CHAPTER – IV
State of Value in Her Works: Social, Political and Moral

Nayantara Sahgal is a social and political novelist par excellence. She is well-known for her outstanding ability of coalescing artistically social, political, and personal events and incidents. Even a cursory reading may reveal that they depict the scene of the Indian politics from the last episodes of the freedom struggle to the disintegration in the mid-Seventies, in a sequence, the occurrence of the events. She affirms that politics is deeply ingrained in her personality, in her “bones and morrow” and in her “emotional and intellectual make up” (Ramachandraiah 70) to such a high degree that she cannot be a silent viewer of the incidents influencing and upsetting the dynamic and fundamental human concerns. The narration of the contemporary political conditions in her novels is saturated with keen awareness of some elementary ideals and principles to which the author was dedicated. She has set her stories in a well-known historical situation in order to protect these primary values or to show her sadness on their absence. The social environments appeal in all their different capacities. Their presentation is neither superficial nor a shabby, gloomy and lifeless commentary by a literary historian. Incessant growth of dishonesty, multiplying problems, reduction in voluntary desire to decide strictly, and permanent dreams surrounding to the temporary representation of the views and feelings and interest of the common people could only destroy the very foundation of the democratic edifice.

Administration and philosophical tenets are not the core issues of Sahgal. She is interested in examining the social and political texture of the threads by which the fabric of this nation is woven. She employs her
skill to achieve this goal by collecting facts from the past and presenting the picture, a posterior of the nation with an understanding of the actual events and their cause. She has created a panoramic view of the country with the intricacies of its men and their ideas.

The situation just before and after the Independence of our country forms the background of the novel *A Time to be Happy*. In a florid style, the novel draws on the genuine scenes of those difficult days. The novel is of prime significance in the sense that it shows the political environment of India after Independence which was not very healthy. There was a dishonest, unfair, and hurried rate race for power grabbing. This trend began dividing even those who share the “same ideals” (Sahgal, Happy 28).

A secret exhaustion, due to growing demand on strength and resources, was visible accompanied by a risky tendency in people with extreme religious and political views. They followed rudimentary doctrine of particular system of thought, representation of feelings, views and interests of common people and there was non-transparency in their action.

The devastating famine in Bengal in 1943 proved to be a bane for the country. Sohan Bhai, a Gandhian freedom fighter illustrates it for us. This incident in the lives of two minor characters brings forth the *Quit India Movement* of 1942.

Following a winding path, the story invents a society which is marked by enforced separation of different racial and religious groups, unjust treatment of Indians on grounds of race and color, slavery among the rich and well-set people who willingly submitted to the demands of
the English culture. However the author and Sohan Bhai disclose that Gandhiji launched a compelling movement of non-co-operation against the British rule for the improvement in the standard of living of the people and for creating awareness among them regarding their rights. Sincere and persistent efforts were made to eradicate the evils of drinking and meat eating. The uproar and commotion against the prevention drinking is also very depressing.

A strange accumulation of events in Calcutta left a subdued impact on the principal contestants. The people, unconventional and unethical, dishonest and morally degenerate did not hesitate in being naughty and looking down upon the subaltern people. Business was carried out harshly with the motto of profit. Lucknow represented a city where the ruling clan led a life of moral lapse and sensual enjoyment. The cultural values were on the verge of litter degeneration and virtual collapse.

For *This Time of Morning* (1965), the days after the independence provide an effective and evocative backdrop. The scenes reveal confusion in the country which faced painful circumstances then. The situation of the society after independence was dark and gloomy due to suspicious activities of the power seekers. “Disorder was just round the corner, always and no money crew of parliamentarians would succeed in coping with it any more than picket fences would stem a deluge” (Sahgal, *Morning* 103). Power was acquiring a significant place and crowds who stirred up popular opinions for political reasons seemed to push men with far-sightedness like KailashVrind, Abdul Rahman, and Prakash Shukla in the rear while those with an inhuman and callous outlook occupied the central position. When the era of Nehru was over, optimism was at its zenith and there was a tendency to ignore and forgive people who were
involved in immoral or illegal activities. This part of history has been genuinely conveyed by Sahgal in this novel.

A prescient novel set in the early post-Independence years *This Time of Morning* reveals how human awareness is free and cannot be separated from the individual by unethical politics for power, by contradictory behavior of men in high position and by the elegant and cultured society which is strangely and practically unable to communicate with all its important members. It also describes the ruthless manipulations of politicians like Kalyan Sinha that are, in a way, a precursor of the moral corruption in the years to come.

Sahgal’s creative fantasy cleverly avoids all distressing details of immorality and dishonesty in social and political areas in the modern India. She describes an experience which is pleasing and morally above suspicion. She handles the plot as skillfully as Jane Austen or George Eliot do. She understands her characters as genuinely as C.D Snow has done in *Corridors of Power* by displaying the power structure of the secretariat and the parliament at the same level as Sahgal’s *This Time of Morning*.

