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The Social Realities with Survival Strategies of the Protagonists in Nayantara Shgal's Storm in Chandigarh

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ABSTRACT

In Storm in Chandigarh, the scene of action shifts from Delhi to Chandigarh, but the same storm of This Time of Morning continues to rage in Storm in Chandigarh. The further linguistic bifurcation of Punjab into Haryana and Punjab nearly twenty years after the first partition based on religion is the situation; political tension between the two newly carved states regarding the boundaries, water and electric power is the theme and as the capital of the two states, Chandigarh is the stage for the action. The relationship between politics and literature has been an interesting field of study. Irving Howe, whose Politics and the Novel is considered the locus classics on the subject, caste, "more than enough skepticism on the impulse to assign literary levels" and calls his book Politics and the Novel, but not Political Novel

Key words: Social Realities, Survival Strategies, Protagonists, dominant politics

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Introduction

The political novel shares common indicators with the historical novel. A historical novel can be designated as political when it specifically and directly deals with political history. A political novel is "constricted to political aspects of history, whereas a historical extends beyond political terrain, to social, cultural, moral and economic aspects of history. As she is the daughter of Ranjit Pandit, a distinguished freedom fighter of Independent Movement and Vijayalakshmi Pandit, a remarkable woman who held important positions in national life as well as important assignments abroad and as she is also the 'ravan eyed' niece of Jawaharlal Nehru, the lieutenant of the non-violent movement and the first Prime Minister of Independent India, politics is her background and her environment and it becomes her natural material. She tells, 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....I do not believe in kings, queens or political dynasties. I have no ideology, 'I've never belonged to a political party. But in this country, politics-if by that we mean the use and misuse of power-invades our lives every day, both at the private, domestic level and at the national level.....political awareness is thrust upon us. It is justifiable to say, to use the words of M.L.Malhotra, that "Politics and Mrs.Sahgal are cousins German or if a metaphor can convey it more forcefully, Siamese twins.

In *Storm in Chandigarh*, the scene of action shifts from Delhi to Chandigarh, but the same storm of *This Time of Morning* continues to rage in *Storm in Chandigarh*. The further linguistic bifurcation of Punjab into Haryana and Punjab nearly twenty years after the first partition based on religion is the situation; political tension between the two newly carved states regarding the boundaries, water and electric power is the theme and as the capital of the two states, Chandigarh is the stage for the action. The novel that begins with the sentence "Violence lies very close to the surface in the Punjab."(P-1)

Depicts the conflict between the two diametrically opposite forces, violence and non-violence represented by Gyan Singh and Harpal Singh, Chief Ministers of Chandigarh and Haryana, respectively.If Gyan Singh, the megalomaniac politician, is the Jack of *Storm in Chandigarh*, *Harpal Singh*, the Gandhian,

is the Ralph of the same novel. The novelist meticulously describes how Gyan Singh rises from anonymity to the Chief Ministership of Punjab through ruthless inhuman ways. Dubey finds out that "Gyan trod a path that involved no inner struggle A careless Atlas carrying the world like a bundle that he would not think twice about dumping if he felt like it." (P-35)

Gyan Singh, the ambitious politician, can "come to immediate grips with a situation, and manipulate it to suit himself." He never hesitates to use violence as a means if it can bring quick results. But Harpal, who has tremendous belief in the Gandhian idea of non-violence, is in anguish over the Chief Ministership for he feels that there is "something sinister at the root of the Partition mentality and those who uphold it. *Among the definitions supplied by different critics to the 'political novel', Irving appears to be 'viable' and also 'radical'. He defines:, By a political novel I mean a novel in which political milieu is the dominant setting.....Perhaps it would better to say: a novel in which we take to be dominant politics ideas or the political ideas or the political milieu. a novel in which permits, this assumption without thereby suffering any radical distortion and, it follows, with the possibility of some analytical profit.*

Mankind's journey was towards integration, not breaking up of what already existed." But the very narrowness of Gyan Singh gives his arguments "a crude strength that no longer vision could ever have." Jit Sahni, a character in the novel who is an Industrialist, rightly observes, "Gyan Singh has a following. People feel he means business, gets things done, while Harpal Singh does not make any impression and gets put in the shade every time. As far as the civilized instincts are concerned human beings have not come very far. The crude basic instincts still rule us, hunger, sex and power.

With the incidents like the violence that breaks out in the factories and the strike by the electricity men, the political storm gathers momentum. Vishal Dubey the liaison officer sent by the Home Minister of the country to resolve the tensions between Gyan Singh and Harpal Singh, suggests Harpal Singh that he has to take a stand against the violent attitude of Gyan Singh. In the process of delineating the relationship between the ends and the means, which is pointed out by Irving Howe as a difficult political problem while discussing Stendhal's novels,

Mrs. Sahgal portrays the disintegration of values in politics. Democracy has become a power game into

which carnal savagery' and Machiavellian strategy, without which there seems to be no survival, have crept in. Elections, the backbone of the democracy has become a process in which, "only the big could afford to lose them. For the others there was no second chance. A mediocre barrister or doctor could go on making a living, but a failure in politics was a zero." Vishal Dubey wonders "how successful democracy was, superimposed on illiterate masses, exploding millions of them." And Harpal things wryly..... "Produce an idea and it would generate its own quota of fanatics to clothe it in colour, put it to music and fire a whole population."(P.45)

The novel concludes when Gyan Singh calls off the strike when the Home Minister dies suddenly. Thus the storm is only temporarily mitigated. It is obvious that it is not because of the respect for the late Home Minister but it is only to save his own face that Gyan Singh calls off the strike. Thus the conclusion of the novel may "appear pathetic, if not altogether stage-managed". It remains one of the conclusions of William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* where the naval officer arrives in a Trim Cruiser to rescue the children from the Coral Island. Though Golding himself calls it a gimmick, a symbolical conclusion is the only appropriate one to a novel of ideas like *Lord of the Flies*. The sudden demise of the Home Minister, 'the last relic of the Gandhian past', with which *Storm in Chandigarh* concludes, can be considered an appropriate conclusion as it symbolically signifies the further retreat from the Gandhian values.

