

FEMINIST MOVEMENT IN THE NOVELS OF NAYANTARA SAHGAL

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Abstract

One of the best Indian novelists in English is Nayantara Sahgal. In the novels of Nayantara Sahgal, the renowned Indian English writer, the main emphasis is on the plight and problems of educated women, often from an urban background. In several of the characters of her books, Nayantara depicts the full right of equality for women. She talks about the problem of a new woman from India. Nayantara Sahgal is a descendant of the belief in which force itself is deified as the 'sakthi' deity, a female symbol. Government officials, corporate tycoons, foreign advisers, upper class citizens, writers and highly trained individuals such as ambassadors and ministers populate her fictitious universe. A political theme is also paired with the theme. Of the relationship between man and woman, their marriage issues, their volatile incompatibility, the problems that result from their tameness, and eventually a woman's place in society. An effort has been made in this paper to discuss the topic of suffering in the post-independence period and maladjustment in the social setup of an English lady. Sahgal also portrays how, facing many barriers, women rise in strength and how women make many sacrifices and concessions, and how tolerantly they bravely face the hardships of life. Nayantara Sahgal is one of the great Indian novelists in English. The main focus in the novels of Nayantara Sahgal, the celebrated Indian English novelist, is on the plight and problems of educated women, mostly with an urban base. Nayantara portrays the complete right of freedom for women in many of the characters in her

novels. She speaks about the dilemma of new Indian woman. Nayantara Sahgal is a progeny of the belief wherein power itself is deified as goddess 'sakthi', a female symbol. Her fictional world is occupied by political leaders, business tycoons, foreign advisors, upper class people, journalists and highly qualified persons like ambassadors and ministers. A political theme is often combined to the theme of man-woman relationship, their marital problems, their unpredictable incompatibility, the problems arising out of their tameness and finally the place of a woman in society. In this paper, an attempt has been made to explore the theme of sufferings in post-independence era and maladjustment of an English lady in the social setup. Sahgal also depicts how women grow in power in spite of many hurdles and how women make many sacrifices and compromises, and how they bravely face the challenges of life with tolerance.

Keywords:

Feminist, male-dominated, political, disappointed inheritance

Introduction

In English, Nayantara Sahgal (born 10 May 1927) is an Indian writer. Her fiction deals with the best response of India to the crises caused by political alteration; she was one of the first widely known Indo-Anglian female authors. She is a member of the Nehru-Gandhi family, the second of three daughters born to Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, Jawaharlal Nehru's niece. Nayantara Sahgal performs novels as a writer pursuing individual women's survival with feminist issues. She sees women involved in their quest for belonging as casualties of predictable Indian culture.

Variety of Characters

Much of the protagonists of Nayantara Sahgal head to the affluent upper class of Indian society. Sahgal meticulously adheres to the people she knows closely; with the existing image of India, she does not seek to mark the caste-ridden middle class or the impoverished Indian villager merely to be conventional. Her diversity of characters simplifies her technique; since most of her characters are the sort of people who will converse in real life in English, she does not have to avoid the present Indian dialogue in English.

Governmental Familiarity

Sahgal is familiar with politics and political personalities in India first-hand, since she spent much of her early days in Anand Bhawan, the Nehrus' ancestral home in Allahabad. Jawaharlal Nehru was the brother of her mother, while her father died because of the ill health he suffered in jail when he was imprisoned for engaging in India's liberation effort. One might say that politics is in her blood. For each of her books, an essential political potential shapes the atmosphere. *A Time to be Happy*, her first book, portrays the dawn of Indian independence. When the main euphoria has worn off, and things no longer look rosy, this time of morning is arriving soon. On linguistic lines, *Storm in Chandigarh* deals with the division of the Punjab just as the state had recovered from the 1947 partition disruption.

Values in ethics

The Indian Capital facing the After-Nehru-Who question poses a situation in New Delhi; known leaders have given up all ethical standards and the angry adolescence is turning Naxalites (Communist extremists). But often, in artistic words, this political consciousness is not transmuted entirely. Some of her characters are public personalities who are instantly recognizable: two examples are Kailash Sinha (Krishna Menon) in *This Time of Morning* or Shivraj (Jawaharlal Nehru) in *A Situation in New Delhi*. Her autobiographies are more rewarding than her earlier books, *Jail and Chocolate Cake* and *From Anxiety Set Free*.

