

## **Feminist Movement in the Novels of Nayantara Sahgal with Special Reference to Social and Political Concerns**

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### **ABSTRACT**

One of the great Indian novelists in English is Nayantara Sahgal. In the novels of Nayantara Sahgal, the renowned Indian English writer, the main emphasis is on the plight and problems of educated women, often from an urban background. In several of the characters in her novels, Nayantara depicts the full right of equality for women. She talks about the problem of a new woman from India. Nayantara Sahgal is a descendant of the belief in which force itself is deified as the 'sakthi' goddess, a female symbol. Government officials, business tycoons, foreign advisers, upper class citizens, journalists and highly skilled individuals such as ambassadors and ministers populate her fictional universe. A political theme is also coupled with the theme of the relationship between man and woman, their marital issues, their volatile incompatibility, the problems that emerge from their tameness, and eventually a woman's place in society. An attempt has been made in this paper to discuss the theme of suffering in the post-independence period and maladjustment in the social setup of an English lady. Sahgal also portrays how, despite many barriers, women rise in power and how women make many sacrifices and compromises, and how tolerantly they bravely face the challenges of life.

### **Keywords**

Feminist; Male-dominated; Inheritance; Political; Frustrated

### **Introduction**

The correlation between society and art is the basis for sociological approach in literature. The common notion is that society and art are somehow related. This relationship is not only superficial, but also a deeply grounded relation which is aesthetically satisfying. The sociological critics proclaim that art cannot be created in a vacuum. It is not a work by one individual, on the other hand it is a work by a person who is fixed in a particular space and time. His writings would certainly articulate his community.

### **Literature Review**

Margaret Walters, *Feminism: A very short Introduction*: This manuscript has a sequential portrayal of womanize that observes at the sources of feminist and the precise of female that facilitates in sympathetic of contiguous of women's movement.

## **Materials and Methods**

### **Social and Political Aspects**

The sociological critic is basically interested in the social milieu and to which extent the artist responds to it. To associate art and social values is almost too natural, and it is also perhaps intrinsic, and it the realistic movement. Wilbur Scott even comments that critics have substituted social and political theory for the term “society”. So even in this dissertation society will be interchangeably used with social and political analyses. The new India right after the independence was socially and politically unstable, and writers like Nayantara Sahgal explored this instability using their fiction. The two novels under consideration can be analyzed with the two social and political aspects.

### **Great National Experience**

It can observe in other countries that a great national experience will always be a grand reservoir for literary material. It will also be beyond mere political reality. For instance the French revolution and the Russian Revolution have had a strong social concern. Great changes were brought forth because of these revolutions, and this can also be compared to our own National revolution. However it must be noted, that unlike France and Russia the Indian revolution was not a violent one. And secondly, with the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, it becomes a collective expression of desire for a political change. And under Gandhi, the political movement became a means of social change.

### **Independence Movement**

It also sought to create a kind of society in which there would be equality, justice and moral values. It cannot be denied that Mahatma Gandhi was concerned with getting rid of many social evils of his days. The way and thoughts of Gandhi didn't resonate in a familiar frequency with people. The implication of his ideology changed from people to people. The views of different parties often came to conflicts. The people who matured during these eventful decades felt the pull of different ideologies. They sometimes shifted their ideologies or loyalties. Those were the times of strong activities. The synchronous happenings of a collection befuddled the essential issues. An author managing these volcanic years needed to act disciplined to dispose of such extreme outcome. The Indian novels written in the first half of this century deal largely with the independence movement. There are scores of Indian novels which deal with the actions, beliefs and experiences of people who actively participated in this movement.

### **Gandhian Values**

A few of them made sincere and honest attempt to record this period of Indian history. The novels of Nayantara Sahgal discuss the political and national issues. She was influenced by Gandhian values between the years 1920 to 1950. This Gandhian values changed Saghals approach to politics and society. It not only changed her approach to politics, it also changed her personal life.

