CHAPTER III

Living in a Free World Yet in Conflict

Nayantara Sahgal's characters, especially her women characters, it appears live in a free and fine world of their own but they remain to be in conflict based on some major social issues. First of all, let us throw some light on her humanism. As a humanist, she attaches considerable importance to companionship and mutual respect in human relationships. No doubt, each of her novels has one or more moral characters who are found fighting against the society or some institution living in clash and conflict. She condemns injustice, violence and hypocrisy, and upholds freedom, justice, nonviolence, truth and moral values. She believes that a true human being should be merciful, fearless, active and sincere. In the worlds of a critic, "Sahgal calls it (nonviolence) 'the most fearlessly active force' because its basic requirement was the human being, cleansed of fear and hate, willing to suffer and fully conscious of human life and effort."¹

Nayantara's heart is filled with pity when she notices the poor and pitiable plight of the oppressed and suppressed sections of society. She mentions their miseries and misfortunes, hard life and severe grievances which reflect and reveal a life of conflict in the characters in her fiction. She talks of suffering peasants and farm-labourers, helpless, hopeless and homeless beggars, cottage dwellers and industry workers who can hardly keep their body and soul together. For this and every kind of human misery, Sahgal holds the defective political and social system responsible. The explanation of Kailas to Rakesh in the novel, This Time of Morning, regarding the grim and conflicting aspects of life, is worth-quotting:

Government will begin when this man, and that one and that, he pointed to two tattered pilgrims washing in the river and a beggar

covered with sores who squatted half naked, staring glassily at the passer-by, ‘arouse some concern and are given a chance to live like human beings.’

It is the novelists’s firm conviction that the erosion of moral values is the main cause of conflict. She projects that social change can be effective and meaningful only when the human being, the individual remains the ultimate concern. She is unhappy to note that human feelings and emotions are ignored not only on the political front but also on the socio-cultural level. She believes that mutual understanding in propitious to decent human relationships. She writes that sweet, conflict free relations can be established.

... with care, with love, when possible and otherwise with time and interest. And with truth, or as much of it as the other person will allow.

In her novel, Rich Like Us, Nayantara Sahgal creates an immortal character, Sonali, who lives a life of conflict but is an upholder of basic human values. During the period of the Emergency, she was free as an IAS officer but lived a life of conflict and clash and she did not submit her will to the dictatorship dominating democracy. She finds that the constitution has become null and void by the act of a dictator and human values have been set aside. A critic aptly comments:

“The individual is suppressed and the leader in power, the Madam assumes an almost Hitlerian persona... An individual, and hence a country, could develop only a fearless, secure milieu, and when that atmosphere is taken away, the individual as well as the country suffer.”

The novelist regards a person as a person. Time and again she found to lay emphasis on a person's liberty. Human relationships, parents and children relationship, master and servant relationship, leader and follower relationship, should

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be governed and guided by human values, irrespective of high-low or great-small considerations, so that they may live in the free world of their own and may not live a life of conflict or clash. The basic human values like love, truth, non-violence, honesty and goodwill promote the welfare of not only an individual but also of the whole nation. In the novel, *This Time of Morning*, Kailas Vrinad says that every endeavour should be made to facilitate an individual to have a chance to live a life of freedom without any conflict like an honourable person.

Nayantara's women characters, though they may have an independent personality of their own, live a life of clash and conflict. Her feminist stance can be accessed by reading her novels closely and carefully. She has tried to introduce female characters who independently struggle hard for selfhood and freedom. The truth is realized, "When one studies the undeserved ill-treatment a large number of her women characters in these novels have to undergo in the society, and tries to know why they are driven to conflict and committing suicide or to seeking divorce, or to undergoing torments defenseless when it becomes inevitable."  

Nayantara Sahgal shows her great concern to the subjection, exploitation and desecration of women in India's male dominated society. According to M.K. Naik, "In her novels, Mrs. Nayantara Sahgal has raised some basic problems pertaining to personal relationship, and her portrayal of politics is just a part of her humanistic concern because it reveals her deep insight into human psyche."  

