



Depiction of the Disharmonious Relationship of Marriage with Reference to Nayantara Sahgal's *Storm in Chandigarh: A Study.*

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An Abstract

This paper attempts to present Nayantara Sahgal's view on marriage and the portrayal of marriage as the tool of domination in the patriarchal society. This paper comments the humiliation against a woman in the name of traditional and cultural practices. In addition to that, this paper also analyses the suffering and dilemma of woman in marriage life. This paper brings forth the disharmonious relationship in marriage with special reference to Nayantara Sahgal's *Storm in Chandigarh*. Thus, by the depiction of patriarchal society, this paper shows how a woman being subaltern till now.

Key Words: Patriarchy, marriage, subaltern, suffering, relationship, individuality, freedom.

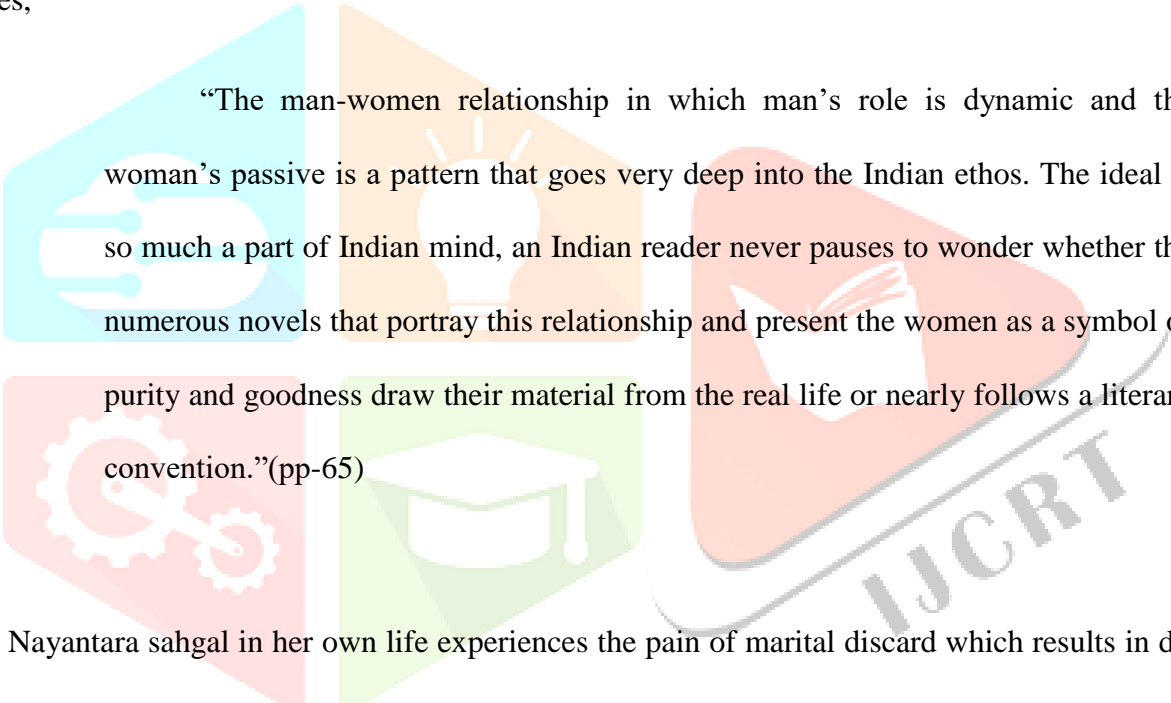
The institution of marriage is the main feature around which all other forms of human society revolve and tied up. Marriage is the most complicated among all relations in humans and it is considered as the basic unit of society. In the name of marriage many women become the scapegoat of the family and then willingly or unwillingly to be. In India, marriage is considered to be the honour of the family. When it comes to a daughter's marriage it is heavily tied up with honor of the father and the family members and it starts the patriarchal dominance inside the family. Already woman used to suffer all kind of discrimination since the day she is born, among all the institution of marriage is the highest. Kate Millet rightly said Patriarchy's chief institution is the family. It is both a mirror of and a connection with the larger society, a patriarchal unit with a patriarchal whole.

The role of an Indian woman as a wife is more significant since ages. Without a doubt, the wife is the backbone of the family. In the Indian society, religion plays a prominent role and it structured it. In different religions and religious scriptures, the role of woman as wife is more valued and her contribution is more significant from the very beginning of the human race. But the irony is all the religious norms, religious scriptures, religious manuscripts made the woman as subaltern and submissive. More importantly, even the scriptures are written by man so there is no doubt that it could contain all such patriarchal attitude in it. One can't expect the freedom of rat from the cat by cat itself. Religion is nothing but the tactic of oppressor to keep oppressing the oppressed in the name of religion. All such dominances are expressed in the novels of the Indian English woman writers. During the survey of Indian-English novels by woman writers, one observes various kinds of familial conflicts such as the conflicts between father and daughter, mother in law and daughter in law but the much focused is between husband and wife which is the foundation and base of the family from where many new relations start taking shape.