Gandhian values in fact are based on reliance, tradition, and also consideration of moral values. Gandhian values are based on non-violence. It is a matter of resistance. Saghals understood how nonviolence can turn out to be a powerful force in achieving freedom. In her novel, This Time of

Morning, the protagonist Kailash Vrind is an exponent of Gandhian values, and he is the cause of Gandhian revolution in the novel.

### **Relationship with the Oppression and the Oppressed**

In the novel the protagonist begins to stand against injustice. It tries to change the relationship with the oppression and the oppressed. The Gandhian thought evolved when Mahatama was thrown out of the First Class in South Africa. He understood using violence it was impossible to fight for freedom. Non violence on the other hand was unobtrusive and it completely changed the outlook.

This political weapon of non violence was not only used against the British, but it became a way of life for Gandhi. This concept of non violence was beyond the concept of refraining from injury in a religious sense. The active force by which Gandhi moved this moment not only helped India get independence, but it also united the nation that no power of arms could defeat.

### **Character of Gandhi**

Non-violence had not its base on material resources but on personal strength of individuals on those who were influenced by the personal character of Gandhi. These people were identified as the ordinary people of the country. The author thinks that many people were influenced because of the Gandhian way of thought. It is also a fact that Gandhi never thought that nation consisted of persons. He started his movement with the cleaning of latrines. It was an act of infinite compassion.

That had the effect of dynamite on rock setting the nation's social conscience ablaze against untouchability. Now that some points related to Gandhian philosophy is discussed, it is time to analyze the novels under consideration in detail. The remarkably sagacious novel, *This Time of Morning* (2000), with a background of the beginning years of post-independence, shows its subjects who are zealously anticipating their promising future.

### **New Generation**

This generation is living in freedom unlike their forefathers, and it also a complex generation as the new generation is living along with old veterans who fought for the freedom of the country. The protagonist Kalyan Singh is a person who seems to have rejected both the British rule as well as the nationalist rule. He had rejected it consciously and critically.

There are also other people, namely characters like Somnath and Harimohan who are ardent followers of the Gandhian philosophy. They adhere to the values only by the name, but not by the spirit. Nayantara Sahgal has mixed different people with different views in most of her novels. Their political views are certainly different from each other. This exhibits the chaotic condition of their biased life.

Except ultimately, all these points reach to the underlying query of the effectiveness and genuineness of violence and non-violence. It is also a ethical interrogation that asks if earthly and tangible concerns are to be valued more than human values. Kalyan Sinha doesn't believe in the

passivity of sitting in the jail as a penance for wrong doings. He doesn't agree with the prison terms.

### **Gandhian Policies**

He is unable to submit to either the British Raj of the newly formed government. In fact he goes into a voluntary exile as doesn't assent with the policies of Gandhi and even after the liberation of the country; he is censorious of the Gandhian outlook. His assumption is that Indian citizens are still underdeveloped and the only reason for such state is Gandhi. The people are influenced and overshadowed by the past and they are beaten in the contest of development.

Kalyan strongly believed that Gandhi has weakened the country. Kalyan Sinha is impatient for progress, and he is also intolerant of suffering. But the reality is that he fails to understand the there are other values that are important more than progress. If this be the case, it can be assumed that Kalyan is not interested in important-personal freedom. In Kalyan's systems such values don't exist.

### **Role of Non-violence**

Non-violence was a positive attitude and required constant striving towards courage and dedication. The novelist herself did not accept that peacefulness had been powerful in the government during the time of independence, even though she withstood the struggles of independent and post-independent India, especially the separation and repercussion. Its particular failure during an important point in history not only revealed its inadequacy but the flaw of mortal.

She felt with the intention of the progress of human life was slow, and this being the case, it would be impossible for a message like love and peace to have a great impact suddenly. Force, she believed if used indiscriminately, was capable of distorting both the beauty and the wisdom of life. The independent India suddenly began to face some problems arising out of its peculiar background.

