
In this chapter I pick up only two novels, viz. (i) *This Time of Morning* (1965) (ii) *The Day in Shadow* (1971) to be discussed as the two novels are more related with the theme of the conflict between tradition and modernity. For the depiction of her women character Nayantara Sahgal divides them into two categories, those who are traditional and those who are modern. In general most of the Indian women are so conditioned and bound by traditional rules and customs of the society as Indian society has strong traditional rules and norms. Moreover the society is basically a Hindu society where women are given a status lower than that of man, but who are bound by social convention and religious beliefs. However, women who are untraditional come forward in every territory which is formerly reserved for males. They are able to make certain

changes about their lives and are relatively independent. They follow their own decisions not depending on the dictates of men folk. Modern women don't find any sense in being acquiescent. They want to get freedom in every field. They are able to guide their destiny, which means their ability to make conscious efforts to make life worth living by virtue of their individual or collective will in spheres, economic, social and political for a collective goal or individual person.

The untraditional modern women have much power of mind. They want to project their image as of individuals free from all kinds of conservative thinking which they seek to overthrow. They are ready to fight their way in fulfilling their aspirations. They rebel against the existing moral codes and social norms which either in theory or in practice tends to relegate women to a secondary place in society. Here in this chapter, an attempt will be made to examine the conflict between tradition and modernity. Nayantara Sahgal's women may be grouped into two types. The first group consists of women who are happy in the confines of Hindu orthodoxy, and the other are those with strong sense of individuality and an analytical mind but shuttling between traditional and modern value. Sahgal depicts such women characters in her novels, *This Time of Morning* and *The Day in Shadow* very vividly. This is seen in the novel *This Time of Morning* where she depicts the characters of Nita and her father Dr. Narang. While Nita is a young, beautiful modern girl, her father is desirous of the

Eastern and Western Cultures. Even if the father has a strong desire for such a life-style, he will act in the most traditional manner by imposing severe restrictions on the movement of his ambitious daughter. In order to strengthen this point, the talk between Mrs. Narang and Rakesh about the blue Cross ball may be seen. At this time, Mrs. Narang says to Rakesh:

Were all the tickets for the Blue Cross ball sold out this year? I'm sure it will be a success. But don't keep Nita out too late. Her father hardly ever allows her to go out to these Club dances. He's ever so strict, but since it's you

She called out to the bearer again and instructed him to call Nita.

There's no hurry, 'said Rakesh hoping his own quiet lone would put his hostess at ease. 'I came a little early. No one ever gets there much before nine (*This Time*, 38).

The concern of Mr.Narang and Mrs.Narang is only for the safety and protection of their daughter, Nita exemplifies their conformity to the traditional values. However, the novelist bitterly condemns such attitudes which value women as property and discourage individuality in them. It is a fact that a girl's movements are highly restricted by her parents when she reaches puberty in a traditional society. So, Nita's parents don't allow her to smoke, to have drinks at any party or to attend the Club dances until she is married although she is a

modern girl. Although her parents don't give her the permission of smoking cigarettes, Nita smokes when she goes to a ball one evening with Rakesh. Rakesh gives her a cigarette by asking if she is allowed to smoke a cigarette. On hearing it, Nita says to Rakesh:

I really would like a cigarette.

Rakesh says to Nita.

'You can't have one

Nita says to Rakesh.

'Well I keep cigarettes in my room. Daddy doesn't know. Isn't it silly not being allowed to do anything until one is married?

Suppose I don't marry till I'm forty five?' (*This Time*, 40).

Again, Dr. Narang, father of Nita, makes plans for the marriage of his daughter since he is a part of the Indian traditional Culture. Although the members of the Narang family have become modern in some possible respects, Mrs. Narang who speaks English fluently will sit around the card table with her friends so that she may discuss the marriage plan of her daughter Nita with them. However, Nita doesn't believe in the idea of arranged marriage in her time. So, she doesn't have any interest in the marriage arranged by her parents and their friends and relatives. In her time, she really wants to observe the man-woman relationship and their marriage in the Indian society. In her opinion, marriage must be agreeable not only to the man but also to the woman.

Since she knows that a man and a woman must get married after testing themselves intellectually and morally instead of performing the marriage hastily at first sight, she declares that marriage should be the result of personal relationship and the choice of life partner is a very difficult task for both the man and the woman. In fact, Nita is very disgraceful when she is engaged to Bijay as she resents an arranged marriage. At this stage, she feels withdrawn with the prospect of fulfillments. So, she requests Rakesh to persuade her parents to break her engaged marriage Nita says to Rakesh:

‘I don’t want to marry a man I can intimidate, ‘she said firmly. ‘I don’t want to marry at all just yet. Now you’re back, Rakesh, do persuade Mummy and Daddy I should have a job, its ghastly doing nothing (*This Time*, 41).