Mrs. Sahgal's take-off point in her third novel, *Storm in Chandigarh*, is the dramatically forced linguistic bifurcation of the Punjab twenty years after the first partition based on religion. Her fictional world is peopled as usual with men of destiny and the women behind them living on more or less equal terms. Vishal Dubey, the young I.A.S. officer, is the protagonist whose point of view remains fairly constant throughout the novel. The well-to-do business magnates, their high-living but low thinking executives and their wives dominate the social scene in the novel.

Mrs. Sahgal concentrates in this novel on the artistic value of violence in the context of political events and ordinary human relations. The confrontation between Gyan Singh and Harpal Singh is more significant than a mere "Clash of Personalities"; it is, more fundamentally, a conflict of ideas: the cult of violence and the non-violence and the creed of non-violence. Gyan Singh, who symbolizes the former, is a politi-

cal murderer in league with the very devil for money and power. His moral turpitude and political rascality date back to the Partition days of 1947 and continue to shadow his conscience even when he becomes the Chief Minister of the Punjab. In contrast, Harpal Singh represents Gandhian values. A shout-hearted integrationist, he is the political counterfoil to Gyan Singh in all matters.

Expertly integrated with this theme of political violence, threatening the normalcy in the states of the Punjab and Haryana, is the theme of social hypocrisy and domestic disharmony. The cult of violence raises its ugly head in the form of male dominance in the domestic sphere Vishal Dubey stands out as the Jamesian "Central Intelligence" in the novel. Saroj recalls Dubey's advice; "There was only one way to live, without pretence. It would be the ultimate healing balm to the lonely spaces of the spirit beyond which there would be no darkness." Dubey's concept of Higher Morality is still more radical than Gandhi's 'inner voice'. "It's a search for value, and an attempt to choose the better value, the real value, in any situation, and not just do what's done or what is expected".

Nayantara Sahgal's artistic exploitation of the cult of violence in politics and inter-personal relations comes off successfully towards the end of the novel. The storm in Chandigarh blows off when Gyan Singh calls off the strike – a gesture of peace from a violent-tempered man: and when Harpal Singh gets shot and wounded – a symbolic act of self-purification in the Gandhian tradition; and Vishal Dubey grows and mellows in his search for the real values of life.

Mrs. Sahgal's awareness of the historical and political developments in Asia and Europe is quite evident in this novel. Even though she does not focus on any particular historical event in this novel, she alludes to the events appropriately. Similarly, the one event that is continually kept in the backdrop is the partition of India in 1947. It acquires a special ironic significance in this novel because of the second partition of the Indian part of the Punjab on the basis of language into Haryana and the Punjab with Chandigarh as the joint capital.

The political consciousness becomes a positive asset in her succeeding novels wherein she discards the broad framework of her first two novels and adopts a more compact and tighter plot-structure. *Storm in Chandigarh* has five major characters and the personal and the political worlds run parallel to

each other. In *Storm in Chandigarh* the political atmosphere instead of stabilizing or improving seems to have deteriorated further. The downhill journey begun by men like Hari Mohan and Sonnath is continued by men like Gyan Singh. The people who have some values or ideals are inert and passive and unable to face reality. Those that are active and aggressive have no values, and what is worse, no scruples. What matters most is the quality of a people. The building of Chandigarh symbolized a new beginning; it was 'a starting from scratch'. But soon the untainted atmosphere begins to be tainted by the same cant. Jit feels that the architects 'could not find the right breed of human beings to inhabit their perfect blueprints.

It is the human element which is important and which determines the quality of life. But unfortunately it is not possible to give this a concrete shape or to put it into facts and figures and thus it is easy to ignore it for other concrete projects. Almost no attention is paid to developing the character of the people involved. The result is that at a time of crisis they succumb to the stronger forces. Dubey, who is only too happy to be freed from the narrow confines of Delhi, finds himself amidst a political confrontation in Chandigarh where Gyan Singh by linking the issue of language to religion is trying to exploit religious sentiment for his own personal position. His instigation is a threat to the peace and normalcy of life but no one is willing or courageous enough to take a stand against it. As Dubey says:

What Gyan plans is a demonstration to show the strength of his demands. He'll call it off once he makes his point. It's a political trick, not a mass movement. (5)

Dubey is unable to understand the reasons for the violence of approach and attitude. He could have understood if starving, deprived people had worked themselves into a frenzy over political issues but he had not expected it from the prosperous people of the area who have nothing much to crib about. He is surprised to see that violence to them has come to be associated with the acquisitive aspect of human nature. Violence was political blackmail.

