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## Delineation of the Indian Army through Kiran Garud in Malgonkar's *Distant Drum*

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### Abstracts

Indian novels are a synthesis of pre-colonial India and people's thoughts during British rule, the country's long period of independence struggle and a longing for identity. Manohar Malgonkar is a well-known and prolific author. Malgonkar's paintings are charged with energy and he has established his own material and reality. An author's life, in general, impacts what he writes. Malgonkar as one of India's most autobiographical writers has delved into every part of his own experience and intimate knowledge and has explained them in an accurate manner. In *Distant Drum*, Kiran Garud is the hero and young man with a commanding presence. *Distant Drum* is a recounting of the hero, Kiran Garud's self-realization journey and an explanation of a success story. It is a human story of struggle and success, culminating in the hero Kiran Garud's eventual achievement of his goal.

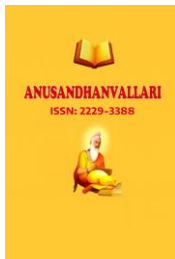
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Novels in Indian English have become an important part of the international literature in particular. The novels are extensively read throughout the world and have received international acclaim for their realistic portrayal of multifaceted, multicultural and multilingual Indian culture. Mulk Raj Anand describes the novels as a process of inhale-exhale, a life-giving inspiration, a prose poem that releases the body and soul, even a new visionary glimpse of the miracle of life itself. He considers the novel as the most appropriate vehicle for depicting society and hence the spirit of writing. He says that the novels are an excellent vehicle for revealing the shifting rainbow of live relationships.

Indian novels are a combination of pre-colonial India, people's mindsets during British rule, its lengthy era of independence fight and a yearning for identity. Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, Salman Rushdie, Jhumpa Lahiri, Arundhati Roy and other Indian English novels have carved themselves an indelible position among the world's top writers. They have also received several significant literary prizes in a national and international scale. These authors have effectively natives a foreign language and embellished it with Indian patterns and colors.

Manohar Malgonkar is a well-known Indo-English author. He is a prolific and voluminous writer, like Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and others. He is one of the few Indo-Englian novels to demonstrate how successfully an English literary structure can be adapted to explore Indian topics, as well as how well the English language can be utilized to express and transmit Indian sensibility. Despite being a latecomer to the world of Indo-English literature, Manohar Malgonkar has established himself with five novels and four collections of short stories. His universe spans the Indian subcontinent, from the Himalayas in the north to the islands of Ceylon, Malaya, Singapore and others in the south and from the Burmese forests in the east to the Andamans and Western



portions of undivided India. He has written in basic British English about things and people he has known largely from experience, without using vernacular language except where justified by the occasion. A. N. Dwivedi points out: “It is as a novelist with an accomplished technique and grounded firmly in the rich Indian tradition that he will survive in the days to come” (136).

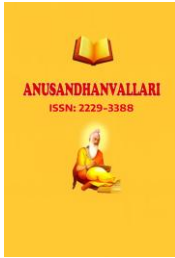
Manohar Malgonkar is a well-known Indo-Anglian novelist, short story author, historian, hunter and planter. He has also authored a play, a few literary and non-literary pieces and screenplays. His work is not many, but what it lacks in quantity it makes up for in excellence. *Distant Drum* (1960), *Combat of Shadows: A Novel* (1962), *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964), *The Princes* (1970), *The Devil's Wind: Nana Saheb's Story* (1972), *Bandicoot Run* (1982), *The Garland Keepers* (1986) and *Cactus Country* (1991) are among his novels that have been translated into several Indian and European languages. It is worth noting that Malgonkar's four major books were all released in the 1960s. They are *Distant Drum*, *Combat of Shadows*, *The Princes* and *A Bend in the Ganges*. Malgonkar's core interests as a novelist are elaborated in these four works. One cannot dispute that these works, taken as a whole, make a cohesive and unified message about life and convey a certain perspective of existence.