Her conception of husband-wife relationship, too, is based on humanism, morality and ideal. She is of the view that man-woman relationship should be cordial and conflictless; marriage, not a clash of ego but a give and take partnership and married life, a co-sharing adventure. The novelist says regretfully that woman in India's male-oriented society has been reduced to secondary position. She is surprised to see that for men these things mean only self-gratification on all fronts.

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Sahgal perceives a woman only as a "figure of humility,' neck bent and down-cast'. She is supposed to be only a domestic servant. Man loves her, no doubt, but he loves as if she were meant for that purpose. Surprisingly enough, they live together, love each other and are even blessed with children but a wipe mostly lives and leads a life of conflict and tension as there in no mutual understanding and respect them because she is not regarded as an honoured member of the family.

Nayantara Sahgal's women characters have emerged as smart and dynamic persons who act as living independent individuals striving for self-assertion. She does not favour with those men who keep their wives as servants as she writes:

It is not a question of generosity or its lack. It is a perfect denial of plain justice one dispenses even to stranger, even to the enemy when the war is over.\(^7\)

Mrs. Sahgal is altogether opposed to those who have greed for money, which sometimes creates a great conflict between husband and wife. In the novel, *The Day in Shadow*, Som is badly made after money. For him, money is more valuable than man. It is more substantial for him than his wife. He spares no time to spend with his wife. They have no mutual understanding between them. So their marriage results into divorce. The novelist says:

Money had been part of life texture of her relationship with Som, an emotional, forceful ingredient of it, intimately tried to his self-esteem.

Money was, after all, a form of pride, even of violence.\(^8\)

Nayantara teaches her characters to face conflict confidently. She encourages her women to resist, resent and defy the vicious oppressions perpetrated on them. She condemns the docile women who do not even raise their voice and resent but to let the things happen against them undisturbedly. She advises her women to meet the challenges boldly. She prefers divorce and extra-marital relationship to unhappy married life. She, in the novel, *The Day in Shadow*, appreciates Simirit's love affair with Raj who is a good natured person. Simirit says:

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If I’d known you well before my divorce, there might not have been any divorce, knowing you would have taken care of one and need not marry another.9

Like man, woman should be allowed freedom in life and love making. Mrs. Sahgal asserts that in that case woman will realize her responsibility and will not go astray even if conflict captures her. Supporting this view, Asnani writes, "A Woman is a person in her own right and Sahgal is sure that she will adjust herself physically and emotionally to the meaning of this freedom."10

Nayantara is a staunch supporter of true love even though it does not run smooth. In the novel, Rich Like Us she creates her prototype Rose who believes that ideal love consists of respect, dignity and grace. Supporting this view, Sanjogita Singh observes, "Complete fulfilment of love is just as elusive as the mythical intend. Right till the end she remains a compassionate, forthright person with sound commonsense, and practical, solid working class values."11 The concept of marriage in India creates a conflict or clash between man and woman. Mrs. Sahgal treats marriage in her novels differently for male and female in the Indian male-oriented society. It has one meaning for woman and another for man. On the one hand, it brings joys for woman; on the other hand, it imposes some restrictions and discipline on her movements. Implicitly, it is a bond and a chain for her. After marriage, begins her tension and conflict and she must obey her in-laws positively, like a domestic cow without any ifs and buts. Her married life becomes altogether different from the freeworld of her pre-marriage life. The new life robs her of her freedom of thought, speech and action in a traditional society. In Rich Like Us, she presents Bimmie and Sonali, the two childhood friends, who could walk, talk, play and laugh together freely. But after marriage, Bimmie’s life style has totally changed. She looked modest, submissive and sober and acted like adults and aged persons. She now walked "slowly as if she’d grown old, her head hanging and her sari pulled down over her face." 12

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10 Asnani, Shyam. M. "The Novels of Nayantara Sahgal". Indian Literature, op.cit., Vol. V
Similarly, in the novel, *This Time of Morning*, Nayantara Sahgal presents the example of Rashmi who has earlier been in close association with Rakesh. She spoke and acted openly and frankly with him but after her marriage things had undergone a complete change. On returning from Paris, Rakesh happened to meet Roshan at a club and found her unnaturally subdued and changed. He said:

Through all the years he had known her she had possessed a brightness that had distinguished her in a crowd. She had never been exuberant but the peal of laughter when it came had been of pure joy and the quality she emanated above all was of being at home in the world. Now she looked displaced. It was marriage, then, that had altered her .....  