Nayantara Sahgal formally sketches herein people of various kinds involved in the administration of the country; powerful officials concerned excessively in guiding, artist and reporters with excellent achievements to their credit, distinguished members of parliament and the free society ladies interested in spreading scandals about other’s private lives as well as the conventional educated women managing their home. The vast domain of fictional description covers the whole of the cultured and refined atmosphere of modern Delhi.
Sir Arjun Mitra is a senior bureaucrat who is famous for his efficient control over ministers and other officers. He suffers in marital relation as his wife has deceived him. His beautiful and sensual wife Uma is not interested in her barren marriage and persistently seeks shelter in the factitious freedom of promiscuous sex. Disappointed and embarrassed Arjun Mitra quietly protects and bears the brunt of his wife’s insults. He wishes his wife would be human at the time of his retirement from the Indian Civil Service. His ego has been hurt but even then he brushes aside the pain and cites the example of Mira, wife of Kailash. He had been instrumental in getting him being behind the bars during India’s struggle for freedom:

You must know how much I like and admire Kailas……he has so much that any man would envy, but I have never envied him anything more than his wife………… I shall never forget the day outside Naini Jail years ago when you refused the life I offered……….it was your way of identifying yourself with your husband…….. that day I know Kailas behind bars was a happy and fulfilled man. He can count on his wife (Ibidem 166-167).

Storm in Chandigarh emphasizes what was scarcely mentioned in the earlier novels. The astonishment of a nation, which finds itself stuck between a decaying generation and the other of perplexed youth is illustrated skillfully. The old leaders experience a keen sense of retracting while the youth were anxious to continue in the existing circumstances.

Storm in Chandigarh charts the record of past events. It is not simply an imaginative narration of the end of the narrow minded, vague, and un-transparent forces representing the views and interests of the
common people. They had been brought to the forefront by the government’s approach to recognize the two states on the basis of the language spoken there. The novel follows the growth of the rough political background of wily politicians hopping upwards from the states to the center. The allusion to the “Congress cracking up,” (Sahgal, Storm 24) the clash of personalities with no issues left but only squabbles, the novel acquires a firm position in the post Nehru era (Ibidem).

It is primarily concerned with the administrative strain and damaging forces emerging from Chandigarh, the common capital of the two states Punjab and Haryana. A different kind of society had developed in the town since the people who came and settled there had brought new traditions, beliefs, views and customs with them. This created panic and disorder and disturbed the civil society. The impression of morality is visible from their ethical behavior, style of eating, interest in education, interaction between the two sexes and their disposition affectionate.

The women in the novel show their desire to emerge from within the four walls of their homes. Mara is amorous and takes sex lightly. She smokes and drinks and has no objection in enjoying whisky in male company. When Vishal Dubey is invited to a drink by Inder, Saroj also demands a drink and when she is asked to refrain from taking alcohol during pregnancy, she become fastidious and is hard to please.

_Storm in Chandigarh_ also reflects upon the subject of change taking place in social and moral standards. Trivedi and Vishal, who are modern educated men, try to give a unique definition of ethics and morality. Dubey did not agree to “what is commonly understood as morality”(Ibidem 80). Dubey takes it lightly when Trivedi comments that he may believe in free love. He asserts that he has no intentions towards
free love but he dislikes to be tied down with the customary morality. He explains his belief in a superior morality which is described as “a search for value and an attempt to choose the better value, the real value, in any situation, and not just do what’s done or what is expected” (*Ibidem*).

People no longer waste their time on Sunday morning by visiting temples and churches. They wish to extract something more from their life. They enjoy going for horse riding, swimming at the club, and playing tennis there. One does not opt for learning Sanskrit, the language of Holy Scriptures because of decaying interest in worship and rituals. English has become the passion of the modern man. Vishal prefers to enjoy breakfast with his Madrasi clerk Ramaswamy as he is an M.A. in English.

Having close connection with morality is the right affiliation between men and women. Dubious comparisons and fake behavior compels them to break away from customary virtuosity. Mara is helpless and compelled to live a dual life with Inder and Jit, Jit and Inder. She cannot refrain from a pleasure seeking love though she does not wish to be involved in a romantic affair. Jit’s wife is unfaithful to her husband and has relations with Inder; Inder’s wife deceives her husband and has an affair with Vishal Dubey; and Gauri pines for Dubey to satisfy her love. They are not honest to themselves. Inder adores Mara but simultaneously confesses, “I don’t know anything about your life” (*Ibidem* 172). Common people like farmers and daily wagers living on the outskirts of Chandigarh abhor such sick mentality and raise their voices against this.

