

Socio-Political Consciousness in the Novels of Nayantara Sahgal

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ABSTRACT

Nayantara Sahgal is a novelist of social and political consciousness. There is a huge social consciousness of modern sensibilities in her novels. With eager consciousness of the group of social forces, memories of the colonial past and its crash on the people, she brings out the political issues in a more vital and instant sense. Philosophically a Gandhian, she explores the communal dreams of the Indian people through her novels. The present study is a humble effort to discover socio-political consciousness in all its diversities and complexities in the novels of Nayantara Sahgal. A comprehensive analysis of the idea of socio-political consciousness constitutes the introduction of the study; it includes a conversation on Nayantara Sahgal's life and works, along with the decisive influences. Nayantara Sahgal's novels have been undertaken for the current study for the state motive that novel is the variety through which modern age expresses itself; Sahgal is a journalist-turned-novelist; by asset of this metamorphosis, she is completely competent of analyzing a political condition and tracing out its crash on society and justifying it on psycho-analytical grounds, and purging principles into super egoistic consciousness or responsiveness.

KEYWORDS: socio-political, modernization, liberty, antagonism, partition

I. INTRODUCTION

Literature is the mirror of society and polity is the frame work of the social consciousness reflected there in. Therefore socio-political principles and consciousness opens innovative view for research in Indo-Anglican Fiction. Society determines what type of government is most excellent for it, and polity determines what the most good of the supreme number is and how such a notion of welfare state can be materialized. With the arrival of

Nayantara Sahgal, a major signature, there emerges and develops a rather fresh genre, 'the political novel'. *This Time of Morning* takes the reader into the globe of lobbying, which is strange to Indian Parliament. "As one reads the novel, and recapitulates the political events in India, one cannot oppose the stimulation to associate some of the characters in the novel with chronological figures" (IWE 472). Though tinged with political expansion the novel should be "read as a fiction rather than as a slice of history" (473). The novelist has produced the novel, *This Time of Morning*, with easiness and cleverness, "and it can definitely maintain to be one of the best political novels written by an Indian in English" (473) The novel, *Storm in Chandigarh* (1969), shows a socio-political consciousness, for "when this situation is once more cut up into the ill dominated Punjab, and the mainly Hindu state of Haryana, Chandigarh being the universal capital, there is enticement to difficulty from the very beginning" (473). So far as the skill of the novelist is concerned, it should be kept in psyche that journalism and honesty arising there from is in the background, as "Mrs. Sahgal's feeling for politics and her authority over English are more inspiring than her skill as a novelist" (474).

Whereas, resorting to a universal approximation, it can be asserted that Mrs. Sahgal's novels are as a result of an effort to present an "autobiography—whether veiled or unveiled—is in her blood" (72); it becomes obvious to have an associate of what happened in her life. The origin of socio-political consciousness can be seen here, arising from the pluralist scenery of Indian society. She had inherited learning from Pandit Nehru's historiographic approach that Indian civilization had played mass to numerous streams of emigrant groups and communities from different parts of the world. The arrival of the Aryans, the Tibeto-Burman speaking Mongoloid groups, the Kushans, the Sakas, the Greeks, the Huns, the Arabs, the Persians, the Turks, and the Arabs at diverse points of time proved to the frequency of the immigration process during the extreme periods of Indian history. The cultural pluralism paved the trail for national identity. Sanskrit Hinduism extend a network of centers of 3 pilgrimage; a combination cultural tradition of Hindus and Muslims was exemplified in the Sufi and Bhakti movements; patriotism and nationalism emerged during the war of 1857 and culminated in the liberty fight; the secular self-ruled ethos of modern India dominated the making of the Indian constitution; modernization was put into movement during the British period and got pace in the post independence period.

