



Social Problems and Political Turmoil in Nayantara Sahgal's *Storm in Chandigarh*

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Abstract: *Nayantara Sahgal is considered as one of the most representative Indian- English novelists of twentieth century. She is a realist to represent certain problems existing in society. She wrote about social inequality, defected political and economic order, and moral and religious evils. In her fiction, Sahgal presents an immense relationship in which characters act, react and interact variously in different situations of life. In Storm in Chandigarh, Sahgal presents a social and political crisis in the lives of various characters living together in the various complex relationships. The present paper attempts to study the social problems and political turmoil in Storm in Chandigarh.*

Key Words: *Social, Political, Problems, Society, Relationship, Turmoil.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Nayantara Sahgal is a unique writer with an extraordinary attitude to explore the social issues existing in Indian society. Her fictional work represents chiefly about her political interest. About her political interest she herself describes in "Passion for India":

Politics was, of course, my background, and my environment, and it became my natural material. I grew up at a time when literature and politics went hand in hand, and helped to illumine and interpret each other. It was a time when songs, poems and stories were the focus for the struggle against foreign rule. (208)

Storm in Chandigarh represents a very unfortunate event- all those problems, violent attitudes and conflicts that arose due to the division of Punjab and Haryana in Indian history. Punjabi speaking people wanted to have their own separate state while those who belong to Haryana consider it expensive and dangerous from the viewpoint of economy and border security. The novel *Storm in Chandigarh* is a live picture gallery of problems like centres interference in state issues due to water and electricity supply. Chandigarh is also the centre of violence whom both the states are pulling on their sides.

In this novel Mrs Sahgal also explores the problem of centres intrusion in state issues. Firstly, it was central government that allowed the bifurcation of the body of Punjab, and then created a problem by declaring its claim on Punjab's agricultural resources. So, there is a great chaos among the two states. Vishal Dubey, a central representative is sent to Chandigarh to restore peace in Punjab and Haryana. Due to his intelligence and understanding, he is expected to solve this problem. It's a new challenge for him to establish a new position as a liaison officer among the people who would never be welcomed him. Actually, Vishal Dubey is a bold selfless man who is filled with full of dedications, austerity and sacrifice towards this post.

After studying the whole issue about the production and export figures, Dubey was acquainted with the cause of dissatisfaction between the two states. Both the states had common problems of irrigation-system and the centre claimed it's absolute control on the whole power system whose control points were two very large reservoirs of Bhakra and Pong. Power was supplied from there to Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan and Kashmir. Punjab's chief minister claimed his state's control on it and was ready to launch a strike in support of his demands followed by both the states. Vishal wants to raise a question of allowance given by the centre to Punjab why "redivided twenty years after the gruelling partition of 1947." (20) But soon he realizes that the civil servants must not ask such type of question. They have to perform just their duty to act as puppets in the hands of wily politicians.

Storm in Chandigarh represents the problem of violence too, in every field of life. It seems to signify that storm of violence is blowing not only in Chandigarh, but also everywhere. Political, social and religious-all circle of life are in its grip. The life of a school going boy and the life of a reputed politician both are equally overpowered by violence. All the citizen like- mill-owners, common people, policeman and innocent women are victim of the brutal aspect of violence.

In the beginning of the novel, we listen to the Home Minister Stating, violence lies very close to the surface of the Punjab which appears to Nikhil ray, a Bengali industrialist as a private and with individualistic attitude, because he desires to confirm that Punjab has not the station of violence, rather it had spread everywhere. Nikhil says, “I deal with it at the mills. When the men are roused, they don’t just want a bonus or an adjustment of pay scales, they want your blood...” (23)

The novelist introduces a few characters who have witnessed to the partition- terror, blood-shed and the fierce form of cruelty. We see the Home Minister recollecting the memories of 1947 when the communal riot occurred. Transport and communication arrangements had been largely disturbed, people became violent and both Hindus and Muslims were afraid of each other. People were confined to their houses and a Muslim neighbourhood surrounded by Hindus underwent a great danger, as it became a programme to supply ration there.

From social point of view, *Storm in Chandigarh* narrates the tale of few dissatisfied characters who represent the growing dissatisfaction a post independent Indian life. There is only material advancement that has been achieved but inner content is still far. Man has been self-centred. Besides his own job circle, he has lest time to devote even to his family and if anyone tries to remove this discontent and misunderstanding, he is boycotted as an intruder.

Through the characters of Inder and Saroj, we saw a number of problems of adjustment of a woman and also the inward possession-instinct of a man. Inder belongs to the patriarchal figure with a conservative attitude towards women. In his view, a woman is a subservience, who holds no separate existence no desire, no ambition, rather the fulfilment of her life lies in serving the husband and family.