Vishal Dubey who pays no heed to the public gossiping about his romantic connections with Saroj is extremely disturbed to discover that his wife had amorous relations with Hari.
Dishonesty creeps in married lives too. Men and women intend to have illegitimate connections without being mentally and emotionally compatible. A woman only desires for a husband who is holding a high position of office or authority. Monetary status becomes the yardstick for judging a suitable partner. Love has no place in the decision-making for a partner. A couple feels rejuvenated in social gathering, especially in cocktail parties, but when at home, has nothing to talk about or share emotionally. Husband and wife happen to behave timidly and indifferently with each other:

*She had selected what she wanted of him, he distinguished escorts at parties, the successful civil servant with a promising future, the husband who could be relieved upon to take pains with whatever problems she took to him and she had ignored the rest she had given herself selectively too, what she has considered it prudent and convenient to give and left him empty of the reality of herself. Even her vitality had needed an audience. She scintillated in company. Time and again he heard her talk animatedly of what has happened a day or a week earlier, of an article she had read, an idea she had at a party. Alone with him she had little to share. Had their failure been their fault or was there something at the very are of human dreams and longings that was fatal to fulfillment through marriage. (Ibidem 69)*

Disastrous marriages and catastrophic administration have been discussed in the novel. Deterioration in politics and disinterestin married life form the core of this novel. Besides this duality of behavior, Sahgal is also concerned about unrestrained freedom. She probes freedom in all its variety.
The novel primarily reveals the use of physical force and damage caused as well as, disturbance and dissatisfactionly conditions in public affairs in the late sixties following the partition of Punjab. Two new states of Punjab and Haryana were formed with Chandigarh with a common capital.

The author concentrates mostly on the weakness of the nation. Symbolic use of storm in the novel acts on two planes at the plane of political commotion after the partition of Punjab and the other mental trauma caused by conjugal frictions. Analogous and painful, these two conditions are skillfully mingled in the plot of structure of *Storm in Chandigarh*.

*Storm is Chandigarh* can be attributed at one level to the estrangement between Gyan Singh and Harpal Singh. The discord between them is due to their differing faiths and convictions. Their views are contradictory to each other. While one believes in arrogant and rash behavior, the other has firm faith in benevolence and non-violence. Gyan does not honor human beings and their sentiments and had a callous attitude towards them. He thinks “honor like prestige was public. It was badge; the insignia of hardihood, the sign of man’s standing in his community” (*Ibidem* 19). He treats humans and non-humans in the same manner. He ignores righteousness, is conceited about his personal esteem and his stamina makes him a forceful individual. He utilizes Gandhian principles for his own political benefits. He summons the people to show their opposition and discontent by going on strike. Dubey says, “What Gyan plans are a demonstration to show the strength of his demands. He’ll call it off once he makes his point. It’s a political trick not a mass movement” (*Ibidem* 169).
In the domain of marriage, absence of the values of righteous conduct is conspicuous. This can be seen in Dubey’s words in *The Day in Shadow*, “Why between men and women did passion so quickly find acceptance, while affection and friendship were so little cultivated”(Sahgal, Shadow 34-35). It is indeed strange to see sexual enthusiasm in high degree between the two sexes and this is tolerated though friendship and attachment did not fertilize.

*The Day in Shadow* focuses on the political scene in the late sixties. The novelist has covered a large spectrum instead of focusing on the minutest details of one facet. It deals with the post-Nehru period having “more fervor than calm” in Delhi, “the belligerent new politicians” (*Ibidem* 35) coming to the front, the bureaucracy shedding its secrecy to assume an evasive in conspicuousness.

The novel censures the political and social conditions in India after Independence. It hints indirectly at the author’s engagement in revealing the gruesome condition of the society in India, especially in Delhi which is the center of social and political melodrama.

Sahgal draws the attentions of the reader to the deteriorating moral standards through the character of Simriti who abhors savage and unrefined attributes. Women are being exploited by withholding their rights and refusing them fair treatment by men and society. “It is barbaric otherwise, full of rotten, elastic standard and the worship of money. I hate the white mass of human affairs. The only clean things left are hills and rivers and the shape of a leaf, things like that” (*Ibidem* 112). The society is savage competing with decayed flexible values and deifying wealth. In chaotic and totally confused society, purity exists solely in the natural environment.
The society is to be condemned because it lacks moral and ethical principles. It looks at life in a modern and refined manner. There is no creed that could teach men to be straightforward and truthful to their ideas and actions and give a feel of wholeness.

The novel shows that Indian customs of landlords and zamindars were prominent. They had choked freedom and led sensual amorous life using women for their satisfaction. Top positioned public servants with a feudal tendency, served in return for some holdings. This has been illustrated by the example of the lustful life of the state minister for petroleum Sumer Singh who makes a widow Pixie his bed partner. Pixie meets him twice a week at a private flat at 100, Wellington Crescent. Even the taxi driver who does not know his relations with Pixie has full information since “No Minister could be anonymous for long in Delhi and he had been using this side entrance for three months where he had kept his own car before and left long before morning” (Ibidem).