As Saroj puts it succinctly: *Oh, I'm not worried about any great disaster. I'm afraid of usual things going wrong, like milk not being delivered and my tins and packets running short, and the iron not working and not being able to get it repaired...It's when ordinary things go off the rails that life becomes unbelievable. (P-6)*

In contrast, Harpal Singh has always counseled caution which continues to be his watchword in his career. A stout-hearted integrationist, he is the political counterfoil to Gyan Singh in all matters. He is easily altruistic where Gyan could be cynically egoistic. As he himself recalls, introspectively:

He could not remember a time when he had wanted power. What he had passionately wanted was recognition as a champion of the underdog. And he had earned that. (P-7)

It had yielded dividends in the past and was again being used as a threat. Violence, Dubey feels, is the joint product of the age aggressive and the inert; it was a sign of urban discontent. Outbursts of brutal, calculated violence had become a part of the cities, 'It was given different names, indiscipline, unrest, disorder. It was dealt with each time-and forgotten', but it refused to submit to oblivion. In the confrontation between Punjab and Haryana it had become more than a threat; it had become a reality brooking no compromise and rejecting all but one solution.

It was a manifestation of the fissiparous tendency, of the limited loyalty of mankind's primitive uncivilized emotions. Politics had virtually degenerated to a clash of personalities-as Dubey tells Nikhil, 'There are no issues left, only squabbles'. Violence made ordinary people either selfish and inhuman or listless and indifferent. It also distracted them from the act of living. Sahgal, with a clever and imaginative use of the actual historical happening of the 1960s, leads the principal characters of the political sub-plot to a climatic point. India which had vowed to adhere to the Gandhian order of non-violence is portrayed as a country where confusion, disorder and chaos is widespread, where people have turned to be a furious, stone throwing,

factory burning mob. By juxtaposing the situation in the country in 1947 and the one during the post-independence period, the novelist draws an appalling and bleak picture of the present where the politicians, with blinkers of self-centeredness on their eyes, have become oblivious of their responsibilities towards the country and its people. In 1947, ruminates Harpal Singh that there was still an Indian left to serve. Susie Tharu points out:

No aspect of life in our country has been unaffected by colonialism. It disrupted existing social and economic structures, undermined the political system, forcibly retarded growth and inevitably

in the process divested traditional institutions and values of their function in society. (P-15)

Now there is no such vision left to bind us. The big vision has disintegrated. The conflict between Gyan Singh and Harpal Singh is thus not merely a political battle; it is a battle of philosophies. In a generation in which leadership means strength, force and

authority, people like Harpal are thrown in the shade every time. Gyan's threat for strike becomes a reality. In the evening the violent strikers make an attempt on Harpal's life. He is luckily saved, but badly injured. Ironically when he regains consciousness he learns about the Union Home Minister's death and is told that Gyan Singh has called off the strike "as a token of respect for the death of a patriot.

The situation in Chandigarh, Dubey begins to feel is, not one of tension but of paralysis; a situation in which one felt trapped and helpless, unable to come to grips with the problem. However noble Gyan Singh's goals may be, the methods he employs are ignoble. In his own words he is 'a simple man fired with a simple purpose: to call his soil his own in the language of his forefathers.' But underlying this is the desire to make others feel guilty and the immoral impulse to power. Nothing else is important and nothing can dissuade him from his course. The political deadlock in Chandigarh is a reflection of the state of affairs in other parts of the country. The watchword of the government,

Hence Dubey feels, had become 'wait and watch.' People were afraid to accept challenges, afraid to act or to think. Dubey is conscious of the change in the basic approach to life and its problems, even the services had changed. Men like Trivedi belonged to the past and there were few who felt any involvement in the wider issues of national growth and interest. A general malaise seemed to have overtaken the whole country. In *Storm in Chandigarh* Nayantara Sahgal seeks to focus attention on this national ailment. In this sense the novel is something more than fiction for it presents the reality of the political situation in the late sixties. The novelist is successful in capturing not only the political issues but also the political mood and intrigues, in fact the deterioration that had set in the quality of public life and which was bound to influence personal and private values. Dubey's advice to Harpal not to submit passively to Gyan Singh's threat is an attempt to check this deterioration. It's a risk, Dubey tells him but

There are greater risks: the prospect of the machinery Of two states running down at the behest of one man Without any kind of stand made against him-and that A man who believes, and correctly, that he has only to Call the tune. There is no room for such men among us. Let us take the risk. (P-196)

Dubey is aware that he may be exceeding his powers in giving this advice but he feels impelled to do so, it was necessary to bring Harpal to 'grips with a problem that..... reflected a graver disease, in the man and the nation.' He feels that it was the only way to ensure continuity in ordinary life. Dubey's advice does pay dividends for the very act of having made a stand restores Harpal's confidence and bestows a positive tone to the government's functioning. Dubey's own stand against Inder is made in the same spirit, motivated by a desire to check the spread and the continuation of violence and aggression.

When Inder hits Dubey, Dubey feels 'a kinship with Harpal.....and with Saroj, another kind of victim', thus establishing an equation between the personal and the political worlds. In taking sides and making choices, Dubey asserts a part of himself, of his true nature and resists injustice. Earlier in the novel he had wondered what held him to this game.

But it was, he knew, what held him to anything, a feeling stronger than loyalty for a concept larger than country. He supposed it could be called love for the very act of living. *Storm in Chandigarh* is perhaps Nayantara Sahgal's most successful novel from the point of view of characterization. The reader is able to see them actually try to understand themselves and grow out of their limitations. Saroj, Mara and Dubey are changed beings by the end of the novel. They not only cohere, they also correlate to others in the novel. *The Day in Shadow*, however, employs a different method of characterization.

