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Abstract

Nayantara Sahgal's *A Time to be happy* becomes the example for a postcolonial novel. Sanad, protagonist of the novel brings the mindset of an individual in the post colonial society. He says people are leaving their own identity and following the western tradition and habits as a matter of prestige. After his marriage with Kusum he started to live a new lifestyle which has importance for his own culture and heritage. Sanad is portrayed by the author as an example of the present youngsters of India. They have realized the importance of nativity and with pride they have started to follow it.

Introduction

Fiction, being the most characteristic and powerful form of literary expression, has acquired a prestigious position in Indian English literature, popularly known as Indian writing in English. It is generally agreed that in India, the novel is the most acceptable way of embodying experiences and ideas in the context of the present time. Fiction is a form of art mirrors the social fabric and reflects the thought of the age.

The very emergence of women writers during this period has great significance. Kamal Markandaya, Ruth Prawar Jhabvala, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Veena Paintal and Nergis Dalal have added new dimensions and depth to Indian fiction in English. The emergence of these women writers marks the birth of an era which promises a new deal for the Indian fiction in English. They have turned as social reform writers. Women's inner self, their agonies, their pleasures are better and more truly being depicted by the women novelists.

The women novelists of the nineteenth century tried to give their characters justice by posting various problems but it was the early experimental period. Owing to lack of experience of writing, they soon turned to didacticism, sentimentalism and romanticism which weakened their novels. It is not so with the later women novelists who emerged in the Post – Independence era such as Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Prawar Jhabvala,

Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy, Shobha De and Bharati Mukherjee.

About the Novel

Nayantara Sahgal's *A Time to Be Happy* was published in 1958 and it is dedicated to "Mamu". The novel ends with the village Industries fair. Men, women even children are sitting and fashioning the baskets, colouring straw for matting, articles of copper and silver, carved wood nob, toys and knickknacks, are designed by them. It shows the crafts of the ancestors who got new blood and the display proves that the ancient skill flourishes and it is not forgotten. From the beginning till the end the context of the happiness changes between Sanad, the hero and Sohan Bai. In the three parts of the novel there are many characters, relationships and events. Everyone is in search of peace and happiness; there is quest for identity. Sahgal validates the Gandhian strategies for the emancipation and development of people in all spheres, social, economic, religious and political. No wonder then Liverpool Port called it a story with wisdom at its core and hope for its goal.

Sahgal presents a galaxy of characters: horde of servants in a traditional household, royalty and celebrities, freedom fighters, diplomats, bureaucrats, businessmen, students, housewives, working women and so on. Her insight into the character is remarkable. She knows intimately the life and people she is portraying.

Objectives of the study

- i. The main aim of the study is to understand the mindset of an individual in the postcolonial society.
- ii. To know the life style of the individual in the postcolonial society.

Findings and Discussions

Nayantara Sahgal is writing about contemporary India reflect the changing social condition through her characters and through their aspirations and conflicts. Personal relationships reflect both the changing social condition and the conflicts of the individual minds. Most of the characters of Sahgal are dealt with the problems in all levels and give hope to future generation that this kind of attitude is needed for the society to attain the realistic perspective.

Her novels are deeply and definitely rooted in the great tradition of the Indian-English fiction which has been a product of change as well as a major vehicle of the consciousness of that change. Her *A Time to be Happy* is an example of a susceptible sensibility, preoccupied with the recapitulation of domestic and social events centering on the career of the protagonist, Sanad.

The 'Englishness' had been a matter for pride and prestige. It had meant so much in the old days... It might have been appropriate in Bombay or Calcutta where city life had drawn the English and the Indians together in a curious mixture of modernity but here in the U.P the heart of India, where men still greet one another with 'Ram, Ram' where the carved images of many-armed gods and goddesses reign over the countryside on festival days, where 'Divali' is still a blaze of earthen lamps, the 'Englishness' had only seemed fantastic. pp-12(A Time to be Happy)

This image of incongruity and absurdity of the super- imposition of English culture on the cultural situation in India is sustained by Sahgal throughout the novel with commendable concentration and unobtrusive descriptions .The problem of Sanad becomes the central consciousness in the novel. It is a long way before he gets out of the labyrinthine lanes of human relations and social conditions and sets out on a voyage of freedom.