The patriarchal system, a woman struggles for freedom and individual space which is shown by many woman characters in the novels. In the novels, writers vividly show the institution of marriage, which is the delicate union of two different minds are not properly treated in the families of male-dominated Indian society. Woman is not treated as an equal partner to a man in marriage. Gremaine Greer points that, "After marriage woman's life has changed radically but not her husband".(pp-78) Every person wishes that the partner should be everything like best friend, sympathetic, affectionate, caring, etc but failure of this results in

breakdown of marriages. Various factors are responsible for familiar conflict like selection of spouse by the parents, problems related to sexual relation, incompatibility between husband and wife, unable to produce children are some of the major issues. In every family parent used to teach their children to not to talk to the strangers but the same parent asked their children to married the stranger which is the biggest irony of the Indian parents.

In an Indian marriage, one of the most pathetic conditions of every woman is that, if a man not considered responsible to make relationship work, a woman is expected to adjust herself according to the needs and demands of her husband and family to make the marriage successful. Meenakshi Mukherjee rightly observes,



“The man-women relationship in which man’s role is dynamic and the woman’s passive is a pattern that goes very deep into the Indian ethos. The ideal is so much a part of Indian mind, an Indian reader never pauses to wonder whether the numerous novels that portray this relationship and present the women as a symbol of purity and goodness draw their material from the real life or nearly follows a literary convention.”(pp-65)

Nayantara sahgal in her own life experiences the pain of marital discard which results in divorce. This experience makes her able to portray female characters trapped in a life-conflicting situation, marital tension and domestic traumas. Various types of married women are presented in the novels of sahgal. In the fictional world of sahgal, marriage often presented as an experience of conflicts, frustration, struggle, and a long period of stress in which women faces deep mental torture. Sahgal’s female characters are liberated women who rebel against the injustice and inequalities interwoven in the so called traditional texture of marital life of India. As stated by Chaman Nahal,

“In each case the attack is not against the institution of marriage but against the inequality and injustice that is forced upon women by men using the institution of marriage.”(pp-102)

Sahgal describes marriages as a 'life long suffering', if the life partner is not sensitive enough. In general, Marriage opens up a vast range of demands that is demands of motherhood and sacrifice. She had a sickening feeling of the marriage, losing her freedom and identity which is reflected in her novels. The heroines in the novels of Nayantara Sahgal prove that marriage, despite its much failure has in it seeds of starting life afresh. Saroj in *Strom in Chandigarh* refuses to be meek and sober feminine behavior like other traditional women which are portrayed in the society. She wishes to establish herself as an individual with an identity of herself for her husband Inder, to realize him that she is not merely a typical Indian wife. Her husband keeps on questioning all about her pre-marital affair with a boy. Inder wants Saroj to be a devoted and pious traditional wife but he wants to have extra-marital affair with Maya who is already a married woman.

In another Sahgal's novel *The Day in Shadow*, the women characters are seen revolting against male supremacy. The protagonist Simrit represents the plight of all Indian women who fights in their own way to get rid of unhappy marriages. When she get divorce from her husband, a woman in India faces a lot of difficulties in the society. The society looks upon her in a prejudicial manner and in particularly her morals. She has to face a lot of problems in almost all the spheres of life- moral, social and economical. In *Rich Like Us*, Shonali occupies a high and respectable position as an I.A.S. Officer, yet she finds it difficult to avoid the institution of marriage. The 'Inevitability' of marriage in our conservative society is questioned in the novel. Even if she is boss in the office, the male officials tend to disobey her orders due to their ego problem and superiority complex. This novel shows the plight of a working woman in a patriarchal society. The female protagonists of Nayantara Sahgal are the revolutionary women who exert for their freedom from all social and moral obligations. They fight against male dominance and demand their right to equality. They dare to show that they have in them the courage of rebellion and they do not accept the conventional impulse for submission.

Sahgal is aware of the victimization of women in Indian society. She has been aware of the fact that her own great grandmother was burnt as Sati. But she is conscious of the fact that modern Indian women are strong and self-respecting. On sex, she is a strong believer that it is a communion of souls and ultimately love is a mystical experience, sex has to be respected. The women in Nayantara Sahgal's novels are no

longer caged animals but rather they have come out of the cage and enjoying the freedom. The women in her novels are intense and independent. They have come out of the so-called norm which was constructed by the society for ages. Rukmini Bhaya Nair says,

“Women, conventionalized into their roles of wives, sisters and mothers have, as a result, remained trapped within a powerful cross- cultural metaphor that violently divides the genders making us all, in one way or another, victims of Lawrence’s Pansy-Syndrome.”(pp-12)

Sahgal portrays her women characters with reality those who are suffering due to sexual bias in a male-dominated society. Marriage becomes a kind of solitary confinement of the human spirit. In her novels, almost all the women characters are a revolt against the conventional security of marriage and their yearning for free communication of ideas, union of two human minds. They are also educated and aware persons. In **Women: Person or Possessions**, Nayantara Sahgal says:

“When I heard someone remark; ‘We never allow our daughter to go out’ or I can’t do that, my husband would not like it, it sounded a very peculiar, alien jargon. As if I thought, women were property, not persons.”(pp-8)

Sahgal strongly believes that woman cannot be taken as a ‘Sex Object’. To her, marriage without love and self-identity is meaningless. She attacks the century-old institution of marriage as the important occasion in a woman’s life and in that she has no social identity and dignity. According to her feminism does not mean giving up femininity but a passion for equality and fairness. Nayantara Sahgal, a courageous woman writer in Indian English, with a bold approach and rebellious intent wants the Indian women to be free from her subaltern chains. Her novels have lucid touch of feminine spirit.

