

# Clash of Tradition and Modernity and the place of Women in Indian Society in Nayantara saghal's *This Time of Morning*

K.Geetha,

M.Phil Scholar,

Department of English, Bharathiyar Arts and Science College for Women, Deviyakurichi.

## Abstract:

Indian English Literature has a long history of growth and development. To stabilize their empire the imperialists encouraged the spread of English education in India. They thought that Indians would by and large assimilate western culture, and help them to administer India without much trouble. The natives, however, adopted English language to express Indian sensibility effectively. Raja Ram Mohan Roy wrote thirty two essays originally in English on various subjects within the first three decades of the nineteenth century which are the early prose writings of Indian English Literature.

Poets like A.K. Ramanujan, Nissim Ezekiel, Jayanta Mahapatra, Arun Kolatkar, Keki N. Daruwala and Dom Moraes in India have treated their choice subjects in exalted manner. The poets have their imaginative connections with continental culture and traditions, invented poetics, experimental styles and voice concerns for social justice and diasporic subjugation, love for indigenous literary tradition, individual variations in brilliant comic and satiric poems. In contemporary Indian English poetry provincial or territorial concerns are more projected often in exotical or pictorial forms. These poets are more pre-occupied with their native lands to celebrate their culture, geography, philosophy, spirituality and values in life.

Sahgal's novels reveals that two dominant themes, political and social are almost always braided with one another. Yet as woman, who has been relentlessly fighting against injustices and oppression heaped upon women in general, she takes up the women's problems as the core to which the political issues form a backdrop, a thin veneer. Sahgal's fiction and non-fiction try to create awareness among the Indian reading public about the various restraints, injustices that suppress the Indian woman, which have restrained her into performing a passive role. She is denied an opportunity to pursue many activities on her own in an endeavour to develop an individual personality or personhood. Sahgal had to struggle through life against opposition even from the family, from her own husband, at times cruel and inhuman, and from the society. This struggle for independence, the self-awareness on the part of a woman in the Indian social milieu is the central theme of most of her novels. This traditional concept we also find in Mira, Rahmi's mother. She is a patriotic leader's devoted wife and expects the same from her daughter. When Rashmi announces her failure in marriage, Mira gets shocked. Mira is a typical Indian woman who knows of no acceptable alternative role for herself than that of wife –mother, and for her the mark of her success as a person is in her living, thriving children.

Rashmi's relationship with Neil restores her faith in the healing power of love and friendship. She broods over the existing predicament the universe looks to be emptied of sensation. She is scarcely aware of her identity and therefore she resolves to start her life a new finally dissolving her marital ties. Rashmi's observation underlines the need of marriage provided it has the right ingredients. That is man – woman relations in marriage can be made happy if the two sustain faith in each – other's integrity and uphold the value of love and harmony.

Nayantara Sahgal, through her novels, tries to focus on women's role stating that woman should not be seen in the stereotypical passive roles of a sex object in the modern society or as the one who is fit only to manage home chores and children without any self identity of her own. For the smooth functioning of family and the society at large, woman needs to be seen as man's equal and honored partner. Sahgal does not view her women characters as wage earners but mainly as wives, daughters and mothers in her all novels. It is in these roles that women are expected to experience freedom and to become aware of themselves as individuals and gain acceptance as equals. In all Sahgal's works, there is a juxtaposition of two worlds: the personal world of man – woman relationship and the impersonal world of politics. Husband –wife alienation resulting from lack of communication, extra-marital relationship, existentialistic problems and temperamental incompatibility form the major themes in her novels. Sahgal's characters suffer from the torment of broken marriages. Loneliness, suffering and frustration in marriage make women rebellious. Most of her couple seem to be happy and contented but they often experience loneliness and feel discomfort in marriage. Her parent's decision was in confrontation with her desire for self-realization. In the deep inside, Nita is having the burning desire to live life on her own terms without unnecessarily carrying the burden imposed by previous generation values and ethos. She dares to take drastic step as per the criteria of traditional society, by going along with the man of her choice, Kalyan. When inquired about her initiative from Kalyan,