The "Dramatis Personae" include five distinct ,though not uniformly distinguished, sets of people –"the narrator's family consisting of his mother, Sheela, the wife of his cousin and Rohan Masi, his aunt; the Shivpal family chiefly consisting of Ammaji, Govind Narayan, a wealthy land-owner of Lucknow , Harish, his more modern brother, Lakshmi, Govind Narayan's wife, Sanad, the son of Govind Narayan and Lakshmi ,who later marries Kusum Sahai; Girish son of Govind Narayan, and Maya ,wife of Harish; the Sahai family consisting of Madan Sahai, a university professor in Sharanpur, Savitri, his wife , Kusum, their daughter, Sahdev, Naresh, Karan, and Kumar, their sons; Sir Harilal Mathur, a wealthy businessman in Sharanpur , Prabha, his first wife, Usha, Lady Mathur, his second wife; Sir Ronu Chatterji, very wealthy Calcutta businessman, Lady Lalita Chatterji, his wife; Kunti Behen, a lady social worker and later a Member of the Legislative Assembly; Vir Das, a successful anglicized Indian; Sohan Bhai , who shares political imprisonment with the narrator; Raghubir, a clerk in the Sharanpur office of Selkirk and Lowe; Mr.Trent, Officer in the Calcutta office of Selkirk and Lowe; Cyril Weatherby, a manager of the Sharanpur office of Selkirk and Lowe; Mark McIvor, successor to Weatherby in Sharanpur; Tom Grrange and his wife, Dora, social leaders of Sharanpur; Marion Finch, a visitor to Sharanpur."

Sanad's marriage to Kusum coincides with the advent of India's Independence in 1947. The country has become free, and the future, which has always seemed so far ahead, so much in the realm of fancy, is upon them. The post-Independence Indian's behavior is brought out through the Sharanpur people. The club life becomes the centre of their social life. The narrator goes to the Sharanpur club for the first time at McIvor's invitation.

It was a world built on imagination, sustained by the power that only imagination is truly a wonderful thing. Nothing, not the Indian brain-fever bird with its flat, staccato cry, not the dust-laden leaves of the mango trees in the garden, not even the fiery reality of the air breathed each instant, could dislocate the fantasy. It had reigned supreme these many years, an island of make-believe in Sharanpur.pp-205

After visiting the club the narrator becomes curious to know everything about the place. Dora an English woman makes it clear that Indians must have their own culture and habits to lead a realistic life. Though these words told by an English woman it becomes the words of the writer to the present Indians.

The author brings out the current situation through Vir Das. Even after his highbrow schooling and his two years with the firm of English company, he is still slow to react in English. He feels easy and normal when he speaks his own language and he is very comfortable to greet people with "namaskar". The writer stresses the importance of mother tongue in the Education system. Each and everyone's talent will come out only when they progress with their mother tongue but the society is going behind the English just for fancy. When Vir Das is not communicating properly in English he doesn't seek the respect. While he talking with Sanad he makes a statement,

I have committed a blunder of great proportion.pp-219

Sanad corrects him and says he must use "A big blunder". pp-219. Sanad who makes fun of Vir Das is not ready to accept the Weatherby's order. He rejects to call Dora Granges for a respectful visit to his home. Sanad thinks that after independence also English people try to show their authority on Indians in the form of business. Sanad is not ready to call Dora Granges at any cost. According to him there is no need to show

any special consideration for British Colleagues. He argues with Weatherby,

.....Morari Lal our colleague and a number of other businessman in the city. I haven't paid any of them social calls. In fact, I've never set foot in their homes for any reason whatever, we meet only on the business level when work demands it. I have nothing to do with them otherwise. Now I come to think of it, have Granges paid formal calls on any of the local businessmen? Pp-228

According to Weatherby it is an idiotic argument and he is not ready treat Indians equal to British people. He criticizes that Indians do not know to give a chair for their visitor and they are bania community so Sanad cannot put the Indians the equal to British business people. Weatherby threatens Sanad that he will not give good conduct certificate about Sanad to his head office.

Sanad is not ready to bother about the threat. He wants to be ruled only by himself not by any external force. It becomes the real mindset of the present young people in India. The major problem he faces in the society is his quest for identity. Due to the fancy for English language and its culture Sanad has learnt and practiced it. Kusum, his wife becomes the main reason for Sanad's transformation. She has been brought up by her parents with complete freedom. Due to that she is able to decide her way by herself. Her brother Sahdev is a very patriotic person who has lost his life for the country. He is very dear to Kusum's heart and he only brought up her in her childhood so she also has the same patriotic feelings like him. She doesn't hesitate to follow Indian culture and heritage. She uses only Indian hand made things in her house. She leads a very simple life with Sanad. All these things make Sanad to realize his present condition and the need for his country. He becomes stern to stand for his rights and search for his self-realization, "All I can see is the brown faces around me, and I keep wondering who they are and what there is in common between us".pp-230

He decides to stand for his principle. When the narrator asks, "Would your principles suffer if you called on Dora?" He answers that he is not ready to add notion for her self-importance. Sanad brings out his real character by his words, "I'd sacrifice a good many principles to make even one person genuinely happy. I have always felt there are so

many discontented, frustrated people in the world that if it lay within my power to make just one such person truly happy I'd gladly do it".pp-229 He is not having any gladness in calling Dora Granges to his house for a respectful visit so only he refuses to call her.

