

## **Nathuram Godse in Perspectives: The Cult of an Assassin in the Indian English Writings**

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Nathuram Vinayak Godse is undoubtedly one of the significant figures in Indian history for he turned one of its “pages”, as he himself calls it, without hesitation but with solemn determination which put an end to the life of an apostle of truth and non-violence in the modern world (Dalvi). “Unparalleled in recent history,” Nathuram’s was no ordinary act, it was an “an assassination that shook the world” for the victim was “Mahatma Gandhi ... who fought and saw an end to an empire with his non-violence” (Kapoor ix). And, with this action, “Nathuram has qualified himself for a sort of odious immortality” (Malgonkar 42). In fact, Nathuram Godse is an interesting personality and it would be a mistake if we consider him a mere Hindu fanatic who was the cause of Gandhi’s untimely demise, as his character testifies in the play *Mi Nathuram Boltoy*, if he was the cause of Gandhi’s assassination, Gandhi, the “messiah of peace” and non-violence, was the cause for his death (Dalvi; Kapoor ix). The writers of post-independent India are prone to represent this historical assassination as they might be tempted to write about the partition which cut the country into pieces. The assassination of Gandhi, for historical reasons, is interlinked with the partition of India, for, it was because Pakistan was there that the Indian government had to share the reserve bank balance and it was because Gandhi compelled the government to hand over Pakistan its due of the 55 crores through his fast unto death, that Nathuram Vinayak Godse and Narayan Apte decided to assassinate Gandhi, the “Father of the Indian nation,” who, the assassins believed, was delivering “his paternal duty not to India but to Pakistan” (Dalvi). Through a reading of selected fictional and nonfictional texts from Indian English writings, and contextualising them in the historical context of the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, this paper attempts to explore the representation of Nathuram Vinayak Godse in the said literary corpus.

This paper aims to understand the various perspectives through which Nathuram Godse is portrayed, the various standpoints from which he is viewed by writers, and their contradictions, paradoxes and similarities. The selected texts are: *The Men Who killed Gandhi* by Manohar Malgonkar, *Savarkar and Hindutva: The Godse Connection* by A. G. Noorani, *Godse’s Children: Hindutva Terror in India* by Subhash Gatade, *Mahadevbhai*, a play by Ramu Ramanathan, “The Last Soliloquy of Nathuram Godse”, and “Nathuram Godse” poems by Rizio Yohannan Raj and Farooqh Dhondi

respectively. While the first three texts are nonfictional prose narratives, the remaining three are fictional; one play and two poems. This paper also posits a Marathi play titled *Mi Nathuram Bolttoy* by Pradeep Dalvi, for a comparative analysis with the English play *Mahadevbhai*.

The objective of this study stems from the want of similar studies on the character of Nathuram Godse and the existing two-fold perception of Nathuram as a villain and a hero by the various contradicting sections of Indian society. Nathuram Godse as a historical character enters people's consciousness as the assassin of Mahatma Gandhi and the two-fold perception is based on whether he was right or wrong in being Gandhi's assassin. What is attempted here is to see how Indian English writers portray this complex assassin in their works, fictional and nonfictional, and to analyse the diverse ways of their representation. This study does not aim to privilege any text over the other. Instead, it focuses on the coexistence of various perspectives on Nathuram Godse as a historical and fictional character, and the dynamics of these texts at various levels. The attempt here is an intertwined textual analysis of the selected texts and an inter-textual theorisation of their modes of representation. The textual analysis serves to explore the representation of Nathuram Godse in accordance with various facets of his life, by various writers, and the significance of these representations in understanding the multifaceted character of Nathuram Vinayak Godse. One can see that Nathuram moves gradually from an ordinary individual with an extraordinary childhood to an extra-natural phenomenon which breeds terrorism in India. The character of Nathuram, in these narratives, exemplifies the image of an individual who is floating in between the realms of normativity and abnormality.

