

## Exploration of gender discrimination and woman liberation by Nayantara Sahgal in *storm in Chandigarh*

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### Abstract

*Storm in Chandigarh* is her third novel. It focuses multipart human relationships in liberty, truthfulness, love, friendship and equality. The novel also presents a contemptuous objection against the denial of liberty and uniqueness to woman. Sahgal's concept of a free woman transcends the restrictions of economic or social liberty and becomes a cerebral or emotional approach. In *Storm in Chandigarh* there is a requirement to redefine morals and virtue. The protagonist in the novel proves that women have a right being a human being to live as they desire. Thus, the protagonist represented as the liberated woman in the novel. Saroj, the protagonist signifies the new woman who is attempting to maintain her uniqueness and breathe independently in the disgusting environment of emotionally and psychologically unrewarding marriages. Sahgal attempts to represent the emotional response of woman that how a woman looks out at her constraints and herself. She believes that woman should try to realize and understand herself as a human being and not mere as an attachment to some man life. She explores that women have been suffered for several years by the hands of discriminating pressures. Sahgal in the novel has attempted to describe these pressures. She doesn't hold men liable for the pitiable position of women. In its place, she blames the system itself. She explored very clearly the effect of gender discrimination on women liberation in the novel.

**Keywords:** Gender Discrimination, Liberation, Emotional Approach, Independence.

### Introduction

The systematic, unfavorable behavior of individuals on the basis of their gender is called gender discrimination, which rejects their opportunities and rights over the world. Women are treated unfairly and less importance is placed on their lives just because of their gender. Women's differential access to power and control of resources is central cause to this discrimination in all institutional spheres such as the community, household, state and market. This paper explores the gender discrimination and woman liberation in Sahgal's *Storm in Chandigarh* through the various characters of the novel with special reference to Saroj and Inder.

Nayantara Sahgal is one of the most well-known Indian English creative writers and holds her unique individuality in Indian Writing in English. She is one of the most productive novelists amongst the contemporary Indian females' novelists. She is the niece of our first Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and the daughter of Mrs. Vijayalaxmi Pandit. She is the child of rich heritage. She had dissimilarities of view with her well-known cousin Indira Gandhi during the most dangerous phases of the political politeness of Indian democratic system in late 1960s and 1970s. Her parents and relatives actively participated in the freedom struggle. Politics entered the life of Sahgal very early and she learnt to accept many unusual happenings as matters of normal occurrence. She is independent and very sagacious woman who always preserve her intelligence of liberty and was not easily frightened by powerful people and power. She lived her life on her own term regardless of social pressures and criticism about the choices she made in her personal life. She is also an independent thinker.

Nayantara, born on May, 1927 in Allahabad, She had a proper schooling at a convent school. She was sent to the USA in 1943. The education in the USA gave her broad knowledge of

life. She got married and after the death of her father she divorced. Then she focused on writing and journalism. She is said to have established herself both as a creative writer and a political columnist. She has written various notable novels such as *This Time of Morning*, *A Time to be Happy*, *A Situation in New Delhi*, *Rich Like us*, *Plans for Departure*, *Mistaken Identity*, *Storm in Chandigarh*, *The Day in Shadow*.

*Storm in Chandigarh* is her third novel. It focuses multipart human relationships in liberty, truthfulness, love, friendship and equality. The 'storm' in the lives of three married couples, Saroj and Inder, Mara and Jit and Leela and Vishal is represented against the political environment of storm or quarrel between the recently divided states of the Haryana and Punjab on the issues of Chandigarh and Bakhra Nangal territory etc. The novel also presents a contemptuous objection against the denial of liberty and uniqueness to woman. Sahgal's concept of a free woman transcends the restrictions of economic or social liberty and becomes a cerebral or emotional approach. The need for liberty for female, according to her doesn't just mean the disobedience of old established traditions; it must also make her conscious of herself as a human being and reject to tolerate gender discrimination. She attempts to put forward the view that in the contemporary society, woman should not be seen in the conventional passive roles and one who is fit just to manage home chores and children without any self identify of her own. For the smooth performance of society and the family at large, woman needs to be seen as equal to man and honored partner. The woman characters in *Storm in Chandigarh* move about out of the strait-jacket of righteous stereotype, and appear as individuals. This is brought out evidently in the representation of far from ideal marriages of three young couples. Nayantara Sahgal is severely concerned with dejected marriages and the