Here Simrit's involvements and unhappiness are viewed retrospectively and through the processes of memory, from her point of view. Not so in *Storm in Chandigarh* where the authorial presence can be strongly felt in the delineation of the characters. This is an advantage in the sense that we get views and counter-views, and are able to get a better insight into the characters. Mara in her school the children,

Inder in his office and Saroj in the company of her two young children reveal themselves as they are. Moreover there are clashes and conflicts which allow an emotional crisis to occur. In *The Day in Shadow* though the air is heavy the moment of crisis is already over.

In *Storm in Chandigarh* and *The Day in Shadow*, Nayantara moves towards a better integrated plot. Vishal who leaves Delhi when the novel opens comes back to it the end. But the real period of self-analysis and the growth is the period in Chandigarh where he comes to terms with his own self, relates his beliefs to his actions and he also plays a decisive part in Saroj's life. He exposes himself to criticism both at the personal and the political level and thus clashes not only with Inder but also with his senior colleagues in the Home Ministry. He oversteps himself in both his roles but through this overstepping he becomes more not less human for he discards passively. In *Storm in Chandigarh* the political and the personal concerns run parallel to each other and Vishal is central to both. He is first the outsider and spectator, and then is compelled by his sense of involvement to act and force the issues to a moment of crisis.

In *Storm in Chandigarh* the two approaches, traditional and modern are represented by two sets of people. On one hand are Trivedi, Dubey and Harpal, while on the other are many like Inder and Gyan. Dubey feels the need for a centre of gravity and for a confrontation with the self, instead of adherence to rituals. He questions the role of Brahmin as priest, law giver and adviser to sovereigns, custodians of the intellectual and spiritual heritage of the race in the contemporary context. Trivedi tells:

What use was this heritage to ordinary man? What did it create but quietude? Did it help the soldier to fight better, the businessman to do his job better? Did it hold any comfort for Trivedi in the night? Was it the thing you could cry out, kneel to, surrender your spirit to? Was there some intelligence to receive all that, or did the human cry fall unheard into a gaping void?

Dubey, in later years, echoes this view. Brahmanism which he feels should stand for a quality of life which a man evolves for himself had lost its vitality and become ineffective. Traditionalism is expected to provide the basis for compassion and understanding but it no longer does this when men are governed by their surface interpretation of traditional values. Inder in *Storm in Chandigarh* and Som in *The Day in Shadow*

are men who, not really traditional but they derive their idea of male superiority from religious sources. Inder views Saroj's premarital relationship from the limited angle of chastity while Som rejects all that is gentle, meek and sensitive.

His pursuit of material interests is justified on the basis of belief in the four ashrams of life—there is time for everything, for making money and renouncing it, one was as much a performance of duty as the other and who but the individual was responsible for what he chooses to do? In Som's case his concentration on one makes him fully conscious of the other and non-attachment deteriorates into indifference and brutality. The non-recognition of evil as a reality of this world facilitates this perpetuation of it just as it encourages passivity on the part of its victims who do not question injustice.

The Millions of Indians have missed the lesson of non-attachment interpreting it to be a submission to fate. Ramkrishna realizes this when he watches Simrit in the role of a victim. It is resignation and resistance which comes easily to the Hindu mind. Renunciation becomes the disuse of one's best self, it is a sadhu with arms held above his head until they could never be lowered again. This was what had happened to the Hindus. It was possible to avoid action and non-involvement by treating reality as an illusion. After all the present was insignificant in the larger context of eternal reality. Shaila in *The Day in Shadow* and Leela Dubey in *Storm in Chandigarh* are two women who are capable of living life at two levels.

In *Storm in Chandigarh*, violence spreads because it is tolerated. Nobody takes a stand against it. People are inert and indifferent to allow violence:

Out bursts of brutal, calculated violence had become feature of the cities. There were too many in the congression and chaos who had nothing to lose by Violence, too many others who sat inert and indifferent, Their sap sucked dry, waiting for it to engulf them. Passively waiting, as they waited for the rains, for the harvest, for the births of unwanted children, for death. Violence had become routine and expected. It was Given different names, indiscipline, unrest, disorders It was death with each time and forgotten. (P-172)

While Gyan Singh and others like him are ruthless enough to exploit this passivity, there are also people like Raj who want the people to abandon this passivity and to find a working philosophy, a decent one

for every day in order to solve the country's many problems. Vishal Dubey also shares this feeling. The Hindus have a backward looking tendency and are dominated by the past. He tells his men:

Escape goat has to be found for bad behaviour like your great-grand mother, dead these hundred years, being held responsible for strangling your neighbour....but I think our great grand mother does have a formidable influence on what we do. In a number of ways she's still alive. Sometimes I think it will need a tearing up by the roots to get her out of the way.(P-145)

Mara finds the traditional heritage suffocating and limiting the vision. It is a bundle of old, useless impossible ideas to him, going on and on. She tells Jit that is a dead burden:

Old, useless, impossible ideas going on and on we Carry them around like deadwood on our backs. It's all Ours all right, but some of it is rotten. We'll die if we Go on like this. Sometimes I think we're already dead(P-153)

There is need for action and fresh thought on almost every issue. The novelist points out that the leaders had shown a tendency to concentrate to exploit sentiments on issues like cow-slaughter and caste. They were also guilty of trying to confuse issues by equating caste with Karma. By telling so they ignored the origins of caste system and invested it with moral significance.

