

Postcolonial Analysis of Indian Politics in the Select Fiction of Nayantara Sahgal

Fayaz Ahmad Bhat
Research Scholar,
English,
Bundelkhand University Jhansi (U.P.)

Imtiyaz Ahmad Dar
Research Scholar, Department of
Department of English,
Jiwaji University Gwalior.

Abstract:

India is a postcolonial society and was under the British rule for almost two hundred years. It is well-known that Indian culture is absolutely different from European traditions. That is why there were not only political and religious conflicts but also cultural ones. In the late 18th century The Great Britain and France struggled for dominance, partly through proxy Indian rulers but also by direct military intervention. The expansion of British power increases rapidly through the greater part of the Indian subcontinent. By the middle of century the British had already gained direct or indirect control over almost all of India.

Key words: - Postcolonial, Rule, Conflicts, Expansion, Military Intervention, Control.

India was under the tyrannical rule of Britishers for more almost two hundred years. The Britishers first got settled for the development of India and promised this with the masses of India. But after few years, when they found the Indian soil rich in raw material they forgot their promise of development and began to drain the wealth of India to their own continent. The Indian people were treated as brutes and were enslaved by the Britishers. By the middle of century the British had already gained direct or indirect control over almost all of India. The revolt of mutiny in 1857 and the policies adopted by Gandhi compelled the Britishers to leave the land of India. Gandhi along with many freedom fighters including extremists and moderates fought bravely and got succeeded to curb the barbarous rule of Britishers in India. Time after colonialism is generally referred to as post-colonialism. In India this period began in the middle of 20th century when the country faced renovation after invading. Post-colonial time was the time of the independence. Considering post-colonial time, one should take into consideration the term decolonization: process of transition of colonial countries to independence and freedom. In India there are many English writers who had written about post

colonial politics one among them is Nayantara Sahgal who demystifies the vast confusing paths of 20th century Indian politics within its historical architecture, the subtle as well as the visible attendant change, spill out of the crevices of her formidable fictional structure, calling attention to the directions new India had taken. More often than not, these changes are symptomatic of the ubiquitous malicious growth in the body politic and social fabric of an emerging nation. These changes, registered in the political vision, economic policy, cultural practices, religious predilections, scientific cross-over and personal space of the Indians, get reflected in the keen penetrative fiction of Sahgal. Well-endowed as she is with the homegrown legacy of thought, sharp political insight, historical scholarship, personal experience and critical reflections, the writer probes these changes for the deep implications they hold for India and the world.

The use of the political genre is one of the main aspects of her novels, the others being the exploration of the religious theme and the problems of women in contemporary society. An important feature in Sahgal's novels is that the political scene in her novels has been presented in human terms. Her fictional political universe throbs with flesh and blood human figures rather than mere abstractions. She uses psychology to engraft her humanitarian concerns and the public and private selves of her characters are blended and explored. One gets from political writers like, Nayantara Sahgal, not the cold truth of the political scientist, but the hot truth of an artist. Sahgal sensitive to human reality, present the political happenings in a wider human framework. The happenings in each novel assume a kind of allegorical dimension. The political and cultural events become an allegory for life. The public political events narrated so scrupulously by the writer becomes a reflection for the private personal happenings. Nayantara Sahgal points out to the glaring defects and imperfections in the Indian political and social world and holds it up against the ideal traditions of the Gandhian era, in novels like *Rich like us* and *Situation in New Delhi*. Where the seemingly secure world of order and discipline propagated by the Emergency is actually an allegory of the muck and dirt of actual Indian politics. Parallels are drawn between the domestic situations projected and the actual political situations. The disturbed relationships, unhappiness and frustration are paralleled to the tensions and quarrels of the state division in the novel *A Storm in Chandigarh*. The novels entitled *This Time of morning*, *A Situation In New Delhi*, *Storm In Chandigarh*, and *Rich Like Us* project the complexity of human relations against the backdrop

of actual political happenings. *This Time of Morning* is set against the backdrop of a just liberated nation undergoing the birth pangs of a new era. *Storm in Chandigarh* depicts certain sets of complex human relations against the background of the second partition of Punjab. The end and aftermath of the Nehruvian era culminating in *A Situation In New Delhi* and dynastic rule of Indira Gandhi, culminating in the declaration of Emergency in the seventies in *Rich Like Us*, which also explores the complexity of the Indo-British relations. Sahgal's second novel, *This Time of Morning* is set against the backdrop of a just liberated nation and seeks to catch the dilemma of a country just passing through the birth pangs of a new era. This novel talks about the attitudes of Indians for whom power has suddenly become a potential reality. Here we observe all canons of decency and decorum overthrown, in the hunt for power. Power here becomes a political reality, to be used or misused. Nayantara Sahgal uses satire effectively and forcefully in this novel to explore the manipulation and treachery that goes on behind the scenes in the Indian political arena. The private and the public are intermingled to focus on reality- the incongruities and the imitation world of the Narang family serve as an analogy to the muddle in the ministry of External Affairs. This novel emerges definitely as a political one, concerning itself with both the corruption and idealism of the political world. The humanitarian and liberal spirit is the essence of Sahgal's philosophy and thinking and this idea encompasses her concerns political, social and ideological. In *This Time of Morning*, the post independence issue of freedom and progress is given individual color. For men like Hari Mohan and Somnath it is power, for others it is the opportunity to create a new society through services. On one hand this novel provides an insight into the working of politics, on the other hand it seeks to explore the effects and outcome of these as they work out in the life of individuals. Rakesh notices the disorder in his country and notes also the signs of progress. He realizes that the time has come to find an identity of their own as Indians of the new era-an identity based on a judicious mixture of modern ideas and ancient values. The seeking of identity that Indians craved for in these early years of independence an identity based on an admixture of the best aspects of the west without severance of their own heritage is paralleled by Rashmi, Nita and Rakesh themselves seeking to express their own individuality and establishing their own identity. Aspects of a society in transition are expressed in the life and attitudes of women like Nita and Rashmi. Rashmi's broken marriage is the result of disastrous relationships and changed perceptions from earlier conventional ones of woman's chastity, submission and self-sacrifice. Rashmi wants

depth in relationships, to her marriage should be based on love and belonging and humanistic values. Rather than suffer in silence; aghast at growing indifference to relationships, she walks out of her marriage, which has turned, into a farce. Nita is a new woman who wishes to live her own life, with a job, earning her livelihood and leading a useful life. She resents an arranged marriage, which is overshadowed by material concerns where even sexual and emotional acts are merely conventional facades. Mira-Rashmi's mother on the other hand is a traditional woman for whom marriage and traditional relationships and images are irrevocable for they keep life and society together. Her daughter's decision of divorce shocks her, but she realizes change is inevitable and life has become complex as she states in *This Time of Morning*: "New vistas presented a range of new conflicts and tensions that society had never known in their youth" (161).

Sehgal being born in the Nehru family has politics in her blood. She has herself experienced the political standpoints while spending her childhood in Anand Bhavan at Allahabad. She has the first hand experience of the politics of India and that is why most of her novels have of touch of politics with a realistic point of view. She has explored the political ups and downs and vividly expressed them in her writings in order to adorn her and make the masses aware about the genesis of politics in India. Her novels are not biased but truthfully capture the events and incidents that have either shaped the Indian politics or have weakened the thread of unity. She dexterously portrays the cultural, political and social issues that were prevalent at the times in the Indian politics. The trauma of partition and many other events in the historical scenario are dealt with a critical thinking. Her novels are true reflections that highlight the Indian politics as she was herself reared in same background. To conclude, her novels are rich in political themes and witness many incidents that took place in the politics of India.

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