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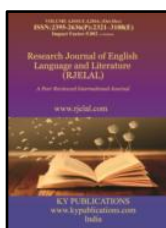
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## ART OF STORYTELLING TECHNIQUES IN THE FICTION OF NAYANTARA SAHGAL

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### ABSTRACT

In this paper we present a narrative approach to novels of Nayantara Sahgal. The narration of Nayantara Sahgal indicate unequal relationships of power; the expose artifice of the natural man oeuvre of power and space. In their capacity a completed texts, the narratives are capable of revealing the gaps in ideology in the process of enacting. As literary representations of Sahgal's story telling is thus the parody of her ideology. The ideological fields that reflect the 'real' and yet are not real on account of their own status as friction.

**Key Words:** Narration, Ideology, feminism, politics, agony, feelings, bitterness etc

The narratives get caught up in the ideology by continuing to tell tales of female characters returning to once rejected roles. Regardless narrative indicate unequal relationships of power; the expose artifice of the natural man oeuvre of power and space. In their capacity a completed texts, the narratives are capable of revealing the gaps in ideology in the process of enacting. As literary representations of Sahgal's narratives is thus the parody ideology. The ideological fields that reflect the 'real' and yet are not real on account of their own status as friction.

The female protagonists in the novels *Storm in Chandigarh* and *A Situation in New Delhi* experience conflict, frustration, alienation and bitterness in their holy marriage. The female characters in *Storm in Chandigarh* wriggle out of the strait-jacket of virtuous stereotypes and emerge as individuals. This is brought out clearly in the portrayal of far from ideal marriages of three young couples-Vishal and Leela, Inder and Saroj and Jit and Mara.

The theme of the novel is violence, not necessarily an obvious physical violence, but an invisible and the more subtle form of violence. Saroj's pre-marital relationship becomes the cause of failure of their marriage. Inder is the husband of

Saroj who obsessed and could not forgive this act of Saroj and constantly exploits her sense of innocence. Saroj has become a victim of the male tyranny. Saroj's quest for communication and sharing naturally leads her towards Vishal, whom she finds more understanding and considerate. Vishal who is the husband of Leela wants to build a true relationship with her. But he felt a great deal of unhappiness because she had always lived a life of pretence and hypocrisy with Vishal. She realized the torture of living together intimately yet remained strangers to each other. In the same novel, another couple is Jit and Mara who also suffer from a similar dilemma. They are a childless couple who suffer from emotional void in their life. Her marriage with sweet-tempered and considerate Jit has its share of estrangements and misgivings, but Mara's problem is not physical but psychological. The search for communication makes Mara come towards Inder. In her relationship with Inder, Mara stimulates his mind and involves him in ways no woman ever has. Mara is capable of responding to Inder's needs which highlights her inability to respond to Jit's much simpler needs. Mara's lack of interest makes Jit feel that all his affection and care are wasted. Sahgal is deeply concerned with unhappy marriages

and the loneliness of living. The novel portrays similarities and contrasts of various characters. Women characters in this novel do not like to remain confined within the four walls of their house. Through the portrayal of Leela, Gauri, Saroj and Mara, the author holds a mirror to the society that subjects its women to worst type of inhuman exploitation.

Sahgal's leanings towards feminism are revealed in the novel *A Situation in New Delhi*. The fact comes to light when one studies the unjustifiable ill-treatment a large number of her women characters in this novel have to undergo in the society and tries to know why they are driven to committing suicide or to seeking divorce, or to undergoing nuisances when it becomes inevitable. Devi is the younger sister Shivraj. Devi's marriage with Ishwar had been a passing interlude of happiness. However, this was a short-lived episode in her life and Ishwar dies, leaving behind his wife and a son named Rishad. After Ishwar's death, she feels no desire to remarry. The character of Devi perhaps stands as the weakest heroine portrayed by Sahgal. There is no convincing emotional catharsis to rise to the heights of pure tragedy in Devi. A performing puppet, she remains without individuality or sensibility, a caricature of a career politician of the modern era and it is a sad end indeed for Shivraj's sister.

