

**Subjugation and Patriarchal enclosure of women in Nayantara Sahgal's  
Storm in Chandigarh and the Day in Shadow**

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**Abstract:** The patriarchal system reduces women's status to inferior position and it perpetuated its system through myths and traditions, which unfortunately have been a part of Society. Indian feminists and feminist novelists also have fought against gender discrimination and feminist issues with Indian patriarchal society, such as inheritance of laws and the practice of Sati. Despite the protest voice against patriarchal society made by some Indian feminist novelists, women living in modern India still face many problems of discrimination. India's patriarchal culture has made the process of gaining land ownership rights and the system of gender discrimination on women servants. In past two decades, there has also emerged a trend of female infanticide abortion.

**Key Words:** Discrimination, Myth, Patriarchal Society, Tradition etc.

Women were not recognized as individuals or autonomous beings. Women had to face many obstacles in the academic circuit, which symbolizes the effects of an educational culture that radically restricts the scope of women's intellectual exposure. Woolf identifies the certain information of being denied access to buildings or ideas as another type of infringement on the freedom of the female mind. This exclusion is a more radical kind of information, one that disturbs not just as a single thought or review but the life-long development of an individual or the historical development of an intellectual tradition. Women's movements campaigns have in the main, redefined sexuality in various significant ways, rejecting patriarchal and normative conceptualizations of female sexuality. As we have seen throughout the book, women identifying themselves as feminists – therefore understanding their positions as posing a challenge to patriarchal structures and institutions – are nevertheless divided in the ways they conceptualize their understanding of sexual difference. The study shows feminism is a struggle for equality of women, an effort to make women become like men. Feminism is seen as the struggle against all forms of patriarchal and sexist aggression, such as oppositional definition presents. Feminism as the necessary resistance to the patriarchal power, logically then it is a theory of imagination. Therefore, streams within feminism have sometimes ignored aspects of female sexuality that they have felt uncomfortable with – therefore there has a feminist rejection of the 'vampish' or overtly sexualise images of women. Women have been prevented from having justice from social, economic, political and constitutional spheres and largely ignored as the 'Weaker Sex'. The twentieth century has seen the new awareness about the women's

marginalized status resulting in the birth of women's Liberation Movement. Literature, being the mirror of society does not reflect the pathetic condition of women but explores the woman's questions, extensively and vociferously. Some feminists assert the importance of women to become aware of themselves as individuals, and shaping their destinies by assertiveness and self-confidence and they use the term 'Feminist Consciousness' in this context. Juliet Mitchell in her book, *Psycho Analysis and Feminism*, defines the term Feminist Consciousness as "the process of transforming the hidden individual fears of women into shared awareness of the meaning of them as social problems, the release of anger, anxiety, the struggle of proclaiming the painful and transforming it into the political"(Mitchell 61). Notwithstanding, the traditional bound women accept their false conditioning into subordination and dependence without objections, the sensitive and aware women realize their need of freedom and struggle against the norms suffering women. Nayantara Sahgal in her article, *The Virtuous Woman*, refuses the opposing the institution of marriage: "Leaving a marriage that had become an emotional wasteland" (Sahgal 1). Simone de Beauvoir in her book, *The Second Sex*, argues: "She is called the sex, by which is meant that she appears essentially to the male as a sexual being, for him she is sex, absolute sex, no less....she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the subject, he is the absolute- she is the other" (Beauvoir 16).

Women have no social rights to own property. Under their own names they do not have any inheritance rights to obtain a share of parental property. Thus patriarchal system reduces women's status to inferior position and it perpetuated its system through myths and traditions, which unfortunately have been a part of Society. Indian feminists and feminist novelists also have fought against gender discrimination and feminist issues with Indian patriarchal society, such as inheritance of laws and the practice of Sati. Despite the protest voice against patriarchal society made by some Indian feminist novelists, women living in modern India still face many problems of discrimination. India's patriarchal culture has made the process of gaining land ownership rights and the system of gender discrimination on women servants. In past two decades, there has also emerged a trend of female infanticide abortion. To Indian feminists, they are seen as injustice.

Nayantara Sahgal has strong ideas against gender bias. She could never understand the patriarchal system which believed in damaging the potentials of women and treating them as if they were things and not human beings. In *Storm in Chandigarh* Inder is a typical male character who feels his wife as slave. He has clear and strong features of manliness and behaves with pre-dominant male ego. Though a father of two children and soon to be blessed with one more children, he believes that child rearing is women's job. He boldly says: A thousand years from now a woman will still want and need a master, the man who will own and command her and that is the man she will respect (Sahgal 108).

