bisons, deer, elephants, pythons, birds, etc. were also hunted, which is described in the novel also, which gives the record of the number of hunted animals and birds by an officer named Bliss:

Bliss, of the Gilmour Tea Company, won the rough shoot cup, having shot sixty-eight assorted birds and six hares, his bag just seven shorts of Bliss's, who's third win in succession it was. It was the first time Sudden Dart came so close to winning the Chinnar rough shoot...Even so, Sudden had something of a windfall

that day when he brought down eleven with a right-and-left, and at one time he was leading Bliss.” (66).

More than a pastime, hunting has a political motif also in this novel, as it uses also one-tusker who appears both as the hunted as well as the hunter, as it is being tracked by Henry and Indian tracker Kistulal but it tramples Kistulal to death. Henry is haunted by the thoughts of it. It symbolizes his fear, not only of the Indians, but also of his own failures. Theme of hunting is in fact so all pervasive in this novel that the game of hunting and the life of the British officers like Henry seem to be intertwined.

Depiction of all kinds of women—British, Anglo-Indian and Indian, their status, their condition, their dilemmas, their struggle for identity, their relationships vis-à-vis men—all this constitute an important part of socio-cultural milieu of mid-19<sup>th</sup> century India. Through a variety of characters such as Ruby Miranda, Jean Walter, Gauri, Malgonkar has brought alive this particular aspect of social milieu. Ruby Miranda is an Anglo-Indian by birth and upbringing. Jean Walter is a pure English woman while Mrs. Miranda is an Indian woman. Ruby Miranda is an ambitious girl who is desperate to establish herself with the white race as she looks up to them as the superior ones. She has suffered a lot due to poverty and also has an inferior complex regarding her status of an Anglo-Indian. She is educated, beautiful, a good dancer and has acquired good formal manners by imitating British ways of living. She is not at all satisfied with her current condition of an ordinary girl compromising on social and economic issues. Rather she wants to elevate herself to the high and prestigious status of the wife of an English man and getting rid of her ‘assumed derogatory status of being an Anglo-Indian’. She emerges as a strong character with guts to get back her dignity, though she is not successful in fulfilling her aspiration of marrying an Englishman. She even overlooks the advice of her lover Eddie. About women characters in Malgonkar’s novels, Indira Bhatt remarks:

A few rebels do find place in novels though they are not happy in their revolt. Though Manohar Malgonkar does not portray the condition of women in Indian society fully, he does present a very powerful picture of women who are full of rootlessness and some of them find the mental strength to break away from the shackles of traditions of centuries....women like Ruby Miranda are unhappy to the core and struggle hard to attain their rightful place in life. (Bhatt 57).

The women characters in the present novel are caught in a kind of a social conflict regarding the women’s conquest for her self-fulfillment. Ruby’s desire to make her unspoken dream come true represents the whole of Anglo-Indians aspiration i.e., to attain a full fledged status in society. While chasing her dream, Ruby does not even hesitate to sacrifice her true childhood love of Eddie Trevor. She loves Eddie, who is also an Anglo-Indian, but since he could not give her what she values most in her life i.e. to go to England as the wife of an Englishman rather than mingling with any Indian or Anglo-Indian, she abandons him. In her pursuit of this goal, she gets support of her father who wants her to join the job offered by Henry

Winton at the Silent Hill although Ruby's mother does not want that her daughter should run behind any Englishman as she herself has gone through the same situation in her youth. When she tried to marry an Englishman, the result was quite disappointing as she was dropped in between the affair and she had to settle for an Irish man as her husband. Malgonkar gives a glimpse of the inner mindscape of Ruby in the following words:

That was the sort of the dream of which you spoke to no one at all, no matter how close you were to him; even if you knew that it was the secret, unspoken deram of an Anglo-Indian itself. Only her mother had fathomed her secret thoughts, and in her way had tried to help; and only then had she realized with something of a shock that there was nothing unusual in her mother's knowing about it, for her own private dream must once have been her mother's too. (Malgonkar, *Combat of Shadows* 101).

Ruby gets to know about the history of her mother when she goes to seek the blessing of 'Bichwa-baba' the ash covered sadhu sitting naked under a Peepal tree and giving 'magic-potion' to Ruby to achieve her ambition. Ruby was unaware that her mother, a devout Catholic, was also a disciple of the Baba. When she approaches the Baba, he assures her:

"Shiva walks with the faithful", said Bichwa-baba. "God stands beside those who have faith. What is thy wish?"

Bichwa baba closed his eyes and picked up his bead chain and began to mumble to himself. "I see a man, a white man", he said in a very soft voice. "far away and so far away; a light-eyed and light-haired."

"On days when the moon is bright, prepare something by thine own hands...be it drink or food...mix this powder...only a few grains at a time... make the man of your heart partake of it." (Malgonkar, *Combat of Shadows* 105).

To the surprise of Ruby, the ridiculous, fairy tale wonder of it has worked Bichwa Baba's holy powder has worked like magic, just as her mother had assured her they would. On a bright, moonlit night, Ruby makes the lemon tarts, with just a few grains of Bichwa-baba's powders mixed in the lemon-curd, and sends the same to the bungalow of Henry. And the very next morning, Henry sends a man asking Ruby to call at his office with school's inspectors's report. And after that it has become almost a routine of Ruby to come to Henry's bungalow now and then. But this happiness of Ruby is short lived as she is ditched by Henry as he comes from England as a married man: married to a pure British girl, Jean Walter.

Thus it becomes amply evident that Malgonkar is a supreme artist who is able to delineate the socio-historical milieu of that particular period in which the action of his novels takes place. In the present novel also, he has graphically portrayed the particular social milieu of a tea estate in Assam during British raj, highlighting the inter-racial, inter-cultural tensions

among Indians, Anglo-Indians, Eurasians and Europeans. Another very important development during that period was the emergence of labour unions which also has been reflected in this novel.

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