The 1975 book *The Men Who killed Gandhi* by Manohar Malgonkar is a monumental work investigating in depth the andhi assassination case and its background starting from the arrival of Mountbatten and the partition of India, to the subsequent communal riots it unleashed. It is an "incredibly well researched book that reads like a thriller" and covers the hitherto unheard parts of the life of the assassins of Gandhi and their convictions (Kapoor ix). Malgonkar investigates the case of Gandhi's assassination through a vivid representation of the persons involved in it, their life, attitudes, visions and fortunes. Beginning with the etymology of the name 'Nathuram', his narrative travels through different facets of Nathuram Godse's life. He portrays with sufficient information Nathuram's acquaintance with Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, his friendship with Narayan Apte, the co-convict in the assassination case, and the reasons for their decision to stop the Mahatma at any cost. Instead of showing a stereotypical image of an assassin, Malgonkar represents Nathuram Godse as a well developed character, if one takes the book as a tragic prose narrative, Nathuram is portrayed as a round character, a tragic hero who falls for his error of judgement. From birth to death

Nathuram's life is narrated by the author intertwining it with the other characters in the narrative who are faithful partners in bringing the protagonist's catastrophe.

Here Nathuram Godse is a tragic character destined to receive misfortune because of his convictions, who receives his tragedy with full felicity. He is an individual "born into an orthodox Brahmin family which came from a small village called Uksan, which is ten miles away from the wayside railway station of Kamshet, on the Bombay-Poona line" (Malgonkar 43). The most interesting part which Malgonkar describes about Nathuram's life is that he was brought up as a girl while he was a child. In Malgonkar's words: "the fact that three sons had died one after the other while a daughter had survived held a clear warning" to the parents of Nathuram Godse, that "their male children bore a curse. One remedy, which had been often proved effective, lay in offering to bring up the next boy as though he were a girl. That might appease the Fates" (43). The next issue was a boy child and as per the vow "his left nostril was pierced to take a *nath* or nose ring" and he was brought up as a girl through his infancy (43). "Though he was named Ramachandra, which name customarily shortened to Ram; because his nose was pierced to take a *nath*, the pretence that he was a girl was taken a step further by his parents, who began to call him Nathuram, or 'Ram who wears a nose-ring'." Thus "the name stuck" and became official (43). Nathuram grew up as a strong child despite his early upbringing as a girl. Malgonkar also wonders about the possibility of psychologists finding some explanation for Nathuram's "warped mental process in the fact that he was brought up as a girl" (43). Informed by Gopal Godse, Nathuram's younger brother, Malgonkar gives a spectacular account of how Nathuram Godse was considered possessing "oracular powers" while he was a child.

Nathuram would sit before the family goddess, staring fixedly at a spot of soot smeared in the exact centre of a copper tray, and soon fall into trance. While in the trance, he would see some figures or writing in the black spot before him, much as a crystal-gazer is supposed to see in his glass ball. Then one or other member of the family would ask him questions. His answers were believed to be those of the goddess, who spoke through his mouth. (Malgonkar 43-44)

Gopal Godse remembers: "he would recite parts of scriptures or Sanskrit hymns which he never remembered... and nor, when the trance was over, could he repeat them or indeed remember what he had recited" (qtd. in Malgonkar 44). Such was Nathuram Godse in his childhood days. The explanation of Nathuram's childhood days serves as a counterpart to Gandhi's childhood days with its entire idiosyncrasy as he mentioned in his autobiography. A contrast is established in silence between a pilferer boy and a boy with oracular powers.

This childhood picture, in addition to the description of how helpful a youth Nathuram was for his neighbours and villagers in various ways, adds to the construction of a dynamic and complex character in the narrative. Though born an orthodox Brahmin, as he grew up, Nathuram became, “a fierce protagonist for the removal of Untouchability”, much to his own parents’ discontent, and later he rejected the idea of passing his matriculation and securing a government job, as he came to be influenced by Gandhi’s non-cooperation movement. This was the Nathuram before he met Vinayak Damodar Savarkar.

Nathuram’s acquaintance with Savarkar is an important chapter for both these historical characters, for it provided Nathuram with a vision and conviction, and it helped Savarkar, in Malgonkar’s view, to be dragged into Gandhi assassination case and serve one year imprisonment (46). In 1929 when his family moved to Ratnagiri, Nathuram came under Savarkar’s spell and by the time his family moved from Ratnagiri in 1931 Nathuram had become a disciple of Savarkar. The reason for joining the Hindu Sanghatan which later became Hindu Mahasabha, in Malgonkar’s view was that he realised it had his master’s full support. The author’s construction of Nathuram’s character sketches his private life and personal traits. As a matured youth, Nathuram decided never to marry, and remain celibate forever. “He neither smoked, nor drank, wore the simplest clothes, read a lot of books on politics, history and Hindu religion, and worked hard” (Malgonkar 58). “At thirty-one Nathuram Godse was a quiet man of simple, almost austere tastes and a serious turn of mind. Pledged to celibacy he shied away from the company of women and deliberately shunned the temptations of life. He was bothered by even small lapses of middle-class morality. His favourite reading was books on religion and philosophy, his secret pride his ability to sway crowds with his speeches, and his admitted weakness a liking for coffee” (60-61). Though the author does not characterise Nathuram as a Mahatma, he is nonetheless give a perspective of Nathuram as a well mannered gentleman and a complex individual and not a religious fanatic.