Mrs. Sahgal suggests that in order to avoid the tension of the break-up of a family, the pre-marriage life style should not be taken into consideration seriously. It must be accepted that pre-marriage life of a woman, sometimes leaves an adverse impression on the minds of her in-laws. Subsequently, marriages, in most such cases end in divorce, discord and conflict. Nayantara creates an innocent character, Saroj in the novel, *Storm in Chandigarh*, who reveals to her husband even of her sharing bed with a boy during her student life. The green eyed jealousy overpowers him and he gets annoyed at it. The novelist describes how her husband reacted:

Jealousy had caught him unprepared. It had no place in an order that clearly demarcated the roles of men and women unless that venerable order were breached, trampled and mocked.  

He neglects her and she lives a life of conflict. She feels guilty. Their relationship becomes purely mechanical and surely superficial and meaningless. They have no feeling of affliction and tenderness towards each other. But suddenly she gathers courage and challenges him saying:

I don't want forgiveness. I've committed no crime. There were apparently generations of men behind her – fathers, brothers, husbands,

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who would have killed her at the very suggestion of what she had done.\textsuperscript{15}

And Saroj advances one step ahead by making friends with Vishal. Extra-marital love, according to Mrs. Sahgal, is not bad in so far as it does not create any tension or misunderstanding between peaceful living between husband and wife. Saroj loves Vishal, and taking and walking with him, she feels elated and happy but their closeness aggravates the tension between her and her husband.

The green eyed monster in her husband Inder cannot bear it with grace and goodness. He objects to her going for walks with Vishal and he insists on drawing the line of reservation somewhere. She can only say childishly but disobediently, "But I like going for walks with him."\textsuperscript{16} Inder's anger may be justifiable because his wife Saroj acts against his wishes. Nayantara Sahgal finds favour with extramarital love affair but not at the cost of the breakup of family as Asnani says, "... living lies in understanding each other, in mutual respect and trust, honesty and freedom, without a thought of dominance."\textsuperscript{17}

Nayantara Sahgal presents a picture of typical traditional Indian family in the characters of Saroj and Inder as husband and wife but on the other hand, womanhood is captured in the passive spirit of the husband. That is why Saroj, his wife develops a deeper attachment with Vishal. However, Mrs. Sahgal suggests that restraint on extra-marital love affair is compulsory. For this, the husband should not command his wife but live with her on respectful terms. Both husband and wife should adopt equal principles regarding family life. She says:

\begin{quote}
If chastity is so important and so well worth prescribing, it would be easier to safeguard it by keeping men in seclusion, not women; the biological urge is supposed to be much more stronger in men.\textsuperscript{18}
\end{quote}

As it is customary in India, arranged marriages are preferred to any other kind of marriage. Such marriages are settled and got performed by the parents. Naturally,

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., P. 196.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., P. 223.
\textsuperscript{17} Asnani, Shyam. M. "The Novels of Nayantara Sahgal". \textit{Indian Literature}, P. 57.
the will of parents prevails and girls remain dumb and tongue-tied. They are sometimes forced to marry even against their wishes. They cannot even given their suggestion about their own future life. However, to some extent, Nayantara too notices shelter, safety and security in arranged marriage as she says:

Not all marriages were healthy or stable, but arranged marriage on the whole was solid, stable structure, true and tried, build on the theory that affection and mutual regard could reasonably be expected to flourish between partners of the same social, religious and provincial background. Another sort of relationship, not based on any of these assumptions, might be successful too, but it was a risk, and a whole life-time could not be treated as a gamble.19

In some of her novels, she has produced some characters – both boys and girls who are marriage conscious and freely express their views regarding their marriage. In the novel, Mistaken Identity there is one Mr. Bhushan who loves Shaila heartily and has a keen desire to make her his life partner. Just mark his words when he says that she is the only woman whom -