The novelist is very critical of the traditional attitude towards evil. It should not be relegated to some unknown future and it should not be taken in life. This does not solve the problems of our life. Such a philosophy contains no dynamic of its own, no inner bone structure to constitute what the rest of the world calls character. It can not inject that iron into the soul which will help it to hold its own against other strong encroaching forces. The Hindu does hold his own. He succumbs to others.

The characters in Storm in Chandigarh (1969) also oscillate between two worlds, one which is satisfying them on the superficial level by not breaking the any of seven promises of marriage, and one which is giving them internal contentment, where setting oneself free like a bird in order to find their heavenly abode full of worldly pleasures. In the portrayal of the life of ideal marriages of three young couples — Vishal-Lee-la, Inder-Saroj and Jit-Mara, Sahgal is deeply con-

cerned with unhappy marriages and the loneliness of living. The novel is a study of certain similarities and contrasts of various characters. It portrays the young hearts broken up by compulsions of matrimony and call of newfound love.

The theme of the novel is violence, not necessarily an obvious physical violence, but an invisible and the more subtle form of internal conflict. Saroj's pre-marital relationship becomes the cause of failure of their marriage. Saroj who has been brought up in the liberal atmosphere of freedom, expects equality in marriage. She is greatly surprised by her husband's violent reactions to a pre-marital affair she had in her college days. Inder is obsessed and could not forgive this act of Saroj and constantly exploits her sense of innocence. Saroj longs for friendship, tenderness and frankness from Inder, but since her jealous, unreasonable husband never bothers to understand her needs, she decides to walk out of her rotten, conventional bond, with all the children to live a life of her own. It is ironical that Inder, himself carries an extra-marital affair with Mara. Saroj became a victim of the male tyranny. Saroj's quest for communication and sharing naturally leads her towards Vishal, whom she finds more understanding and considerate. She frankly tells Vishal:

Half the time one is afraid — you know — saying wrong thing or of being misunderstood — just for being oneself and being punished for it. So one spends such a lot of time, acting, or at least hiding, and that's very tiring. (P-19)

Inder, like a conventional husband, never approves of his wife's virtues and turns violent towards her. Saroj is constantly rebuked, abused and tortured by Inder because of her pre-marital sexual indulgence. She longs for love and understanding but every time it has to be begged and given as a charity, she withdraws into silence. During her college days, Saroj enjoyed sex with one of her friend for satisfying her curiosity. But later when Inder comes to know about it, he treats her brutally and considers her as a sinner. He would punish her quite often and torture her physically and mentally. When Inder could not sleep, he resurrected the other man, the one who had known

Saroj before he had, making her marriage a mockery and betrayal. He had stalked the man down the dark alleys of his imagination, his thought about him churning, now sticking, now moving sluggishly, now

flowing on unimpeded like the filth in the city's sewers. „If I catch him I shall kill him. Ironically, Inder is torturing his wife for having pre-marital relationship once only, while he had no explanation to offer for his own extra-marital relationship with another man's wife. In Indian society, it is a crime for a girl or a woman to have a sexual intercourse with any man; on the other hand, it is considered no crime at all for a man to have sexual relations with other girls before or after his marriage. This means that in India we have different norms for the man and different norms for the woman. It exposes the open practice of double standards in our society. Saroj learns the value of freedom from Vishal Dubey during their lonely walks:

Life, Dubey told her, was bigger than any system. Life could remould or break the system that lacked righteousness and reason. It was life's precious obligation to rebel, and humanity's right to be free, to choose from the best light it could see, not necessarily the longer accepted light (P-193)

Inder shows a lot of indifference towards her and has no time for emotional involvement. Their relationship lacks even the minimum communication. Even his affair with Mara comes to an end. Mara's self-assertion and individuality disgusts him. Saroj accepts her role as wife and affectionate mother and does not want to seek anything outside marriage. But she has reached at a stage in her relationship with Inder that even ordinary conversation becomes difficult. Going out for a walk with Vishal, Saroj feels much relieved and freshened from the suffocation of the four walls of her house. When Inder forbids her to meet Vishal, she refuses to listen to him. At this stage, she rebels, and understands the truth of failure of her marriage. Saroj's departure is a move towards personal freedom and a rejection of the role Inder has wanted to thrust on her, Vishal tells:

It has taken a million years of evolution for a person and his cherished individuality to matter and no terror must be allowed to destroy that. (P-234)

and finally Saroj overcomes her initial hesitations and comes out of her husband's home. At last, Vishal takes the final decision for her. She remembers Vishal's words to her:

Vishal was right. There was only one way to live, without pretence It would be the ultimate healing balm to the lonely spaces of the spirit, beyond which there would be no darkness. (P-254)

Vishal helps her and sets her free from the burden of guilt. In the novel, another couple is Jit and Mara who also suffer from a similar dilemma. They are a childless couple who suffer from emotional void in their life. Mara suffers from an acute sense of emptiness in life. Her marriage with sweet-tempered and considerate Jit has its share of estrangements and misgivings, but their differences dissolve in the compromising disposition of her husband.