Leela represents similar case just like Nita who hails from similar tradition background with not much acquaintance with freedom. These women don't know how to deal with much freedom if they suddenly come across with. In absence of clarity of thoughts, this may lead to doom as they get easily misguided. It may be inferred that such false impression of freedom is equally harmful just as the shackles of orthodox conventions. Young and vivacious Uma when can not finds any means of self-expression in her marriage, with older Arjun Mitra, she gives liberated sovereignty to her sensuousness though flaunting traditional values. This creates a labyrinth of tortured vanity a sort of abysmal gulf in their relationship. Uma lacks self-expression in her marriage to Arjun Mitra and turns towards Neil because in his company she has the feeling of freedom and the sense of release and joy in the activity of painting. Just like Rashmi, Uma also feels very comfortable and at ease in the company of Neil. Thus, Sahgal highlights the woman of new generation who look beyond marriage in her novel *This Time of Morning* with a contrast with older and younger generation. We have the couples Kailas and Mira representing older generation. Through Rashmi, Nita and Uma, Sahgal has portrayed the new generation women who require total involvement without self-effacement in marriage.

In Nayantara Sahgal , there is a very sensitive depiction of the way women suffer due to the sexiest bias in the patriarchal society which gives a subordinate position to women and always treats them as second-rate citizens. The subordination of women begins even before their marriage. When she is groomed by her parents and ironically more often by mothers who are orthodox in their thinking to grow into unattractive commodity that can have many uses for

her husband in future. All the stress is laid on making her specifically feminine and an attempt is made to curb her independent spirits. While some girls bow to this conditioning like Nita in Nayantara Sahgal's novel *This Time of Morning*. Some girls openly revolt against the kind of conditioning and take their own decisions over the issue of job and marriage. These novels uphold the feminist assertion that femininity is a cultural not biological construct.

Sahgal in her novel, *This Time of Morning* explores the place of women in Indian society before marriage. Nita is the young beautiful daughter of Dr. Narang. Though he follows western life style he brought up his daughter in the traditional form. The Narang's never send their daughter unescorted to parties. Nita's parents would not allow their daughter to smoke, to have drinks or attend club dances till she is married. When Rakesh escorts her to a ball on evening, enroute she questions these conventions. *This Time of Morning* is there a portrayal of Dalip's character and the conjugal relationship between Rashmi and Dalip. In each one of her novels, she concentrates on a woman character whose self-awareness takes place in degrees. So, one can see in her women characters both non-violent resistance and helpless acceptance, creating a conflict within.

While highlighting the power situations in family relationships and society, Nayantara Sahgal takes efforts to change the customs that are dishonourable and oppress women. Her attack on old ideas about chastity opens up a new world for women. She is a reformer who sees chastity not as a public virtue but solely as a private one. Men and women are urged to follow honesty and truth dictated by their own conscience. So, in Nayantara Sahgal's novels there is no undervaluing or minimizing of the male identity to maximize the female identity. If the power in both man and woman is nurtured and monitored in the light of both the traditional and the new values, humanity will be saved from damnation.

Nayantara Sahgal's novels can be understood and appreciated only with sufficient knowledge about her life and experiences that have gone into the making of the novelist. Nayantara Sahgal has presented women who suffered due to the sexist bias in the patriarchal society which gives a subordinate position to women and also treats them as second-rate people. Sahgal envisions a world which is based on equality, sharing the functions, the virtues of women are equally valued with those of men.

### Work cited

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Newyork and London: Routeldge, 1999. 17. Print.

De Beauvoir, Simon. *The Second Sex*, Trans. and Ed. H.M. Parshley, Newyork: Vintage Books, 1974. 165, 500, 504. Print.

Jain, Jasbir. "The Aesthetics of Morality: Sexual Relations in the Novels of Nayantara Sahgal." *The Journal of Indian Writing in English* 6.1 (1978): 42. Web. 5 Jan 2017. Print

Narendra. M. "The Theme of Freedom in the Novels of Nayantara Sahgal." *Indian Women Writers Critical Perspectives*. Ed. Jaydipsinh K. Dodiya and K.V. Surendran. New Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 2000. 83-97. Print.

Ramya. C. Dr. “Nayanatara Sahgal as Champion of the Indian Woman’s Quest for Identity: A Note.” *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews* 3.1 (2016): 20. Web. 3 Feb 2017. Print

Sahgal, Nayanatara. *This Time of Morning*, India: Harper Collins Publishers, 2014, Print.

Sahgal Nayanatara. *Prison and Chocolate Cake*, Bombay: Jaico Publishers, 1964. 84. Print.

Selvanayaki. M. “The Plight of Women Before Marriage in Nayanatara Sahgal’s *This Time of Morning*.” *Language in India* 14.10 (2014): 272, 274-276. Web. 15 Feb 2017. Print

