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Portray Of Female Psyche With Unsatisfied Relationship In Marriage In The Novels Of Nayantara Sahgal's A Time To Be Happy, Storm In Chandigarh, And Rich Like Us

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Abstract:

In the present scenario, Women in India are on the top of every field which is the result of increasing education and reaching of its approach towards the common man. Women are considered more powerful in making their decisions, living a free life with changed mentality and engaging themselves purely and honestly in their household duties too. Indian writers whether male or female, have depicted a clear picture of women in a very sensible ways that shows various shades of women life in general and man woman relationship. The Disharmony occurring in relationship due to lack of communication, love and affection has always been a discussed topic. Nayantara Sahgal in her writings has pictured the female psyche in case of marital situation where females are not happy and satisfied with their married life and feel themselves isolated.

Key words: Women psyche, Marital Disharmony, Liberalism, Divorce, Isolation

1.Introduction

Women writers are now enjoying an increasing popularity and prestige in India. They have an impressive record of success. Women novelists writing in English attempt to project woman as the central figure and seem to succeed in presenting the predicament of woman most effectively. The work of women writers has given a distinct dimension to the image of woman in the family and society. In most of their writings, they have tried their best to free the female mentality from the age long control of male domination. Nayantara Sahgal is also a successful figure of Feminist Writing. She beautifully probes the psyche of her women characters to reveal the trauma, insecurity and agony that lies beneath the gloss and glitter of modern life. The women in her novels are however liberated, educated, assertive and confident, they do not totally move out the ideas of marriage in their lives. Her fiction also focuses woman's search for sexual freedom and self-realization. Her writing is generally characterized by simplicity and boldness. Her writing is also famous for depicting the latest political ups and downs with a tinge of Western liberalism. The present paper aims at showing that how the pure bond of marriage becomes weak, non futile and suffocating in the lack of communication, through various characters of her novels – A Time To Be Happy, Storm in Chandigarh, and Rich Like Us.

2.Main Study

Sahgal shows women suffering in marriage-life and then deciding to come out of the suffocating bondage by preferring for divorce. She depicts her women deciding to prefer for divorce rather than live a stifling life of injustice and agony. Her women characters leave their husbands or break the marriage which does not allow them to be free and to live life in their own way. She represents that through divorce they will be free from the suffering and agony of an unhappy or unjust relationship but it does not solve the problems and women have to struggle and suffer on various levels — economic, emotional and psychological. Women who feel frustrated either because of marital disharmony or loneliness in life is shown to indulge in social or religious activities. For example, Maya in Sahgal's A Time to be Happy is a woman who tries to submerge her unhappiness and dissatisfaction in doing social work and getting involved in religious activities. Sahgal is deeply concerned with the failure of marital relationships and the loneliness of living; hence, most of her women believe to get remarried. Most of her couples seem to be happy and contented, but they often experience loneliness and complain of silences in marriage. Maya appears that she lacks emotions, but this is actually the lack of communication which has resulted into emotional isolation in her marriage. What she wants is just some kind of response and recognition of her existence:

Not a good one or an approving one, necessarily, just a response of any kind. Even when we live or die is not important unless it is important to someone. (A Time to be Happy,35)

Due to insufficient love between the couple, Maya remains childless, which is also a cause of her unhappiness. Maya is a silent victim of the outcome of marriage. She has asserted herself from becoming meek and docile housewife. Not only Maya but Ammaji also suffer because they refuse to lose their identity. Ammaji is a representative of the older generation whereas Maya belongs to the transition period. Sahgal shows her acute awareness of the dependent status of women in society. She is aware of the confining role of marriage as an institution for women. A Time to be Happy explores women's search for individuality both within marriage as equal partners and without it as an individual. For Maya, marriage was doomed from the beginning, chiefly on account of the antithetical personalities of her husband and herself:

She had the cool purity of the eucalyptus, as compared with his extravagant gulmohur. She was the mirror-smooth lake to his rushing waterfall.
(A Time to be Happy, 42)

Logically speaking there is no spark left in their marriage it should have failed very early as it is like two different poles attract each other. In short, it was a sterile marriage, leaving them dry. The narrator's description of her as a slab of marble as 'marble in difference' is significant. What she considers the most important thing in life, is the emotional response which she is unable to receive from her husband. However, she receives it from the narrator. Maya is represented in contrast to the traditional ideal women. The narrator's mother supports her husband in all his views and enterprises. Like any true Hindu woman, she believes that

His concern was with God and hers with God in him.
(A Time to be Happy, 153)

Lakshmi, Govind Narayan's wife, also represents herself as a Hindu woman. In her smoothly run household one seldom heard the voices of the servants and the crying of the baby. She always needed her husband and never does anything without him. Savitri, Kusum's mother, like a true Hindu woman, regularly observed fasts and offered prayers at five every morning for the well-being of her family. The concentration on the traditional woman by Sahgal therefore serves to reveal the second vital function of a woman in Indian society and one cannot defy it at any cost. Maya, on the other hand has shown an effort to come up from such norms and bondage of the society and set an example for others. She is not ready to sleep over the ashes of her burned relation, where nothing is left to give or take.