aloneness of living. The novel is a study of definite resemblances and dissimilarities of several characters. It depicts the young hearts broken up by pressures of marriage and call of newborn love. The theme of the novel is aggression, not essentially a clear physical violence, but an unseen and the more slight form of violence. Saroj's pre-marital relationship becomes the reason of disappointment of their marriage. She is very much surprised by her husband's aggressive responses to a pre-marital issue. It is satirical that Inder considers it to be a severe moral lapse while he himself carries an extra-marital affair with Mara. Thus, Saroj became a sufferer of the male domination and gender discrimination.

Female characters in *Storm in Chandigarh* don't like to remain limited within the four walls of their homes. They like to go to parties and picnic to reduce the burden of tediousness and repetitiveness. Through the representation of Saroj, Gauri, Leela and Mara, Sahgal holds a mirror to the society that subjects its women characters to most horrible kind of cruel exploitation.

The female protagonist, Saroj in the novel is married to Inder who runs the textile mills of Saroj's cousin Nikhil Ray's company in Chandigarh. In the novel, Saroj appears as a sufferer of male domination and gender discrimination. She fears rather than loves her husband. There is no emotional relationship between Saroj and Inder inspite of the truth that they have been married for the last 4 years. Saroj is having 2 children- Muff and Bunny and one is in her stomach. Saroj is a straightforward living Indian lady. She is glad with her children and her household things. She becomes very sad when her children become ill she says 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.”(SIC, 38)

Saroj who has been brought up in an environment of liberty and faith has grown up to expect equality. She is puzzled by Inder's aggressive response to an affair she has had before her marriage. She tells him about it in all her innocence but this is for him the starting of an irritating doubt. Saroj is suffered by her husband, Inder, for her before marriage relationship. She tells him about her past events. Being very faithful to her husband she begins her voyage to find her individuality within marriage. But her efforts to search individuality are abolished by her husband's unkind attitudes. Inder is a typical male chauvinist who thinks woman should not have vision on her liberty and identity. He believes it to be a serious moral tumble with which she stained their whole relationship. Inder thinks himself to have been victimized. Premarital relationship of Saroj is only an external sign of the difference in their attitudes. Saroj, in *Storm in Chandigarh* is incapable to discover fairness in her marriage. Inder, her husband is not only from a dissimilar cultural milieu but is a special type of man altogether. Inder is a typical male character who thinks his wife as slave. He believes in gender discrimination. He has clear and strong characteristics of maleness and performs with pre-dominant man ego. Although, he is a father of two children and soon to be blessed with one more child, he thinks that child rearing is females' job. He gallantly says:

“A thousand years from now a woman will still want and need a master, the man who will own and command her and that is the man she will respect.” (SIC, 108).

Saroj wants to be recognized as an individual and wants to build up a relationship on that whereas Inder treats her just as a commodity and a wife-possession. Saroj attempts to search self-identity within the sphere of marriage. Her attachment with her marriage is significant. Her desire for self-identity is comparable to that of Rashmi. Inder couldn't give her, the liberty as he is involved with Mara. Saroj wants true love to search her individuality. She turns her concentration to her children because this happiness she doesn't get from her husband. And she gets happiness in bearing a child. Attachment gives a meaning and value to most ordinary instants of life. It creates wisdom of security which makes Saroj strong when she is embarrassed by Inder. When Inder locks her out of their bedroom, she doesn't feel terror, instead of that she attends to her children.