Saroj, in *Storm in Chandigarh*, is not able to find a reciprocal involvement in her marriage. Inder, her husband is not only from a different cultural background but he is a different kind of person altogether, Saroj has been brought up in an atmosphere of freedom and she has grown up to expect equality. But she is suffered by Inder's cruel reaction to an affair

she has had before her marriage. She tells him about it in all her innocence but this is for him the beginning of a nagging suspicion. He considers it to be a serious moral lapse. Inder believes himself to have wronged. In an order that clearly demarcated the roles of men and women, unless that venerable order was breached, trampled and mocked, He was maddened by it. When it came over him, he sat looking at Saroj with a revulsion that had ancient, tribal male roots (Sahgal36). When she marries Inder, she has the previous experience in pre-marital relationship. It is a different situation that society which lives by double moral standards. Saroj, however, is not really guilty. She is not dishonest and for her it is a part of her life and she is warmly and fully involved in her marriage but her husband is afraid by this activity. For that he uses to humble her and to destroy her sense of innocence. Inder's attitude is secret in keeping the cruel behaviour with the rest of his character. He has no time for emotional involvements or tenderness, his whole nature is ruthless and aggressive. While Saroj longs to penetrate his inflexibility, Inder persists in raking up the past and withdraws into his own self, leaning her outside, isolated and unhappy beating against, numbness like a bird against a window pane, trapped in a futile frenzy (Sahgal97). The couples in Sahgal's *Storm in Chandigarh* live together under the same roof but they are separated by loneliness and emptiness.

In the novel, *Storm in Chandigarh*, Saroj is married to Inder, who runs the fabric mills of Saroj's cousin Nikhil Ray's company in Chandigarh. There is no exciting relationship between them, in spite of their four year married life with two children. She represents the new woman who is trying to preserve her individuality and breathe liberally in the suffocating atmosphere of passionless and unrewarding marriages and to live in self respect, thus completely demanding a re-alignment of the parameters on which marriage function. But She does not think it as a sin rather as a part of growing up. After her marriage she has been truthful to Inder to the fullest degree. She is a person who values common belief, consideration, honesty, message and absence of pretence in a relationship. She is carefully honest to Inder and her honesty in marital relationship can be gauged from the fact that she even confesses about her pre-marital relationship to him with the purpose of looking forward to a clean break from the past. But this affirmation actually dooms their marriage. Inder keeps on torturing her mentally and physically ever since her acknowledgment. Inder represents the usual patriarchal approach of society toward woman which puts high premium on female chastity and virginity before marriage. The double standards of patriarchal ethics are evident from the fact that Inder who wants to make Saroj feel 'ashamed' of her pre-marital situation, himself has many sexual experiences before marriage. But women have no right to question male promiscuity or treat in practices which are deliberate to be male prerogatives. Thus the relationship between Inder and Saroj exposes the cruel face of patriarchal society where a woman lives in a pathetic condition and faces sufferings and harassment because of strong social taboos, she cannot escape herself from society therefore she accepts these things as the part of her destiny.

There is another couple in *Storm in Chandigarh* Jit and Mara, in search of sharing and involvement. Mara is a strong, Westernized, independent-minded woman. She is full of life and ideas but Jit is quite passive. Jit and Mara's story is quite different. Jit has no skeletons in his

cupboard. He is an affectionate, understanding and caring man, but Mara is not satisfied. She wants someone to exercise authority over her. Jit's passivity is killing her and she is losing her energy. Inder comes as a life force and she feels more youthful. She is a childless woman; Jit's passivity had made her life dull and monotonous. Inder's strong presence shakes her back to life and she likes it. Though Inder is at times insensitive to her, she likes him. It is as if with Jit, she was lacking something and Inder fills that empty space. With Jit as husband and Inder as a friend, her life reaches its fulfillment: She wanted all the worlds, she could lay hands on and the best of each...the softness of Jit and the hardness of Inder...Was it wrong to fulfill and integrate oneself through fragments of other natures (Sahgal 57). Perhaps Mara's problem depends on the fact that she has outgrown Jit. Her marriage to Jit had been a decision taken in haste only to repent at leisure: If you were nearly thirty, you wondered at such times what had become of your life, why the man you had met at a party and married eight years had not, after all been your destination (Sahgal56). Jit is soft and sweet-tempered but he fails to make an impact, which Inder does. She wants Jit to be more human with all human weakness. That Jit gives into all her whims, that he never seems to mind anything and that even when hurt, he does not show signs of anger are the facts which Mara hates. She shakes Jit to wake him. Compared to Jit's passivity, Inder's impertinence is welcome.