Malgonkar's works are energetic and he has created his own substance and reality. In general, an author's life influences what he writes. Malgonkar is one of the most autobiographical Indian writers, exploring and articulating every detail of his personal experience and intimate knowledge. This demonstrates his profound power of sympathetic observation, which he applies to the compassionate delineation of people living within the boundaries of polite society.

In his works, Malgonkar has shown the most important events in the history of the nation as human circumstances. His canvas is broad and his characters valiantly fight against the obstacles while dealing with inner issues and external conditions during a moment of transformation. His characters are not averse to development if it can be achieved gradually, but not at the expense of excellent things in the past and tradition. His imaginary universe is one that is not afraid of confrontation, action or ideas. His works feature a transitional rhythm and a mythic structure. They've got a vision to share and a tale to tell. Malgonkar does this through his heroes, around whom he has weaved his narrative. They go through a period of disorientation when the old world, the old pattern, the old ideals, good or evil, have been destroyed and the new world has not yet been formed. His protagonists have an insatiable need to fulfill themselves and their heroic fight is most vividly shown. Malgonkar is concerned with personality rather than character or characterization.

*Distant Drum* is an explanation of a success story and a retelling of the hero, Kiran Garud's, self-realization journey. It is a human narrative of hardship and triumph, culminating in the hero Kiran Garud's ultimate attainment of his aim. Kiran Garud is a young man with a strong personality. The story is about Kiran's schooling and the growth of his personality as an Army Officer. The majority of the story is concerned with the hero's moral and intellectual judgment, as well as the genuine documentation of Army life. Kiran is shown as kind, valiant, courageous, masculine and daring. He is a firm believer in the Satpura Code ideals. He makes an attempt to follow the code. He is assertive, lively and active.

Kiran is influenced by Roney Booker, an ideal military officer and aspires to spend his life similarly to Roney Booker. He overcomes obstacles and passes exams in his work and love. He is a loyal officer. He is patient, tolerant and peaceful. The army's slogan instills in him the attributes of leadership, commitment, sacrificing values, brotherhood and selfless service. He learns these things while being trained by a British officer and he is transformed into another British officer. Kiran's character stands out for his unwavering courage, manliness, magnanimity and commanding presence of mind. He has a strong sense of honour and patriotism for his army and country. We see these traits in him when he meets Colonel Manners in the mess. Kiran's actions are bold, forceful and intriguing.



Kiran's career is fraught with difficulties. He has been moved as a result of his love connection with Bina Sonal. During challenges and obstacles, he gathers followers and aids. Kiran's interaction with the Accounts Department demonstrates his bravery, fortitude, firmness, strength and courage. Kiran deals with red tape at the Accounts Department. Red tape, procrastination and decision-making delays, which formed an intrinsic part of the Army after independence, posed road blocks for quick and honest commanders like Kiran. Kiran takes the challenge and eventually triumphs. Kiran is in love with Bina Sonal, but he would not give up his job or his dedication to the Army for her. Kiran is a free, fair and honest person by nature.

Kiran's interaction with Govind Ram Sonal who is Bina's father, highlights the conflict between the Satpura Code and the Civilian Code. Mr. Sonal organises Kiran's transfer, yet he neither blames nor complains about him. It demonstrates his vast thinking, bravery and nobility. His connection with Abdul Jamal is special; it demonstrates Kiran's liberal ideals. He encounters Abdul Jamal in No-Man's Land after the country is partitioned. It has caused a schism in Kiran's life, but Spike Butler saves him.

Kiran's friendship with Abdul Jamal demonstrates that he is secular and devoid of religious and racial biases. Kiran assists Abdul Jamal, while Abdul Jamal assists Kiran twice by testifying in Bob Medley's lawsuit and in the community incident. Kiran takes a risk by seeing Abdul Jamal, despite the fact that Abdul Jamal is an enemy Army officer from Pakistan. Kiran's meeting with Margot Medley causes a schism in his life.