Although Nita has refused her parent’s plan for her marriage to Bijay at first, she can’t disobey her parents any longer. As a result of this, she agrees to become engaged to Vijay eventually. Being a modern girl, Nita has a sexual contact with Kalyan Singh before her engagement. Regarding her sexual involvement with Kalyan Singh, Jasbir Jain Opines:

With Kalyan Singh, sex comes naturally to her not because he loves her but because she has unconsciously allowed herself to love and advise him and turn to him in her desperation at being hedged in by convention (42).

Even if Nita is engaged to Kalyan Singh, she is emotionally dependent on him still now and after she has met him, she showers her tenderness on him. Nayantara Sahgal seems to be critical of the traditional marriage in salivating in Indian society in which the life partner are chosen by the parents by arranging the marriage, for the two young souls so that they can spend a happy life forever. In addition to this, she strongly attacks this social convention of marriage and condemns the hypocrisies of the affluent upper-classes wherein women are encouraged to take the alcoholic drinks or to smoke cigarettes in the name of freedom and modernity. In brief, most of the major characters of the novel, *This Time of Morning*, are a blend of the modernity and traditional elements since they are modern in some aspects and they are traditional in many other things.

In the novel, *The Day in Shadow*, Nayantara Sahgal has exposed the struggle of a young beautiful, daring Indian women, who is trapped under the burden of a brutal divorce settlement and the agony and unhappiness which she experiences at the hands of cruel and unjust male-dominated Indian society. Besides these, the novelist also presents the social lives of the political leaders, business barons, journalists and free thinkers in the flow of the daily living in New Delhi. Although the Indians have got freedom, it is only on the surface level still now since they are the slaves of the Western people in their attitudes towards love, morality, sex, marriage, education and religion. Som, Raj, Simrit, Summer

Singh, Brij and Ram Krishna, who are the major characters of this novel, behave like the modern men but at the same time, find it difficult to isolate themselves completely from the age-old tradition of their own country. This mixture of tradition and modernity may be observed in their attitudes towards morality, education, eating habits, man-woman relationships, love and architecture. It is true that Delhi is not a new city unlike Chandigarh. Since it has got its precious past, it now becomes completely a modern city which is blossoming into new street lighting, fountains, parks, restaurants, shops and discotheques. In this modern city, a new type of society has appeared. So, most of the people who are come to settle here bring their beliefs, ideas and customs with them. It may be right to say that modernity in the Indian society is frequently confused with the Western lifestyle. The deed of imitating the Western ways of dressing, eating, drinking, social get-together and enjoyment is regarded as modern. The Indian people think that they may become modern just by imitating the lifestyle of the Western people. Like the Western people, the people of New Delhi have a strong desire for organizing parties, drinking wine, flirting with women other than their wives, late night dinners and ball-room dances. The opening scene of this Novel will stress this point:

The huge mirrors of the Zodiac Room at the Intercontinental, festooned in carved gilt, reflected everyone of consequence in the

Ministry of Petroleum, and a lot of other officials besides and their wives. And some of their daughters the supple, flat-stomached young, with their saris tied low showing their navels, their hair swinging long and loose, or piled high in glossy architecture (*The Day*, 01).

All these show the superficial modernity of the Indian people who blindly imitate the Western style in their fashions and manners by knowing little that these things are taking them away from the traditions and customs of their own country. Instead of knowing this point, they consider slim body, naked stomachs and trimmed hair to be the sign of modernity. They throw parties and spend their money lavishly in order to become modern persons. They think that a person living in New Delhi attends parties in order to know more and more people. Raj also wants Simrit to go out of the house frequently so that she can meet more and more people even if Simrit feels out of place in such parties.

Besides these things, the Indian people also go for holidaying like the foreigners. Here in this novel also, Som and Simrit frequently go for holidaying although it is not always holiday time and there is a lot to do at home. They call it “A European’s idea of a holiday” In such a modern society, vulgar is regarded as a sign of modernity. Again, we find Som kissing his wife in front of his friend Lalli. However, the friends of Simrit don’t want her ex-husband Som since they

regard him as a rough and bad mannered man. They had thought him a boor. They opine that:

A man had to be flashy on a big scale to be thought well of, and majestically vulgar to be admired, and Som had not arrived in that category (*The Day*, 04).