..... I wanted to marry but she didn't want to marry me. I had to repeat this blasphemy, then she said 'Bitten hear this? And made me say it again.20

Similarly, Nayantara has produced a female character, Rose in her novel, Rich Like Us, who loves Ram and exclaims: "I, Rose, take the Ram."21

In other words, it can be said that she gets herself married with him even at the cost of conversion. Describing Rose's marriage with Ram, C. Vijayashree rightly remarks, "Rose, a cockney shop girl turned an Indian businessman's foreign bibi who tries her best to make a passage to India and eventually meets her death ...."22 For

Rose, after Indian tradition, her marriage with Ram is a lifelong commitment which she tries to maintain at all cost.

Sometimes, Nayantara prefers arranged marriages which are decided by mature members and which are likely to last long. She believes that if women characters are freed from the dominance of the men, they do not exercise adequate restraints over themselves. Supporting her view, B.D. Sharma comments, ".... the fact remains that her (Nayantara's) women characters who are free from the dominance of men, do not exercise adequate self-restraint and do not lead blameless lives. For instance, we can take the case of Devi, even though she is free from the dominance of a husband, as she is a widow. She is in love with two men, namely Usman Ali and Michael." But at the same time, Mrs. Sahgal regrets to say that now this sacred institution of marriage though still popularly prevailing on a large scale, is lobbing its importance day by day. People's thoughts and feelings are being influenced, governed and guided by logic and scientific outlook. They are evincing their faith more in mutual understanding than forced marriage.

Nayantara asserts that on the one hand many of arranged marriages end in divorce and discord; love marriages too, on the other hand are not successful in some cases. Their marriage fails because of lack of mutual respect and understanding. On the failure of their love marriages, R.K. Dhawan remarks, "Simrit gets married to Som, a businessman, against the will of her Brahmin parents. She remains unhappy with this marriage and ultimately takes divorce from her husband." Here the novelist is of the view that discord and divorce is preferable to an unhappy marriage, whether arranged marriage as love marriage. It can be believed that Nayantara Sahgal, though a great supports of women, is not a severe critic of traditional family set up.

A girl or a woman lives in a free world of her own but later on she is tied in several bonds of restraints and restrictions. Nayantara condemns all the kinds of restrictions and restraints imposed on the movements of a girl warning her at every step against pre-marital sexual relationships. She is rather shocked to see that the husband is found to be very curious to know of the past of his wife in order to assess

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her character. He also imposes upon her his dominating importance by telling her that she is very lucky to have got husband like him otherwise there had been many a girl after him to win him as husband. He reveals his pre-marriage love-affairs with other girls as a mark of his pride, prestige and honour but would not tolerate that if his wife was found so and this creates a conflict in the mind of the wife.

Nayantara is deeply touched to see the double standard of morality in every walk of life, especially, the place and position of woman in society. Even women's freedom of expression is crushed to such an extent that they are tongue-tied and mouth-muzzled and they can only whisper and not speak or talk loudly. The novelist feels at loss to narrate the manner in which Bhushan's mother and her maid servant in the novel, *Mistaken Identity* talked in a low tone:

> When all her maid servants were in the room together their voice had the suffocated squawk of captive geese who had been fed and tranquillized into docility.\(^{25}\)

Thus, the woman lives in a free world but suffers from conflict, tension and imposition. The misery of a woman is projected through Bhushan's mother who lives a life of conflict.

As regards the point of sexual conflict in a woman's mind, and her morality and chastity, she is judged by her sexual morality. Mrs. Sahgal rejects this scale of chastity. Supporting Nayantara's view, Shyam M. Asnani comments, "It is a pity that the only morality most people bother about is sex morality."\(^{26}\) Mrs. Sahgal holds the view that a woman after all is a human being, not a lifeless commodity or an object of lust or lure. She should be allowed to enjoy life fully and freely without any clash or conflict.

In the novel, *The Day in Shadow*, Simrit lives a life of conflict full of miseries and misfortunes. She suffers humiliation at the hands of her husband Som. Though unmindful of the warning and advise of her parents, she has openly chosen him her husband, yet she feels neglected and ignored because in matters of business he does not consult her at all. Thus, dealing with the theme of tradition and modernity, the

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\(^{25}\) Ibid., P. 25.