The characters in *Storm in Chandigarh* (1969) also oscillate between two worlds, one which is satisfying them on the superficial level by not breaking any of seven promises of marriage, and one which is giving them internal contentment, where setting oneself free like a bird in order to find their heavenly abode full of worldly pleasures. In the portrayal of the life of ideal marriages of three young couples — Vishal-Leela, Inder-Saroj and Jit-Mara, Sahgal is deeply concerned with unhappy marriages and the loneliness of living. The novel is a study of certain similarities and contrasts of various characters. It portrays the young hearts broken up by compulsions of matrimony and call of newfound love. The theme of the novel is violence, not necessarily an obvious physical violence, but an invisible and the more subtle form of internal conflict. Saroj's pre-marital relationship becomes the cause of failure of their marriage. Saroj who has been brought up in the liberal atmosphere of freedom, expects equality in marriage. She is greatly surprised by her husband's violent reactions to a pre-marital affair she had in her college days. Inder is obsessed and could not forgive this act of Saroj and constantly exploits her sense of innocence. Saroj longs for friendship, tenderness and frankness from Inder, but since her jealous, unreasonable husband never bothers to understand her needs, she decides to walk out of her rotten, conventional bond, with all the children to live a life of her own. It is ironical that Inder, himself carries an extra-marital affair with Mara. Saroj became 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. She frankly tells Vishal:

Half the time one is afraid — you know — saying wrong thing or of being misunderstood — just for being oneself and being punished for it. So one spends such a lot of time, acting, or at least hiding, and that's very tiring.
(Storm in Chandigarh, 19)

Inder, like a conventional husband, never approves of his wife's virtues and turns violent towards her. Saroj is constantly rebuked, abused and tortured by Inder because of her pre-marital sexual indulgence. She longs for love and understanding but every time it has to be begged and given as a charity, she withdraws into silence. During her college days, Saroj enjoyed sex with one of her friend for satisfying her curiosity. But later when Inder comes to know about it, he treats her brutally and considers her as a sinner. He would punish her quite often and torture her physically and mentally:

When Inder could not sleep, he resurrected the other man, the one who had known Saroj before he had, making her marriage a mockery and betrayal. He had stalked the man down the dark alleys of his imagination, his thought about him churning, now sticking, now moving sluggishly, now flowing on unimpeded like the filth in the city's sewers. 'If I catch him I shall kill him.'
(Storm in Chandigarh, 93)

Ironically, Inder is torturing his wife for having pre-marital relationship once only, while he had no explanation to offer for his own extra-marital relationship with another man's wife. In Indian society, it is a crime for a girl or a woman to have a sexual intercourse with any man; on the other hand, it is considered no crime at all for a man to have sexual relations with other girls before or after his marriage. This means that in India we have different norms for the man and different norms for the woman. It exposes the open practice of double standards in our society.

Saroj learns the value of freedom from Vishal Dubey during their lonely walks:

Life, Dubey told her, was bigger than any system. Life could remould or break the system that lacked righteousness and reason. It was life's precious obligation to rebel, and humanity's right to be free, to choose from the best light it could see, not necessarily the long-accepted light. (Storm in Chandigarh, 193)

Inder shows a lot of indifference towards her and has no time for emotional involvement. Their relationship lacks even the minimum communication. Even his affair with Mara comes to an end. Mara's self-assertion and individuality disgusts him. Saroj accepts her role as wife and affectionate mother and does not want to seek anything outside marriage. But she has reached at a stage in her relationship with Inder that even ordinary conversation becomes difficult. Going out for a walk with Vishal, Saroj feels much relieved and freshened from the suffocation of the four walls of her house. When Inder forbids her to meet Vishal, she refuses to listen to him. At this stage, she rebels, and understands the truth of failure of her marriage. Saroj's departure is a move towards personal freedom and a rejection of the role Inder has wanted to thrust on her, Vishal tells:

It has taken a million years of evolution for a person and his cherished individuality to matter and no terror must be allowed to destroy that. (Storm in Chandigarh, 227)

and finally Saroj overcomes her initial hesitations and comes out of her husband's home. At last, Vishal takes the final decision for her. She remembers Vishal's words to her:

Vishal was right. There was only one way to live, without pretence. It would be the ultimate healing balm to the lonely spaces of the spirit, beyond which there would be no darkness. (Storm in Chandigarh, 203)

Vishal helps her and sets her free from the burden of guilt.