Even if it is so, all the characters of this novel don't come into this very category. Speaking as an example, it may be mentioned the name of Shaila who is quite traditional in her view of modernity. The moment Raj holds her arms in the market, she requests him not to do so since his act of holding her arms in the public creates a strange and odd scene. It is a fact that 'love' of the foreign languages has become an obsession with the modern man. The moment we meet Som first, we find him talk with Lalli in Punjabi but in the later part of the novel, he learns some German phrases through the contact of his friend Vetter. This time, he likes to look like a foreigner in his mannerisms also. Besides this, the reputation of a Civil Servant in Delhi has nothing to do with his merits except his struggle for the ability which enables him to become a man who is good at the English diction and manners.

It is true that most of the major characters of the novel, *The Day in Shadow*, are a blend of the traditional and modern elements since they are modern in some aspects and traditional in many other things. Speaking as an

example, it may be mentioned the character of Som who tries to be modern in each and every manner and blindly imitates the Western lifestyle. He speaks the language of the Western people, learns their mannerisms and adopts their fashions. Although he has done so, he can never abandon his own country's traditions. That's why he believes that a woman should live under the control of a man. In fact, he disgusts women's individuality and their freedom. He believes in male's domination over females to such an extent that he gives the least freedom to his wife. In the meantime, he expects her to conform to his ideal of the subdued womanhood, and considers the inequality of their relationship to the right order of things. Regarding Som's views on modernity and traditionalism, Anita Mahajan rightly observes:

Although Som is modern in other aspects. Then coming to husband wife relationship, he is completely traditional- He gives no voice to Simrit even in the ordinary decisions of everyday life (Mahajan, 12-13).

Since Som lives in a male-dominated world, he never views women to be persons. So, he can early condone Lalli's murder of his wife. Besides this, he also shows no affection for his daughter since he loves only his son Brij. Like this, Simrit is also a mixture of the tradition and modern elements. Since she likes individuality and freedom, she feels suffocated and unhappy in the

husband-centered world. So, she has divorced Som. Since she rebels against the conventional security of marriage for getting a free communication of ideas with her husband beyond the glandular sensations of sex, she is regarded as an awakened, modern woman who shows the courage of living alone in the world. However, she doesn't get peace of mind after she has divorced her husband, and it is tradition in her which enables her to feel that she has offended something old and ordained by taking divorce. She feels that "a part of her would always be married to Som" (*The Day*, 220). Although an Indian woman may become modern in this way, she can never abandon the old traditions and customs of her own country.

In the traditional Indian Society, a marriage was usually arranged by the parents of the bride and the bridegroom and after marriage the husband and the wife had to live together in all circumstances. It was generally considered to be a contract or bondage made in the presence of God, the Almighty, and which had to be obeyed by the people of the said society. However, people don't believe in the arranged marriages in modern society. In the case of Simrit, She gets married to Som, a businessman, against the will of her Brahmin parents. Since she is not satisfied with the marriage, she divorces her husband untimely. After she has divorced Som, she plans to marry Raj. Thus, a marriage in the modern Indian society is fixed by man himself and not by God, the Almighty as it was thought

in the traditional Indian society. Nevertheless there are some people who stick to these rules in the present Indian society. Regarding, this matter, one can mention the relationship between Shaila and Raj. Although these two lovers have loved each other, they can't get married since Shaila can't break her parent's wish. As a result of this, she gets married to the man whom her parents have chosen to be her husband.

It may be said that, although the modern man has changed a lot, he doesn't give up the old traditional view of considering a woman to be an object of possession. On the divorce of Simrit and Som, Ram Krishan rightly says:

The Hindu woman traditionally has no rights apart from what her father or her husband chooses to bestow on her. The law has changed some of that, but attitudes haven't changed much, which is clear from the husband's attitude in the care and court's acceptance of such a document. A woman can apparently still be used as a convenience for tax purposes by her husband even after he has divorced her (*The Day*, 168).

In *The Day in Shadow* also, Nayantara Sahgal seems to be deeply concerned with the need of freedom for women as she has done in some of her novels. Saroj, Kusum, Simrit, Pixie like to stand on their feet so that they enjoy individuality, self expression and self dependence. It is Simrit's desire for

freedom and individuality that urges her to divorce her husband. In fact, she doesn't like to be known as her husband's wife but as her own self.