\(^{26}\) Ibid., P. 25.
novel highlights the conflict and bitterness in the life of husband and wife. Commenting on the conflicting situation, Anita Mahajan writes, "The main characters of the novel, Som, Simrit, Sumer Singh, Brij and Ram Krishan 'behave' like moderns but at the same time find it is quite difficult to isolate themselves completely from the age-old traditions of their own country." Whereas the traditional parents of Simrit do not like Som because they think he is poor, Simrit feels at a loss because of lack of mutual understanding. Som does not discuss business matter in her presence because he believes that matters like business and money cause unnecessary conflict and are not to be discussed in the presence of women. Yearing with a boredom of tension and burden of conflict, for free communication of ideas with her husband, Simrit feels ignored, alienated, isolated, suffocated, disappointed and frustrated. Ultimately divorced, she struggles hard to start afresh a new life with Raj, a brilliant member of parliament and a man of progressive ideas and ideals. His words encourage and inspire her to live hopefully and zealously. He says:

"It's time to cut loose all those ragged ends, all the bleeding bits of the past, and get on with your life. And you can't with this hangman's noose around your neck .... Even a like sentence ends after fourteen years till you die."

Nayantara is an upholder of divorce and remarriage. She also prefers unmarried life to unhappy married life. She believes that remarriage may bring blessings and joys to make life worth-living. To live life conflict free and happy should be the first choice of a person. The proposal of Raj for marriage with Simrit and that accepted by her, fills her life with new hopes, ambitions and aspirations. A magnanimous husband like Raj, familiar with the fact that she already has a number of children and a tax problem, does not feel disturbed at all, Simrit too, is satisfied with her new husband so much so that she declares in a philosopher's tone:

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The whole world is the garment of the Lord. Renounce it, then, and receive it back as the gift of God.\textsuperscript{29}

Though the characters in her earlier novels are mostly traditional, in her later novel, she has created powerful female characters like Rose, Anna and Sylla who can adopt themselves to any circumstances. They are the true and complete creations of her dream. In spite of their not being Indian, they are the models of modernity.

Whereas Gauri in the novel, \textit{Storm in Chandigarh}, appreciates arranged marriage and finds solace, satisfaction and security in it, Maya, in \textit{A Time to Be Happy}, suffers from conflict and 'finds herself dead in emotion as marble slab' and feels herself 'locked within bonds of arranged marriage and craves for freedom and conflict free life. In the novel, \textit{This Time of Morning}, Nita protests against arranged marriage and rejects Vijay, the boy of her parents' choice. Moreover, she chooses Kalyan as her life-partner and declares:

\begin{quote}
He has given me the freedom to be myself. I'd never known it but for you...\textsuperscript{30}
\end{quote}

Similarly in the novel, \textit{A Situation in New Delhi}, Rishad, the feminist would like a girl to marry a boy of her choice. When he comes to know that Pinky is going to be wedded to a boy whom she has never met, he even refuses to participate in the marriage on the ground that it is an arranged marriage. He says:

\begin{quote}
... that kind of marriage is just organized rape. Pinky hasn't been allowed to put her nose out of the house without her mother's permission and now they are handing her over like a pudding to that nitwit who hasn't put his nose out of his house his mental nose anyway.\textsuperscript{31}
\end{quote}

Thus, the main cause of the conflict for a woman is that Nayantara Sahgal challenges the age-old traditional concept of arranged marriage, if it is settled by the parents ignoring the suggestions and desires of the dear daughter. That is why Mrs.

\textsuperscript{29} Prasad, A.N. New Lights on Indian Women Novelists in English. \textit{Isha Upanishad}. Sarup and Sons. P. 76.
Sahgal has produced in the character of Nita, a revolutionary female character who flatly and sternly denies to be married to Vijai. In this context, Hari Mohan Prasad aptly comments, "She (Nita) resents the idea of arranged marriage, remains withdrawn in the presence of Vijai whom she is engaged and without any concrete way out for fulfilment."\(^{32}\) However Nayantara upholds arranged marriage if it can provide joy and happiness to the married couple. She finds no harm in consulting the boy and the girl who are going to be married with each other. For Nayantara, marriage means, not courting conflict, but peaceful security, mutual respect and understanding which, no matter, any kind of marriage can provide.