### **New Administrative System**

The new administrative system still worked like the colonial way, and India was imbibed with the burden by an alien system of values and education. And there was also the refugee problem. This was the time of trial. There were many who considered it difficult unless the official policies were changed and non-violence abandoned as a political method.

### **Religious Crusade**

One can consider the view of Somnath in the novel *This Time of Morning*. According to him, initiating a freedom combat is totally different from administering a government and the congress party should put in their tedious efforts to enhance themselves as any other successful political parties. But Kailas believes that any transformation that engages the deterioration of righteous principles would be a great downfall and self-defeat. Kailas in the novel believes in the capacity of the people and their quality. He believes they will surely build the nation in the right manner.

### **Violence and Non-violence**

The retreat has penetrated into the personal world. It is a confrontation between Gyan and Harpal, and also between Saroj and her husband Inder. Ultimately it is a question about violence and non-violence. It is also about taking or not taking a stand. It is a question of the victim to bow down before the oppressor or to claim its right for survival.

Gyan, the character in the novel has not wasted his energy and time on emotions. He was also known to be heartless and mean while handling any circumstance and as far as he is concerned, at any condition, always a negotiation exists to be closed. Harpal is concerned with human beings and human values.

### **Injustice and Tyranny**

Following these people Inder is a person who doesn't seem to have patience with emotional bylanes whereas Vishal believes that decent human relations can be built. Gyan Singh and Inder are men of a kind who feel secure to disdain other human beings. These people somehow gain an audience and followers.

This helps them get a public sympathy. Harpal who takes a long term view of the political situation is unable to draw the requisite amount of support just as Vishal. When he sends Saroj to Delhi he finds himself socially in the wrong. The message the novelist wishes to impress upon is the courage involved in taking a stand against injustice and tyranny.

### **Spirit of Dedication**

Moral values are threatened when selfish and corrupt leaders emerge. It seems it is a counter philosophy that combines ruthless and violent attitude with a spirit of dedication. Kailas in *This Time of Morning* is also aware of the attraction communism can have for many people. And many millions have been victimized for ages.

Kailas realizes: "Had he taken to himself the ecstasy of the mystic, the rapture of the poet, the crusading ardour of the zealot and transferred them into the stuff of battle" (TTM 127). In the same novel, it is Vishal Dubey who is sensitive to the entire political and social world around him. The passing away of the older generation of politicians is also the passing away of an era of Gandhian ideals and goals.

### **Spirit of Mahatma**

The novelist also feels that the spirit of Mahatma if it exists at all certainly doesn't exist in India. She also wonders if unity and secularism can ever be reality here. A handful of men cannot make it a reality. The reasons for the distancing from Gandhian ideas are countless. Important of them is the hold of orthodox religion which has actually overpowered secularism. Similarly, in the novel *Storm in Chandigarh* the Chief Minister Gyan Singh of the divided Chandigarh is similar to Kalyan Sinha. He is a man who is concerned with results, and not the methods. Kalyan as orphan was brought up by his uncle Dhan Singh, and he was a man of rough morals. And later in life, a missionary named John Meadows helped him to land a job in a factory.

However, his efforts to instill a sense of conscience in Gyan had failed miserably. Gyan Singh had learnt to value only honour. Harpal and Gyan have been political colleagues, and they have also been rivals. And now that they are chief ministers of neighboring states they disagree on fundamentals. Harpal is concerned with the long time building of the nation, Gyan's main stress is on the progress and power. Gyan Singh who has also been on the charge of Harpal's first election campaign had made it clear about inadequacy of the soft approach to politics.

### **Revival of aspiration**

He had told him that sincerity was a personal crusade, not a political one. When one of their young workers is kidnapped by a rival group, Gyan finds the boy, and he beats the boy blue and black. This kind of life bothers Harpal's life and he has found it difficult to tolerate. He actually was concerned about the kidnapper and the boy. In fact it was difficult for him to handle any kind of high handedness.