In the modern Indian society, every man becomes more materialistic. So, he gives more importance to money. For a man like Som, money is the most important thing in life and this love for money becomes the root cause of his separation from his wife. The moment Simrit knows her husband's love for money, She feels:

She felt surrounded by remorseless complicated machinery from which these were no escape, all because of money. She wondered why she had not seen it before. Money had been part of the texture of her relationship with Som, an emotional, forceful ingredient of it, intimately tied to his self-esteem. Money was, after all, a form of pride, even of violence's (60).

Since the modern man has become so much money minded, there is no place left for human beings and emotions in his heart. He weighs everything with money. Som feels that only money can give happiness to his wife Simrit the husband-wife and father -son are also weighed in terms of money. He can go to any extent to get more and more money. In fact, the more he earns, the more he breaks relationship with his friend Vetter and Lalli. Even Brij is fascinated by the money, So, he decides to ignore his mother's side of the case as he thinks that it may be upset with his father "it was too big a risk. He didn't dare." Besides these

people, Simrit's daughter also lives in the dream world of affluence projected by the rich advertisements in the magazine.

It is true that hunger for power and money is considered to be the sign of modernity in the present political world. Nayantara Sahgal successfully portrays the lives of the modern political leaders and shows how they are going away from the Gandhian ideas and views. Summer Singh in *The Day in Shadow* relates everything to power and positions as Kalyan Sinha, Hari Mohan and Somnath do in *This Time of Morning*. He uses politics and his position as a road to personal ambition. He aims at drastic changes overthrowing tradition and religious values like Hari Mohan. In this modern political world, power becomes an end in itself instead of being a means to an end. Even if it is so, there are still people like Sardar Sahib who is worried about the betterment of the present human society.

One may certainly say that the extramarital relationships were considered immoral in the traditional Indian society and such relationships are becoming quite common in the modern Indian society. In the novel, *The Day in Shadow*, Simrit and Raj are having an affair even though Simrit is a divorced woman and a mother of many children. Although Raj had a relationship with Shaila earlier and even after her marriage with another man, he wants to meet her. In the same way, Summer Singh has sexual relationship with Pixie and so many other girls. Since the people of the present Indian society are modern in some aspects and

traditional in their attitudes, they are still unwilling to know that there is no difference between a daughter and a son. Since they think that a male heir is more important than a female heir. They give more importance to sons. In order to strengthen this point, the case of Som and Simrit may be observed. Although they have so many daughters and only one son Brij, Som doesn't show a slight love for his daughters while he is considerate only to his son.

Again, in the traditional Indian society, religion strongly influences the minds of the people. People used to have a strong faith in the theory of 'Karma' and accepted their fate willingly. Besides that, they had a full faith in the supreme power of God, the Almighty. In the novel, *The Day in Shadow*, Summer Singh's father believes that in case there is any taint in his son, "only providence or a miracle would put it right"(134). Like this the moment Simrit is thinking about Brij's moving towards his father, Raj thinks:

She was rather like the Moon herself, obedient to rhythms she herself didn't understand, satisfied that some power outside her controlled it all. Not God or any rational conception, Just fate (136).

Simrit also willingly accepts the tax terms since she believes that they are in her fate. Although she accepts everything as her fate, Raj and Ram Krishan like Simrit to take a stand against injustice and not to yield to a sense of helplessness

and victimization since they don't accept fate as an answer to the problems of human beings. In a conversation between Ram Krishan and Simrit, Ram Krishan says to Simrit:

Retribution catches up," With people who do not face a problem. Religions are supposed to help one face up. Religions are like public schools. Each produces a type, a uniform personality. The type ours produces doesn't face up - it puts problems into cold storage. Oh yes, it keeps thing in an excellent state of preservation, perfect museum pieces" He looked at Raj with a light in his eyes, "But I've found a way out of that" (233-234).

He identifies religion with devotion to do well. After examining such statements of Ram Krishan in *The Day of Shadow*, Nayantara Sahgal's concept of religion is a secular one since she gives importance to the men folk as human beings. In traditional Indian society the matrimonial ties are considered to be irrevocable. Regarding the Hindu religious Indu Swami points out:

The Hindu Dharma expects famous a wife complete obedience and devotion to her husband. She is expected to completely merge her ego with her husband's and to strict by follow the ideal of Pativatra (Swami, 42).

Nayantara envisions a world that may be based on equality, sharing and harmony between the male sex and female sex where the needs, the functions, the virtues

of women are valued equally along with those of men. These mean that she is not against man and her call is for recognition of woman as an equally important partner in marriage or in any other relationship. In brief, a woman's needs, freedom, personality and individuality must be equally valued. Regarding Sahgal's approach to the problems of Indian women J. Samuel Kirubahar and R. Meena opine:

Nayantara Sahgal has an independent approach to Women's problems in India as she does not accept the social tradition emphasized through religions mottoes and economic needs that failed to give the meaning to the concept of marriage and woman's individual identity. Woman has never been accepted as a full human being and as a result it causes her consistent suffering and miserable life in which her life ends in self-immolation (13).

