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A STUDY ON FEMINISM AND PATRIOTISM IN NAYANTARA SAHGAL'S *RICH LIKE US*

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ABSTRACT

In this research paper I might endeavor to build up that both Nayantara Sahgal's women's rights and patriotism are set apart by weakening ovals, which make her complicit with those exceptionally talks—of male controlled society and government—that she obviously looks to uncover and study in *Rich Like Us*. Born into modern India's chief political family, the Nehrus, and raised in a household in which female children did not feel the pressures of being female, Sahgal subordinates the lady question to the national question in the narrative. Amusingly, however as anyone might expect, her patriot fealty is, thus, confounded by her Western-style childhood and education and her area inside a global as opposed to a local literary arena, bringing about numerous topical antinomies in her novel. This paper is an attempt to critically analyze the themes of "Rich Like Us" from political and feministic point of view.

Key Words: *Rich Like Us*, feminism, nationalism

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Introduction

The political and social concerns of Nayantara Sahgal, which the writer sprinkles so flawlessly in her anecdotal story, make her an extremely important and serious author to the vast majority of her readers and critics. As the critic Makarand Paranjpe¹ remarks, "To me Nayantara Sahgal's books are significant accounts of a bigger account, in reality as most Indian English fiction seems to be." (Paranjpe, Makarand, 159) The narrative of the development of India has certain key topics, which can be characterized as imperialism, patriotism, segment, autonomy, regionalism communalism, urbanization, women's liberation, free enterprise, socialism and so on which frame the pith and foundation of our lives and additionally fiction. In Sahgal's writings these issues are reasonably mixed in her themes.

Indian English fiction has gained a prestigious position everywhere throughout the world amid late circumstances. It is acclaimed worldwide as the most persuading of all the

contemporary types of writing. It possesses a huge place in world writing. In any case, the Indian English fiction has gone through many stages previously involving this prestigious position and overall recognition. As the early novels and scholars were unapproachable from socio-political concerns or issues, the more profound issues of national centrality and in addition human life were not the noticeable issues for the author of that specific period. Indian English novel was influenced by socio-political changes amid the 1930s onwards. The scholars, for example, Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao rose on the literary scene in 1930s and endeavored to extend the contemporary Indian political situation with their particular perspective without misshaping and curving of actualities. These noticeable writers separately began the period of political novels through making the perfect works of art of fiction and the considerable gem *Coolie*, *Untouchable*, *Kanthapura* and *Waiting for Mahatma*. All these literary

manifestations are considered age making manifestations of Indian English fiction².

Nayantara Sahgal's novels principally deal with the mind boggling human relationships and additionally portray the contemporary society with much legitimacy. In this manner, including another measurement to Indian Writing in English. Her novels dependably have a nationalistic intensity³. *Rich Like Us* published in 1985⁴ won Sinclair Prize for fiction and the Sahitya Akademi Award. Mrs.Sahgal has the pleasure of being the primary Indian lady writer writing in English dealing with political topic. I expect to make an investigation of Nayantara Sahgal's *Rich Like Us* in view of the hypothesis of feminism and nationalism.

In the portrayal of Sonali Ranade, we observe the feminist in Sahgal coming of age. *Rich Like Us* belongs to a more mature phase of Mrs. Sahgal's career. The women belonging to this phase are strong-willed and emotionally independent. They refuse to bow before the strange hold of men, right from the beginning. Sonali grows up with a dream to fulfil "a new tradition to create, her independent worth to prove" (*Rich Like*, 28), uncompromising she refuses the pretend that "the emperor's new clothes were beautiful" (28). Her resignation is not acceptance of defeat; it is rather her defiance against oppressive forces. It is her unique manner of asserting her individuality. The character of Sonali Ranade is that of a woman whose vision of self-assertion is not clouded by conventions. She knows not only what she wants but also how to achieve it. Sonali is indispensably a character who exhibits all the four traits of Emotional Intelligence like self awareness, understanding of one's own and other emotions, managing and generating emotions. In the due course of the novel we see her looking at herself and the pressures around her. But she decides her future with much clarity not losing her emotional balance, thereby testifying the success of Emotional Intelligence⁵.