Dowry system in our society is a curse and cause of conflict. It is like a heavy premium for the life insurance. The novelist discards dowry system which is the root cause of a woman's miseries and misfortunes. More than often suitable matches are missed lost only for want of money to be given away as dowry. It has been customary in the orthodox society that a huge amount of money must be spent if social position and prestige were to be maintained. The grim and gloomy aspect of this system creates difficult problems in the life of many a poor man who incurs life long debts during his daughter's marriage. On the other hand, "The wealthy spared no trouble or expenses. Elaborate arrangements had to be made to house, feed and entertain the bridegroom's party."\(^{33}\) Mrs. Sahgal attacks those who regard dowry as a customary privilege and also as a source of tax-free income to the bridegroom's family.

Nayantara Sahgal cannot bear to see that the birth of a daughter, once considered to be a good sign, is now regarded as a heavy and cumbersome burden on the shoulders of parents who are, since her birth, worried about her marriage. It is again a fearful thought that the parents begin to save money somehow or the other tightening their belts and curtailing the requirements of the family or borrowing or adopting other foul means. At times such marriages result in continuous conflict and strife leading to divorce, discard or suicide. Discarding such unhappy events, Nayantara writes:


Let one couple well known in the society stop this paraphernalia and society will begin to be transformed.  

With a view to making a woman tension free and conflict relieved, Nayantara Sahgal advocates and favours inter-caste and inter-religion marriage. She takes marriage to be an enterprise which is co-sharing and collaborative one. She asserts that marriage brings two persons closer to each other. They are expected to understand and be faithfully respectful to each other. Caste, community, cult or creed is no bar to unite them in a sacred bond. Rose, a Christian, in *Rich Like Us*, marries Ram, a Hindu. Besides this, Nayantara is worried about the miserable condition of woman particularly in a Hindu family. She 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 

The novelist does not want to see woman in desperate and doleful condition living a constant life full of tussle, tension and conflict. She is a champion of woman's complete liberation. So she champions the cause of woman in different ways which are likely to make her happy and conflict free. Apart from this, she condemns the tradition of child-marriage because childhood is the time for enjoyment and pleasure seeking. There is no wisdom in entrusting her with the heavy responsibility of family life in an early age. Social reformers like Dayanand Sarswati, Vivekanand and Raja Ram Mohan Roy made efforts to bring about improvements and reform in the contemporary social set up. Much still needs to be done in this direction.

Some critics go to the extent of saying that Mrs. Sahgal cannot be regarded as a champion of women's liberation. They say that she herself admits the fact that a woman needs a husband to gratify her biological need. Moreover, her female characters like Tazi and Reba are desirous of getting married as early as possible because they do not like to remain single. Her male characters like Rishad seem curious to improve women's position in India's status ridden society. Nayantara goes

to the extent of permitting her female characters, namely, Tazi and Reba and Neeta Narang who look and act like modern people.

Mostly the upper middle class society suffers from several complexes, especially inferiority complex. This results in their tension, tussle, clash, conflict and unhappiness. Nayantara Sahgal had her first acquaintance with the upper middle classes of society, which comprised big landlords, businessman, industrialists, intellectuals, party presidents, cabinet ministers, bureaucrats, ambassadors, governors etc. She notices their conduct and character and other activities with the eye of a keen observer of life and affairs. She finds them in position of modern bungalows, costly luxury SUV cars, refrigeration, tape-records, lap tops and telephones. She describes a rich house-hold with great delight. She says, "Celia Rand's drawing-room was alight with sparing flowers. Delicate pinks, blues and yellows bloomed against the silver-grey of curtains and chair covers. Though it was spring it was cold and a fire glowed in the grate. Tea was laid, before it heavy Georgian silver and fine bone china gleaming in the fire-light."36 It seems that she is deeply interested in both the exterior and interior living of people. She also notices that people are carrying with them rotten and impossible ideas.