In the 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. Mara suffers from an acute sense of emptiness in life. Her marriage with sweet-tempered and considerate Jit has its share of estrangements and misgivings, but their differences dissolve in the compromising disposition of her husband. As pointed out by A. V. Krishna Rao,

Mara's problem is not physical but psychological. The search for communication makes Mara come towards Inder. The privacy of her thoughts is ruptured with the arrival of Inder who has developed a peculiar intimacy with her. Mara is not content with the gentleness of her husband but desires all that the world can offer her - the softness of Jit and the hardness of Inder.³

She desires not gentleness but aggressiveness and passionate involvement in relationship. In her relationship with Inder, Mara stimulates his mind and involves him in ways no woman ever has. But she does not surrender her individuality and offers a challenge to Inder's domination. 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 on her:

Back to the caves, she had said, and that was what would suit her best. You gave a woman the perfection of which you were capable; the finest flower of your most evolved instincts, and it was a waste.... She didn't want to be cherished and affection made no impression on her. (Storm in Chandigarh, 138-139)

It does not mean that Mara lusted of physical love nor does it suggest that she is forced into submission by Inder. Soon she is disillusioned when she finds him a hypocrite, and breaks all relations with him. By that time, Jit also realizes that there is something lacking in their relationship and makes an attempt to come closer to her. Jit helped Mara to come out of the emotional jungle by talking to her of an unhappy experience of his own. The realization makes them be reconciled and remain true to each other. The novelist says that the conflict in marriages arises mainly from absence of communication resulting in the estrangement of individuals. Vishal Dubey's marriage is also a vanishing search for communication. Vishal who wants to build a relationship on truth finds it a difficult task. In his relationship with Leela, he felt a great deal of unhappiness. Despite her extra-marital affair with Hari, Leela insisted on maintaining the fakeness of a stable marriage with Vishal. She had always lived a life of pretence and hypocrisy. Vishal undergoes the torture of living together intimately yet remained strangers to each other. Talking about Mr. Dubey and his wife Leela, Nayantara Sahgal writes in the novel:

She had selected what she wanted of him: the distinguished escort at parties, the successful civil servant with a promising future, the husband who could be relied upon to take pains with whatever problems she took to him. And she had ignored the rest. She had given herself selectively too, what she had considered it prudent and convenient to give, and left him empty of then reality of herself. Even her vitality had needed an audience. She scintillated in company. Time and again he heard her talk animatedly of what had happened a day or a week earlier, of an article she had read, an idea she had had, at a party. Alone with him she had little to share. Had their failure been their fault, or was there something at the very core of human dreams and longings that was fatal to fulfillment through marriage? (Storm in Chandigarh, 69)

After Leela's death, Vishal is attracted towards Gauri's natural, luxuriously feminine generosity. Dubey's relationship with Gauri is based on sex and the urgency of a momentary need. She makes no emotional demands on him. His affair with her began in the disturbed year after Leela's death. Gauri feels secure in her marriage. She feels satisfied with her Successful industrialist husband Nikhil Ray. She has no pretensions about her virtuosity; she calls herself a

Social butterfly with positively no interest in life beyond my own comforts and pleasures. (Storm in Chandigarh, 162)

Sahgal is deeply concerned with unhappy marriages and the loneliness of living. Through the portrayal of the married life of Leela, Gauri, Saroj and Mara, the author holds a mirror to the society that subjects its women to worst type of inhuman exploitation.

Most of the Indian novels in English portray the stereo-typed versions of Indian womanhood. Sonali in *Rich Like Us* is made of quite a different stuff, a top notch at the IAS competitive examinations. She has the intellectual strength to rebel against hackneyed thoughts, outdated customs and anachronistic rituals. She knows and lets the world know that she is not out for an arranged marriage and the consequent life of intellectual inertia. But her destiny is, elsewhere. After completing her studies in India she goes to Oxford for higher studies. Her rebellion against society is not merely a passive ideological resistance; it is a concrete manifestation of carving a new image in a new purpose to Indian Womanhood. She has inherited her values and ideals from her conscientious who was an ICS officer in Colonial India. With an admirable rare courage Sonali refuses to grant permission to open the fizzy drink Hapyola factory to Dev the spoilt son of Mona and Ram.