The English firm wants to send him to England for six months. He is ready to go to England "to see what the original is like".pp-213 The narrator asks explanation for "The original". According to Sanad, the life style he is leading is not his original culture, it's all from England. He is just a carbon copy of it. He openly states

I've studied English history and literature. I've read the English poets. It's all more real to me than the life I live every day. Don't you see, it has been burned into us, we're branded with it, my body is in India, but my brain doesn't belong here. I might as well be an Englishman except for the colour of my skin. Pp-231,232

The narrator makes fun out of him so he gets irritated and says,

I don't want to forget anything I've been taught. I don't say there's anything wrong with it. I only want to redress the balance. I don't want to feel like a stranger among my own people. If I feel this way now, it'll be much worse in a few years' time. Pp-232

He wants to go to England as an individual instead of carbon copy of an Englishman. Sanad is longing for his identity. Sanad is suppressed in his heart. He is not able to see himself as an odd man among his own country people. The author brings out the importance of knowing history and heritage of their own. Moreover she stresses that Indians must learn and give importance to their culture. She also says that there is nothing wrong in gaining knowledge of foreign language and knowing its culture but they must not forget their native's spirit because they can shine only with it.

The importance of English language in India is brought through by Sir Ronu Chatterji. According to him India is developing fast and facing many changes with English language. Sanad stands for the Indian Languages and he suggests everyone must learn some Indian languages to communicate. Ronu makes a clear picture to Sanad,

Now, that is just what I mean," he explained patiently. "Why waste time

learning each other's language when we both speak English? It's so impractical... Never mind the language controversy, we're doing away with any number of institution. We're playing ducks and drakes with the future education of our children," he confided, "Whatever you may have had against the British, you must admit they provided us with a sound education "British education,....." is not a system, it is an institution, a tradition, proved over hundreds of years, we can't discard it overnight. We can't offered to.pp- 256

English language plays an important role in Indian communication. From Ronu's point of view Sanad haven't thought so he goes with him but he needs the Indianess in Englishness. He says that he wants to make or change from playing tennis to learn spinning. Ronu comically says "My dear boy, next you'll suggest we all turn up at our offices in dhoti!". Pp-257

Sanad answers with the thought of Indianess.

Why ever not? In another ten or twenty year we might well be doing just that. It' would be much cooler than a suit. And, after all, "Sanad added with an air of having come to an inescapable conclusion after months of deliberation," we're Indians". pp-258

Everyone who is close with Sanad is dumb stricken and even criticizes for his national consciousness. Weatherby says he is making monkey out of him. But to everyone's surprise,

Sanad sitting beside him, his left hand wrestling with the delicate trick of keeping the newly spun thread from snapping while his right hand turned the wheel.

GENTLY, almost imperceptibly, the era of cottage industry had come into its own, with the spinning-wheel symbolizing the dignity of the hand-made article. Pp-260

Sanad comes up against all minor irritations. His desire is to discover his country.

He learns Hindi from his wife and even once danced in nude on the rooftops of his house for an Indian colloquial song. From his point of view “There’ is nothing to be gained by stepping outside the bounds of one’s own position-nothing but a temporary sensationalism, and I’m sure you’re above that. Mind you, there’s nothing to stop you doing anything you want to,” pp-268. He also says to a Selkirk and Lowe’s employ his learning his own language and spinning isn’t an inhibition. It is his background and the company must accept the changing happens in India to stand.

Mr.Trent, Sanad higher officer is a nice man and he respects everyone’s feelings. He is able to understand Sanad desire to become familiar with his country. He has drawn a new contract for Sanad to continue his work in the Selkrik and Lowe’s company. The contract is satisfactory to him and it doesn’t force to do a work or action against his will. Mr. Trent is not only supporting Sanad’s view he also gives a new dimension to him. He says, “One can talk to an Indian about tradition. It’s something he understands and appreciates. You people could teach the world a thing or two about it. It’s something we British respect; too, In fact, I think a healthy respect for tradition is a fairly sound measure of a man’s character.” Pp-266

The writer brings out the importance of Village Industry through the celebration of village industry week which has begun in the sizzling heat of May. The fair includes an exhibition of hand-made products and a spinning display, and every night there is a festival of folk dance as a replica of Indian tradition. The government wants to promote village goods to show that cottage industry has a prominent place in the indian economy. The narrator carries the author’s thought about the fair and says,

..... the coloured straw matting, the articles of copper and silver, and carved things did not matter. What matter was woodwork, the toys and assembled with artistry and patience. What mattered was the surge of enthusiasm which had brought them there by the cartload. Men, women, even children had sat by the hour fashioning them, filling in time that would otherwise have been idly spent, playing the crafts of their ancestors, and here was this display to prove that ancient skills flourished and were not forgotten.pp- 271

This shows that the machine age has not robbed the people of their powers or their

faith. All the painted toy and article of wood is a symbol of courage and the determination survive.

