

**EXPLORATION OF HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS IN NAYANTARA
SAHGAL'S *STORM IN CHANDIGHARH* AND DORIS
LESSING'S *A PROPER MARRIAGE***

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Abstract

*Literature, as a work of art, focuses on the exploration of human relationships. There are various shades of human relationships like husband and wife, son and mother, daughter and father, sister and brother which are recognized by the society. Nayantara Sahgal, a prolific Indian writer and her western counterpart Doris Lessing have shown a deep concern to these relationships in their novels. The present comparative study focuses on the exploration of human relationships in Nayantara Sahgal's *Storm in Chandigarh* and Doris Lessing's *A Proper Marriage*. Though both the writers belong to different countries yet both have presented the problems arising out of human relationships in their works. Moreover, it is inclined to shape the improved lines of the relationships and accordingly Sahgal and Lessing have depicted the mindset and psychology of men and women. Both the writers have studied deeply the psychological disturbances of individuals and have understanding about human relationships beyond nature. These two writers have given importance to the equality in human relationships and thus have brought out the reality of higher sophisticated class. The present study indicates towards the fact that, while handling the human relationships both the novelists have shown soft corner for women than that of men in their novels.*

Keywords: *Exploration, Human Relationships, Psychology, Sahgal, Lessing.*

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Nayantara Sahgal is one of the renowned political novelists among the Indian women writers in English. The fiction of Nayantara Sahgal is skillfully interwoven with the fabric of interpersonal, social and political human relationships. We do find various dimensions of human relations in all her novels. As A.V. Krishna Rao rightly remarks her :-'Nayantara Sahgal is perhaps one of our best socio-political novelists today.'(SFNF 6)

Storm in Chandigarh is one of the best political novels written by Nayantara Sahgal, as the novelist deals with various dimensions of human relationships with full concern and broad perspective. In this novel Nayantara Sahgal has explored the hypocrisy and pretence of human relationships on political as well as personal level. As Jasbir Jain rightly remarks:-

'Sahgal's work has a strong realistic base and reflects not only her personal value but also the changing values of the society exposed for the first time to both freedom and power.'(NS 9)

In this novel Sahgal uses the word 'storm' metaphorically in the title. It is the storm which arises in Chandigarh at the time of partition of Punjab into two states. So it works on two levels-the political storm and personal conflict in the human relationships. Sahgal herself remarks that the political violence has spread into the social relationships also, specially the lives of individual which she has skillfully handled and explored in this novel. Beside the political background, the novel has a human background also. On the political level, Sahgal portrays the political relationship between Gyan Singh, the chief minister of Punjab and Harpal Singh, the chief minister of Haryana. Both the chief ministers had been friends and partners once but now behaves like rivals, making menacing gestures. Now their relations are totally changed. A critic states, 'The Storm in Chandigarh can be attributed at one level to the estrangement between Gyan Singh and Harpal Singh.' (NNS 70)

This political violence has its impact on the human relationships also. The main characters of this novel-Vishal,Saroj, Inder,Jit and Mara have the blend of Indian tradition and western modernity. It can be observed in their attitude towards their relationships with each other. In the novel Saghal explores unsatisfied human relationships through the relations between Vishal and Gauri ,Inder and Mara and Vishal and Saroj. Vishal Dubey, the protagonist of the novel is a civil servant. Vishal marries to Leela who dies 6 years before and has no children.Vishal's failure in marriage,proves to be a vanishing search for communication. All the time they remain strangers to each other. Vishal has the relationship with Leela without love and this failure relationship ends due to her death. Vishal, the widower then forms his relationship with Gauri, Nikhil's wife who likes Vishal and wants to establish her relationship with him. But Vishal is honest and he never wants to attach himself to a single one as he asserts:-'You could be attached to humanity, yet go your way alone. Attachment to a single individual bound you.' (SIC 16)

In Chandigarh Vishal establishes his relationship with two young couples:Inder-Saroj and Jit-Mara. Inder and Saroj are bound in the knot of husband and wife but their relationship is purely mechanical and superficial without any feeling of affection and tenderness. Saroj's pre-marital relationship becomes the cause of failure of their marriage.Saroj brought up in the atmosphere of freedom from her childhood and she expects this freedom and equality in her relationship with Inder after marriage. Inder does not accept her pre-marital relationship which Saroj has in her college days. So in their relationship there is a lack of friendship, tenderness and understanding. Even Inder does not treat his children in a proper way. His relationship with his children, Bunny and Muff, is also immodest. He treats them as if they were non-living objects.Inder is not human in his relationship with his wife and his children because they have to live under fear. As a typical and traditional Indian woman, Saroj always prefers her home where she lives with her husband and children. She makes all the efforts to save her relation. She wants to break the silence of their relationship. She tries her level best to tie their relationship into well knit but the rigidity and suspicious nature of her husband makes it difficult to survive the relation further. As Saroj explains to Vishal about their (Inder-Saroj) relationship:-

'Half the time one is afraid, you know of saying the wrong thing or of being misunderstood-just of 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.'(SIC 79)

Even after trying to be positive about her relationship with Inder and her family, she gets only negligence which widens her sense of loneliness.