Mara's problem is not physical but psychological. The search for communication makes Mara come towards Inder. The privacy of her thoughts is ruptured with the arrival of Inder who has developed a peculiar intimacy with her. Mara is not content with the gentleness of her husband but desires all that the world can offer her - the softness of Jit and the hardness of Inder.³ She desires not gentleness but aggressiveness and passionate involvement in relationship. In her relationship with Inder, Mara stimulates his mind and involves him in ways no woman ever has. But she does not surrender her individuality and offers a challenge to Inder's domination. Mara is capable of responding to Inder's needs which highlights her inability to respond to Jit's much simpler needs. Mara's lack of interest makes Jit feel that all his affection and care are wasted on her:

Back to the caves, she had said, and that was what would suit her best. You gave a woman the perfection of which you were capable; the finest flower of your most evolved instincts, and it was waste.... She didn't want to be cherished and affection made no impression on her. (P-138)

It does not mean that Mara lusted of physical love nor does it suggest that she is forced into submission by Inder. Soon she is disillusioned when she finds him a hypocrite, and breaks all relations with him. By that time, Jit also realizes that there is something lacking in their relationship and makes an attempt to come closer to her. Jit helped Mara to come out of the emotional jungle by talking to her of an unhappy experience of his own. The realization makes them be reconciled and remain true to each other. The novelist says that the conflict in marriages arises mainly from absence of communication resulting in the estrangement of individuals. Vishal Dubey's marriage is also a vanishing search for communication. Vishal who wants to build a relationship on truth finds it a difficult task. In his relationship with Leela, he felt a great deal of unhappiness. Despite her extra-marital affair with

Hari, Leela insisted on maintaining the fakeness of a stable marriage with Vishal. She had always lived a life of pretence and hypocrisy. Vishal undergoes the torture of living together intimately yet remained strangers to each other. Talking about Mr. Dubey and his wife Leela, Nayantara Sahgal writes in the novel:

She had selected what she wanted of him: the distinguished escort at parties, the successful civil servant with a promising future, the husband who could be relied upon to take pains with whatever problems she took to him. And she had ignored the rest. She had given herself selectively too, what she had considered it prudent and convenient to give, and left him empty of then reality of herself. Even her vitality had needed an audience. She scintillated in company. Time and again he heard her talk animatedly of what had happened a day or a week earlier, of an article she had read, an idea she had had, at a party. Alone with him she had little to share. Had their failure been their fault, or was there something at the very core of human dreams and longings that was fatal to fulfillment through marriage?(P-134-135)

After Leela's death, Vishal is attracted towards Gauri's natural, luxuriously feminine generosity. Dubey's relationship with Gauri is based on sex and the urgency of a momentary need. She makes no emotional demands on him. His affair with her began in the disturbed year after Leela's death. Gauri feels secure in her marriage. She feels satisfied with her Successful industrialist husband Nikhil Ray. She has no pretensions about her virtuosity; she calls herself a

Social butterfly with positively no interest in life beyond my own comforts and pleasures. (P-162)

Sahgal is deeply concerned with unhappy marriages and the loneliness of living. Through the portrayal of the married life of Leela, Gauri, Saroj and Mara, the author holds a mirror to the society that subjects its women to worst type of inhuman exploitation.

In this novel, Sahgal has pointed out that the woman should accept her responsibility as a wife and a mother only then she can remain happy. It is the destiny of a mother that she has to take the whole responsibility of her house and her children. In this novel the 'storm' in the lives of three married couples, Inder and Saroj, Jit and Mara and Vishal and Leela, who are experiencing or rather suffering from the notion of motherhood is portrayed. The first couple is of Saroj-Inder. Saroj, the protagonist, is having two

children- Bunny and Muff and one is in her abdomen. Saroj is a simple living Indian woman. She is happy with her household things and her children. She becomes very panic when her children become ill she explains this to Vishal:

"If the children fall ill I'd know what to do about it. But if they woke up dead silent tomorrow morning and didn't say a word till lunch time I'd be terrified."(P-141)

Saroj is enjoying her motherhood by taking care of her two children and one baby in her abdomen. But it is Inder's indifferent attitude towards Saroj's pregnancy that created negative approach towards motherhood in Saroj. When Saroj tells about her pregnancy, Inder's face turns into annoyance and then into resignation. Inder considers Saroj as illiterate for not using the precautions to keep away pregnancy, He says irritably,

"Hundreds of women use the damned things successfully. It's madness to have three children nowadays." (P-200)

On this reaction Saroj feels humiliated and disappointed on her motherhood .She now considers it as an unused burden of longing which she has been caring from long time. Suddenly, she thinks to get rid of from both the married life and motherhood but now the seed which is growing in her is stirred. She now wants to enjoy the different feelings appearing in her because of motherhood. She accepts the fact that though the woman have not planned motherhood and even not wanted it, its appearance takes charge over her. The feeling of motherhood is so deeplyrooted in her that she is even ready to leave her house for her baby when Vishal Dubey, a frequent visitor to her house and whose company consoles Saroj, asks her for leaving the home. She knows that women like her do not leave their homes. But for her baby and for her freedoms, she leaves Inder and his house with Vishal.