Mrs. Sahgal holds the view that wealth as well as costly items is the status symbol for the privileged sections of society. In the novel, Rich Like Us also she describes the daily activities of the prosperous and affluent families, and distinguishes their life style from that of the unprivileged classes of people:

The richer the host, the later dinner was served. Dinning late was a status symbol, like scotch whisky, five times the price of the Indian and the imported car, particularly a costly luxury that had brought him here from his hotel.37

Nayantara observes minutely that the richer and prosperous the people, the more lavish and costlier their tastes and hobbies. They are given to drinking wine, attending tea parties, clubs and bell dances. At times, they themselves are the sponsors of these activities. Even their wives are well acquainted with the names and brands of

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various kinds of wine – whisky, rum, gin, scotch, brandy etc. In the novel, *Rich Like Us*, Saroj demands at least one peg of alcohol and says, "I'll have one too." Mrs. Sahgal watches all this objectively as the degradation and deterioration of social values in the name of modernity and woman's liberation.

Regularly going on tours and picnics is an integral part of the activities of the privileged section 1 of society. On the other hand, they have no taste for journeys to religious and holy places. If they do so, they perform visits to these places for the sake of enjoyment and picnic. They also seek pleasure in other resorts like visits to hill stations and valleys and bays. In this connection, Anita Mahajan rightly remarks, "The moderns do not spend their Sunday mornings on going to temples and churches. They aspire to take the most out of life. For that, they prefer horse riding, a swim at the club, or a game of tennis."\(^{38}\)

Craze for English language has created conflict and complex among Indian youths. English language has captured the imagination of Indian youths so much so that they have forgotten or rather neglected their own native language, scriptures or popular games. Even at the cost of games, walks, worships, prayers, swimming or visits to clubs, they like to learn English. They have passion for English. In the novel, Storm in Chandigarh, Vishal Dubey likes to have breakfast with the Madrasi clerk, Ramaswami, because he is 'an M.A. in English'. Sanskrit or the oriental language of worship or scriptures, does not attract and interest him. English has become his obsession.

So greatly are the rich men influenced by the European culture that they take great pains to initiate and adopt it. In high societies, both husband and wife are seen attending rich parties, flirting with others, and bringing to show more and more. Taking dinners late in the night is the fashion of their world. They keep their bungalows decorated and furnished with the latest costly and comfortable furniture. They dress-up themselves richly and gaudily. Mr. Sahgal presents the glimpse of a rich and opulent Delhite family.'

The huge mirror of the Zodiac Room at the inter-continental, 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 glassy architecture.\textsuperscript{39}

Mrs. Sahgal asserts that mentally, the woman characters live in tussle and turmoil, clash and conflict, but physically they show off. Their concept of modernity is to make a show of their physical features of beauty – their trimmed hair and naked stomach, slim body and sharp features. They try to maintain their physical charm with the help of cosmetics, costly hair oil and perfumes. They afford to wear rich and fashionable clothes in order to appear carefree, impressive and modern. They care a fig for social and moral values. In this context, Shyam M. Asnani writes, "Most of Nayantara's young woman smoke and drink and are sex starved. Uma takes a lot of drinking because it gives her a 'somnolence, a sleep walker's gait and appearance. The women use their husbands as convenient tools for enjoyment but object to being so used themselves."\textsuperscript{40}

It does not mean that Mrs. Sahgal deals only with the upper class woman in her novels. She also shows her concern about the women belonging to the lower sections of society. She is shocked to see that these poor creatures require nothing else but feeding, clothing and lodging. She says, "They lived from day to day, from hand to mouth not with the vagabond carelessness of gypsies but of people with nowhere to go."\textsuperscript{41} Mrs. Sahgal is of the view that woman is born with the rocky ground of clash and conflict. From time immemorial, woman has been an integral part of human society but \textit{mend} has caused her a life of conflict and has always looked down upon her as a 'door-mat', a servile creature and a domestic maid servant. Even the scriptures have established superiority of man over woman. “Not only the Hindu holy book but

\textsuperscript{40} Asnani, Shyam.M. "The Novels of Nayantara Sahgal". \textit{Indian Literature}, P. 46.
also the *Bible* clearly instructs the women."\(^{42}\) The *Koran* also repeatedly stressed the superiority of men over women. Men are superior to women on account of the qualities which God has gifted to them.

