Feminism and Identity in Nayantara Sahgal's "The Day in Shadow"

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ABSTRACT

Nayantara Sahgal is a great Indian novelist in English. She was young and a proficient writer of the post-Independence year. She started writing at an early age. Her books are generally related to people, particularly women under tension close to enslavement and foul play stored upon them for the sake of custom and culture. Nayantara Sahgal stresses the need to revitalize the Indian social, ethical and religious conventions and attitudes towards nuptials in her novel "The Day in Shadow". Women longs for the care of male throughout her life. With the advancement in time, Indian women began to show some signs of awakening. Women need to remain within society constructed boundaries and also woman shows bravery to cross those boundaries she gets the mark of shameless and unwomanly. The traditional approach of our culture demands the submission of a wife to the unquestionable authority of her husband. Indian women novelists tried to explore female subjectivity to set up a distinctiveness that is not forced by a patriarchal society. Women have to tolerate all kinds of humiliations in finding their role in the family as well as society. She cannot always be under the control of men in every situation. Women are also subordinate to gender discrimination.

KEY WORDS: POST-INDEPENDENCE, CONVENTIONS, AWAKENING, HUMILIATION, DISCRIMINATION.

INTRODUCTION

In this male-centric society, women are always dominated throughout the world for centuries. All the religious books from all the religion namely The Bible, The Bagawath Gita, The Quran and Manusmriti accepts the role of women who lives in the "confines of the household". It is written in all the religious books that Women must be honoured and adorned and where women are sacred there the gods rejoice. . According to this era, awareness of education, science and with the help of social institutions, a modern woman cried for freedom from the orthodox tradition. In most countries, Men have taken responsibility for women's economy, liberty and social security. In India woman play the role of 'abla nari' but now they are equal to man in every aspect. It is all about the plight of different class traditional Hindu women attentive in

repressive institutions such as dowry, child marriage, and prohibitions on women's education, arranged marriages, sati and enforced widowhood.

Unlike the west women's movement in our country is combined with the theory and the feminist praxis, as Indian feminism is evolved out of the women's movements for social, economic and political rights. Gender discrimination in the patriarchal system prefers much importance to men. Besides, the system of class and caste has made the situation of women much complicated in Indian society. As Anupama Choudhary has rightly observed, "feminism has emerged in our country not as a theory but from the real problems faced by women".(34) Jasbir Jain identifies: the second phase was an activist phase around the 60s and 70s – for opposing social oppression and to seek justice. Protest on dowry, deaths, abolition of sati, demand for education and job etc were the major issues of women in her day to day life.

Feminist Perspective: Nayantara Sahgal is a great Indian novelist in English. She was young and a proficient writer of the post-Independence year. She started writing at an early age. Her books are generally related to people, particularly women under tension close to enslavement and foul play stored upon them for the sake of custom

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and culture. A large number of women participated in the freedom struggle in response to the call of Gandhi, who had realized the women power for the success of the non-violent movement. The Day in Shadow reveals an insightful story of a woman who suffers in Indian society. Simrit, the heroine of the novel was a writer and completed one of her credit. She was planning to write another and in the meantime, she works as a freelance writer.

Simrit was a middle-aged woman and a mother of four children. She divorced Som at the beginning of the novel. The “consent terms” of divorce, drawn up by Som and signed by an immature Simrit, had completely destitute her and call for a greatly reduced standard of living for her and her children. She adjusted her life in a small flat without a phone and other comforts in which her children had made themselves accustomed to it. Simrit was suffered everyday difficulties in establishing a home in an urban country. While talking to Som’s lawyer she sees her life has no different from her present one: “Maybe she had always been an animal, only a nice obedient domestic one, sitting on a cushion, doing as she was told. And in return she had been fed and shelter”. (57)

Simrit had experienced a suffocating situation with her husband Som. This made her get a divorce from him to stay free but still, she didn’t get real freedom rather she was under the cruel situation to exist as a divorcee in society. A separated woman was stigmatized for and she was watched oddly by others as if divorce were: “A disease that left pockmarks” The miserable state of women in society is clearly shown as she leads the separated life. She was not worthy of respect also she has to face the humiliation of society. Simrit appears to stand alone and separate in a social atmosphere. Against the will of her Brahmin parents, her marriage to a businessman was unsuccessful. The character of Som, her husband whose sole intention was to earn money, glory and power- by hook or by crook. Som was a selfish person who gives much importance to wealth and authority rather than human thoughts. His craze for wealth and possession becomes the cause of his division from his wife. Simrit feels.

“Money had been part of the texture of her relationship with Som, an emotional, forceful ingredient of it, intimately tied to his self-esteem. Money was, after all a form of pride, even of violence”. (38) Women have a single cause to fight for the freedom of the nation rather than their grievances. Hence, women’s cause was merged with the nation’s cause. But after independence once again women remained backstage and men occupied places in the political and social field and reaped the benefits of freedom. Women had to be content with the status of citizenship rights including voting power given by the constitution. Hence, the feminist wave of western feminism and Indian feminism remained hidden.

