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MARITAL DISCARD IN NAYANTARA SAHGAL'S *THE DAY IN SHADOW*

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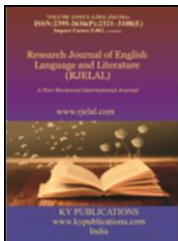
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ABSTRACT

Nayantara Sahgal is one of the leading pioneers of Indo-Anglican Literature, the daughter Vijayalakshmi Pandit is a novelist of politics. She is known as a successful political columnist for different newspapers. Her writing is generally characterized by simplicity and boldness. Sahgal has raised some basic problems pertaining to personal relationship, and her portrayal of politics is just a part of her humanistic concern because it reveals her deep insight into human psyche in all her novels. Sahgal has emphasized the need of understanding the individual existence of others through the exercise of love and freedom. This paper aims at analyzing Sahgal's portrayal of temperamental incompatibility in marriage leads to marital disharmony in her novel *The Day in Shadow*.



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INTRODUCTION

Nayantara Sahgal's growing reputation as a notable Indian English writer solidly rests on her nine novels and eight non-fictions. Sahgal attempts to project a nation's consciousness through the fragmentary consciousness of an individual.

Her superb mastery of the medium of communication enables her to evoke not only the surficial expressions of the 'outer reality, but also the subtle perceptions of the inner reality in to-day's India. Her fecund imagination combines with her intellectual resources in transforming her fiction into a faithful vehicle of individual and national sensibility. Sahgal's literary sensibility achieves a satisfying novelistic quality in producing socially and politically significant fiction.

The novel, *The Day in Shadow*, deals with a protest against the restrictions imposed on women. The novelist, Sahgal portrays the women character

in her fictions to strike upward mobility by educating, asserting, and by gaining economic independence themselves, Jasbir Jain observes; "In almost every novel, Nayantara has a central woman character that gradually moves towards an awareness of her emotional needs..." (Bai, K Meera 22).

Title of the novel

The title of the novel is a metaphor taken from the famous speech of Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister, on the eve of the dawn of India's Independence;

I do feel...there is a magic in the moment of transition from
The old to the new, something of that magic which one sees
When the night turns into day, and even though the day may be a cloudy one, it is day after all...(pp.149-150)

Theme of the novel

The novel, represents the story of Delhi on the threshold of unseen changes and a new breed of politicians far removed from the compassionating attitude and approaches to life practiced by Gandhi. It is the story of Simrit, a daring lady who got divorced from her cruel male dominated husband, Som, and she finds a new life with Raj, a staunch believer in Christianity. Her marriage to a business man against the will of her Brahmin parents has fallen on rocks owing to the boorish character of Som, her domineering and insensitive husband whose sole for existence is money and success and the power and glory that accompany them. Simrit is different from other women. Simrit is a woman of inner strength. The relationship carries no sense of partnership for her financial independence and her self-identity.

Characters of the novel

The universe of discourse, characteristic of a Sahgal novel, presents to us a symbolic cross-section of the Indian nationality. The novel is not only turn around the character of Simrit but also Pixie, the young widow, who is forced to Sumer Singh's sexual exploitation and Shaila the former girlfriend of Raj, who does not remain in marital bondage with Raj because of some personal pressure between them. The other characters who play powerful games throughout the novel are Sumer Singh, Brij, the sixteen-year old son of Som and Simrit, and a chip of the old block after his father, Sardar Sahib, the Senior Minister, aged and ailing in the Hospital and Lalli and Vetter, the business partners of Som for some time.

Sahgal brings into sharp focus the diversity of these human characters and enacts the variety of their motives and mottoes in the drama of life in New Delhi, the microcosm and nerve-centre of modern India.

Temperamental Incompatibility vs. Physical Incompatibility

Simrit in *The Day in Shadow* is a scholarly and independent woman. But she chooses her husband who does not consider her ideas and feelings, she expects her husband to share her feelings both as a husband and a friend. She has no ego problem with Som. She tries to adjust and

compromise with him because she wants to lead a peaceful life with Som. But she is not ready to lose her individuality. However, the marital relationship lacks in emotional, intensity and disharmony. More than marital prosperity, Simrit respects the certain values of life. But for Som, never loses a fair chance of making money.

Simrit realizes that talk is the missing link in her relationship with Som and tries in vain to engage him in any meaningful dialogue. She is isolated and ignored like a piece of furniture but used for physical comfort whenever needed by Som. Som considers physical intimacy as common activity that tends to satiate as far as his own self is concerned. It is not physical incompatibility instead of the temperamental incompatibility which makes Simrit to break the bond with Som.

Simrit has no other way than divorce.

R.K. Dhawan makes pointed remarks,

“What forces Simrit]to rebel against the conventional security of Marriage is her yearning for a free communication of ideas With her husband...” (R.K. Dhawan 168)

Simrit is not happy even after divorce. Simrit, who made a separate peace as a way-out of the violation of her self-respect, opts for the divorce and innocently signs on the dotted line of the “consent terms”-a document which Som intends as an attractive noose around her neck. The release is thus not joyful but dismal, for, it makes her an economical wreck with a bleak outlook for the next nine years. Lack of understanding and inability to strike a sympathetic chord with each other leads Simrit to divorce from Som. After getting divorce from her husband; Simrit gains the friendship of Raj. His friendship helps her to come out of her shock.

In the novel, *The Day in Shadow*, physical relationship is the carving of Som and the denial of same on the part of Simrit is the cause of marital disharmony. There is no mutual understanding between them. Som approaches Simrit for his physical needs. He has strong passions and strong sexual desires. Although it is usual with middle aged men, he begins to suspect her sexual powers and looks for reassurance from his wife. Simrit always longed for for the experience of

intensity, depth, devotion and partnership in marriage but in vain. Hence, their marital life comes to an end.

Self-Identity and Call of new found love

To Simrit, the terms of divorce settlement are harsh and involve heavy responsibility of taxes. She overcomes all the misfortunes heaped on her by Som and decides to lead a new life with Raj, who is a Christian converted, a member of parliament and not a conservative. Raj understands the enormity of the consent terms and helps her to retain her lost moorings, emotional as well as intellectual. He loves Simrit, not as he did as a youth only to be disappointed, but as a mature middle-aging bachelor; for he discovers in Simrit the kind of person that would soothe and sustain his restless spirit. His quest for tranquillity and fulfillment thus culminates in his discovery of, and attachment to, Simrit, the up-rooted mother of several children but a woman of culture. Simrit finds a similar sympathetic soul outside her marriage in Raj.

Conclusion

To sum up, Nayantara Sahgal's marital morality is revealed in her works is based on honesty, mutual respect, consideration, understanding and freedom. She attacks selfishness and pretense that subsequently result in marital discard. What Sahgal wants to emphasize in all her novels is that physical relationship cannot stand for permanent endurance unless buttressed by the quiet understanding or friendship.

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