Authentic Image

The Day in Shadow is an excellent novel; human interests take precedence over politics here. A divorcee (like Sahgal herself) is the protagonist, Simrit Raman, a novelist, and the novel reveals the chauvinism she faces in a male-dominated society. She develops into an idealistic Member of Parliament, Raj, who shares her ideals, unlike her husband, who, above all, believes in making money. Sahgal offers an authentic picture of high-level politicians and officials thinking more about themselves than about the issues that the country looks like, caught up in their cocktail parties. Between Simrit and Raj, the reciprocal magnetism is not strictly sexual. Sahgal indicates that marriage is not a romantic partnership, like in her other books, it implies companionship on equal terms. In human partnerships, whether they are between man and woman or the leader and the governed, she pleads for the requisite honesty.

As an idyllic host and presenter

Sahgal is an idyllic presenter for the Western-educated Indian, who finds it tough to come to terms with India because of her birth and upbringing. As her heroine, Sanad, confesses in *A Time to Be Happy*, “I do not belong entirely to India. I simply can't. My schooling, my education, and my sense of values all merged to make me an Indian.... Of course, my belonging to any other country cannot be doubted.” Jawaharlal Nehru, too, had expressed the same problem when he wrote in his autobiography, “I have been a queer mixture of the East and the West, out of place anywhere, nowhere at home. Perhaps my thoughts and attitude to life are more akin to what is known as the West than the East, but India clings to me in countless ways, as she does to all her children.”

Political Sharpness

This awareness leads to a fervent obsession in the modern era with the Indian heritage and its significance; all of Sahgal's novels are concerned with India's present decadence, and how it can be used originally from its history. It is this concern for the nation that prompted her to protest against her cousin Indira Gandhi's emergency, when most Indian authors opted to stay quiet. Her political sharpness had led her to expect intervention from Mrs. Gandhi, and in her weekly newspaper column she had warned against it.

Sahgal's Storytelling Strategy

Perhaps her best book is *Rich Like Us*, which won the Sinclair Award for Literature. During the emergency, Sahgal's quest seems to show that freedom and faith are still skin-deep in India. The slaughter of the great-grandmother of the narrator Sonali in the name of Suttee, the defacement of the sharecropper because he demands for his due, the police raping of the village women because their folk men dare to question the landlord, and the murder of Rose, the big-hearted. Only because her frank talk is an insult to her stepson Dev, English woman in New Delhi are all presented in a totally factual manner. The narration strategy is interesting; the narrator is Sonali, but in the third person, exchange chapters deal with Ram, a businessman who loves Rose, her father Keshav's friend, so we get a dual view of events. The novel begins with a note of hope; there are people like Kishori Lal, a frivolous shopkeeper, in the midst of sycophancy, who have the confidence to denounce cruelty.

As an activist in politics

The subsequent novels by Sahgal regress back to the past. *Plans for Departure* was praised as a “novel of ideas,” although it was called a “backdated Jewel in the Crown” by a less understanding critic. In the fictional hill station of Himapur, the odd Raj characters are present—the kind British governor, the missionary, the racist white woman out to preserve colonial dominance, the nationalist Indian chief, etc. Anna Hansen, a Danish woman visiting India, is the protagonist who makes her preparations to leave when the shadows of the First World War are falling over Europe. She’s moving back to marry Nicholas Wyatt, the old English family’s scion. When their son marries an Indian girl who is a political activist, Anna’s Indian encounters hit a kind of consummation.

Conclusion

In Sahgal’s eighth book, *Mistaken Identity*, which has a male narrator, much like her first novel, *A Time to be Happy*, the India of the early decades of this century is evoked more vividly. Bhushan Singh, the playboy son of the Vijaygarh Raja, was on his way home from college in America in 1929 when he was arrested on an erroneous charge of disturbance. He has to spend almost three years in prison, where Mahatma Gandhi’s idealistic supporters and radical trade union leaders are his friends, all seeking to pursue independence in their own ways; the hero’s contact with them is often quite comical. Sahgal’s continued obsession with India is evidenced by these two later novels, although they lack .

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