The Socio-political direction began at an early stage in Anand Bhawan where she spent her early childhood. Nayantara Sahgal was born on May 10, 1927 in Allahabad to Vijay Lakshmi Pandit and Pandit Ranjit Sita Ram in the midst of a wealthy cultural tradition. Incidentally, May 10 coincided with May 10, 1857, which saw the commencement of the First War of Indian Independence. The Anand Bhawan was the ancestral home of the Nehrus which hummed with frantic activities in the wake of the Gandhian call of the liberty fight movement in the 'thirties'. Her political direction witnessed the custody of her parents, pains of division and other events to have a lasting crash upon her responsiveness. The scholarship of Pandit Sita Ram kept her away from the cramping forces of conformism and Hindu convention. He used to clarify to her the complexities of modern political values. This increased her rational prospect, as she inherited from her father a zeal for scholarship and an intellect of history. It gave her socio-political consciousness and kept her away from the narrow sectarian influences. The Indian ethos of life molded her rational and cultural consciousness. Along with her sister, Lekha, she was sent to America for additional studies, which taught her the worth of bravery, modesty, endurance and solidarity, which became obvious in some of her women characters. Her eccentric marriage to Gautam Sahgal ended in failure due to their cultural and socio-religious

environment and made her understand that a man's personality and objective must be sewed first; her mind became a battle field where the opposing ideologies clashed against each other.

The similar socio-political consciousness is revitalized when it is brought to intellect that Gandhian concept of non-violence shaped Nayantara's creative apparition. Ahimsa or non-violence is essentially a social consciousness, for it is based upon the ancient concept of 'live and let others live'; at the same time it is a political and conscience oriented weapon that gave our nation independence without weapon and sheath. Nayantara Sahgal has a towering stare for the standard of non-violence, though it is considered to be limitation in realistic life; however, her socio-political consciousness had taught her that the families with those who perform it without having the ethical bravery and power of Martin Luther King in America and Mahatma Gandhi in India.

Having molded the structure of Nayantara Sahgal's creative vision, the socio-political consciousness emerges in the pages of her writings that documentation what happens in her novels and non-fictional writings as well. The major novels of Nayantara Sahgal are: *A Time To Be Happy* (1958), *This Time of Morning* (1961), *Storm in Chandigarh* (1965), *The Day in Shadow* (1971), *A Situation in New Delbi* (1977), *Rich Like us* (1987), *Plans for Departure* (1986), and *Mistaken Identity* (1988).

The idea of social and political activity has been dealt with simultaneously in Nayantara Sahgal's first novel, *A Time to Be Happy* (1958), which opens with the central character Sanad's aspiration to leave from the British compact of Selkirk and Lowe. In the conclusion of the novel, the hero forges his links stronger with the compact. According to the narrator, "This is truly Sanad's tale" (472); and the reality is an actuality. The protagonist is the son of a Landlord and joins Selkirk and Lowes at their offices in Saharanpur. It should be kept in intellect that the populace of Saharanpur is of pluralistic scenery and of a combination culture having a Jumno Gangetic ethos or tahzeeb. On the biased field, the origin of Kakori train dacoity case was this position, for the treasury looted was of Saharanpur district. Besides, the Saharanpur Bomb-factory case paralyzed the pillars of the British government. Though in the office, Sanad is fallen victim to drink and making love to Kusum and marries her. With the appearance of liberty, he has the most excellent of both worlds. Sanad is in control of the aptitude of being joyful and none can cheat him of this virtue. The description also reveals the awareness of socio-political consciousness. Govind Narayan, Sanad's father, stands for the feudal system; the wealthy Ronu Chatterjee, and his evil wife Lalita illustrate the maladjustment between a Bengali couples; Sohan Bai, the social employee, is the symbol of philanthropism, as she runs a home for children, who became orphans during the Bengal starvation. Above all, political consciousness is exhibited; "references to Congress activities and the events of 1942, and, even though the legend is interesting sufficient, it is hard to run away the feeling that the achievement and description have not been appropriately integrated and placed in correct relation to the background" (473).