One theory made out of Nathuram’s acquaintance with Savarkar is that the latter is the master brain behind the plot of Gandhi assassination and Nathuram was only his lieutenant in the process. This theory stems from the approver Badge’s argument that he saw Nathuram and Apte with Savarkar on the eve of their trip to Delhi for the January 20’s attempt on Gandhi’s life, and “within Badge’s hearing, had blessed their venture with the words, ‘Yeshaswi houn ya’” (Malgonkar 333). Badge’s recollection goes like this: “We got down from the taxi and walked down to the house of Savarkar. Shankar was asked to wait outside the compound ... Apte, Nathuram and I entered the compound. Apte asked me to wait in the room on the ground floor. Nathuram and Apte went up. They came down after 5-10 minutes ... followed immediately by Tatyarao

[Savarkar] who said to them ‘Yeshaswi houn ya!’ [Literally, ‘come back successful!'] (qtd. in Malgonkar 144). But Malgonkar does not buy this argument and problematises Badge’s argument as a police motivated one:

That Nathuram and Apte should wish to see Savarkar before setting out on their mission is altogether understandable. Both venerated Savarkar as many Congressmen venerated Gandhi, as the man whose *darshan* (sight) would constitute an auspicious beginning for any venture. But to deduce from this visit, if it ever took place, that it was Savarkar who directed the two to kill Gandhi, or that he even sanctioned a killing that was proposed to be accomplished in so clumsy and so inhuman a manner, would be altogether fatuous. (Malgonkar 144)

He sustains that Nathuram was the commander of the team and he was his own lieutenant, and not Savarkar’s, in killing Gandhi. Malgonkar silences Badge’s ‘hearing’ of Savarkar by this, and he is also sceptical about the very fact that they met Savarkar before leaving for Delhi.

Narayan Apte is another vital point in the life of Nathuram. The author introduces Apte’s relation with Nathuram rather dramatically, juxtaposed with his introduction of Nathuram himself in the book. He writes:

Even as Gandhi was talking to Mountbatten, the news that he had decided to go on a fast was being broadcast over the news media in all of India’s fourteen languages. In Poona, two men sitting in a shoddy newspaper office read it over their teleprinter. Read it and suddenly made their great decision: Gandhi must be killed. Their names were Nathuram Godse and Narayan Apte; they were the editor and manager respectively of a Marathi language daily called the *Hindu Rashtra*. (Malgonkar 41)

Apte was the best friend of Nathuram, as the author confirms. Nathuram’s close association and telepathic relation with Apte are amply explained when Apte tells Gopal Godse that “in the four and a half years that Nathuram and I worked together, we often thought the same thing at the same time. Nathuram would send a leading article from wherever he had gone to, and it would turn out that I had already written on the same subject and on the same lines. And as to our devotion to the cause, we were like one mind in two bodies” (qtd. in Malgonkar 42). The author here adds to the character of Nathuram, an image of a true and infallible friend.

Nathuram was a good organiser, and a speaker who could sway away the crowd with his eloquent rhetoric, a politician, and a journalist. He was a disciplined activist for

his organisation and since 1939 held the leadership for many protest campaigns for the Hindu cause. In 1942 when the Hindu Mahasabha introduced an armed group called Hindu Rashtra Dal, Nathuram, along with Apte, became its office bearer. In 1944 he established the Marathi daily *Agrani*, which was later renamed as *Hindu Rashtra*, and became its editor, and Apte, its manager. The motto of the paper was also the motto of Nathuram's life: "Public good, not mere popularity" (Malgonkar 65). Much to prove the development of his aggressive anti-Gandhian mindset Nathuram says: "As regards non-violence, it was absurd to expect forty crores of people to regulate their lives on such a lofty plane" (qtd. in Malgonkar 119). He was never against Gandhi, but he was against the cause Gandhi stood for.