The two decades have witnessed unique achievement in feminist writings of Indian English literature. Novelists

of the present scenario attempt to project woman as the essential stature and appear to be successful in presenting the plight of woman most efficiently burning. Issues associated with women as well as those that have existed in society for a long. The modern English novels portray a different dimension of women’s image in the home and society was given by the women writers. The novels of Indian English women writers consists of the latest preoccupied with the inner life and individual problems of men and women.

Simrit always desired a proper life partnership in their matrimonial life but Som does not render adequate cooperation and understanding. This was the reason why Simrit rebels and decides to walk out of a marriage that was seventeen years old. It was difficult to begin a new life with the memories of the shared years and the lives of the children. Women writing are changing its trends in recent times and the changing faces of women’s images are represented in the literary works of Shashi Deshpande, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Arundhati Roy, Shobha De and others. The postcolonial feminist theory is also contributing the same opinion about the heterogeneity of Indian feminism as well as its difference from western feminism due to the difference in class, race, social and cultural status of women in India. It objects to the western feminist’ representation of colored women, claiming universality of women’s problem all over the world. Feminism is the primary theme of Sahgal’s novels. Nayantara is a writer of feministic perspective. Her heroines are differing from other women.

Identity of Women: Indian English Literature has witnessed great success in feminist writings. Women writers have been exploring burning issues related to women in society for a long. No one can better understand a man and a woman than a feminist writer. Nayantara Sahgal being a feminist writer has emphasized freedom and a new definition of the new women. In the post-feminist phase, around the late 80s and 90s, the development of technology and better educational facilities has brought positive changes in women’s lives.

Women are in quest for identity as they face a lot of problem inside the family and also in their personal life. The subject of the self-identity of women in modern society was the major theme of this paper. A Study has been made to explore a woman’s plight at two levels – as a spinster and post-divorce period with a shattering query: It’s a painful act in which women suffer extreme in divorce, she loses her identity and precedes her life with struggles to satisfy the needs of her family. She even has to take care of her children too. Sahgal highlights a female’s affliction in marriage - life and afterwards choosing to emerge from the oppressive subjugation.

Nayantara Sahgal outlines with sharp perception and affectability the difficulty and misery of wedded ladies, who feel entangled, and abused being taken care of by kids, spouse, and home, and extended the response to it

in her books. Not many of the women characters in her books acknowledge their destiny without even batting an eye. Be that as it may, the majority of them relax for an opportunity, and gradually lament the conventional relations for division or for separation to carry on with significant life. Sahgal perceives lady power yet regrets that Indian culture has still not acknowledged this thought. My point in this paper is to draw out the feministic viewpoint and quest for the individuality of the women characters in the novel "The Day In Shadow".

Nayantara Sahgal's *The Day in Shadow* portrays the sorrowful experience of a separated middle-aged woman, Simrit. Her marriage with Som, a businessman, turns out to be a tragedy. In this novel, Sahgal fictionalizes her own experience after divorce through the character Simrit. The question often arouses why always women have to suffer in their marital life, whereas men are also equally responsible for all the problems of family life. A woman accustoms herself to all the tribulations for the sake of children's betterment, but men live in the comfort zone without taking any responsibilities. Money-making is the ultimate goal of most men who forget to fulfil the basic requirements of their wife. Som in *The Day in Shadow* fails to satisfy Simrit's intellectual and emotional needs to maintain the status of "happily" married women. Simrit longs for her husband's emotions of love, sympathy, understanding and friendship. Som concentrates only on his business motto. "Be tough. Be winner". (TDS69) Som would not speak about any issues related to industry with his wife, or in her presence.

The concept of a woman as submissive to men and considered as a man is superior to women in every aspect of our Indian tradition. According to our Indian culture, a woman is Paraya Dhan of her parents who are the custodians until she gets married. Then her husband is the owner of the entire life both personal and all her possession. Sahgal strongly criticises that woman is an object to be used whenever required by the male. At the same time, she sacrifices her time and health for the sake of her family, though never been recognised by their superiors. This results in much misery and victimization. Women need a humane and compassionate approach to married life with love, care, involvement, honesty equality and liberated communication.

Among many women writers, Nayantara Sahgal has acquired a separate space for her meticulous interest in emotional insight and existential concerns. Women are suffering but they sustain their identity and self-respect. The protagonist of Sahgal's novels is of high class, educated, sensible women. Her women were new women whose lives were not diseased by problems of dowry or poverty. It has been observed many women were facing the problem of identity. At present most women are in search of self-identity. They need an individual reorganization in their married life as well as in society. No more women were slaves to their husband. They equally stand with men in business, education, culture and society.