Nayantara Sahgal is always successful in endowing her women characters with a sense of beauty and femininity along with boldness and self awareness. She doesn't like marriage to provide only financial and social security for a woman, but also love and companionship. It is a fact that woman in Nayantara Sahgal's *The Day in Shadow* has been groomed for a sub ordinal role and conditioned into secondary role along the exits lines right from the childhood. She is groomed to be an object of sale right from her childhood and she gets hardly any encouragement to develop her independent individual self since she

has to obey the age-old social traditions prevalent in the present society of India. In this novel Som has no respect for the woman who happens to be his wife. For Som his wife Simrit is a commodity and not a person. In the meantime, Simrit also has her own cravings, her own dreams of a respectable life when she will be kicked at every instance since she wants to enjoy the modern elements of the present Indian society. Since her husband Som follows the tradition which says that a woman should live under the control of her husband. She doesn't know what to do and when to do. It is true that Som in *The Day in Shadow* tries to keep his wife Simrit under his control as he wants to follow the traditional custom which expresses that a wife should obey her husband. So, Som simply orders his wife Simrit and expects her to obey meekly. The moment she refuses to allow her body to be used as a commodity, he tells her in plain language:

Look, I don't understand that high-flown stuff. And God knows you've had enough time. I want an answer when I get back. A plain one I can understand (*The Day*, 97).

Since Simrit is compelled to obey her husband, she never dares to stand alone. Asha Choubey says that "the aim of her revolt is not achieved as she rebels against the tyranny of one man only to yield unconditionally to another of the same pieces. Even the realization of exploitation only when she meets a man who makes her aware of her servile existences" (08)

Again in the novel, *The Day in Shadow*, Som is annoyed because of his wife Simrit's melodramatic attitude. Finally he resolves that a husband has to call it a day when a wife freezes up every time her husband touches. As a modern woman, Simrit rebels against the traditional society and her husband. Because of these reasons, she is humiliated by her husband Som. However, she seeks divorce from him to avoid him.

We are also allowed to say that Nayantara Sahgal gives experience to humanistic values, according to which a woman is not to be taken as "sex object and glamour girl ... lulled in a passive role that requires no individual identity,"(Quoted Asnani, 112). In Rashmi in *This Time of Morning* and Simrit in *The Day in Shadow* we have moving depictions of the New Woman struggling to retain her selfhood, to breath freely in the suffocating environs of loveless, unfaithfully marriages. In fact, they are not women intent on professional lives but home-loving women who merely plead for a respect of their individuality and marriages which are not merely social conveniences or socially sanctioned means of male dominations. Having personally experienced the trauma of a failed marriage Nayantara Sahgal writes deftly, often poignantly, of the dilemma of women trapped between traditional assumptions regarding womanhood and the stirrings of individuality. She fulfils a clearly feminist function in her seeing exposure of the hollowness of man woman relationships based on socially

predetermined patterns of gender inequality. The New Woman is determined not merely to live, but to live in self - respect, thus simplicity demanding a realignment of the parameters on which marriages function.

There is a conflict in the minds of the major characters of Nayantara Sahgal's two novels, *The Time of Morning* and *The Day in Shadow*, whether they will preserve the traditional elements or they will follow the modern rules in the present Indian society. But Sahgal undoubtedly confirms that the people of the modern Indian Society had better follow the modern rules by preserving some important traditional elements since human beings need both the traditional and the modern elements in their lives. After knowing Sahgal's view, we cannot say the modernism is better than traditionalism and vice versa. Those who want the modern elements will merely favour modernism and those who love the traditional elements will certainly favour traditionalism.

In this chapter, the conflict between traditional and modernity has been examined thoroughly in *This Time of Morning* and *The Day in Shadow* Since Nayantara Sahgal has a strong dislike for the age-old tradition of the Indian society, she has exposed the defects of these age-old traditions. In these two novels it is very clearly and attentively, known the age-old traditions which deprive the women of the Indian society of their right and privileges. As a result

of this the Indian women can't get the same rights as those of the Indian man. In order to free women and make them move without being under the control of their husbands, the novelist demands that man power and subjugation of women by men should have to an end. Only then, women's rights which were already snatched from women will be protected.

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