Finally, Inder is left alone as Saroj takes decision to go to Delhi for her incarceration and with the vision of spending rest of her life with Vishal. Inder himself is responsible for his aloneness because it is his own nonflexible and unconquerable self which prohibited him from setting up a continuing relationship with Saroj. It doesn't mean that Saroj wants to throw her life with Inder away and storm out. Even, she makes all attempts on her side to make his marriage with Inder successful. But her every attempt to go near him remained as ineffective as of a bird beating against the window glass to go inside. Saroj, the protagonist wants to be a fine wife but not at the cost of her identity. She finds in her friendship with Vishal. Her friendship with Vishal makes her understand the concealed potentialities of herself. She feels that she can no longer accept to the unfairness of the double morality anti-dual standard adopted by Inder. She learns that patience is no asset and human relationships can't be left to opportunity. At lastly, she becomes representative of new women who not only desire for liberty, self-respect and fairness in a relationship but who really has the courage to leave the decomposing relationship in favor of one which is full of potentialities without caring about patriarchal society.

Saroj signifies the new woman who is attempting to maintain her uniqueness and breathe independently in the disgusting environment of emotionally and psychologically unrewarding marriages. The New Woman is determined not just to live, but to live in self-esteem, thus absolutely demanding a rearrangement of the parameters on which marriage function. Marriage without emotional association and love without esteem are abomination to Saroj as her man oeuvres her way through the transforming times.

Woman has been used as subordinate or secondary since ages. Woman has been feeling it astringent because nobody wants to be used. That is why the word 'marriage' has become a horrible word in Sahgal novels. In *Storm in Chandigarh* there is a requirement to redefine morals and virtue. The protagonist in the novel proves that women have a right being a human being to live as they desire. Thus, the protagonist represented as the liberated woman in the novel.

Another female character, Gauri in *Storm in Chandigarh* feels safe in the arranged marriage which has saved her from emotional disturbance and painful feelings. She says:

“There’s only one safety in India for some time to come, and that is to marry in your own state into a background you thoroughly understand... That kind of a thing endures.” (SIC, 160-161)

But Gauri’s view regarding arranged marriage seems wrong because her idea of gladness is a tremendously limited one such as love, a cup of tea in the morning, a message from Tenny Souza. She has the need to be unfaithful to her husband may be she hasn’t so much in emotion and thought. Gauri believes in the momentary requirement and she makes no emotional attachment.

Sahgal attempts to represent the emotional response of woman that how a woman looks out at her constraints and herself. She believes that woman should try to realize and understand herself as a human being and not mere as an attachment to some man life. In her novel *Storm in Chandigarh* woman represents dissimilar types of virtues. She doesn’t bear but maintain her status. Sahgal depicts new morality, according to which woman is not to be taken as a just toy, an thing of lust and temporary pleasure, but man’s equal and honored partner. The novel, *Storm in Chandigarh* talks about woman who is demoralized by marriage and by accidents of history. The female protagonist is victim of a conservative society which doesn’t allow woman to assert her rights pertaining to her individual liberty and considers the very issue of identity-crisis.

Nayantara’s views on gender discrimination are represented through her female characters. She desires to join marriage and independence. She has her own visions of marriage as a pleasant and harmony of the human relationship based on marital faith and understandings. The couples in the novel *Storm in Chandigarh* live together under the same roof but they are estranged by aloneness and blankness.

Nayantara Sahgal explores that women have been suffered for several years by the hands of discriminating pressures. Sahgal in the novel has attempted to describe these pressures. Unlike other feminist writers, she depicts an unbiased approach in true Gandhian custom. She doesn’t hold men liable for the pitiable position of women. In its place, she blames the system itself. She blames not only men’s unkind thought but also women’s disinclination and submissiveness. Sahgal highlights women agony in married life and then deciding to come out of the disgusting bondage by having a preference for divorce. She shows her women deciding to wish for divorce rather than live an airless life of unfairness and suffering. Her female characters like Saroj, Rashmi, Simrit and Anna all leave their husbands and break the marriage which doesn’t permit them to be liberated and to live life in their own approach. Her characters also don’t want to tolerate adverse effects of gender discrimination. She explores that through divorce they will be liberated from the agony and suffering of a miserable and unreasonable relationship it doesn’t solve the problems and women have to maintain to struggle and suffer on several levels such as emotional, economic, social and psychological levels.

Thus, it can be concluded that in *Storm in Chandigarh*, Sahgal unfolds the truth that liberty is an essential basic requisite for the progress of the individual, and then it promises the holiness of the human self, exposed of social double standards, conformity and pretence. She explored very clearly the effect of gender discrimination on women liberation in the novel.

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