Thus, a woman has several roles to play in her life; a woman is a mother to her children, wife to her husband, and a daughter to her parents also a housewife to her family and above all, she is a woman. Women have stepped into politics where they can control the whole nation. No longer Women are the sufferers of a male-dominated society. The identity of women is essential for the growth in personal life as well as in the patriarchal society. Despite so many hurdles the women community needs self-identification in the family after toiling herself in various situation. Simrit's self-confidence and to make a mark in society she opts for the brutal settlement of divorce with Som. Women want to have their own identity in society by taking up all the responsibilities of her life.

Simrit's character is an example to all the womanhood to choose the right match with whom she can share all her feelings and frustrations also she gets comfort and security for the future days. Simrit met Raj a real friend who understands her feeling and emotions and later becomes her husband. Raj becomes a supporter and brings Simrit to reality in the world. Simrit feels happy to have Raj as her husband as she is properly treated and in the way she deserves. The behaviour of Raj makes Simrit feel that she is treated equally on par with men. Simrit finds true love and affection and they both continue the relationship happily. "Men like him were born to lead and educate, sometimes to triumph just when it seemed fortunes could go no lower. Raj would be all right" (TDS 236)

Every woman has different shades of life in this materialistic world right from birth to death. She has to depend on the male counterpart in every stage of her life. She has not been allowed to make her own identity nor in family neither in society for her survival. Women always aware of their materialistic desires and struggle for self-satisfaction avoiding the present traditions and societal setup. They are broadminded and need an unconventional style of living in society. Sahgal's women are subjugated as they depend upon men. Women have to experience the stressful situation and try to overcome this bitterness through their willpower and confidence to the utmost. She struggles to come out of the bondage and wants to survive on her own feet. Most of the women protagonists of Sahgal's are from a different society but facing similar problems.

Som in *The Day in Shadow* by Sahgal shows his significant other as an "individual belonging". He regularly ventures to his companions: "Look what I have, adequately good to hold under lock and key." (19). Som regards his significant other as an invaluable article for his pleasure. He likewise imagines that his duty is over by embellishing his significant other with gems and costly things to fabricate a wonderful family. Over a long time from now, a lady needs a man who will claim and order her. Simrit the primary hero in "The Day in Shadow" after confined by her significant other and being a divorced person, put forth an attempt to raise their kids. Som, the

dad of Brij, entices him with costly products and vows to send him to another country as well.

He embraces the male youngster in his authority and prohibits the little girls for his irritated spouse to care for. Simrit is now battling under the monetary weight of a fierce separation repayment. The destiny of ladies is hopeless even after the subjugation of marriage; a kid turns into servitude. Sahgal's females are instructed to remain passive, repressed, quiet, and enduring, however, like Rose, Simrit, they give indications of enlivening. The "womanliness" is constrained upon her ladies' characters.

The novel tosses a keen record of the sufferings of a lady in Indian culture when she selects to break down a seventeen-year-old marriage. Simrit was struggling to find her individuality and identity in the material life of Som. According to Sahgal, there is nothing wrong if women are in search of camaraderie outside marriage bonds to fill the void in communication. Simrit wants to have a meaningful relationship and stability in her married life. Women are still considering as docile by evil people. Men always expect women should live under their control. In India, women need excess courage and determination to break the marriage bond. At present most of the women had to undergo all the tribulations in their married life still they are leading a happy life. They want to be independent, self-confident and bold enough to withstand the male-dominated society. A woman needs her own space to lead her life in her way. They mark identity and shown with the individual's name in society.

Most of the women character in Sahgal's novels ponder over the question "Who am I"? For which they struggle to find an answer. Husbands are the sheltering tree for their wife to provide her needs and necessities, if he fails to provide it will lead a woman to seek self-identity. Wollstonecraft and Margaret fuller contend that ladies are free levelheaded specialists fit for guiding themselves in their lives. They regard the customary capacity of a lady as a spouse and mother. However, this work should not be drudgery, involving the entire of life, but should be just a piece of life, so a lady is more than spouse and mother and is recognized and respected as being of equivalent worth with her husband. Equality in a family is communicated through the husband, being a supplier and wife as a maid.

CONCLUSION

Nayantara Sahgal witnessed the post-colonial views of women in her works. She tries to find a new way for women's liberation. The discrimination of women will be eradicated with the theme of feminism, which was started by Sahgal. The portrayal of women's suffering and she looks at her problem from a women's perspective

also highlighted in her novels. Aristotle says: "Women is to man as the slave to the master, the manual to the mental worker, the barbarian to the Greek. Woman is an unfinished man, left standing on a lower step in the scale of development".

Of all the writers Nayantara Sahgal is unique when she talks about feminism. As a politically conscious writer, she has a lot of questions to deal with the agony and pain of women in her novels. And her novels are with great intensity that the faces in her married life. The objective of different groups of feminist is to set free women from male oppression and to support women's rights. In today's scenario, the status of women is changing increasingly and they are struggling to take part in the affairs of the world. It is still a world that belongs to man. Nayantara Sahgal's women characters are prominent for both strength and weakness. In India, many successful women have reached the highest position and never bother about the ill-treatment of their husband. Women should be treated equally with men in all respects.

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