Though externally, he seems to follow the modern ideals and new mode of life yet internally, he is led by a sacraments and primitive ideas. He is a stern follower of married love and wants a woman chaste before marriage. After marriage she seems to him only a means of sexual satisfaction. One cannot expect friendship, understanding or least amount of affection from him. His sacraments repeatedly come on his tongue and tell the tale of ideals as are expected from a wife only.

Inder wife Saroj is a simple, Indian housewife, who becomes victim of her husband superiority feelings and is tormented thoroughly. She is a pure hearted woman with lot of innocence. She tells Inder about her pre- marriage sexual experience and Inder’s orthodox outlook cannot accept the reality and innocence of her wife. Consequently, he fails to cope with Saroj in his domestic life. Mrs Sahgal sharply reacts against the traditional social and moral norms in which women stuck up in a bit of humiliation and negligence. Chaman Nahal observes:

In each case the attack is not against the institution of marriage but against the inequality and injustice that is forced upon women by men using the institution of marriage. (102)

It appears a great challenge to Inder’s manhood and he wants her to confess and stoop before him. Jealousy and superiority instinct overpower him in such a way that all his wife’s efforts to be normal bitterly fail. Neena Arora observes:

Inder, the husband, who himself is hankering after another woman constantly rebukes and harasses his wife Saroj because of her past sexual indulgence with her college mate once. Inder is maddened by jealousy and behaves in a primitive manner by torturing her physically and mentally quite often. (61)

Though sometimes he also tries to get rid of this self-made problem and sympathises with her, yet soon he becomes helpless before his nature. The novel informs us that it is Inder who welcomes the idea of Pinjore picnic chalked out by Mara, and takes his family there with great joy but, on the way the ghost of past overpowers him and he leaves them all. He proves to be a double standard person, who leads a double life. His dominating habits don’t let him remain happy with his wife and to satisfy his passions he seeks the company of Mara but even before her he tries to maintain his superiority. Mara is aware of the fact that there is something that is missing in their life, but Inder never reveals his secret. She says about Inder, “Trying to know him was like walking on a soapy surface.” (175)

At one place when for Inder and Saroj all the doors of hope and harmony seem shut, Vishal Dubey comes in Saroj's life with a friendly hand and sympathetic touch. A few evening-walks together help them to understand each other. It is Vishal who always motivates Saroj, and fills her with great confidence. In Vishal's view, Saroj is a simple, loveable and kind hearted. Saroj gets all those things in Vishal's company which she is never given by her husband. Finally, unable to bear the harsh attitude of Inder she leaves Inder's house for ever with the help of Vishal. Vishal is, later on, beaten by Inder for interference. To him, Inder appears as an uncivilised person in a civilised society. Thus, the rude and egoistic behaviour of Inder results in separation and destructions of family harmony and peace.

The truth of modern life has been fused in this novel. Sometimes the man wants emotional response and leaving an argument due to patriarchal ego, while the woman is unable to come out of her domestic circle, kind nature and submissive attitude. Sometimes a woman longs for freedom, desires to live free life, but the cruel society keeps on blaming her for a little mistake of past. People have lost all peace and naturalness, and when they come in external world's contact, they find the same restlessness that reflected in the atmosphere. So, everywhere a lot of loneliness is existing, and no peace at all.

Inder is dissatisfied with Saroj. Saroj is also melancholic in the company of her husband whose commander-like personality has overshadowed her and does not let her remain in peace. Both lack something in each other and try to get it outside. Mara has her own problem to face. She is fed up by Jit's affection and friendly treatment and wants to behold Inder's rudeness and superiority in his personality. At the beginning their relationship explore a kind of positiveness with one another. Jit on the other hand is unable to get an emotional response from his wife and feels a vacuum in his personality. Similarly, Gauri has everything full luxury, wealthy husband and children but she also misses something and tries to see it in Vishal's company. Vishal on the other hand proves to be a fiasco. His wife Leela, loved by a young man Hari, always tried to be embodiment of fidelity. Both passed together a very unhappy life and is resulted in Leela's untimely death.

To conclude Sahgal in *Storm in Chandigarh* explored a world that struck up in political turmoil and social issues made on the basis of caste, creed and sex. It is Gandhian ideals which advocates don't be tolerate injustice and to follow Gandhian ideals most of the characters of Sahgal's novels strive to be free of any personal or political injustice. The characters actions represent the hindrance in the society. At both the political and social level Sahgal explored there are a number of problems existing in the society which creates chaos among the society.

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