

#### Abstract

The main aim of the paper is to understand the social responsibility of Nayantara Sahgal. The writer has taken presented realistic India in the novels taken for the study. Sahgal's work has a certain dialectical quality which has been generalized into its life cultural connotations in terms of social tradition and political change in the country. The climate of ideas that encounters in her fictional world holds up freedom as the seminal concept that motivates all characters and stimulates the action in the novels. Sahgal through her novels taken for the study says that the proper, impartial and unbiased use of various anti-social regulations are needed to take strong, deterrent, and timely legal action against the offenders, irrespective of their political influences or money power for the progress of the country.

#### Introduction

Sahgal's work has a certain dialectical quality which has been generalized into its life cultural connotations in terms of social tradition and political change in the country. Her work affirms the life-giving quality of the capacity to absorb and assimilate change and transform historical stimulus into cultural adjustment. But unlike some other Indian novelists in English who indiscriminately affirm the Indian cultural milieu, she seeks to excoriate the diseased and the decadent part of the Indian tradition. She does not however go with Mulraj Anand in making loud and strident protests against the concept of conformity to tradition, in favour of some alien idea of social justice; on the contrary, she dives deep into the sustaining springs of the composite cultural tradition of India and comes up to affirm that aspect of the Indian tradition which possesses and promises a survival value. She is thus neither too submissive to the dictates of an orthodox tradition nor too much in love with revolutionary romanticism. She accepts the composite character of the Indian tradition and affirms its catholicity which allows for the human being's maximum freedom. She, therefore, achieves for her

protagonists an identity commensurate with, or sanctified by, the cultural individuality of the Indian tradition.

The climate of ideas that one encounters in her fictional world holds up freedom as the seminal concept that motivates all characters and stimulates the action in the novels. It must be said, however, that freedom in Sahgal's novels is not the declaration of political independence with or without violence, the end-product of a revolution or the result of conspiratorial concentration of troops, or the consequence of political assassinations and massacres; it is usually a deliberate choice or communication with one another or self-identity or courage of conviction the fearless expression of one's personality or simply 'being' itself.

#### Discussion of the Study

In *This Time of Morning* the author seeks to present a new India in search of a social identity. It is about a country's first encounter with freedom and the resultant problems. The novelist not only satirises the politicians, the leaders and the bureaucrats but also the lopsided educational system. The novel seeks to capture the atmosphere of a political one concerning itself with both the corruption and the idealism of the political world. On the one hand it provides an insight into working of the politics, on the other it seeks to explore the effects of the outcome of these policies as they work out in individual human lives.

It is an artistic paradigm of the inalienable freedom of the individual consciousness against the backdrop of amoral politics of power, conflicting attitudes of men in power and the sophisticated high society which is, ironically enough. The author brings out the need of identical politicians for the country's growth. The politicians must work for the people's development. Political corruption is worst in India. The major cause of concern is that corruption is weakening the political body and damaging the supreme importance of the law governing the society. Kalyan Sinha works for his name alone. He doesn't worry that his way will not bring any progress to the country. He also says that Gandhian principles will not work for the present time. Kailas is totally opposite to him, he works only for the people's development. Rakesh comes forward to discuss with Kalyan about his faulty action he is doing for the country. By this the author says young people like Rakesh is needed for the country's growth.

In *Storm in Chandigarh* the novelist is concerned with India which is bewildered

in its retreat from Gandhian values. The retreat has penetrated into the personal world. While on the one hand it is a confrontation between Gyan Singh and Harpal, on the other hand it ceases to be a question of violence versus non-violence. It becomes taking or not taking a stand. It is the question of victim to bow down before the oppressor or to claim its right for survival. Gyan Singh had never wasted his time on emotions. He has always displayed a ruthless attitude dealing with a situation. For him there is always a bargain to be struck but Harpal is concerned with human beings and human values.

The conflict between Gyan Singh and Harpal is very well depicts the current situation of the Indian politics. Vishal Dubey the liaison officer sends by the Home Minister of the country to resolve the tensions between Gyan Singh and Harpal Singh, suggests Harpal Singh that he has to take a stand against the violent attitude of Gyan Singh. Sahgal portrays the disintegration of values in politics. Democracy has become a power game into carnal savagery. The political atmosphere instead of improving seems to have deteriorated. The people who have some values or ideals are inert and passive and unable to face reality.