Spreading over four generations and essentially set in the obscuring universe of New Delhi amid Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's Emergency (1976-77), *Rich Like Us* keeps running on the strangely parallel life tracks of two altogether different women. A period promising riches for the degenerate, yet unnerving with disinfection for poor

people and prison for the basic, the Emergency changes everlastingly the lives of the two women. Sonali and Rose, one Indian, the other Cockney English, are profoundly dedicated companions. Because of her antiquated genuineness, Sonali's effective common administration vocation is ended, waking her from her fantasy of another India. For Rose, second wife of a Hindu businessman, the defilement of society sets the scene for the keep going scene of her long adjustment to her received home. Gently resolute, Mrs. Sahgal requests that we see a changing country through its own particular eyes. "Being Nehru's niece or Madame Pandit's little girl," the author has stated, "has not been assistance nor a hindrance— it has just been my legacy and background— yet being Mrs. Gandhi's cousin and also faultfinder is another issue. It has given me a look at how narrow minded foundations decrease their commentators to non-people"⁶

Sahgal devotes *Rich Like Us* to "Indo-British experience and what its shares have gained from each other." The activity of the novel goes back to the time of India's national Emergency amid 1974-75 when Indira Gandhi was the leader of India. Shyamla A. Narayan remarks that as opposed to Sahgal's before books, it is in "... *Rich Like Us* and ensuing books that she makes ornament imaginative use of political occasions by observing them in the point of view of India's history" (17). Here Sahgal effectively dovetails the private and people in general issues by copious references to the segment of India, Nehru's discourse (in Chapter Thirteen), Gandhi's peacefulness and his emphasis on Truth in guide difference to the ignoble and agonizing improvements amid the Emergency. With such verifiable allusions, Sahgal consolidates the narrative of Rose and Sonali - both of whom are the casualties of Emergency. Rose is an English wife of Indian husband Ram, while Sonali is an I.A.S. officer in New Delhi. In *Rich Like Us*, Sahgal has intentionally picked English characters, for her motivation is to demonstrate that history is never an uneven issue, however involves a blended story of various individuals. Sonali leaves from her position all together not to adjust to the degenerate arrangement of political apparatus. In the wake of disjoining her associations with her authority past, Sonali feels significantly more human in organization with Rose. On the off chance that Sonali experiences

injustice and wrong the regulatory set-up, Rose endures injustice as well as even passing because of false and degenerate Dev. In correlation with Rose, Sonali's character is three-dimensional because she is on the double an eyewitness, member and storyteller of the Emergency and its effect on private lives. She depicts the shocking points of interest of a protected breakdown and the results of an unscrupulous abuse of political organizations to subvert not just the parliamentary majority rules system set up following a hundred years of the flexibility battle, yet in addition the time-respected social and good esteems s in between individual connections.

The story of the novel is silhouetted against the backdrop of the Indian sociopolitical ethos, its economic disparities, rampant corruption, the hoary past with the cruel tradition of sati and the political upheavals of 1975. Sonali Ranade, an upright civil servant in the Ministry of Industry is pitted against the contemporary bureaucratic regime. Sonali heroically fights the malice in the bureaucratic hierarchy which has seeped to the core and corroded the Indian society and its long cherished values. While 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 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. 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. She rebels overtly and fearlessly against the bureaucratic set up. Patriotic, committed and honest that she is Sonali suffers a rude jolt when she gets her transfer order. Instead of receiving appreciation for having

done her duty with a sense of patriotism, she is victimized by the bureaucratic system⁷.

Sahgal like numerous contemporary feminist critics and social history specialists see the custom of *sati* as a case of male centric/conventional and political mastery that takes physical structures. In spite of the fact that Sahgal delineates *sati* as an issue of the past, she interfaces the past to the present when she uncovers that the torment or infringement of female bodies is ordinary in the nation. This is uncovered by Sahgal when she specifies the assaults and killings of lower-rank/class ladies in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Sahgal uncovered the dim side of the Hindu social convention of *sati* by demonstrating how ladies' bodies were regularly used as images of religious and patriot suppositions. She portrays the life and passing of the grandma of Sonali (the protagonist in the novel) who had kicked the bucket as a *sati* and was copied alive. Sahgal uncovers how the ladies in those days had no flexibility of decision and their lives were formed and coordinated by customs and social practices developed by man centric society and certain precepts of patriot belief system. It was guaranteed by men that the ladies had energetically experienced *sati*. In any case, Sahgal denies this claim and demands that they were regularly tranquilized and calmed (so they can't shout) and dragged them to the fires. In any case, the novel additionally perceives that superstition and socio-social weights likewise influenced numerous ladies to acknowledge their destiny. At the point when some of them endeavored to flee and dissented, they were given discipline for that, as well. Sahgal depicts the destiny of one dowager who refused to come back to the fire in the wake of getting away:

When the inhuman relatives saw this, they took her by the head and heels and threw her into the fire, and held her there till they were driven away by the heat; they also took up large blocks of wood with which they struck her, in order to deprive her of her senses, but she again made her escape, and without any help ran directly into the river...The people of her house followed her here and tried to drown her by pressing her under water. (*Rich Like Us*, p. 154)

A Woman, once she is set apart out to end up noticeably a sati, can't turn back as this implied a demonstration of indefensible transgression and a matter of incredible disgrace and disrespect for the family. Through this introduction of the dishonorable practice and convention of *sati*, Sahgal criticizes the man centric and severe type of Hinduism. Through this portrayal of the act of *sati*, Sahgal likewise depicts the human and violent side of convention, history and social practices in Indian culture⁸.