His concern for causes had become well known. He had been one of those who had agitated for clearance of the harmony area, for housing and employment for displaced persons. He, an unknown on the political scene, had soon come to symbolize the restoration of goal and hope, amidst the deprived.

As much as any man could be who belonged to a party, he had been his own man. (44) Their first encounter was not only during their election campaign. They had met in similar situations in which one wanted to help and the other revived help. It was also the time of partition and Harpal was on relief mission to his home town.

### **A Political Battle**

Gyan seems to know what he wants in life, and he is very obvious concerning his existence. He doesn't care about hurting others he is only about achieving his goals. And even he advocates for a Punjabi speaking state, he relishes in mixing both religion and language. However, Harpal on the other hand is more secular and humanistic in his view points. This is one of the reasons why he can't make any lasting impact. Each time they confront each other, Harpal feels that he is losing the ground. Vishal Dubey observes that there is more than a normal supporting clash: "The crowd surged towards the exit, blocking Dubey's way, and he was still trying to elbow his way through it when it parted to make way for Gyan and his colleagues"(15). Harpal is aware of his own anxieties, and how he is withdrawn into his own self. He carries a sense of frustration.

### **As a crusader**

He is also unhappy that power instead of conviction has become a motivating factor for men in politics. He believed that one has to be more than a mere politician. Harpal felt like he was crusader, and Gyan feels like a manipulator. Harpal, on the other hand, feels he should be more careful when he handles creatures. Gyan on the other hand refuses to make difference between the human and non-humans. He doesn't care for values of any sort. Vishal finds him as man who is quite free from complications, and in his functioning: He felt the crude, elemental attraction of the man, a human being uncomplicated in his functioning, one who would could to immediate

grips with a situation and manipulate it to suit himself. He would not even recognize the power of a bargain. Not, Dubey thought, an unscrupulous man, for that would imply he saw scruples and ignored them. Gyan trod a path that involved no inner struggle.

### **Chastity as a Weapon**

A careless Atlas carrying the world like a bundle that he would not think twice about dumping if he felt like it.(SC 15) Likewise, these politicians are obsessed with material riches. Similarly, Inder in *Storm in Chandigarh* is a man who is obsessed with a narrow desire to possess lot of material wealth and also Saroj. While many will use power or power he uses chastity as a weapon against Saroj. This is a torment himself, and also to torment others. He finds satisfaction in Mara than with Saroj. By mental and physical restrictions, characters such as Inder are secluded from characters like Vishal. In a situation, Inder is incapable of crossing his formal attitude while conversing with his work force, whereas, Vishal clearly highlights his readiness and zeal in crossing his borderlines and restrictions even with people who have contradictory views.

One individual needs obedience to the set of rules and attitude as per the drawn motif and the other recognize the necessity of breaking out individual restrictions and investing time and power on prioritizing and maintaining human connection. Saroj feels that she is gradually losing her marriage, and so she wants someone as understanding as Vishal. He is important and essential for her. He also helps her to be free from guilty, and also to gain back faith in herself. In a similar way Simrit draws upon the strength of Raj Garg, using the strength she resists the desperation of the situation. He seems to have the capacity to be involved in causes not in the hope of reward.

### **Integrity of Human Life**

He does merely out of conviction, and his involvement gives the really meaning of life. According to him social change must be related to tradition values and to make it meaningful as well. The novel *This Time of Morning*, without any doubt, addresses the biased and communal considerations and all the incidents narrated throughout the novel clearly depict those concerns. The concern for the post-independent novel goes way further into the surface. It not only gives a mere meaning to the liberation and uprightness of an individual's life. Liberty differs and it is interrupted diversely for people like Som and Hari Mohan. For them, freedom is potent and ability and for many other people it simply means liberation in working. As for Kailas, it is a favourable circumstance to form a brand new society and its merely a usual advancement for people like Kalyan Sinha. And many Indians felt that after political independence every problem was solved, and now they could simply enjoy their freedom. This creates an air of absurdity and avarice. This novel also states the crude behaviour of the Indian delegation's members towards Moscow. Characters like Saleem and Rakesh make an attempt to investigate the intention the members' crude behaviours and even Saira was not an exceptional.