The other woman character who is driven to commit suicide is Madhu in the novel *A Situation in New Delhi*. The society that Nayantara creates in *A Situation in New Delhi* is one which fails to protect women even on the University campus in the capital city of the country as here Madhu, a student of Delhi University, is raped in the Register's office. The boys who raped Madhu obviously regard Madhu only as an object of lust to be used at their disposal and have no regard for her feelings, will and self-respect. A society which produces such men and cannot punish them does not deserve to have women in it. Lydia and Nell, two ladies who become Michael's wives successively in *A Situation in New Delhi* have to seek divorce because they find their husband's behavior to be intolerable. Another woman character in the novel that has too undergone torments because she finds her husband

incorrigible is Nadira, the wife of Usman Ali. Nadira feels herself to have been wronged by her husband, as she has come to know that he is in love with Devi.

In the novel *A Situation in New Delhi*, Sahgal has portrayed her male characters mostly as narrow-minded, ruthless, careless husbands and their life is emptiness and boredom. However, some of her male characters equally suffer in a wrong marriage, due to loneliness or lack of communication.

Sahgal has first-hand knowledge of politics and political figures in India. In the backdrop of her political and feminist concerns there also underlie the writer's personal feeling of bitterness and agony. In fact, all writers in some measures or the other sound autobiographical in their works. Nayantara Sahgal is no exception in this regard. She appears rather more personally anecdotal in her fictional writings. One can see very close links between her life events and the narrative structure of her fiction. However, despite the autobiographical learning's, Sahgal's fiction in overall effect emerges as a fine work of artistic vision and creative imagination. She as a novelist is capable of transcending her personal experiences and sensibilities into literary realities. While writing novel she takes care to ensure that her personal experiences and feelings do not over dominate her artistic vision and narrative craft. In support of autobiographical elements in the novel of Sahgal, Usha John has pointed out in one of her articles:

"Everything around the writer is material for a novel... All one's material comes from real life... One generally draws on one's own experience or someone else's experience"

Notwithstanding the above, one can clearly see that Sahgal's early novels are marked with intensity of her personal feelings and bitterness when compared to her later works in which she focuses more on historical revolution of political and social happenings and autobiographical elements remain only hidden agenda.

Most of Sahgal's fiction highlights India's present through its historical past and therefore, any attempt at critical appraisal of Sahgal's ideology requires a historical sense and understanding. Being

a student of history herself Sahgal shows keen interest in chronicling India's past and relevant facts of world history. In one of her essays she remarks:

"Yet though I use a political background or events since these happen to be the outer focal points that trigger my imagination and also because I think we gain or lose significance in our relationship to events, I prefer to think of my fiction as having a sense of history"

Most of her fiction has a background to the history of Indian freedom movement, which she uses very skillfully to expose the decay of moral values in existing politics. At implicit level, Indian freedom can also be interpreted in terms of the need for women's emancipation or autonomy, to liberate her from her 'colonized status', forced on her by the man-dominated world. At several places Sahgal's text implies that in India woman is treated like man's oldest colony, exploited, ill-treated and short changed. In the backdrop of her historical narrative details she reveals the spirit of the 20<sup>th</sup> century decrying Indian social customs and traditions, which deny freedom to women. Sahgal's fiction is also not without religious leanings. Sahgal's ideas about religion are akin to the concepts generally known as 'morality' and 'Brahmanism'. In her novels she exposes hypocrisy and futility of Hindu religion. She points out that true religion should be free from myths, dogmas, and hypothesis. According to Sahgal, religious rituals and customs that are devoid of concerns for the well being of humanity at a large is a façade and therefore, need to be discouraged. She points out that true religion always aims at the promotion of positive growth and humanistic values. While talking about Sahgal's humanistic approach Jasbir Jain states:

"Her works are marked with vision which shows a genuine concern for human values and human beings"

Shyam Aswani also expresses the similar view when he remarks in one of his articles:

"The humanistic Nayantara champion for the new values to blast her way through the jungle of superstitions, pretence and seeing face of politeness"

It has been observed that Sahgal's views on religions for example Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity, are related to the questions of truth and human conduct. Her religious ideology is marked with humanistic and social elements. In specific terms, these humanistic elements become more visible in the context of status of woman in the Indian society. Sahgal's works have psychology interpretations too. Psychological analyses of her textual accounts, in most cases, have their basis in Freudian psychology of human behavior. Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), the famous Austrian psychologist once wrote:

"the great question that has never been answered and which I have not yet able to despite my 30 years of research in the feminine soul is 'what does a woman want' Put this question to any young woman or feminist and she will snap back 'just to be treated like a human being nothing more, nothing less"

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