This lack of communication, fear and tiresomeness of their relationship leads Saroj towards Vishal. Vishal Dudev, the protagonist, is a very decent and honest man. He himself donot like acting, hiding and pretence in the humanrelations. He thinks decent human relationships, in terms of manufacturing a formula. As the maker has to use variousingredients, while making a formula, likewise human relationships has formed with love, care & interest. They just not happen by luck or by chance. When Saroj askedVishal about decent human relationship, he answered: -

'With care, with love, when possible and otherwise with time and interest. And always with truth, or as much of it as the other person will allow. All of that reduces the heartbreak and a lot of the loneliness of living. But it is damnably hard to do.'(SIC 80)

Saroj is impressed by Vishal's this remark. She knows that Vishal wants bone and sinew of truth in their relationship. Now Saroj feels free and enjoys the new world in Vishal's company. Inder, who has an objection over Saroj's pre-marital relationship and also the post marital relations she has formed with Vishal, indulgeshimself in extra marital affair with Mara, who is already married to Jit and runs a school. Mara is unsatisfied by her relationship with Jit as there is a lack of communication in their relationship also. The search for communication makes Mara comes towards Inder. But soon 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 Mara.

Thus Sahgal has explored human relationships which are unsatisfied and discontent on political as well and social level. It seems that there is a quest for communication in all these humanrelationships.In fact, Sahgal has portrayed a society affected by political crises.With the advancement in every sphere of life, whether political or social, human relationships also get affected under the complex condition. Sahgal deftly projects human background along with political background.

Though Sahgal belongs to Indian background and her novels are set in Indian framework, she draws in unorthodox way, the picture of a woman who restlessly tries to tread out of her confinence which seems to limit her horizon. Sahgal's women, like the narrator, hesitate for long before taking the final bold decision whereas Lessing's women are already exposed to the outer world and are also independent. This is because of the cultural and traditional difference between the east and west.

As Sahgal presented a multi layered social and political history & its effects on human relations, Lessing in her novels rebel against the cultural, social & racial discrimination and its impact on the human relationships. Lessing's childhood is spent in

Africa & her childhood experiences found voice in most of her novels. Her work criticizes the exploitation of Black Africans by the white colonials and the outcome of the Second World War. Michael Thorpe perhaps rightly observes that Lessing is 'the most accomplished, versatile and illuminating white African writer in English we have seen, or are likely to see.' (DLA 104)

Lessing's A Proper Marriage is the second novel written under the series called Children of Violence. In this novel Lessing explores Martha Quest's relations on political as well as social levels. It presents a complex portrait of Martha's life in relation to the Rhodesian society. As Schlueter asserts, 'A study of the individual conscience in its relation with the collective.' (NDL 23)

This Part of the series includes Martha's married life, her relation with her husband, mother, daughter and impact of politics on her relations. In this novel the human relationships are defined in a rather conventional way. Stella, Martha and Alice respond to men differently. Stella seems to be a prototype of orthodox women who respects the traditional laws of society. Stella and Alice know that in the relationship with men, women have to give freedom and independence to men.

Martha falls in love with Douglas Knowell, a young civil servant, because he seems to be different from the other men & marries him. But in a very short time Martha realizes that she does not fully understand him. It is their marital relationships which compel both to be bound in with each other. Martha's feelings towards Douglas are always changeable. Most of the time she has a very strong feeling of dislike for Douglas and tries to escape from that feelings. In her relationship with Douglas there seems contradiction all the time. On the one hand, Martha feels attracted to Douglas, but on the other hand her negative feelings often come out. At last she feels that her relationship with Douglas is a terrible mistake. In their relationship Martha cannot keep herself conformed to her husband as she considers herself a woman who has the same right that of a man.

At the end of the novel Martha contemplates about her relationship with Douglas and she is in doubt whether there has an element of love in their relationship. As at the end of the novel the author asserts, 'Douglas really loved her, as she put it; really loving, now meant the exquisite fragile relationship with William.' (APM 338)

Martha's political ambitions concerning the communist party have a strong impact on her relationship with Douglas. As it irritates him and he becomes jealous of her political involvement. Because of this Martha suffers from various states of lethargy regarding her relationship with Douglas. The war and the distance make their relationship more

complicated & at the end Martha decides to leave all her relations for the sake of the political party and her freedom.

Moreover, Martha has a similar cold attitude towards her own daughter, Caroline. Though being a mother, she has no affection for Caroline. Sometimes Martha has very tender feelings towards Caroline but most of the time she does not enjoy mother-daughter relationship as she herself did not have good relations with her mother Mrs. Quest. All the time she wants to resist the existence of her mother. She feels guilty about herself that she fails to stop her mother's involvement in her relationship with Caroline. This feeling of guilt colours Martha's relationship to Caroline because in a way Caroline is a constant reminder to Martha that she has not been able to totally resist her mother's influence. Martha finds new meaning into her life when she joins the local communist group, and she slowly goes away from Douglas and Caroline. Finally she separates herself from the bondage of relationships by leaving Douglas and Caroline. It is observed that Lessing has presented complicated human relationships through her novel *A Proper Marriage*.

In this novel she has explored the human relationships on three levels. Firstly, individual level – self analysis of the individual character, secondly, the interpersonal level – a relationship between two individuals and lastly, the level of social and political relations – which focuses on the attitude of the protagonist's towards social and political conventions.

Thus both the writers have shown through their novels that there is a quest for constructive and meaningful relationship in which individuals are genuinely and intrinsically interested in each other. These two writers have given importance to the equality in human relationship, focusing the fact that any relationship cannot be maintained by one person alone and thus have brought about the reality of higher sophisticated class. The call is for recognition of woman as an equally important partner in marriage or in any other relationship. Her needs, her freedom, her personality, her individuality should be equally valued. While handling and exploring the human relationships, both the novelists have shown that women need not make continuous sacrifices in order to please men and ultimately, have given a soft corner for women than that of men in their novels.

The abbreviations:- (SIC),(APM),(NS), (NNS), (SFNF), (NDL),(DLA)are used for Storm in Chandigarh, A Proper Marriage, Nayantara Sahgal, The Novels of Nayantara Sahgal, A Study of her Fiction and Nonfiction, The Novels of Doris Lessing, Doris Lessing's Africa respectively.

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