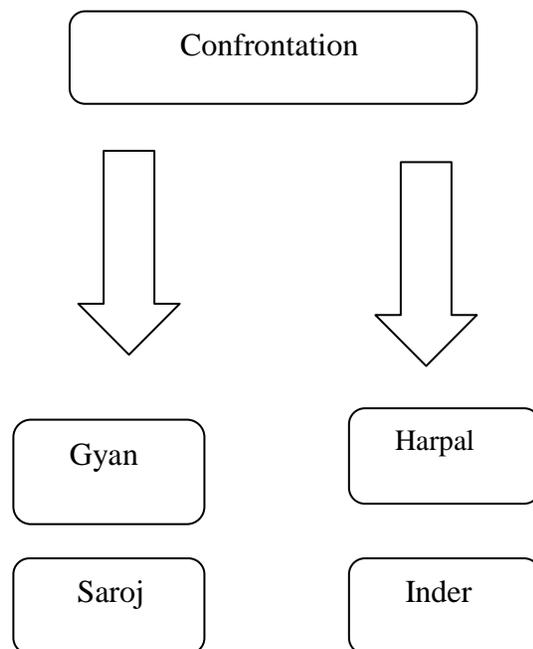
### **Methods**

This research that is used is to compare and contrast the chief with regard to the perspective of martial understanding. Many articles were compiled, and researched for supporting ideas for this paper. She has specifically dealt with the wide topics like gender, tradition and modernity in the novel.**Results**

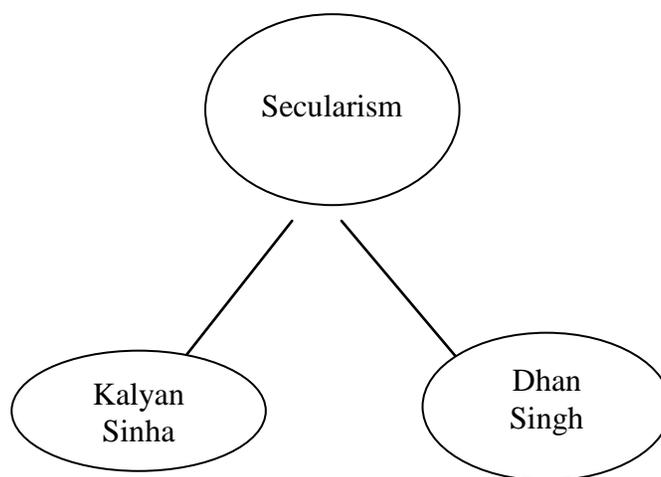
**Table 1.** Great National Experience

Political Reality		
French Revolution	Russian Revolution	National Revolution

**Figure 1.** Violence and non-violence



**Figure 2.** Spirit of Mahatma



**Discussions**

For men like Hari Mohan and Som, freedom means power, while for others it can mean the ability to work freely. For Kailas, it is a chance to build a modern civilization, and for Kalyan Sinha, it is just a matter of development. Many Indians believed that after constitutional emancipation, all of their problems had been fixed, and they could now simply celebrate their newfound freedom. This creates a climate of changeability and corruption. Members of the Indian delegation to Moscow are also shown in the novel as being crude. The other characters, Saleem and Rakesh, want to figure out why this type of performance occurs. Saira has been poisoned as well.

### **Conclusion**

Nayantara Sahgal has no intentions of letting her life flow as it comes but has a keen motive of being ambitious towards her goals in life. She, in her novel *This Time of Morning* tries to present a country that is new and how it searches for an identity. It is also a country that is experiencing freedom, and how it deals with it.

The novelist not only satires the politicians but also the system of education through her work. The novel seems to capture the political happenings and its aftermath. On one hand it shows the political works, and on the other it shows the individual human lives.

### **Acknowledgement**

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