The building of Chandigarh is symbolizing a new beginning. Vishal Dubey finds himself amidst a political confrontation in Chandigarh where Gyan Singh is trying to link up the issue of language to religion to exploit religious sentiments for his own personal position. His instigation is a threat to the peace and normalcy of life but no one is willing to take a stand against it. Dubey is unable to understand the reasons for the violence of approach and attitude. Violence is becoming a political blackmail. It has yielded dividends in the past and is again being used as a threat. Violence, Dubey feels that it is a joint product of aggressive and inert. It is a sign of urban discontent, outburst of brutality and calculated violence has become a part of cities. The situation in Chandigarh is not one of tension but it paralyses, the situation in which one will get trapped and become helpless. The political dead lock in Chandigarh is a reflection of the state of affairs in other parts of the country. People are afraid to accept the challenges and afraid to act or think. Dubey is conscious of the change in the basic approach to life and its problem.

The author wants to focus attention on the national ailment. She presents the reality of the political situation in the late 1960s. She is successful in capturing not only the political issues but also the political mood and intrigues. She has also touched upon the deterioration that had set in the quality of public life and which is bound to influence

personal and private values. Dubey advises Harpal Singh not to submit to Gyan Singh. Though Dubey is exceeding his powers in advising Harpal, it is necessary to bring him to grip with a problem that reflects graver disease, in the man and the nation.

From Nayantara Sahgal's point of view non-violence is a far more comprehensive attitude. It is an active and a powerful force. It may have been ineffectively used on occasion i.e., by a misuse of fast, and the like, but it remains protent force if used in an organized way. Till now Gandhi is able to have all around response because he is rooted in the same soil; brought up on the same simple food and reared in the same beliefs. He is virtuous by the same standards as ordinary people. He never wished to give up tradition or outlaw religion or impose alien standards. He emphasizes pious and pure aspects of life. Dubey stands for a quality of life with Gandhian principles. He says that truth and traditionalism are needed in the society. They could bring an uncontrollable development to the country.

Marriage is a social institution, which plays an important role in shaping the life of a human being. As most of the modern societies are patriarchies, "Marriage is the destiny traditionally offered to woman by society".<sup>5</sup> For the Hindu Woman, marriage is a bondage that extends beyond the husband's death. According to the scriptures the goal of the life of a woman is to worship her husband. Woman must be under the protection of the father in the childhood, then under husband in youth and if fate condemns her to widowhood, she must lean on her son. The supreme good of her life is to fulfill her duty towards her husband. She is never to waver from her loyalty and never to find fault with her husband. She must follow him in prosperity as well as in adversity. He may be well disposed or ill-disposed towards her, wicked, libidinous, poor or sickly, he must be obeyed and loved.

Mrs. Sahgal rightly understands that she belongs to a period of transition. She observes, "For my elders, marriage both by law and tradition had been indissoluble, a choice once made irrevocable. For my grandchildren, who would grow up in a greatly changed India, it would in all probability, be a more flexible and less stable institution, yielding more and more to the pressures of personality and society. For me, it would be a midway between the two, the law eventually facilitate divorce while tradition and sentiment were still ranged against it. It would not be the impregnable institution it had once been. Where the responsibility for it rested with oneself one had to be all the more certain".<sup>12</sup>

The status of women in India has been subjected to many great changes over the

past few millennia. From equal status with men in ancient times through the low points of the medieval period, to the promotion of equal rights by many reformers, the history of women in India has been eventful. In modern India, women have held high offices in India including that of the President, Prime Minister, Speaker of the Lok Sabha and Leader of the opposition. However, women in India continue to face atrocities such as rape, acid throwing and dowry. According to a global poll conducted by Thomson Reuters, India in the “fourth most dangerous country” in the world for women, and the worst country for women among the G20 countries.

*The Day in Shadow* can be considered as a sequel to *Storm In Chandigarh* as Simrit in *The Day in Shadow* resembles Saroj in *Storm in Chandigarh* in many ways. As a sensitive and refined woman, Simrit longs for communication and understanding. She wonders why can't a husband and a wife be friends. Som, whom she marries against the will of her Brahmin parents, turns out to be a ruthless entrepreneur who is caught in a spiraling mania for affluence. He cannot simply understand for what on earth she is crying for as he thinks that he is a “damned good husband”. He tries to pacify her by saying that they can go to abroad anytime and buy anything they want. They can air-condition the whole house. But Simrit is in need of a world whose texture is kind enough and all she wants is to get to a clean, cold atmosphere where there is some goal beyond self-advancement.