*The Day in Shadow* also exposes the cruel patriarchal system of the society. It reveals the male chauvinism in the modern male who believes himself to be liberal-minded, but he considers wife as his possession. Her husband Som is also a cruel face of male domination in our society. He tries to be modern in each and every activity and imitates the western life style. He speaks their language, learns their mannerisms and follows their fashions; Som is money-minded person. He gives more importance to money and power than human values. For men like Som, money is the most important thing in life and this love for money becomes the root cause of his separation from his wife. Simrit feels: Money has been part of the texture of her relationship with Som, an emotional forceful ingredient of it, intimately tied to his self-esteem. Money was, after all a form of pride, even of violence (Sahgal38).

Thus Som wants Simrit to act as a traditional wife and the ideal wife of subdued womanhood. Som believes the tradition that women should live under the control of man. Simrit finds it a sorrowful experience. She has no voice in the ordinary decisions of everyday life and not even in the choice of curtains or chair covers. Simrit's life with Som fails to continue longer and she feels isolated. There is nothing happened in their life. Sex is a part of life not a separate relationship which can be isolated from the rest of life. Sex is no more just sex that food is just food. Som's cruel activity to his wife proves that cruelty to a woman is an eternal manifestation in man's life and woman is still in the modern world a symbol of Indian modern woman - an embodiment of service, slavery and sacrifice. Simrit feels uprooted in a husband centered world in the time of divorce. It is difficult to begin a new life when she is unable to forget the memories of past life. She finds her life disrupted and herself in the midst of a peculiar financial problem. The heavy payments are an attempt to enslave her in every way. The divorce is a new beginning of risk to face the problems after the divorce settlement. She feels her position to that of an over loaded donkey whose burden attracts notice. There is no

pity for her. Her divorce does not convey the meaning that marriage had failed as social institution. Marriage is neither a system nor an escape route. But it exposes the cruel faces of patriarchal system. Som takes pride in showing his wife as his property. He often shows his wife before his friends. "Look what I've got. Good enough to keep under lock and key" (Sahgal27).

## Conclusion

The novelists like Nayantara Sahgal also accept the role of a preacher here at times and presents the pathetic condition of women in Indian Patriarchal Society. Women's issues and her domestic world find significant place in the novels of Nayantara Sahgal in spite of the novelist's pre occupation with other issues. Understanding the novels of Nayantara Sahgal in a feminist context is thus important and interesting not because she is a woman novelist, nor because she writes about women like other woman novelists, Shashi Deshpande, Kamala Markandeya and Gita Hariharan. She does not have the feminine problems in her little heart, but considers the feminist issues as radical feminist that leads to large feminine problems without presenting unnecessary details about her characters. She searches deeply the emotional fulfillment among her women characters.

Our Society is tradition bound and conventional which makes women as victims and helpless. Women especially young, immature and inexperienced women become easy prey to these conventions, as they are powerless, likely to suffer, defaulters and more exposed than their older and mature counterparts. Once victimized, some of them quietly accept the role traditionally offered to them, while some others embrace death as the only refuge from the problems created by society. In *Storm in Chandigarh* Saroj decides to leave the home that has failed to give her shelter and security, she is helped by her relatives. It shows that the awareness against wrong marriage has started spreading and society at large has begun sensing the need to break off the relation which becomes suppressing. Simrit in *the Day in Shadow* is again not at all scared of desiring Som, though she is burdened with many children. It is in *the Day in Shadow* that Sahgal thinks on the issue of divorce at great length. Simrit finds pity, suspicion, hatred and even jealousy in the eyes of people when they come to know she is a divorcee. People look at her, "as if divorce were a disease that left pock marks". Simrit is professedly Sahgal's own image. Sahgal herself had to experience what Simrit goes through. Her disbelief in divorce as a solution to wrong marriage is a natural system to her belief in the institution of marriage. There is another relevant issue that Sahgal raises from time to time, through her several characters. This issue is that of virtue, chastity and honour of women.

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