The next couple in the novel is Jit and Mara. Mara is childless and runs a school for small children to fill her emotional lack of not being a mother .In her school; she has created an environment of home. She is teaching the children all those things which a mother should do at home .She doesn't have any problem with the children, but only with their parents .As Mara is an American, she comments on Indian tendency of child bearing and rearing, when Inder comes to her school she remarks,

“child rearing seems rather than one-sided here.”(P-50)

She also comments that she has stopped parents meetings as fathers never come to the meetings. In Mara there is an air of independence and forthrightness about her. Another couple in the novel is Vishal and Leela. Leela has an extra marital affair with Hari but she wants to maintain the fakeness of a stable marriage. Vishal, who is very much caring for Saroj and her baby during her pregnancy, considers the death of Leela, his wife, during her abortion as right. Leela died during an abortion performed by unskilled hand. Vishal thinks a woman should not die in the process of childbirth as Leela. Leela has performed the cruel act of abortion as she does not want the burden of motherhood. Without taking in confidence to Vishal, she has taken the decision of abortion. Thus Vishal thinks that Leela is different from Saroj because Saroj is nourishing the life of her child and Leela has done the brutal activity. Vishal is horror-struck on Leela's rejection of the motherhood, he asks himself;

“Why had she done it? How had he failed her? Had she lived, had she talked, had she ever given her confidence?”(P-67)

A mother never takes a decision like Leela. There is a reason behind her cruel decision. The passivity to a certain extent is responsible for the 'storm' in their lives. When Vishal thinks in isolation, he realizes that his search for truth about the extra marital relationship of Leela and Hari may be the reason which makes Leela to lose her bearing. As Nayantara Sahgal remarks;

“And at times he wondered whether his ardour for the truth between them had done her actual harm, made her lose her bearings, so that she was like a lost soul wandering in a land not her own.” (P-243)

It is observed that though Indian women want freedom, it is difficult for them to remove the feeling of motherhood which is deeply rooted in their heart. The feeling of motherhood is sociologically and psychologically attached with the Indian womanhood. So even after the mental and physical turmoil they cannot reject motherhood, child bearing and rearing. Rather than that the fulfillment of a woman's life is only in motherhood.

Saroj, the female protagonist in the novel is married to Inder who runs the textile mills of Saroj's cousin Nikhil Ray's company in Chandigarh. There is no emotional communion between Saroj and Inder in spite of the fact that they have been married for the last four years and have two children. In the novel, Saroj emerges as a victim of male tyranny and chauvinism. She fears rather than loves her husband. She represents the new woman who is trying to retain her individuality and breathe freely in the suffocating atmosphere of passionless and emotionally unfulfilling marriages. “The New Woman is determined not merely to live, but to live in self respect, thus implicitly demanding a re-alignment of the parameters on which marriage function. Marriage without emotional involvement, sex without passion, love without respect are anathema to her as she maneuvers her way through the changing times.

Saroj had a physical relationship with a person before her marriage but she does not consider it as a sin rather as a part of growing up. After her marriage she has been faithful to Inder to the fullest degree. She is a person who values mutual trust, consideration, honesty, communication and absence of pretence in a relationship. “Hailing from a liberal family, believing in openness and trust as the hallmark of relationships, Saroj had naively presumed that her husband shared those values, not realizing that he was the product of an atmosphere where male dominance is the most formidable Of cults.”⁴ She is thoroughly truthful 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 intention of looking forward to a clean break from the past. But this confession actually dooms their marriage. Inder “was maddened by it. When it came over him he sat looking at Saroj with a revulsion that had ancient, tribal, male roots. Inder represents the traditional patriarchal attitude of society toward woman which puts high premium on female chastity and virginity before marriage. While in the same patriarchal set up, the idea of male chastity in never thought about, let alone questioned. The double standards of patriarchal morality is visible from the fact that Inder who wants to make Saroj feel 'ashamed' of her pre-marital affair himself has many sexual experiences before marriage as the third person narrator tells:

“he had been precocious and successful in sex, robustly collecting Experience where he found it.”(P-212)

But women have no right to question male promiscuity or indulge in practices which are considered to be male prerogatives. This patriarchal attitude is aptly summed up by Dubey when he says,

“The one thing you could not crave, the thing that was a crime was that they should inhabit the world as your equals, with splendor and variety of human choice before them.”(P-265)

Men like Inder who are the products of conventional orthodox patriarchal society and whose consciousness is steeped in male chauvinism can never accept non-virgin women as wives. Inder felt deeply cheated as he recalls,

“Somewhere he had read the were primitive societies that demanded the blood of virginity as there were evidence of female purity. No man need be cheated of that. He had been cheated.”(P-123)

Vishal Dubey, who emerges as the spokesperson of the novelist, rightly sums up patriarchal prejudice against woman when he says,

“A woman was not entitled to a past, not entitled to human hunger, human passion or even human error. In the fires and desolations of living she ranked as not quite human.”(P-143)

Inder instead of reaching out and valuing the precious human being in Saroj, has never been able to forget her pre-marital affair and neither let her forget it. He keeps on torturing her mentally and physically ever since her confession. But as every cloud has silver lining, modern society, inspite of its male dominated ideology, has men like Vishal Dubey who believe in gender equality and women’s liberation His views on female chastity are like whiff of fresh air in suffocating patriarchal atmosphere as he says,

“If chastity is so important and so well worth preserving... it would be easier to safeguard it by keeping men in seclusion, not women... The biological urge is supposed to be much stronger in men, so it is they who should be kept under restraint and not allowed to roam free to indulge their appetites. The entire east might flourish under this sort of reversal of purdah.”(P-152)

Saroj symbolizes modern women who want to es-

tablish a new order with changed standards where they can be their true selves and where character is judged by the purity of heart and not chastity of body. “According to Sahgal, Saroj’s premarital act of sex has nothing to do with the pollution of flesh, promiscuity or immorality. But Inder’s attitude towards her has always been of disgust, contempt and revulsion. He always abuses her and sometimes even brutally beats her because of her this one act before marriage. On the other hand, inspite of all this torture and tormentation, Saroj has never let her inner strength, her pride and her self esteem get completely obliterated.