Sahgal sees the emergency as an occasion which denotes a clean break from past like the room of Dev with add up to secrecy, as it bore "No echo of things past or thing to come". (2) It is a peculiar vacuum, where anonymous individuals fit among solid power images of imported autos and the fragile ring of Belgian gem and scotch whisky, five times more costly than Indian whisky. The assertion of Emergency witnesses the quick trade of energy from mother to the child, prompting the beautification of the royal city by exploding apartments, vasectomising the majority and setting up youth camps. Sonali caught wind of how lawbreakers were being blinded by the police with needles dunked in corrosive as discipline for a wide range of violations. At the point when she saw ruthless treatment towards a kid on an open street, she thinks about how individuals could bear what she calls "this bogus emergency". T.N. Dhar remarks, "One of the dismal features of the times, the novel stresses, was that Madam, (Mrs. Gandhi in the novel) succeeded in getting the support of lawyers, professors, newspaper editors, and other liberal and progressive groups for her unrestricted use of power". (Dhar, 153)⁹

Women and power are conventionally thought to be paired alternate extremes traditional societies like India. Women are relied upon to adjust to socially built sexual orientation parts and any transgression wherefrom prompts a provoke marking of being "bold" and "unwomanly". The very qualities of women that Mary Wollstonecraft had adequately reproved in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) are as yet held dear in well known consciousness and esteemed exceedingly particularly for wedding contemplations. Tragically, training and expert skill hold practically zero significance in numerous Indian families looking for

"excellent, reasonable cleaned, simple" ladies for their dubious "very much settled" children as is apparent from marital notices in the daily papers. Women are named as substandard and ill defined people, everlastingly intended to obey and never order. Simone de Beauvoir's revelation of one not being conceived as but rather turning into a lady seems to be valid in such twisted impression of sex relations in the general public. The novel *Rich Like Us* depicts the status of women as found in the Indian culture. Numerous awkward inquiries are raised— how can it be that God spared Draupadi, who likewise needed to wed five men for no blame of hers, while Sita needed to petition be gulped by the earth in spite of demonstrating her modesty however trial by flame. The hero Sonali makes a scorching observation— "Everything relies upon whether you are on the correct side of power and transcendence. Sita wasn't and it was expulsion to the wild for her" (*Rich Like Us*, 252). While the men certainly summon the figures of Krishna and Draupadi to justify various spouses, the lady needs to take after the norm— to obligatorily wed, to agree and be devoted, bear youngsters to be the special lady of her own house, to confer *Sati* keeping in mind the end goal to stay away from the difficulties of widowhood, to serve in sanctuaries for being a kid dowager et cetera.

In such a situation, it is useful to break down the significant women characters of *Rich Like Us* in whom one can identify various articulations of power and agency— they may not be very "effective" in their own and social lives, however they do show unavoidable trends and reestablished arrangement and also contestation of their everyday lived involvement. Portrayal of such women communicating various sorts of power is significant— the demonstration of portrayal itself being a political demonstration naturally vital to creation and spread of learning and in this manner, prompting activity of power (Kalyanee Rajan²⁰¹²)¹⁰. Another important facet of the emotions of women is that for fear of loss of societal status and esteem lot of sufferings are hushed up by women. Hence, they become mute spectators of patriarchal domination. Men decide the destiny of women. Rose dreams of romantic life with Ram, but her rosy picture of life is shattered on her arrival to India and sees the first wife of Ram and his son Dev. She cannot go back to

her land and her people and shed tears because it was her choice to be the wife of Ram. She pleads to Ram for obtaining a divorce but he refuses and there ends the matter. Such insignificant role in decision making makes the plight of women very miserable.

Conclusion

The author's patriotic feelings for the country and its people, is revealed through realistic portrayal of the state of affairs during the emergency period. This work is an attempt to make an in depth study of the emotions and its impact on the people connected. Sahgal's novel successfully depicts the impression of torture during the time of emergency on various characters. This novel gives a clear – eyed account of the events of Emergency itself and its brutality. "Rich Like Us" is a repeat act and an eye-opener at that Rich Like Us Sets out to analyses the Indian heritage which is not all bliss and not all same. The bits of evil which surface how are not all the result of a colonial aftermath. They are bits of the Indian Heritage with its ratio, class-system and caste-division, and with India's inability to generate and persist in a native morality. The Gandhian episode begins to appear not as a continuation of a tradition, but a flash in the pan which was now over. *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.

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