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The Cultural Controversy and Political Paradox in Nayantara Sahgal's

The Day in Shadow

Abstract:

Sahgal shows the social taboos which prevailed in New Delhi during the 1970s. She presents a figurative cross section of the Indian nationality such as the political masters, bureaucratic politicians, business barons and social parties in interaction with intellectuals. She depicted the phenomenon of the Emergency – the corruption, the forcible sterilization of ideas and the crushing of all the disturbing protests.

Key Words:

Gandhian Ideology, bureaucratic politicians, business barons, corruption and Emergency.

Introduction

Nayantara Sahgal is one of the remarkable and distinguished Indo-English writers in the stream of national consciousness. She emerged as one of the most important and powerful voices in the realm of Indian English fiction. Born in a family of freedom fighters, she has political philosophy in her every drop of her blood. She is indeed a deserving writer to write about the political movement.

Sahgal is a prominent Indian woman novelist of political and social consciousness. Her novels have a deep social awareness of contemporary sensibilities. She is one of the writers who are politically aware of the movement of social forces and the memories of the colonial past and its impact on the people. She portrays the political issues of the volcanic years in a more urgent and immediate sense. Her approach to political and personal problems is based on the Gandhian Philosophy. Philosophically, politically and culturally a Gandhian, She

unearths the hidden collective dreams of the Indian people through her novels as an angry Gandhian of early generation of post colonial India.

Nayantara Sahgal's novel "The Day in Shadow" is a remarkable and impressive sequel to her earlier novel "Storm in Chandigarh" not merely because of the common felt, but also because of continuous deep rooted moral vision that shapes and reveals their individuality. The Day in Shadow shows social taboos which is common in Delhi. It depicts its political masters, bureaucratic machinery, business barons and social parties in inter-action with intellectuals, free-lance journalists and liberal thinkers. The time is crucial as it compels and controls different men and women as they hurry along to keep their rendezvous with destiny. The Emergency period is historically memorable in the annals of modern India, facing the cross roads of progress after independence. Thematically, "The Day in Shadow" (1971) begins where The Storm in Chandigarh (1969) ends. It concerns itself with the release and recognitions of the individual consciousness and its growth and maturation.

Sahgal's novels give a figurative cross section of the Indian nationality. Raj, the Indian Christian intellectual and the most influential member of parliament; Ram Krishna, the veteran journalist and a doyen among the editors of free India; Simrit, the free-lance journalist and Som's divorced wife; Sumer Singh, a committed Minister of State in the Union Cabinet, responsible for the Ministry of Petroleum; Som the newly emerged business baron and Simrit's divorced husband; Sardar Saheb, the Senior Minister, aged and ailing in the hospital; Shah, the flexible industrialist, Lalli and Vetter the business partners of Som for some time; Brij, the sixteen-year old son of Som are the remarkable characters. Sahgal shows the diversity of human characters and represents the variety of their motives and mottos in the drama of life in New Delhi.

In "The Day in Shadow", Simrit, torn between the two worlds of politics and commerce, is frankly perplexed by the real image of Delhi, in the very first chapter of the novel. Simply, Delhi had been the home for bureaucratic politicians and business barons. It is a place to bring up and educate children but ostensibly it was much more, the criterion for whatever happened in India, Delhi became the centre of a crisis. The personal and emotional crisis of Simrit gradually become augmented and recognised as a national crisis with the future of the country itself at stake. Sahgal constructs the plot in her novel out of what appears to be ordinary, trifling and prosaic personal details. The divorce of a woman, sensitive, delicate,

complacent and unfeasible is well presented. The winning integration of this personal crisis with critical movement in India's foreign relations in Asia is what distinguishes the novel. The aesthetic ambivalence that Sahgal accomplishes in dramatising this turmoil lends unprecedented symbolic significance.

The novel opens with the gala get-together at intercontinental hotel. It introduces us to all the central dramatic personae and sets the tone of the novel. In the opening paragraph, Sahgal shows us an integral view of the social and political scene in New Delhi. For example, the very first sentence accentuates the glow and glitter of the background. Sahgal uses the words with semantic significance and stylistic words such as mirror, reflect, gilt, official, consequence, wives, daughter, show, supple, swing, and glossy. This cannot be over-emphasized as they abundantly suggests the artificial, superficial, and elitist kind of life that engulf Simrit. The description reality reflects Indian cultural paradox.