Like Inder in *Storm in Chandigarh*, Som also belongs to the ‘he-man school’ who can relegate only the secondary role to the women. His pride of procreation is concentrated only on his son, Brij, but not on other children. Wife is a mere possession for him. There is no room for warmth and commitment in his world. He can easily change jobs and discard friendship and the only interest of him is to win the race at any cost. In spite of the fact that the world of Som becomes suffocating for Simrit, she struggles to resist the gradual alienation from him. The physical relationship with him becomes no more just sex than food is just food. And once past its immediacy, sex has its visions too of tenderness, of humour, of more than a physical act. Sex could be an argument or a problem shared. The same spring fed all its facets-the day's work in office, children at home, bed at night. Simrit feels on the verge of a fatal realization.

The divorce settlement, according to which all that she earns through her writings will be wiped out as she has to pay tax to those six lakh worth of shares Som has given her in trust for their son is the parting shot of Som. In the divorce settlement, Mrs. Sahgal has created a powerful central image which clearly points out that heartless

individual and societies must learn compassion and justice. The divorce settlement, which Simrit accepts is passed by the law courts, can be considered a contrived feature and a fine flourish of rhetoric that emphasizes the plight of woman and the cruelty of the world. The world has no sympathy for Simrit because divorce is not part of our tradition. She finds out that the woman cannot begin a new life after the divorce as a divorcee is abandoned and uprooted in the husband-centered world.

Simrit's life is not an isolated one in India. Divorce here has become a maker that further ostracises and marginalizes women. Divorce for the most women in Indian community is a matter stigma. People always blame the woman. Simrit dies socially after divorce. She wants the society to see her as an individual. She says that "no marriage is perfect, there is nothing like perfect pair or perfect couple. It is a union of confluence of ideas and visions of two people. It's just about how much efforts both the parties are doing to make it successful. Respect each other's individuality and things and surely work".<sup>4</sup> Simrit has done everything to save her marriage life but in vain Som cuts her off as easily as he cuts off Merriweather and Lalli, his friends, when she cannot respond sensitively to his needs. But Simrit is at once a modern woman for whom marriage itself is not an end but only a means of attaining true relationship based on honesty and equality and also a person who has still reverence for the traditional mould cast upon her as a result of which there are contradictions in her character. Mrs. Sahgal portrays Simrit "in such convincing manner weeping at one movement, determined to fight, the next...".<sup>6</sup> Mrs. Sahgal delineates the different nuances of struggle of a divorcee as authentically and vividly.

*The Situation in New Delhi* represents life of the situation in the New Delhi where whole of India's public spirited attitudes and socially conscious ideas have been pushed out by the unscrupulous, self-seeking and power hungry politics. The spirit of Shivaraj, however; survives and continues to inspire the general public and sensitive individuals who are willing to serve the people with a sense of mission and in spirit of dedication. Sahgal analyses the problem of a newly independent and developing country by focusing her creative attention on the young men and women.

It is a novel with full of political and social ideas. It is nowhere connected with novelist's own experience of politics, but the story is set in the mid-fifties. In fact the political happenings of two decades have been presented in the novel. Sahgal starts the novel with the news of Shivraj's death and proceeds to deal the political situation arising out of it. His followers and party men are eager to abandon his policies and

commit themselves to the idea of progress. But these men are mediocre and unrealistic in their approach to the political problems. They are men who had never done anything with their hands. They are more concerned with the idea of progress than with progress itself.

Violence has become a part of campus life. A girl is raped and when the Vice-Chancellor Usman takes action, he gets hurt in the eye and his office is invaded and ransacked and burned and his driver injured. There has been damage done in other colleges too. Followers of Shivraj get shocked for the outburst in the society. Usman is forced by the government to take back the three students responsible for rape. The novelist, however, shows that violence does not pay, for it is self-destructive, as forcefully highlighted in the death of Rishad by the explosion of a bomb planted in a house by his own group.

Devi, widowed sister of Shivraj, is included in the union cabinet as a mark of respect to the departed leader, though she finds herself isolated. She feels that the political situation has fully changed. It has lost the sense of direction which is during there in her brother's region. She even finds changes in her own son, Rishad. She herself has a solution but she is helpless. Usman blames the Hindu apathy and resistance to fresh ideas while Rishad puts forth another view. He feels that the older generation is simply not interested in change. He joins with the Naxalite movement to get the public ready for violence. He fails to realize that a revolution must be meaningful and it has to involve the people and begin with oneself. He also does not realize that violence like power can become an end in itself. This is what happens when their leader Naren while hiding gets badly wounded and his long illness makes his group to lose the sense of direction.