The political consciousness in its multidimensional and self-governing ethos orientation can be seen in Mrs. Sahgal's adult novel, *This Time of Morning*, which is a proof of what happens in the corridors of authority and Parliamentary lobbies. The control of such information and facts of Mrs. Vijay Lakshmi Pandit and the niece of Jawahar Lal Nehru, the originator of the Modern India. The location of action is Delhi, in the fastidious background of the decline and fall of Kalyan Sinha, one of the pillars of the government. "Rakesh, a junior official in the External Affairs Ministry, returns after a term abroad to Delhi, and even at Palam

he scents the rapidity of transform in the country. He is soon caught up in the spin of politics, community life, careerism and deception. Personal and political ambitions interweave and there are erratic affiliations and separations” (473).

The socio-political consciousness on its public level dominates the prospect in the novel *Storm in Chandigarh*. The city was considered by Carbusier as the capital of the partitioned Punjab, a state, which was to bear the agonies of a next partition into Sikh dominated Punjab and the mainly Hindu state of Haryana. The preliminary problem starts, as the city of Chandigarh is to be the ordinary capital of both the states. An antagonism is created between Harpal Singh and Gyan Singh, the Chief Ministers of Haryana and the Punjab, though they had been friends and colleagues. With the mounting up of nervousness, Vishal Dubey is deputed by New Delhi to observe the circumstances at Chandigarh. Vishal takes side with Harpal and asks him to tolerate the impact of wave of strike coming from Gyan Singh. There erupts brutality and Harpal is wounded. The loss of the Union Home Minister comes as consent in disguise as the fighting “State Governments (come) to the meeting table” (474).

Apart from political consciousness, there is individual consciousness also, which is the groundwork stone of social consciousness. Having suffered the marital failure, the widower Vishal tries to find out fulfillment from Gauri, a Bengali businessman’s wife. After that, at Chandigarh, a triangular love affair is formed, when Vishal feels an affection to Saroj, the wife of Inder, who himself is in love with Mara, the wife of Jit—Inder and Jit are in commerce. “It is approximately like an episode from John Updike’s couples. Jit and Mara, though, find one another in the conclusion, Saroj escapes to Delhi to be met there by Dubey, and the unbearable Inder is left to fend for himself (474).

In *The Day in Shadow* social consciousness takes the appearance of separation and political consciousness is exhibited through “the politically disastrous terms of the oil conformity with Russia” (745). The novel shows that Simrit has divorced her husband Som, and marries her friend Raj in the conclusion. The terms of divorce are cruel. They structure the idea of the novel. The reasons for the separation are unknown. So certainty is not possible, Raj is a distinction to Som. Political consciousness is symbolized by Sumer Singh, a sharp politician. Concubines also participate a major role in promoting societal disagreement. Pixie is the mistress of Sumer Singh and Sheila is the kept of Raj. “The political slope of the novel consists in Sumer’s Maladroit achievement with the oil contract and his altitude to the external Affairs Ministry” (745). It appears that the politically oriented theme of the novel is a celebrated maxim that politics is the previous resort for scoundrels, for the pages of the novel show “the passing of Gandhism, the defiant immoralist of the Jet set, the innovative approach of politics and the constant sense of improbability” (746).

That the corridors of authority in New Delhi are a proof of twice dealing political consciousness, student turbulence, political indecision and barefaced sensuality and resulting bestiality, is obvious from the novel, *A Situation in New Delhi* (1977). The magnetic premier Shiv Raj dies and the dynastic tyranny is followed when his sister Devi becomes the Education Minister in the new cabinet. Her son Rishad is a Naxalite and is involved in the cruelty. The dreams of political principles and dignified ethics are shattered, as there is witnessed along with the disintegrate of Gandhism, the fast scuttling of Nehruism as well. Even so, it is about the pre-emergency period “when options were silent probable” (746).

II. WORKS CITED:

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