He replaces Sonali as joint secretary and thus Sonali's destiny comes to a dead end. After the death of her father she has none among his survivors who can measure and understand her deep sense of agony and isolation.

The alienness of what had just happened, the midnights knock at mid day, for no reason. I could understand paralyzed me, until I realized that nothing new or shattering had happened after all. No malign fate had singled me out for punishment. The logic of June 26th had simply caught up with me
(*Rich Like Us*, 32)

Sonali feels bitter and frustrated that the society she lives in rates those in power higher and more important than the honest and upright officers. She feels completely alienated and her sense of rejection reacts with a determination not to beg any favour and act like a worm instead of a person. The tragic death of Rose by the hands of her stepson Dev's hired goon reflects the bitter truth that women in India are mercilessly murdered by her own relatives when it suits them whatever reasons.

Sahgal tells the story and looks at life at least in the present novel, from two planes of view. One is the Omniscient author's and the other is Sonali the heroine and her quest for love and commitment in relationship. The novel is admired for its creative innovation and optimistic vision of life. Ravi Kachru, when at Oxford, was a committed communist. Sonali, the western educated part narrator says:

Even when we did not agree with him he was the inspiration of all us radicals and we never did understand why instead of throwing in his lots with the commitments after Oxford changed his mind and joined the civil-service as I, in search of another kind of involvement had already decided to do. Within a few years Ravi is making his way up there hierarchy, and when the Emergency comes, he is one of Mrs. Gandhi's favorites. The "higher-up".
(*Rich Like Us*, 176)

By the end of the novel, he falls from political grace but finally attain maturity to be honest on a personal level. After Ravi's Plea to her of his continuing love, Sonali finds that:

This admission of waste, of years gone and opportunity lost, filled me with a sweet relief. Isolated from all that had happened outside our private creation it had the wonder for me of broken ends mending, Kachru becoming Ravi again, of friendship resuming, of love having been really love and not a mistake he had been trying to forget. (Rich Like Us, 261)

Already Sonali's commitment is closer to reality, but still she refuses to be carried away by philosophy and try to come out from a relationship which has no future ahead. But like true Indian women finally surrenders in front of her love and later she says that:

Only the cloudiness commitment, like the perfect relationship, could be knocked sideways with a feather. It was doubts and uncertainties that kept things alive and kicking.
(Rich Like Us, 261)

One more side of unsatisfied marital love is reflected in the novel through Rose, the London-born second wife of a rich businessman, could be seen as epitomizing this ideal of redemption through personal courage. She risks marrying Ram despite knowing about his being married and comes to India along with him. She saves Mona, Ram's first wife from suicide and inspires of their initial rivalry, soon develops friendly terms with her. Her outspokenness and cockney bluntness-the principal characteristics makes her unpalatable to her step son-Dev. Though Ross- a brave women yet is doomed by her honesty and her unenviable position in Dev's household after her husband is incapacitated by illness. Her position as virtual widow leads to her death arranged, as 'sati' usually is, by her husband's relatives and partly motivated by the same economic reasons.

This novel is remarkable for its non-emotional treatment the peculiar depiction is made of Dev's treatment of his wife Nishi and his step-mother Rose. Women like the colonial people are treated with indifference or with ruthlessness. Very often they are a long succession of compromises and sacrifices, a constant pushing into the background. As opposed to this, men ride roughshod over the women's emotional requirements and reject long term solutions if short-term gains are in sight. Though it seems to be an over-generalization, yet mostly the men are found to be the exploiters. Divorce may be a way out for women, but bigamy is the rule for men; for instance- Ram having two wives in *Rich Like us*.

It was always Sita who had to pray to be swallowed by the earth, and always a woman who had to climb her husband's pyre and be burned alive.
(Rich Like Us, 67)

Rich Like Us is important for more reasons than one: it comments on the political situation which has colonial overtones, it analyses the flow in the native tradition and it justifies the moral struggle so important and significant for survival of the human being and clearly explains man and woman relationship in its own ways.

3. Conclusion

To conclude, we can state that the works of Nayantara Sahgal clearly depict the portrayal of Indian Women in her own style, where they were shown with individual's own name in the society. The characters in the novels of Sahgal describe the unsettled married life where they long for love and satisfaction with affection in the relation. Sahgal's most of the female characters are well qualified and possess their own identity, but fail to make them established in their personal house, which later results into the legal separation of relation and they involve them in to some religious, social activities. Dissatisfaction, isolation, disharmony and dissolution are aptly pictured by Sahgal in her works.

4. References

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