Along with the activities of the Naxalite movement, Sahgal also introduces the problems of student unrest and indiscipline that sprang out of the unrealistic and non-feasible policies and programmers of the government. Sahgal repeatedly warns in her previous novels that violence has been becoming a leviathan to the administration though constant provocations are presented in the novel objectively as episodes. The novel also forewarns that in order to tackle the violence, the authoritarian government will seize the opportunity to lead the country towards dictatorship. Usman has the courage to do what most people in power are unable to do. He resigns his post but this does not mean that he accepts defeat; on the contrary he frees himself from the position

of power to provide direction to the student's agitation. He understands the gravity of the situation and plans to act accordingly for the country's welfare and takes students in a right path.

### **Conclusion**

Sahgal is aware of the changes and also their impact on the individual sensibility and collective life of the Indian psyche. Her concern is with human values and man's destiny. Indian culture with its past traditions, the present issues and the future trends—nothing escapes from her pervading vision. She does not believe in blindly clinging to the outworn tradition. She is liberal, humanistic and cosmopolitan in her outlook and gives space for human beings to grow. Her concept of freedom is not merely political. It includes the full expression of one's personality and discovering of one's true identity. Her characters show faith in an individual's capacity to communicate and reach others through debate and discussion. She believes that all progress, whether social, political or economic, is possible in an atmosphere of freedom and where people can communicate on all fronts. Having been brought up and nurtured under the impact of Gandhian ideology and Nehru's faith in the human spirit, she projects immense possibilities of life. Jasbir Jain feels that "Her work has a strong realistic base and reflects not only her personal values but also the changing values of the society exposed for the first time to both freedom and power".<sup>7</sup>

The values of any society are determined by the preferences of the people of that society and the need of the time. In the post-independence phase while the traditional Indian values did not fit the changed circumstances, the Western values are not acceptable to masses.

Life was bigger than any system. Life could remould or break the system that lacked righteousness and reason. It was life's precious obligation to rebel, the humanity's right to be free, to choose from the best light it could see, not necessarily the long accepted light.<sup>11</sup>

The last words quoted above are significant; the best must be discovered and accepted; it may not be the traditionally best. Sahgal's suggestion is to be empiric in one's vision and develop the courage to implement a new lesson if it is for the benefit of individual and nation. People of the country as a nation ought to cultivate antipathy towards self-centred tendencies such as minting money, manipulating things by fair or foul methods. People must learn to avoid ennui and inertia. For this purpose certain inspiring role-models are required. India suffers from a leaderless situation. The so



called elected leaders who do not honestly serve the country need to be overthrown, and replaced by law-abiding path makers. It is generally believed that a public deserves its leader, ultimately holding it responsible to bear with corrupt ones because it has elected them. Therefore, the axis of the problem lies in first educating the people in lessons of awareness which are imparted by guides like Mahatma Gandhi, spiritual teachers like Vivekanand.

According to Sahgal, violence has different names, indiscipline, unrest and disorder. Like Gandhiji she also thinks that violence means to cause pain or wish ill or to take the life of any living being out of anger or selfish intent. This is very well portrayed through most of the characters in her novels. All the protagonists in the novels which are taken for the study stresses that they need free air to breathe. Sanad, Rakesh, Dubey, Simirit, Devi, Usman and Sonali go in a peaceful way and follow all the law and order to have their freedom from the suppression. Most of the people of India are not awakened and enlightened. They fear to raise their voice against anti-social elements prevailing in the society. But all the protagonists come first to register their voice against the social evils. They are ready to face all kind of trouble but they seek their own space to do the action. They value freedom is more important than anything in the world. According to them every action must be done in the right way and also for the development of the country. These kinds of people will become the role models for the future generation.

Sahgal through her novels taken for the study says that the proper, impartial and unbiased use of various anti-social regulations are needed to take strong, deterrent, and timely legal action against the offenders, irrespective of their political influences or money power for the progress of the country. All the protagonists of the novels take firm and strong steps to curb the menace and they have created an atmosphere so the good, patriotic, intellectuals will come forward to serve the country with pride, virtue, and honesty for the welfare of the people of India.

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