With the post of Petroleum Minister expected, no liquor could be served, is a pointer to the cant enshrined in public life, a fascinating sidelight for anyone who cared to make a study of Indian character. Sahgal develops this atmosphere of cultural cant into an almost visible form when a little latter, Sumer Singh, Union Minister, is an opportunist and a careerist enters the scene. The Gandhian semblance fits the ruling party as a preposterous outfit in the questionable and murky politics of contemporary India.

Simrit stands out alone against the political corruption and social hypocrisy and gets separated. Her marriage to businessman against the desire of her Brahmin parents has fallen on rocks. The paper also outlines the problems of the novel and introduces the central consciousness and focuses our attention on the central characters too. Raj, an independent Member of Parliament emanates warmth and demonstrates a distinctive mental adroitness and a supportability to communicate his idea and acute analysis of the matters of men.

Raj combines in himself the two requisite qualities that Simirit has been so diligently and desperately striving to find the gentleness and justice. His non attached and indifferent involvement in the realistic problem of Simirit soon grows into a personal interest in Simirit herself. He loves Simirit as a matured middle-aging bachelor; for he discovers in Simirit the kind of person that would mitigate and sustain his restless spirit. His quest for peace and

fulfilment thus culminates in his discovery of bond to Simirit, the uprooted mother of several children but women of culture.

Ram Krishna, another character in the novel has encountered and lived a life full of action, both physical and mental. Stepping in Gandhian ideology and programmes, he has trust and believes in non-violence as a value worth leaving as a legacy to posterity; for, it is the rectitude of non violence that is apparent in the practice of soothing co-existence which alone corroborates a natural continuity and performance of our institutions. He feels the exigency of the present and accepts it.

The obvious ambiguity in the policy of non-alignment and peaceful co-existence as practised after the death of India's prime Minister, Jawarhalal Nehru, made clear on the day of voting on the bureaucratic verdict to accept the Russian offer to explore the region of jammu and Kashmir, consistently, politically diplomatic and vulnerable to foreign invasions, under the inspection and supervision of U.S.S.R in the transgression of a senior Cabinet Minister's counsel to accept the neutral country's offer, that of Canada for instance, in remaining with policy of non-alignment. Raj's dismal and dejected rumination, when the soviet offers wins the preponderance, underscores the lurking fears of all thoughtful people. Well, that's democracy, the member of success and like development; it does not always do the right thing.

Nayantara's Sahgal's life-like representation of her character is persuasive and authentic. Her subtle artistic sensibility makes the finest feasible distinctions and enables her to take a coolly detached view of the entirety of the contemporary political scheme its inner contradictions and outer misrepresentation. Samar Singh's visit of the ill Sardhar Sahib, his advents at shah's parties to celebrates commercial or contract, his rendezvous with his father, his rendition in the Parliament on the eve of voting, on his credence of the soviet offer for oil exploration and above all, his shameless exploits are all supremely, ironical in their import. There seems to be a family likeness between Sam and Sumer Singh in their love of violence and carnal desires, as well as in their unanimous denigration of Gandhi. For example, after successfully piloting bureaucratic resolution on Government's oil policy, Sumer Singh insolently call the Gandhian ideology "Gandhian Syndrome" and reflects wistfully about the Russian revelation.

Sahgal's artistic calibrations can be seen of points and counter-points forces and counter-forces while dramatizing the growth and maturation of the individual consciousness in the

context background of the national consciousness is clearly sensitive and subtle. Raj becomes thoroughly aware of the fundamentally “Different lines of thinking” divide the describe him and Sumer Singh passionate moral perception filters through awareness of life in this novel and recognize the human being as “the heart of the crisis” in the modern world; and perceives the truth.

Sahgal with her apposite attitude towards life and its infinite feasibilities manifests an unparalleled ethical sensibility if resolving the emotional crisis of Simrit. The marriage of Raj and Simrit which thereby acquires a moral significant like that of Gora nad Sucharita in Rabindranath tagore’s Goara. Her art balances, while records the tempo of life and it is ordered and discovered by her creative institution.

In Day in Shadow , Nayantara Sahgal has transposed her own struggle and it’s experience after her divorce. Abundant of biographical material has been depicted to the fact that is in the novel she dreams what she missed in her real life. Simrit Raman, ex -wife of Som, business baron, admits various manners and faces at the party, as all residents of Delhi should. Howe ever, now she lives away from husband centred world , such as cocktail parties are absolutely unreal to her. Simrit’s friend Raj Garg, a Member of Parliament, has been admonished her to get out of the house. He counsels her to meet more people. He executes his principle faithfully i.e. “ruthless about life”. He also says that one should live it “aggressively” (D.S 2-3)

The novel’s artistic merit lies in its imagistic perception of life which is all turmoil, chaos, and disorder. It circumscribes the “deliberate disorder deliberately inflicted” in the form of divorce, a rather usual sort of brutality and violence to one’s feelings and proceeds to circle of experience around it, in order to that the entire of life may be envisaged in perfect perspective and proportion. With a view to gain a real and new perception of life, the existential experience of other character, is finally merged into one whole. Thus the personal crisis and political crisis were successfully integrated that discriminates this as a sensational and satisfying piece of fiction.

