

Women as Subaltern in Nayantara Sahgal's *This Time of Morning*

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Introduction

The novels of Nayantara Sahgal concentrates the sufferings of women in the society before and after independence. Sahgal wants to bring out the real position and freedom of woman. She reveals these things through characters of Rashmi, Nita and Mira. The inner feelings of these characters cannot be accepted by all even is selecting their life partners. The story revolves around these major female characters and some male characters, Rakesh, Kalyan Sinha and Arjun Mitra. Rachel Bari comments Sahgal characters in his Gender and Politics, Nayantara Sahgal's women are of the view that they should move with the time or not compromise with the issue of their individual freedom in our male dominated society. (48)

In India, arrange marriage is quite common. In this regard, Parents has selected suitor for their daughters. Here, the opinion and dream of woman's marriage life has been killed by the name of tradition. B.P. Sinha comments on Indian marriage in his Feminist Concept A study of Nayantara Sahgal's Fiction,

In childhood a female should be dependent on her father and in youth on her husband and after the death of her husband on her children. If she has no sons or the near the kinsmen of her husband. ... In Indian classical literature a woman is always shown in relationship to man. (30)

Rashmi is a daughter of Kailash Urind and Mira. Kailash has followed non-violence and lover of Gandhi. However, he never thinks to place the opinion of his wife. Mira is a traditional Indian wife. She feels happy to participate or to support her husband's views. He never considers her as his equal. Rashmi is married to Dalip but misunderstanding between them make them to be separated. Then, Rashmi decides to get divorce from Dalip. Because he never considers her as his life partner. Nayantara Sahgal says in her, In Women: Person or Possessions Nayantara Sahgal says,

When I heard someone remark: we never allow our daughters to go out 'or' I can't do that, my husband would not like it, it sounded a very peculiar, alien jargon. As if I thought, women were property, not persons. (1)

When this divorce heard by Mira, she has burst out. Because she is a traditional Indian wife of being with her husband at any kind of situation. Being a woman, she is not tolerable with the decision of Rashmi and says,

She had not tried to talk Rashmi out of her decision but her very withdrawal had been an accusation of Rashmi, a charge that the moral order was degenerating, that the old virtues were no longer honoured. ...Mira was not reconciled to Rashmi's attitude, but she could concede it. (224)

Woman like Mira think of themselves as subaltern to man in all ways. The background and tradition make them to be slaves of it. She never has different opinion of her husband. He says about Indians, "Indians are no more peace loving than anyone else". (26) Kailas had always been grateful for Mira's quite housekeeping. Mira often worries about Rashmi that she cannot lead her whole life alone apart from the rules and regulation of the society. Neil explains peace and conflict in marriage to Rashmi as,

Peace is a necessity, like bread and water, he said. 'I don't think it ought to be dramatized. Have you noticed it never had been? Tolstoy said happy marriages are all alike and no one has written plays novels about them because there is no drama without conflict. (192)

Another important character is Nita. She is never allowed to go out without her parents. As per parents, Mr and Mrs. Narang, she does not smoke and drink but she likes to do it. But she is strictly prohibited to do certain things because she is a female. So she should be virgin in all types of behaviours. Rakesh has come to call Nita to the party. B.P.Sinha says about these characters,

Nita is not quite certain what she wants from life she does want to find it for herself, not have it thrust upon her. Then there is Rashmi who with an unhappy behind her is slowly groping her way back of disillusionment. (Sinha 119)

Her mother says, "But don't keep Nita out too late. Her father hardly ever allows her to go out to these club dances. He's ever so strict...of course we don't allow Nita to go out alone. Her father would not hear of it". (38) But Mr. Narang is lover of going to clubs and for drinking, smoking etc. Rachel Bari says about Nita's father as,

Nita is the young, beautiful daughter of Dr. Narang, who is a queer blend of Eastern and Western culture. Western life – style is a part of Narang's culture but when it comes to his daughter, he would act in the most traditional manner, imposing severe restrictions on the movement of his ambitious daughter. (Bari 49)

Nita is something different from other female characters of Sahgal. B.P. Sinha comments on her in his, *Social and Political Concerns in the novels of Nayantara Sahgal*,

Nita wants a job of her own and resents the idea of an arranged marriage to perhaps one of the 'putty faced' men whose family regard her as a catch. Nita feels that the emotional content of such a marriage would be over shadowed by the material concerns, by the stocks and shares, 'money and clothes'. And she wonders what about her body and its desires... the body that pulsed for something with an urgency she had never known. (119)

The wife of Arjun Mitra is described by Neil Berenson very badly. Uma is a nineteen-year-old girl with beauty. He describes her as, "The woman with the breasts – he could not describe her frank sexuality any other way- was than her husband and aware of it. The green and gold saree that looked like layers of net was nonetheless too girlish for her" (27) Neil Berenson sees her and judges her with her physical beauty not with her real own feelings. Here, he shows his chauvinistic attitude. Arjun Mitra marries Uma without the wish of her. He marries her for the sake of his parents and their wish. Her opinion is not considered as important because he is thirty-three-year-

old man and she is just nineteen. She feels alone in the house. Mitra never consider her as his equal and a life partner. To him,

As far he was concerned Uma was dead. As for the world was concerned he continued to give food, shelter and the protection of his name to the woman he had had the misfortune to marry. He would have done as much had his wife become insane or incurably ill. (34)

Always he feels satisfied to stay with books. He asks her to chat with neighbours to pass her time. But he never tries to understand her and he always blame her. Women are considered as subaltern even in economically. Their wages are lower than the males. However, they are dare enough to face the problems. Rachel Bari comments on Uma thus,

What more could you expect from Uma, a young girl with only marriage as the goal? Or is it? In fact, there are no instances of a woman with a career in the novel. There are women who work but not as in career. And even if they do, it always in the position of subordination. (Bari 40)

The bold and modern woman, Nita is offered a job by the minister Kalyan Sinha. The job is offered by a minister so their parents could not refuse it. Nita becomes happy to become a working woman. Here, Kalyan pretends to be respectable man towards young educated woman. But when he was in abroad he cheated and murdered two women like objects for his need. There Kalyan had started the Centre in 1935 to encourage public opinion in favour of India's freedom. He became the president of it. A girl who was studying at Radcliffe, Leela. She calls Rakesh as Rakesh Bhai,

It touched him that she called him Rakesh Bhai, as though clinging to the shred of emotional security this gave her. But gradually like of them she was drawn to Kalyan and began to turn to him when she needed advice. (79)

She visited Kalyan often. But at times reduced. Rakesh never see her again. She said goodbye by saying goodbye to him and informed that she would go for New York. Then Rakesh had enjoyed his vacation offered by the University. That came to an end with the inquiry of the police,

The vacation was coming to an end when he got a message from the police station to identify the body of an Indian girl found in the Charles river. The police concluded after questioning those who had known Leela best that her pregnancy had been too great ... she was not, as far as you knew, about to be married? He had been asked. (103)

Rakesh knew that Kalyan is the seducer and the murderer of Leela. He also spoils the life of Celia too.

Conclusion

The world has grown up in many ways. However, it lacks few things like equality of women and a woman cannot go out even in the day time. Because many brutal tortures for women happen in the world. Here, the women characters have suffered because of the sexual harassment of sadist like Kalyan Sinha finish the life of the woman. This is the slight example of reflection of the world. So women have to aware of certain things in the world.

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