

The Neo-Identity of the Indian Women in Nayantara Sahgal's

This Time of Morning

Jameel Tahmoush

1st MA English, Jain Deemed-to-be-University

Email:jameel.t@hotmail.com

Abstract-Nayantara Sahgal the winner of the Commonwealth Writers Award (Eurasia) in 1987 is one of India's best-known novelists and thinkers who writes in English. She is able to study her characters' mentality deeply. In her novels, Sahgal does not only depict the sufferings and the conflicts that Indian women have been through due to the patriarchal society, the trivial customs and the British colonizers, but she portrays the neo-identity (image) Indian women have obtained after the post-colonial era (independence). In her novel *This Time of Morning* (1965), she tries to attempt how the Indian women such as Rashmi and Nita go beyond marriage, the trivial traditions and the patriarchal restrictions and create a new identity in the Indian society. The first one, Rashmi, attempts to find her position in society after the failure of her marriage, whereas the later, Nita, manages to grant herself a place in the society before marriage. They refuse the worthless traditions and the dominance of the phallocentric mentality that are imposed by society upon them. They refuse to abandon their individuality and struggle till they get their own identity. They want to live a life according to their own terms and values and not for norms imposed by their parents or society. In *This Time of Morning*, the narrator portrays the new image of women unlike the typical image of women in *A Time to be Happy* who cannot violate the patriarchal mentality, society or even think beyond their duties like when Maya's husband requests her to be the true image of the traditional woman. Sahgal supports the feminist goals of defending equal civil and social rights for women. So, the neo-identity of the Indian women represented by Rashmi and Nita in *This Time of Morning* is the main theme of this paper.

Key Words-Post-colonialism, feminism, marriage, identity, image.

Introduction-Nayantara Sahgal was born in 1927. She is an Indian author who writes in English. She is a member of the Nehru-Gandi family, the second of the three daughters born to Jawaharlal Nehru's sister, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit. So, she is a member of one of the country's most high-political family. In her novel *This Time of Morning*, Sahgal presents women's struggle and suffering against the worthless traditions and norms. These women continue their quest till they create their own identity according to their own beliefs. This novel is set in the early post-independence years, when a new republic looks forward to a future full of hope. It is considered a great text in the post-colonial fiction.

In the past, India suffered when the White British men attacked and ruled this land. This interfere in India caused many changes at social and political level. They forced the natives to learn the English language and some western customs trying to obliterate their rituals. However, independence in India has brought many changes in the cultural and personal life of the individuals. This novel portrays the neo-identity Indian women have obtained after the Britishers left India, after independence.

In this novel, the narrator enters the females' psyche so deeply which enables the readers to read closely the mindset of these two women, Rashmi and Nita. So, this paper is going to show how Rashmi and Nita, the two the Indian Women, struggle against the norms of their society till they get their own identity. Sahgal's novel *This Time of Morning* presents them as strong women who faced their conflict or struggle bravely to create the image or the identity they dreamt of.

(1): B.R.Agrawal, M.P. Sinha. *Major Trends in the Post-Independence Indian English Fiction.*

Explanation-In *This Time of Morning*, Sahgal portrays the neo-image of those women who can face the male dominance strongly unlike the typical women who did not think beyond house, the burden duties and marriage. Sahgal stands for humanism. Women, to her, is not a mere toy, an object of lust, but man's equal and honoured partner in word and deed, as against the inhuman, traditional pasture, "old, impossible ideas," taboos,

and prejudices which, being out of date, must be cast aside like old clothes⁽¹⁾. It is highly clear that the narrator portrays women as equal as men and this equality is in “word and deed”. In other words, they are women of action and not a commodity or a “mere toy”.

In this novel, Nita and Rashmi are dare enough to take a “neo-path”: they dare to leave their husbands and go beyond the marriage ‘contract’ when they feel uncomfortable with their husbands. Rashmi has surprised her mother, Mira, when she tells her that she would like to get divorce. It is not actually easy for Mira to understand this shock or her daughter’s psyche. Rashmi fully intends to live her life to the max.

Though, her feeling and suffering like “moth trapped in cement” with Dalip, She remains loyal to her marriage life even when she is not satisfied with this relationship. Eventually, she becomes an independent woman. Her quest for her own identity leads her to different places and persons till she lastly finds herself in form of Rakish. Rashmi believes in love and self-discovery and realization. She believes that sharing based on the norms of equality may help in her quest for self realization or recognition.

This realization makes her see Rakish as her honest and true companion in her journey of life. At the end of the novel, she lived a life according to her own values, norms and principles and not for norms imposed by the society.

Nita, another female character in the novel, attempts to find her place-identity- in society before marriage while Rashmi tries to find her place after the failure of her marriage. She has her own values and norms that are different from those of her parents. She is an open-minded modern girl who loves to have fun and interested in going to clubs. She is crystal-clear about her choice of husband and marriage. She is highly opposed of the idea of being “parcel bride” and intends to marry only if she finds a man of her own choice not imposed by her parents or society.

Her parents choose Vijay for her as a groom. She realizes that Vijay would treat her like a “mere toy, an object of lust” since he represents the patriarchal mentality. Her parents’ decision is in confrontation with her desire for self realization. However, she has a strong

desire to live a life on her own norms and values, like Rashmi, without carrying the worthless traditions and the dominance of the phallogocentric mentality.

Eventually, she creates her own voice and identity by going with the man of her own choice, Kalyan saying: "I only knew I would die if I didn't...because I wanted to and it's the only thing I've ever really wanted to do"⁽²⁾.

She finds in Kalyan her soul-mate whom she can share her opinions and views freely. He gives herself the opportunity to discover herself saying: "the freedom to be myself. I had never had that before. I'd never had known it but for you". This is her first time that she is free from the chains and the restrictions of society. She finds herself with a real soul-mate, Kalyan, who helps in the creation of Nita's identity. She truly represents the modern Indian Women image.

Conclusion-Nayantara Sahgal in her *This Time of Morning* portrays the neo-identity Indian women have obtained after independence represented by Rashmi and Nita. They suffered till they create their own voice as they behave according to their own values. They fight against the typical image of Indian women in action. They are not like other traditional women like Maya, for example in *A Time to Be Happy* who suffers since she accepts to be under the control of men. Sahgal always calls for the equality between men and women. The title itself is symbolic that the word "morning" represents light, and light refers to the new image the Indian women after independence. Thus, this novel is considered as one of the most important texts in the post-colonial fiction.

(2): Sahgal, Nayantara. This Time of Morning. Delhi: Hind pocket Books, 1970.

Works Cited

B.R. Agrawal, M.P. Sinha. *Major Trends in the Post-Independence Indian English Fiction*.

Ritu Menon, "*Out of Line: A literary and Political biography of Nayantara Sahgal*", 2014.

R.K.Dhawan. Ed.“ This Time of Morning A Critical assessment” *Indian Women Novelists*. New Delhi: Prestige Books, 1993.

Sahgal, Nayantara. *This Time of Morning*. Delhi: Hind pocket Books, 1970.

Taank, Virender. *Feministic Approach in the Novels of Nayantara Sahgal: A Critical Study*. International Journal of Information Movement: vol.2 issue v, 2017.