In the national context, freedom has carried the holocaust of the bifurcation of violence and ferocity in its trail. And its personal context, Simrit has carried with the violence of divorce, a lot of “emotional debris” and macrocosmic levels of consciousness it has meant a unique opportunity to choose and determine whether it is the matter of oil exploration or remarriage. Simrit ponders the new feasibility that life has held before her.

Storm in Chandigarh and The Day in Shadow have been taken together to estimate the artistic maturity and achievement of Nayantara Sahgal, more remarkably, the latter novel clearly establishes her reputability as a leading and notable Indian novelist in English whose perception of India is authentic in so far as it is projected by the highly matured sensibility of a writer, strongly rooted in the composite cultural tradition of India. Sahgal's "The Day in Shadow" is to be read as an adult novel, which covers the twin problems of restlessness and by Simrit and Raj. It is a imaginative rendering not only of the stress and tension of public life but also of the torment and ecstasy of the private lives of men and women in the modern made chauvinistic society in India, all the development since independent notwithstanding. Sahgal's fictional analysis into the cancerous growth of social hypocrisy and political dissimulation in the modern India is fortified with love and compassion. Its inspection and interpretation of the human predicament is informed of truer insight in to the human psyche.

Sahgal's works not only represents an inspiring segment of the Indian English novels but also sum up the Indian struggle for her freedom and transformations it has bought about the orthodox social set up in India. The character of the every individual has been shaped in strange and sudden ways and the disposition of the collective life as well as the competing structures of the human values and human karma. The major inheritance of the cultural change in modern India has been the new historical sense consisting in itself feeling for the past as well as consciousness of the future as both dramatize themselves in the personality of the present. Sahgal does not however stretch her theme with Mulkraj Anand in making loud of conformity to tradition in favour or some concept of social justice; on the contrary, she goes profoundly deep in sustaining springs of the composite cultural customs and tradition of India and comes up to affirm that aspect of the Indian tradition which acquires and affiance a survival value. She is thus neither an out and out conformist nor a pure blooded non conformist. She is neither too docile to the dictates of an orthodox tradition nor too much in love with revolutionary romanticism. She agrees the compound character of the Indian tradition and affirms its catholicity which permits for the human being extreme freedom. She, therefore, attains for her protagonists as identity commensurate with, or sanctified by, the cultural individuality of the Indian tradition.

Sahgal works for the complete political and social independence with or without violence, the result of conspiratorial concentration of the troops, or the outcome of political massacre, and assassinations; it is generally, a deliberate choice of the communication with one another or courage of conviction bereave expression of one's personality or self-identity or simply

“being” itself. In Sahgal’s system of values, the human being is the core of social sprits; peace, freedom and progress are mutually related concepts and resultant factor. Thus, for example, when freedom and liberty are the input in the context of the individual consciousness the output is the dialogue or communication, the individual dialogue or the discussion result, in the social context, in a sense of belonging and commitment to the well - being of one another. The development in the sense of economic growth, productivity, social development prosperity and welfare is really output of the collective commitment of countless individuals. Hence, the emphasis is on the freedom of the individual self in the novels of Nayantara Pandit Sahagal.

Sahgal may demonstrate the best of the notable women writers at work in India Today and apparently, yet she is one of the most underestimated Indian women novelists in English. With her distinguished linguistic resources and profound knowledge of public affairs in India since her childhood, fine impartial attitudes. She is likely to delineate and distinguished herself eventually as a major Indian novelist in English. Her both novels “Storm in Chandigarh” and “The Day in Shadow” have established her artistic credentials. Obviously, everybody may say increasingly confidence that the Indian novel in English characterized and portrayed unquestionably authentic fictional correlatives of the tempo of Indian life in the citadels of power in Delhi. Her perception of her works has intensely moral with a deep a respect for the possibilities of life, for, the deep rooted influence of Gandhi and Nehru shapes and structures and sustains Sahgal’s work. It is the final interpretation, this kind of affirmation of the Indian tradition that should finally promote her to the front rank of Indian writer in English.