To further exemplify Nathuram's paradoxical character, Malgonkar adds that once the assassination was plotted both the principal convicts tried to pull themselves back from any significant roles. "If it did not show up Apte and Nathuram as cowards, equally so it did not show them up as men of courage either, for they had managed to farm out all the dangerous roles to their subordinates and themselves intended to remain in the background. They had even put the pistol into the hands of the most inoffensive of men, Badge's servant Shankar Kristayya" (Malgonkar 123). But this perspective of a cowardly Nathuram soon changes into the image of a daring militant when, after the failure of January 20's attempt on the life of the Mahatma, Nathuram decides to do it himself without any assistants. His words were firm: "I am going to do it. I don't need any help, not another man. No recruiting people, no depending on anyone else," Nathuram's catastrophe was decided by these words (qtd. in Malgonkar 187). The power of these words was such that, hearing it, Apte swore that, "in that instant," he "saw Gandhi dead" (187).

Quoting Gandhi's words on 27 January on his visit to the Mehrauli shrine, Malgonkar posits the ultimate image of a civilised man so as to counterpoise his narrative of Nathuram Godse. "Gandhi has been called a saint, a villain, a politician, a statesman, a fool, a knave, a charlatan, an astute tradesman, a naked fakir and many other things, but the few words he now said at the urging of the Mullas of the Mehrauli shrine are enough to show that, whatever else he might have been, he was, above all a truly civilised man." Gandhi said: "I have never known what it is to be communal. To unite all sections and all communities that people this vast land of ours has been my dream ever since my childhood, and till that dream is realised my spirit can know no rest" (qtd. in Malgonkar 232-233). By this, Malgonkar makes his standpoint clear that he finds Nathuram guilty of assassination for ending the life of this "truly civilised man" (232). This also drives out any suspicion of Malgonkar sympathising with Nathuram Godse. Had Malgonkar found any point to sympathise with Nathuram he would not have brought Mahatma Gandhi suddenly into the narrative and established him as a

“truly civilised man” (232). But still he goes on exploring further images from Nathuram’s album. The fatal act of the assassination is described by the author in Nathuram’s own words:

‘With the pistol in my right hand [,] I folded my hands and said Namaste! [Greetings!]. With my left hand I pushed aside the girl who might have come in my line of fire. Then the shots went off, almost on their own. I never knew whether I had fired two rounds or three. Gandhi gave a quick gasp, a sound like ‘Aaaah!’ and fell down, I kept holding my hand high, gripping the pistol tightly, and began to yell “Police... Police!” I wanted everyone to see that this was something premeditated, something deliberate – that I had not acted in a fit of passion. I wanted no one to say that I tried to run away or to get rid of the pistol, but wanted to be caught complete with the pistol. But everything was suddenly still, and for at least half a minute no one came forward’.

(qtd. in Malgonkar 250)

After he was overpowered by the police, “he saw the pistol being passed from hand to hand and shouted to a police officer, ‘You’d better take possession of it and put on the safety catch before they shoot one another!’” (Malgonkar 251). After the assassination, Nathuram accepted full responsibility for his deed and maintained that he did not desire that any mercy be shown to him. He was convinced of the righteousness and logic of his deed and was proud of having fulfilled it. His defence in the appeal court was full of rhetoric and logic which made the audience feel for him. Malgonkar, by citing Justice Khosla who was the judge at the appeal court for Gandhi assassination case, shows how convincing Nathuram’s speech was. Khosla said: ‘Had the audience of that day [in the High Court] been constituted into a jury and entrusted with the task of deciding Godse’s appeal, they would have brought in a verdict of ‘not guilty’” (qtd. in Malgonkar 278).

Malgonkar maintains that Nathuram has been stern and unemotional throughout till his death. He was true to his convictions till the end, and lived a rather relaxed life. This is further exemplified when he describes Nathuram’s last days as similar to the casual comedy outside the cell.

