

Society, Politics and Culture in The Novels of Nayantara Sahgal

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Abstract

This paper focused on the social and political concern in Sahgal's novels through broad critical resources; explore the fundamentals of individual experiences. The author has tried to give a wide-ranging survey and fine significant intolerance of outer and personal realities in the novels of Nayantara Sahgal. In the concept of freedom, the socio-political scenario of colonial and post colonial India and feminism are the vital points which form the environment of her novels. The author has reflected in the book, the crude and dazzling climate, the hushed past, the riotous feature, interpreting the nuances of various shades of evaluation, in an stimulating and fascinating manner, which makes this study of special relevance.

Indian literature, writings of the Indian subcontinent, produced there in a variety of vernacular languages, including Sanskrit, Prakrit, Pali, Bengali, Bihari, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Malayalam, Oriya, Punjabi, Rajasthani, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Lahnda, Siraiki, and Sindhi, among others, as well as in English. The term Indian literature is used here to refer to literature produced across the Indian subcontinent prior to the creation of the Republic of India in 1947 and within the Republic of India after 1947. Beginning in the 19th century, particularly during the height of British control over the subcontinent, Western literary models had an impact on Indian literature, the most striking result being the introduction of the use of vernacular prose on a major scale. Such forms as the novel and short story began to be adopted by Indian writers, as did realism and an interest in social questions and psychological description. A tradition of literature in English was also established in the subcontinent. Later many Indian writes was came. It is also associated with the works of members of the Indian diaspora, such as V.S. Naipaul, Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri and Salman Rushdie, who are of India descent. Nayantara Sahgal's views on society, politics and culture are of great significance. She thought ahead of her times. The picture of society that she presents in her novels has great relevance even today. However, her views in this regard have not been paid the attention they deserve. A few books or theses have ever been undertaken to study the treatment of society, politics and culture in her novels. It is hoped that the present research will unearth the hitherto unexplored dimensions of Nayantara Sahgal's fiction and make affirmative payment to a better understanding of the writer and her work.

This section has been prepared with a purpose to formulate a milieu study. After independence, as the socio-political profitable template of India underwent a change, the novelists began to reflect the changing pulse of the nation. The novels of Nayantara Sahgal deal with a wide gamut of themes collection from special quandary and tribulations, joys and sorrows fulfillment and frustration of womanly central character to the political upheavals that India has experienced since liberty. Her proximity to political power has enabled her to project the kaleidoscopic view of the political changes in the country. She indeed is the ring-side view of the happenings behind the political and ritual curtains.

A fresh bring in of novelists like Bhabani Bhattacharya, Monohar Malgonkar, Nayantara Sahgal, Kamala Markandaya and Khushwant Singh Continued to nourish the tradition of social realism by probing more deeply and lengthily into the social, political, economic and cultural milieu of the contemporary period. Indian English novelists of 1960s and 1970s like Anita Desai and Arun Joshi shifted their center of attention from socio-political and economically viable concerns to the journeying of individual's interior world. Indian novel in English touched the new perspective after 1980s when some talented novelists like Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Shashi Tharoor, Upmanyu.

Chatterjee, Arundhati Roy, Amitav Ghosh and Rohinton Mistry inwards on the literary firmament and signaled a new trend by introduce new them and technique. The thematic canvass of these novelists is as vast as the subcontinent. These novelists, with sophisticated outlook, took recourse to magic realism, fractured structure and subverted the grand narratives of the old generation. Women novelists have made a significant contribution to the contemporary Indian writing in English. They have, in a number of ways, not only surpassed their male counterparts but also maintained a high standard of literary writing applauded not only by Indians but overseas readers as well. The history of Indian English fiction by Indian women novelists dates back to the last quarter of the nineteenth century when a host of women novelists appeared on the literary scene and subjugated the genre of narrative technically and thematically to put across their point of view in a more effective and powerful way.

Social Scenario

Sahgal is deeply fretful with women's status in Indian society. Her equivalent British writer Doris Lessing is a strong enthusiast of women's cause in the west. Despite belonging to different countries, having different socio enlightening backgrounds, both look at the women's question from the same point of view. Political consciousness is a lifelong exploration to discover one's identity, their values, the path of development and the determining of their age group. It is a journey filled with conflict and growth that can be both stimulating and painful. They both advocate feminism long before the advent of feminist movement in the 1960 in the west. The chapter studies the theme of social discord from the feminist perspective in Nayantara Sahgal's *Storm in Chandigarh* (1969) and Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing* (1950).

They both look at feminism afresh and from a different perspective. She gives a central place to women in her novels repeatedly strikes a central place to women in her novels repeatedly strikes the note that women should not be treated as a "sex object and glamour girl, fed on false dreams of perpetual youth, lulled into a passive role that requires on individual identity." She believes that woman is an equalent grateful partner of man, and should be treated as such. Most of her female characters strive for this egalitarianism.

Political Scenario

Political awareness forms an integral part of the artist's consciousness as a human being. But the artist's dialogue with the social and the political forces must be subsumed within the creative

process which transcends the horizons of society. Her novels read like commentaries on the political and social turmoil that India has been facing since independence. Mrs. Sahgal's reaction for politics and her command over English are rather than impressive in her novel. In her novel she spoke about politics as well as she is successful political columnist for different newspapers. Her writing is generally characterized by simplicity and boldness. Her novels portray the contemporary incidents and political reality saturated with artistic and objectivity. As a women novelist, she recognizes that her commitment is advocating the liberation of women. She has gone deep into the female psyche in her novels. She describes in her novels how women are oppressed in modern times by the society as well as by male domination. She tried to depict that how a women looks out at herself, and her problems. During almost six decades of post- colonial history of Indian English fiction, a wide variety of novelists has emerged focusing attention a crowd of social, economic, political, religious and spiritual issues faced by three coinciding periods of individual experience. In Indian novelists in English, women writers like R. P. Jhabvala, Nayantra Sahgal, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy, Shobha De, Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri, Rama Mehta, Manju Kapur and Geeta Mehta have heralded new consciousness, particularly the pathetic plight of the Indian women. Through women writer's eyes, we can see a different world, with their assistance we can seek to realize the potential of human achievement.

Cultural Scenario

The cultural conflict between the East and West is a recurrent theme in Indian English literature. She has been active on the literary scene both as a creative writer and a political columnist. The effort has been made to critically analyze the cultural views of Sahgal's as reflected in her novels. Moral values and traditions, the very important aspects of culture, have been paid great concentration in her work. To her, culture is not stagnant. It is dynamic. It receives timely influences, and sheds off the unnecessary ones. She sensitively records that the moral order is changing, not degenerating. She rejects stupid observance to traditions such as of arranged marriage and favours a slight amendment in Hindu Marriage Act so to facilitate separation which is the central theme of *The Day in Shadow* (1971). Her novels inquire about to posit the independent existence of women and atrophy all attempts to preclude them from the centre- stage of human way of life. Her approach towards the issue is holistic and focuses mainly on the question of identity- crisis for women. The finding of the preceding discussion has been summed up in this chapter. In her novels the majority of her characters, in her the initial stage, assert their feminine identity though protest and defiance but eventually end up accepting and embracing the traditional values of patriarchal society. Therefore, the conflict in her protagonists between traditional pull desires for female frustrates the quest for wholeness and integrated selfhood

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