Nayantara looks at the cause of conflict in women because of the two faces of women in Indian society. She cannot bear to see that a woman in Hindu society has been presented in two forms, namely, a goddess, and an object of lust. Neera Desai cites a scripture which reads thus, "Man provides the seed, the essence for the creation of the off-spring; the seed determines the kind, the child's identity is derived from the father for the group placement. The role of the mother is just to receive the seed and help it to grow."\(^{43}\) This sufficiently proves true what the *Koran* says and it causes conflict in the mind of a woman.

Nayantara Sahgal has rightly been referred to as 'lady liberty' in the editorial note on Geeta Doctor's Review of her *Lesser Breeds*. Her female characters are ambitious, aspirants and strivers. They long for freedom in every walk of life but mostly they live a life of conflict. Sonali in *Rich Like Us* represents the image of a modern woman. She asserts it openly and overtly in an interview with S. Varalakshmi:

"That is my feeling and so it is with Sonali. I had to invent her, there was no such person. I know no such person in the corridors of power who would have reacted as Sonali did. So she is a complete invention. She is my dream of what somebody should have done at the time."\(^{44}\)

Similarly, in a letter to Jasbir Jain, she has revealed her thoughts and feelings about emancipation and free life of women she says:

"My women are strivers and aspirers toward freedom, toward goodness, toward a compassionate world."\(^{45}\)


In another novel, *This Time of Morning*, Mrs. Sahgal has created a character, Neeta, a modern young and beautiful daughter of Dr. Narang. Western way of life style, drinks, dance and playing bridge are an integral part of her life.

The main reason behind the conflict in the mind of a woman may be because of the clash between the old and the new values of life and between tradition and modernity. Mrs. Sahgal has adequately death with the theme of tradition and modernity in her novels. She indicates conflict in the mind of a woman is because modern man has not given up the traditional view and mentality regarding woman as a living object of possession. But we find that despite living a life of conflict, the women characters of Mrs. Sahgal have emerged with new ideas and modern outlook. They can be seen trying to stand on their own feet. They have developed self-confidence and self-dependence. They are very particular not only about their body shape and looks but also about their intellectual progress. They also evince keen interests in family planning. In this context, Anita Mahajan observes, "The cult of family planning is also of recent origin and has an air of modernity about it. Many women have voluntarily taken to it because they appreciate the economic viability and social usefulness of a small family." 46 There are some other characters like Nikhil who also supports family planning progresses and says:

"Hundreds of women use the damned thing successfully. It's madness to have three children now a days." 47

Clubs, coffee houses, restaurants, hotels provide lunch, dinner, enjoyment, fun and frolic to the upper middle-class visitors who, more than often, discuss political, social, cultural, economic and religious affairs too. Mrs. Sahgal in her novel, *Time to be Happy* refers to the club of Saharanpur, a city full of life, hustle and bustle. The theme of the novel also pertains to club life. In this connection, Shyam M. Asnani writes, "Most of her characters in the novel are fond of inviting and being invited to hotels for dinner where after a drinking evening, they have chunk of meat, succulently

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cooked, and plenty of bread with it."  

Clubs and picnic spots are the best places for the settlement of business affairs as well as social issues and personal problems. They feel that a club is a good shelter place. A.V. Krishna Rao comments, "The narrator finds Sohan Bhai's company more comforting than that of the young couple."

"The world is in need of a universal culture, if not in literal terms, at least in terms of thoughts and values."  

Thus, men and women of Nayantara's early novels are mostly what conventional and traditional. Women are conformists, passive living a life of conflict and tension. But in her later novels, her female characters have emerged as powerful, progressive and modern persons influenced by modern views and western culture. So the characters are an amalgamation of free will and conflict, past and present and tradition and modernity. They adopt healthy traditions of Indian culture and welcome the changes coming from other countries. Mrs. Sahgal's characters represent many caste, creeds, cults, cultures, religions and nationalities.

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