To the question of Nathuram’s link with the RSS, which has been denied repeatedly by the BJP and the RSS leaders, Noorani presents Nathuram as an avid worker of the RSS. He cites from Gopal Godse’s confirmation in a later interview: “You can even say we grew up in the RSS rather than in our homes. It was like a family to us. Nathuram had become a *bhuddhik karyavah* (intellectual worker) in the RSS. He said in his statement that he left the RSS. He said it because Golwalkar and the RSS were in a lot

of trouble after the murder of Gandhi. But he did not leave the RSS” (qtd in Noorani 138). This testimony of Gopal Godse provides evidence for Noorani to place Nathuram as an RSS cadet and to connect him to Savarkar through the RSS also, for “Savarkar moved closer to the RSS after the Gandhi murder” (138).

What we get from this representation of Nathuram is that while Malgonkar tries to present Nathuram as the author of his own catastrophe, Noorani tries to authorise Savarkar with that authority. Here Nathuram Godse is not the master of his acts but he is merely an obedient of his master. Nathuram’s own claim - “no depending on anyone else” - which Malgonkar privileges is not appreciated by Noorani. Noorani’s conception of a strong link between Savarkar, Hindutva and Nathuram Godse sets in motion the work of Subhash Gatade which came out in 2011 with marked observations on the contemporary Indian polity and the presence of what Gatade calls ‘Hindutva terrorism’ in it.

Portraying Nathuram Godse as the harbinger of ‘Hindutva terrorism’ in India, Gatade’s contentious work *Godse’s Children: Hindutva Terror in India* introduces Nathuram as the first terrorist in independent India and Gandhi’s assassination as the first terrorist activity. Reading the Savarkar-Nathuram-RSS equation along the lines of Noorani, he fortifies Noorani’s claim of Nathuram’s affiliation to Savarkar and the RSS and the connection of both in the Gandhi assassination plot. He, like Noorani, cites the claims of Badge and Gopal Godse to base his argument on Savarkar-RSS-Nathuram question. He supplants his arguments with further claim on grounds of enmity with Gandhi over the Hindutva forces. He claims that there were five attempts on the life of Gandhi including the final one. In four of these attempts Nathuram Godse is featured, and in the culminating attempt Nathuram achieves his goal. This claim contradicts Malgonkar’s version which mentions only two attempts on Gandhi’s life and which introduces Nathuram as the leader of those two attempts.

The five attempts on Gandhi’s life spans 14 years.

The first one happened in Pune on 25<sup>th</sup> June 1934 when Mahatma Gandhi was going to the Corporation Auditorium to deliver a speech... The explosion caused injuries to some police men and ordinary people. The second attempt on Mahatma Gandhi’s life also involved his future assassin, namely Nathuram Godse. Gandhi was visiting Panchagni, a hill station near Pune, in May 1944. During the prayer meeting in the evening, Nathuram rushed towards Gandhi with a dagger in his hands, but he was overpowered by others. The third attempt took place when Gandhi’s talks with Jinnah started in September 1944. When Gandhi was leaving for Mumbai from Sevagram Ashram, a group of fanatic

Hindu youth, led by Nathuram Godse, tried to stop him. Nathuram again was found in possession of a dagger. The fourth attempt was on 20 January 1948. It involved Madanlal Pahwa, Shankra Kristiya, Digamber Badge, Vishnu Karkare, Gopal Godse, Nathuram Godse and Narayan Apte. The last attempt took on 30 January 1948 at 5:17 pm when Nathuram Godse approached Gandhi and shot him three times in his chest at point blank range.

(Gatade 43-44)

For Gatade neither is Nathuram the master of his own acts nor is he the lieutenant of Savarkar, instead he is just a representative of the Hindutva forces in whose hands he was a mere pawn. Gatade's representation of Nathuram is not focussed on the fact that he assassinated Gandhi, but focuses on the image of Nathuram as a symbol of terrorism, a preamble of a wider politics of Hindu domination, a harbinger of Hindutva terrorism in India.