“Even in extremity, she had never said, ‘Forgive me’. For each time she had lived through a night’s torment, she could wake to the sunlight and find herself unsullied in it.”(P-212)

Saroj tries her level best to adjust and compromise at every point with Inder because she feels that she is responsible for the failure of their marriage. She always remains vigilant not to do things which could annoy Inder and tries to talk on ‘safe’ topics which could not make him burst into anger. Because of such conscious living with Inder where there is no room for spontaneous behavior, she always feel tense and pressurized.

There is no passionate bond, affection, emotional communication or understanding between Saroj and Inder. He treats her with total indifference and regards her only as a sex object. When he comes to know that Saroj is pregnant inspite of their already having two children, he felt irritated and rebukes her as if only she is responsible for her pregnancy. He puts the whole blame on her when he says,

“Hundreds of women use the damned thing successfully its madness to have three children nowadays.”(P-25)

After her pregnancy, when Saroj first feels the flutter inside her body, she is overjoyed and wants Inder to feel it move but for Inder “the touch without sexual significance, the caress of affection was different. It cost him an effort to make it”. While sex with her came to him without any effort and difficulty and it was a mere performance of act without any emotional involvement for him.

Saroj is a person who is fully involved in life. She wants to feel the every moment of her pregnancy.

When she first feels the flutter inside her body, she wants to laugh and celebrate. She even tells Vishal that her flutter is nine inches long. For her, to have babies without being completely involved in the process is same as dogs and cats have their babies. According to her, by feeling the every step of the process, one is not troubled by the pain rather one feels dignified. Saroj is a woman who is interested only in living things around her. She is not at all bothered about the untidy things in her house, for example, she does not mind if sofas and chairs in her house need to be upholstered or if children's socks need darning. The things, which are not alive, are not important for her. On the other hand, she is very careful that her garden looks beautiful and orderly. She takes infinite pains with a stray animal and spends hours in the company of her children. But Inder is unable to reach to the deep core of her inner being. He feels irritated at her slipshod house-keeping, at her careless way of dressing and at her wonder at every flutter in her body. He never thinks of her as a person with feelings and emotions and is therefore, unable to comprehend her need to be deeply involved in things happening around her. He is a businessman and thinks of his wife also in business like terms.

This makes evident that Inder allows no individuality and freedom to Saroj. Inder in this sense behaves like a typical representative of patriarchal society in which, as Julia Kristeva points out, woman is always marginalized by the male symbolic order. He wants to control all her actions and wants her thoughts to be in agreement with him. When Saroj finds a good friend in the form of Vishal Dubey and frequently goes for walk with him, Inder gets deeply infuriated. He snubs her for being absent from home. Saroj's utterance- "I like to talk to him. He is a good man"- inflames Inder and he blunts, "I don't give a damn if he is Jesus Christ." So saying he thrashes her not only with words but also with blows. "This attitude of Inder, it will be agreed, is typical of Indian men, who regard their wives to be possessions, meant to be used for furthering their careers and looking after their homes and children. That this is the approved norm is proved by the wife's passive acceptance of the whole situation. Saroj's marital relationship with Inder is completely contrary to her image of ideal marriage where "it would recognize that somewhere within the desirable woman, behind the eyes, the mouth, the breasts, there was a -struggling, imperfect human being to be valued for her own sake." (P-67)

Saroj's yearning for acceptance, communication, honesty, liberty and lack of pretence in a relationship draws her near Vishal Dubey who completely shares her emotional cravings. He like Saroj is also a victim of marital unhappiness. His wife, Leela who dies six years back due to the surgery of an incompetent abortionist, has never been able to reach the inner core of his personality. She marries Dubey because he is a successful civil servant with promising future. The mismatch between the two is evident from the fact that Leela was used to the life of social parties, hypocrisy, adultery and pretence while Vishal wanted a person with whom one can

"talk to when the day's work was done, the friend with whom one could be naked in spirit and to whom one could give the whole of oneself." (P-28)

His loveless and faithless wife is not able to fulfill his need for companionship and understanding. Vishal and Saroj's common ideas about marital relationship which according to them should be based on emotional communication, honesty, complete acceptance of other person's weaknesses and lack of pretence and their lack of realization of such relationship with their respective spouses bring them close to each other. Vishal Dubey is a feminist in the real sense of the term. As Toril Moi says in his essay, 'Feminist Literary Criticism' that men can be feminists and, it is the sole prerogative of woman to be a feminist. Most of Dubey's ideas in the novel shows his deep concern about the lot of women in present times.

"He thought of his own country women as the subdued sex, creatures not yet emerged from the chrysalis, for whom the adventure of self-expression had not even begun... there had long been a figure of humility, neck bent, eyes downcast, living flesh consigned to oblivion... Their sphere was sexual and their job procreation." (P-231)

He wants people to think that the world consists of human beings rather than men and women in watertight compartments. He has always treated his wife as his equal and has wanted her to give him her natural self but unfortunately she always maintained her fiction and proves to be an adulterous lady. With Saroj also, he wants to have a relationship in which there is no pretence but frank communication. He loves Saroj not because she is a woman in the physical sense

of the term but because he likes the beautiful human being in her. her for being absent from home. Saroj's utterance

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"A wife was one half of an enterprise, the compliant business partner who presided over house and children and furthered her husband's career. Saroj had not interest in any of it and not because she was gifted with any accomplishment that took her time. It was her preoccupation with herself that unnerved him. That and curious concentration of her spirit upon whatever came her way."(P-38)

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