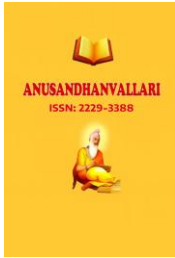
Kiran refuses Roppy Booker's offer of a private employment and remains a loyal soldier, an Army officer for life. He matures. At the end of the story, Kiran achieves success in his love and job, as well as a sense of self-realization. Kiran emerges as a Code Hero as a result of his Satpura Code and good ideals in life. The novel *Distant Drum* depicts the development of a shy and awkward Second Lieutenant into a self-possessed and committed Regimental Commanding Officer into a man who strives to live up to the code, the gentlemanly code known as the Satpura Code.

Malgonkar's examination of Indian personalities uncovers the wickedness of Indian politics from several perspectives. The Lalas, Namdevs, Ramdevas, Balgopals and Sonals lack a civilised code of conduct. These cunning, unprincipled politicians, egotistical and arrogant government workers and self-centered, narrow-minded administrative commanders have annihilated the British Army's proud tradition, which has historical value.

Malgonkar has used the contrast approach to highlight his main theme the deterioration of the Indian army as a result of political intervention in its affairs. Malgonkar employs contrast in the selection of his characters as well as the situations assigned to them. The situations assigned to the British characters highlight their courage, discipline and army camaraderie, whereas the situations assigned to the Indian characters reveal their selfish, unethical, self-centered and corrupt nature. The battles of the Twin Pagoda-hill and the Sittang Bridge are shown authentically, these military scenarios demonstrate the British authorities' Satpura code ideals. Kiran Garud's interactions with the coordinator, administration and the Accounts Department reveal their anti-Satpura bias. Malgonkar delineates the Indian government in Delhi as a part and parcel of modern history and he says:

... it described a state of mind in which officials had begun to use procedure not to avoid mistakes: 'but to avoid decisions. The tendency was to seek shelter behind some obscure but impregnable bastion of procedure and strenuously resist the need to make a decision. That was what they delighted in and only when a decision could no longer be delayed, they tried desperately to make someone else responsible for taking it?' (123)

*Distant Drum* is a novel that deals with modern history. The Untold Story of General Kaul is history. William Walsh observes: "racy but rather indulgent account of the Indian army from an officer's point of view" (18). The similarities between the two show how Malgonkar's imagination works logically and historically. The writer uses the contrast approach while presenting the locations in order to emphasize the Army's degradation. Even the cantonments have changed for the worse since independence.



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Malgonkar successfully conveys the historical significance of the Indian Army's degradation following Independence. It demonstrates that Indian politics and the politicians are to be blamed. Malgonkar splits his material into two parts for the sake of narrative structure: (1) the second week of August 1949 and (2) the period of the Shingargon. The Infantry Commanders Annual Conference acts as a dividing line. The nature of the separation is nearly pre-Independence and post-Independence, however this is two years after Indian Independence.

The first section is told through flashbacks, while the second section is told in a continuous chronological order. The flashbacks span eleven years, whereas the continuous story lasts only six months. The material distinction, however, has a conceptual meaning. The first part highlights the magnificent history of the Indian army under British command. The nostalgic tone of the flashbacks indicates that this is all already past. The second section portrays the modern present while also hinting to the future.

In the texture of the basic story of a regiment that maintains its equanimity in the face of crushing defeats and glorious victories, the author has successfully recaptured in his book, the spirit of Indian soldiers, their ideals, shortcomings, depressions and their singular devotion and valour in the aftermath of a historical crisis. *Distant Drum* is a down-to-earth true narrative that completely engrosses and absorbs us. It is a novel throbbing and pulsing with empathy and is written in interesting and brilliant English. Meenakshi Mukherjee observes: "Malgonkar in his first novel worked within his limitations and succeeded in writing an honest remarkable novel" (58).

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