*Mahadevbhai* by Ramu Ramanathan is a play featuring Mahadev Desai, one of Gandhi's most significant assistants, who passed away in 1942 while he was imprisoned in the Aga Khan Palace, near Poona, in connection with the Quit India movement. The author says: "In fact I wanted to write the play in the nineties when there was a surge of anti-Gandhi plays" (Ramanathan 04). Thus, the existence of this play is based on its 'other' Nathuram Godse, as the playwright makes a reference to the Marathi play *Mi Nathuram Boltoy* by Pradeep Dalvi, which, he says, is "a PR hype for Godse. History is distorted. Lies invented. And at the end of it, we're informed, Gandhi *Hatya* was not an assassination, but a *Vadh* (as in *Ravana Vadh* or *Kamsa Vadh*)" (Ramanathan 04). The play *Mi Nathuram Boltoy* stems from the defence of Godse in the appeal court. It shows Nathuram as the convinced individual who plotted one of the most significant assassinations, as the character of Nathuram says: "IPC 302, the assassination of Gandhi" (Dalvi). Here Nathuram Godse is the hero speaking in two different time periods. The play begins with the speech of the protagonist who comes to the stage to face the audience many years after his death. Then the scenes move back into Nathuram's life, focussing on the decision to kill Gandhi and its execution. Here Nathuram is given voice by the playwright:

Gandhi has acquired some position in history which nobody can deny, not even Nathuram. The page will be there forever in fact. Sometime in the future, in some storm, the pages will flutter and there will be that same Gandhi's page before the world. I don't refute Gandhi's theory of non-violence. He may be a saint but he is not a politician. His theory of non-violence denies self-defence and self-interest. The non-violence that defines the fight for survival as violence is a theory not of non-violence but of self-destruction. (Dalvi)

This shows that the play is made by intertwining the playwright's narrative with that of Nathuram's speech in the appeal court. This 'other' is countered by Ramu Ramanathan's historical narrative of Mahadev Desai's life, travelling through his diary notes, which he wrote during his life with Gandhi. The writer's representation of Gandhi-friend thus keeps an absent presence of the Gandhi-enemy.

Rizio Yohannan Raj, placing the poem "The Last Soliloquy of Nathuram Godse" in her collection of poetry titled *Eunuch*, shows Nathuram Godse portrayed as a character entangled in recurring thoughts of his deed in the last hours of his life. Here, Nathuram is contemplating the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, and his memories act "like faraway childhood kites" on the scaffold. As a child flying a kite, Nathuram was well praised by his friends as a good kite fighter while he "manoeuvred the line as he pleased" (Raj 17). The mind of Nathuram is made peculiar at this stage by the poet, for she attributes to him a realisation of the odd ways of winning the game.

The weirdest kite cuts the best in flight, I'd understood  
the game of intimidation early enough. (Raj 17)

Since Nathuram was the best of the kite fighters, his friends could only fight themselves to be his preys. As a navigator, neither did Nathuram like anyone entering his territory, nor did he allow anyone to cross the borders, since the sky was his "own sheer blue territory" (Raj 17). Nathuram grew up with this mind of a kite fighter and saw Gandhi crossing the borders infinitely. The poet, by titling the collection *Eunuch* and characterising the book with the "idea of crossing the borders' which is fundamental to the eunuch's identity," opens the book with the poem "Eunuch" which represents Mahatma Gandhi as the paradigm of crossing the borders "with his womanly fasts", "singing hermaphroditic non-violence" (Raj 01). "Eunuch" addresses Gandhi as our last *ardhanareeshwara*. Through this representation of Gandhi, the poet prepares the reader for the words of Nathuram justifying his deeds:

Later, later when I saw Gandhi crossing  
the borders of land, religion, gender, age  
my hands were again seized  
by the fervour of kite fighting;  
I had to cut his line  
and finish him in the open.  
Now, no more miracles, no Noakhalis,  
I said, aiming at the Joiner of Opposites. (Raj 17-18)

And when Nathuram says this the reader gets the image of an imagined kite fighter cutting the lines which crossed his imagined borders. With her undeniable love for Gandhi, the poet makes Nathuram doubt his conviction in the second part of the poem:

Was my fury at Gandhi only a spectre  
from my childhood training? (Raj 18)

Nathuram here is a character caught between his confused thoughts and guilt. In a convoluted mind, he sees his “macho kite” which stayed with him in all his wars he waged on the effeminate piety and infinite power of the one who crossed the borders. Now the “macho kite” no more stays with him. Now, the Joiner of Opposites “snaps ties” with the tender nights of Nathuram’s childhood, as he sets upon to paint Mahatma’s face with the killer instincts he earned as a kite fighter.