Sahgal’s special strength is the political novel in her works .She has immense historical and tremendous political visions. Her novels include the life of diplomat politicians, ministers, beautiful wives daughters of high society. Sahgal writes only about the “felt experience”. Her themes and characters do not deal about the rural background. Her themes have urban roots. She writes usually about the characters she knows personally. The social realities are deep-rooted in her psyche and therefore she is not only a good story teller but she has her own social and political opinions. She obtains materials from political backgrounds. She is completely disturbed at the scenario of post colonial India.

During emergency most of the journalists and writers were bending at the authoritarian rule, she takes a daring stand and writes an anti establishment novel rich Like Us. She has portrayed the erosion of crisis in human values in great detail.

Sahgal perceives the phenomenon of the emergency – the corruption, forcible sterilization of ideas and crushing all the protest disturbing. She is astounded by the minister's hypocrisy, which while laying the foundation stone Happyola project talks about Vedas, India's glowing glory of its heritage and bright future assured the emergency. She says "The Mahathma had inspired him to shed his profession, the law and luxurious life, to follow a humble disciple in his foot step,...(3).

In one of her interviews she observes: when I was growing up, politics was not, 'loud and vulgar.' There was natural movement inspired by the ideal and example of Mahatma Gandhi...(4). Well acquainted of her political background she is aware that politics is concerned with the misuse of power. She follows Gandhian doctrine and fulfils the Gandhian core. "The task of Mahathma Gandhi under took was to express the poetry hidden in the individual...(5)". She has the firm opinion that India's survival depends on the spirit of Gandhi. Sahgal writes persuasively and with ardour about Independent India's turmoil and social change with a deep political insight.

"Gandhi had said, I have nothing new to teach the world. Truth and non-violence are as old as the his.'...(6). Sahgal is alarmed and frightened at the happening after India's Independent. People had refused the Gandhian ideology. They were as cruel as long before. She states about the October of 1947- two month after partition.

"Delhi in contrast was dark and brooding pock-marked with refugees, immobile with shock...(7)." Sahgal's work has a strong realistic base it also reflects the changing values of the society and personal values. They exposed both freedom and power. The struggle is not between the old and the new but between the power and dedication. She has conscious of liberal and the spirit of a non conformist. Essentially concerned with the social realities, she views freedom in all its meanings and demonstrations. Women, she finds, are compared in every sphere by conventions. It accredits her that once a character is created and grows and develops along the course of its inner claims. Value judgements are made not through direct authorial comment but through the contrasts, through the discussions and through the monologues. The subjectivity information i.e the material does not interfere and hinder with

the objectivity. Sahgal is aware that one may start with known person but as soon as one creates the characters, they develop on own.

Intertextuality and interconnectedness can be seen throughout Sahgal's work. The novels are incorporated by their background of contemporary Indian politics. She makes aware and enlightens us of the division of the world into aggressors and the non aggressors, the active and the attentive, those whose main interest is riches and power, and those who care for justice and moderation. There is awareness of women to become the equal partners in the struggle to protect and preserve those values which allow human being to live together in mutual respect.

Sahgal writes with a vivid vision in mind. She differs greatly from other women novelist. Though she is born and brought up in the aristocratic and high political background, she is distressed and disheartened at political corruption. She is not an apathetic onlooker. She protests, she is furious and outspoken in her callous criticism of the Emergency. The novelist supports for the restoration of the civil rights. For her, writing novels is a sort of purgation. In "Rich Like Us" she hits hard at the political authorities for banning the fundamental rights and clamping censorship. Her pen becomes a powerful weapon of social protest. She shows the fascist and hostile ugly face of power, conveying anger and frustration, she strikes against the political exploitation, thereby breaking its official image as a land of equal opportunity, non-violence, peace and justice. The totalitarian exploration led to emergency of new upper class on the debris of oppression.

During the emergency, the Post Independent generation has witnessed the dread erosion of human values. The innocent and faultless people were jailed on slightest pretext. People were oppressed, harassed and beaten up and even shot, Emergency is a sordid and filthy chapter in democratic India. Only a writer with a deep social and political ideology can voice their opinion so emphatically. Sahgal always believed that freedom is not gift, which is an accomplishment of every generation. She is aware of the dangers awaiting the third world countries.

It must be accepted that the political questions acquire full meaning only if they are studied in conscious with social realities. Sahgal may not be a revolutionary and anarchist in the true sense of term, but she is a committed writer. She arouses the collective consciousness of readers with the perception of politics, society, and history. She is disturbed at the plight of the marginalized common people.

Contemplating things from various angles, yet turning each theme of her works into introspection Shagal, is a very significant writer for anyone who wants vigorously and seriously to come to grip with the experience of Post Independence Indian realities.

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