The author brings some more characters to bring out the reality of the post-colonial India. Govind Narayan, a Zemindar in pre-Independence India is unable to face the abolitions of Zemindari system. When the land is taken by government his children have to lead their life with salaries. The salaries will not permit them to live a sophisticated life they are accustomed. According to him it is sheer robbery, and a violation of his most ancient traditions. Moreover he is unable to tolerate filth. He is unable to accept the refugees who take every bit of the ground in the country to survive. But his daughter Veena accepts the change and says "It is wonderful. Being there is like watching the beginning of something" pp-237. When the narrator says Delhi is becoming dirty due to refugees but she says, "It's one's own, isn't it and that's what makes it so exciting. One can have an ugly child, but it's one's Very own" pp-237. She firmly says that everyone must accept the change and try to understand it.

Sahgal's first novel brings out the changes in the minds of the post-colonial people immediately after independence. The quest for their freedom is not only in their physical living but they need their identity without the resemblance of any foreign country. It only makes them to develop their cottage Industry. The author uses her hand to present the need of pure politicians and free thinking youngsters.

In Sahgal's system of values, the human being is the nucleus of social dynamics. Freedom, Peace and Progress are mutually related concepts and the resultant factors. Thus, for example, when freedom is the input in the context of the individual consciousness the output is the dialogue, or communication or discussion. On the other hand, the individual dialogues or discussions result in the social context, in a sense of belonging and commitment of the well-being of one another. The condition of peace is thus to be perceived as the product of common heal and concern for one another. Progress in the sense of economic growth, prosperity, productivity and social development, is really the output of the collective commitment of countless individuals. Hence the emphasis on the freedom of the individual in the novels of Nayantara Sahgal becomes very important.

Conclusion

In *A Time to be Happy* Sanad the protagonist of the novel fights with the society for being like his own countrymen. He thinks he is a carbon copy of the British people. After Independence, India is free from the Imperial-colonial framework, but no relation is free from the oppression. It exists in all levels. Most of the Indians think that following foreign culture and their habits is a prestigious one.

India is the greatest country and Indian culture is one of the richest cultures in the world. It is one of the oldest forms and has held its heritage and flavor right from its birth to present day. It is well known for its culture and its various diversities in Indian culture. Though Indian culture is rich and great it was bound to undergo reforms and changes. Nothing stays permanent, everything changes with time and so did the Indian culture have changed with time. Reforms and changes came during the time of the British rule influenced the Indians along with their western culture. Due to that Indian culture lost its richness in the Post-Colonial period.

Modern India is under the influence of western culture. Sanad sees the changes in dressing habits, food habits and in the education system. When the narrator learns Sanskrit everyone makes fun of him. Awareness of own culture is important because it will project the true values and their identity. Sanad realizes that Indian culture is under the threat of extinction. He decides to take steps to restore back the rigidity and heritage. Being Englishness becomes fancy among the people. Sanad has practiced it for years. His wife Kusum makes him to search for his originality. He is sure that English language and its culture is eating the roots of the Indian culture and it is quite evident through the club life of the Indian people.

The colonial hangover which embedded in social psyche makes people to accept the cultural and intellectual superiority of the west unquestioningly. By following English people Indians are tied with certain bonds and they are unable to communicate freely. Their intellectuality is not growing completely. The author makes it clear with Vir Das. After finishing his education in a reputed English school and college, he has gone to foreign country for his higher education. But he has not gained anything out of it. He is very much relaxed when he communicates in his mother tongue. Sanad also once argues with Ronu for native language. But Ronu says that it is waste of time when there is a common language for everyone. From these characters author wants to make it clear that

English language will lead to an understanding and acceptance of their culture and society must automatically distances from indigenous culture. The author doesn't want her people to be Indian in flesh and blood but western in spirit. The author is not meant to be rant against the growing influence of English which is killing our culture but she aims to give a suggestion so as to successfully preserve both the English language for all its economic importance and the mother tongue for all its historical and social significance. The awareness of once own culture is important because it will keep them in projecting their values to the world.

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