What is contradiction in this representation of Nathuram as one who waged war on the effeminate piety or the *ardhanareeshwara* is the fact that Nathuram himself was brought up as a girl, subjugating his own masculine identity. Raj, by portraying Mahatma Gandhi as the *ardhanareeshwara*, posits a masculine character of Nathuram, with the symbolic macho kite. But at the same time she seems unconcerned about the fact that Nathuram had to experience the life of a *Brahannala*, to cure the curse of the Fates. The childhood experience as an in between eunuch might have haunted Nathuram so that he could not bear the sight of another eunuch, and later when he saw Gandhi, presumably another eunuch as Raj portrays, he could not finishing Gandhi in the open, true to the “warped mental process” mentioned by Malgonkar. Thus, one can see an obvious irony in Raj’s portrayal of Gandhi as *ardhanareeshwara* and Nathuram as a macho kite fighter.

Farooq Dhondi’s poem “Nathuram Godse” is a complex blend of material and philosophical aspects of the change which has occurred in India, and the assassination of Gandhi. The poet makes the poem complex with references and allusions. It opens by introducing the shift of the socio-political system through independence. The British system was replaced with another kind, which is perhaps not quite the thing that India had aspired for. The poem works in two phases the British leaving and what changes happen physically around, and how these physical changes are accorded to certain individual/spiritual aspects.

The first part of the poem connects itself to the materiality of the change. The second part begins immediately after Gandhi is brought in. Gandhi’s killing in the middle of the poem is the axis on which the material change turns around to reveal its implications. And revealing the implications, Nathuram is introduced. There is a hope for, and an

imagination about, a recreating of Nathuram's life. What did this killing bring him? The poet portrays how Nathuram would have lived on after the assassination if he was not executed.

The ousting of the British and the killing of Gandhi by Nathuram are juxtaposed and both amount to the same effect. The first creates a material change which is reflected in the psychic/deeper realm in a happening such as Nathuram's killing of Gandhi, which was also done with some hope. But like India falling apart, Nathuram's dream also falls apart. Both India and Nathuram fall preys to banality. The author here identifies Nathuram with the nation itself. There is hope of Nathuram's survival after the assassination, his free life etc, which stems from the hope that his deeds would be considered valid by the society. But it never happened, and his vision could not be fulfilled by him. But there is a later system which developed in India as many of the other writers consulted in this would argue, and that system was capable of taking Nathuram's ideal of Hindu Rashtra further. Nathuram Godse as an individual could not survive, but he was successful in doing what he needed, and is surviving still through an "odious immortality". So, as Dhondi portrays, at an individual level, just like India falls in the very moment it achieved what it searched for 200 years, just like the "messiah of peace" becomes the reason for capital punishment for two persons at the same moment he sacrifices himself for the cause of peace and non-violence, Nathuram Godse also falls exactly at the moment he achieved what he longed for. Dhondi's portrayal of a living Nathuram after his actual death in the timeline of the narrative itself finds a parallel in Dalvi's Marathi play *Mi Nathuram Bolttoy*.

One can see that there are three major ways in which Nathuram is represented in both fictional and non-fictional works in Indian English writing; Nathuram the individual, Nathuram the assassin, and Nathuram the paradigm symbol for Hindutva politics.

While Malgonkar analyses the life of Nathuram as an individual, paradoxically under the title *The Men Who Killed Gandhi*, and explores his various personal traits and their implications throughout his life, creative writers like Rizio Yohannan Raj and Farooq Dhondi goes in search of the psychological and philosophical realms of Nathuram the assassin. Noorani concentrates on Nathuram the assassin, with the view of him being the lieutenant of Savarkar in his attempt to portray Savarkar as the master mind behind Gandhi's assassination. Gatade exemplifies a symbol of Hindutva terrorism through Nathuram by portraying him as its harbinger, the first terrorist in independent India. And Ramanathan engages with the absence of the "other" image so as to counter Godseian narratives in the contemporary scenario.

Though none of these texts in Indian English seems to celebrate the political assassin and his deed, as against Dalvi's Marathi play, the Indian English writers represent a complex image of Nathuram Godse, both as a private and public individual. The representations do not suggest any trace that the authors sympathise with Nathuram, instead they show that these writers have their own political stand points, either pro-Gandhi, anti-Hindutva, or neutral. Thus, one could see Nathuram Vinayak Godse represented in Indian English Writings through diverse narratives and dynamic images which show light to Nathuram Godse's life in various ways and make him a cult representation in Indian English Writings.

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