Nayantara Sahgal believes that the root cause of marital discard is the failure of couple to communicate and understand each other. Saroj in *Storm in Chandigarh* is unhappy and do not find any emotional attachment with her husband Inder. The temperamental incompatibility also spoils their conjugal relationship. M. L. Malhotra states:

“Their marriage, though outwardly successful is unhappy, reeling on the rock of temperamental incompatibility and a radical diversions of marital ideas. Saroj is a highly sensitive, child-orientated, marital creature raised in a free atmosphere but yoked to an insensitive, self-centered, a western gloss. They belong to two different culture milieus.”(pp-229)

Saroj has been brought up in an atmosphere of freedom and trust. She is confused and suffered by Inder’s violent reaction to an affair she has had before her marriage. She tells him about her past in all her innocence and she wants to be truthful but this is for him the beginning of a nagging suspicion. He considers it to be a serious moral lapse with which she stained their whole relationship. He behaves like a typical reactionary Indian husband. Inder believes that,

“In an order that clearly demarcated the roles of men and women, unless that venerable order was breached, trampled and mocked. He was maddened by it. When it came over him he sat looking at Saroj with a revulsion that had ancient, tribal, male roots.”(SIC-36)

When Inder marries Saroj, she has the premarital relationship. Saroj, however, is not guilty. She is not dishonest and for her it is a part of coincidence. For herself, she is wholly involved in her marriage and accepts him as her husband but Inder is preoccupied to disturb by this one thing, which he uses to humiliate her and he has never wants to see the good things, for emotional involvements or tenderness. He has a crooked mind and his whole nature is cruel and ruthless:

“While Saroj longs to penetrate his inflexibility, Inder persists in raking up the past and withdraws into his own self, leaving her outside, isolated and unhappy beating destroy her sense of innocence. Inder’s attitude is in keeping with the rest of his character against, numbness like a bird against a window pane, trapped in a futile frenzy.”(SIC-97)

Saroj wants to be recognized as an individual and wants to build up a relationship on that whereas Inder treats her merely as a wife-possession, a commodity. Women have been used as subordinate and subaltern since ages. Women have been feeling it bitter because nobody wants to be used. Therefore marriage has become an ugly word in Sahgal’s novels. Inder feels ill at ease with her emotional needs. He is unable to understand why she cannot have a baby like other women. According to him, a wife is one half of an enterprise who is meant to take care of her husband’s home and children. Inder is unable to find any other kind of relationship with Saroj or for that matter even with Mara. Inder believes that even after a thousand years a woman will still need a master. This shows the patriarchal mindset of the husband in Indian society.

In course of time, Saroj realizes the emptiness of marriage and endurance in marriage is not a virtue in itself. She makes friendship with Vishal Dubey, who has come to settle some political problems. It is no wonder that Saroj’s parching soul takes love and affection elsewhere. She finds in Dubey, understanding and mutuality in a relationship which Inder has denied to her always. Coming under the influence of Dubey, Saroj begins to protest against Inder’s authoritarian ways and consequently she is manhandled and abused. Meanwhile, Dubey’s frequent visits to Saroj make Inder green-eyed monster in Saroj’s eye. Soon the situation becomes worse and Saroj decides to leave Inder’s home.

With the help of Dubey who awakens a new sensibility in her, Saroj finally emerges as a new woman and comes to stay in New Delhi leaving her husband behind in Chandigarh. Saroj breathes the air of freedom and she wants to be herself. On the dramatic significance of Saroj's departure to Delhi Lakshmi Sinha states as:

“Saroj leaves domesticity and timidness far behind and emerges out of her chrysalis with new found confidence. Dubey has resurrected her personality.”(pp-109)

The tradition and culture of any community are highly responsible for the status of women in that community because the behavior of woman is tightly bound up with the norms of the particular community tradition that the woman belong. For that reason, any tradition and culture in India woman are subjugated and domesticated by all means. In the name of tradition and religion, a woman has been a slave to man and society till now. They denied woman development in the form of tradition, culture and religion.

Modern India marked a significant change in the status of women. But still today, women are fighting for the crisis such as dowry, female feticide, child marriage, sex-selective abortions, neglect in education, domestic violence, sexual exploitation, molestation, rape and even murder. In the fictional world of Nayantara Sahgal, women tried to free themselves from all such suppressive conditions. In her novels, there is a very sensitive depiction of the way women suffer due to the sexist bias in the patriarchal society. To conclude, Patriarchy is a mindset which cannot be changed by the external factors and it can be change by one's own. Writers like Sahgal tried to imbibe the fact to the patriarchal society.

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