The novel *A Situation in New Delhi* exposes the private life of ministers who take undue advantage of their public positions. The ministers were not serving the public but rather they posed to be their masters in disguise. His past was quite depressing. Being unsuccessful in the entrance exam for Foreign Service he had opted to join politics and eventually the ministry though “the mastery of facts and figures had never been in his line” (Sahgal, Situation 106).

When the minister’s wasteful extravagance is revealed to his personal servant Bahadur he also becomes lavish in expending money. He gets implicated in a dishonest dealing of exporting crates of Scotch whisky obtained at low rates through personal acquaintance in a foreign
embassy. The episode costs an adverse effect on the reputation of the ministry and the national government which has already declared the use of alcohol illegal in its crucial political meeting.

The novel also attacks the lethargy, apathy, and in competence of the authorities accountable for the shocking and disgraceful conditions of the hospital where the minister for petroleum Sardar Sahib has been admitted for treatment of some ailment.

The government gets criticized for having adopted a socialistic agenda but not giving due consideration to the liberty and progress of women.

Even after having been in power for twenty five years, the ruling party has ignored taxing the section of the society which possessed taxable property. The custom of property being transferred to ladies was designed on different lines. The property was divided on the basis of monetary consideration and distributed among kith and kin in order to avoid tax payment.

Sumer Singh’s father was bent on transferring his property to charitable institutions but finally he passed it on to his wayward and undeserving son, his legal heir.

Simriti’s divorce document reveals a monetary arrangement showing scanty regard for a woman’s dignity and freedom and underscoring the society monopolized by its male members. Probing made in the novel for exposing the working of the judiciary also unveil to the subjugations of the female sex and deprivation from getting fair treatment in any way.
Deplorable conditions of the society in the sixties are featured in the novel A Situation in New Delhi. It hints at the political circumstances before and after the emergency. Instead of highlighting the silent suffering of the people, the government endeavored to conceal it. “There is a general drift in the direction of more control over newspapers, films, books and so on, more censorship” (Sahgal, Situation 5-6). By a ruthless exhibition of force and through marking “intricate maps of burns” on the bodies of those had the guts to criticize the indifference of the government, the officials in power tried to suppress and frighten the discontentment of popular views.

The western countries’ passive indifference to the newly born democracy has been skillfully illustrated in the novel. They assumed that a democratic government would not be successful in a country which has many religions, diverse cultures, and several political groups which “led the chorus prophesying chaos instead of supporting (her) Herculean labors” (Ibidem 129-130). Conforming to similar policies they echoed and forecast disorder and confusion instead of patronizing Indira Gandhi’s massive efforts. Now they wish to co-operate with the subduing measure of the government apparently with clever comments. “It is an Asian country and therefore we can’t apply our yardsticks here” (Ibidem107). “These people need a strong leader.” The indifferent attitude of western countries towards democracies in the third world has genuinely recorded in the novel. They are inclined to dwell on moribund thoughts and deny to scrutiny the situation carefully, and render assistance when required.

A Situation in New Delhi narrates the after effects of the tenure of a famous prime minister, Shivraj, who has monopolized the political and national scenario for ten years. He surrendered the luxuries and comforts
of his noble and esteemed family and joined the struggle for India’s Independence. Now, after his death, a well administered country begins to disintegrate. The political merits and principles inherited by Devi, Usman, and Michael have become useless, and have lost their validity for the political party. The young politicians who miss no occasions to help them materialize their self-interest appear strange to them, and they wonder if they are the same young men who had received the primary knowledge in politics from Shivraj. The significance of Shivraj’s political beliefs has become irrelevant and obsolete after his death. The elite group of English speaking young people represents the new diplomatic faith of compromise. It is frequently made explicit to Devi that her views are antiquated and that she is no longer a member of pleasure seeking group. She becomes isolated in the House. In this context it would be most sensible for her to observe silence but this she would not do. She cannot resist speaking on law-making issues. She is then ridiculed by the frivolous young Mineral and Metal minister who favored the members of the House who are timed apes. She realizes that there is a solid working obstacle, and a unanimous opposition against her. She feels a strange isolation. “The party, the great sheltering party under whose tutelage she had grown, was now an entity outside her……she did not belong with the new aristocracy” *(Ibidem* 106). The party which had protected and guided her till now seemed to have turned against her. She feels to have been excluded from elite family.

Usman feels to have been placed in a similar situation. With his obstinate and unrelenting heart and mind he had joined as the Vice-Chancellorship to implement some basic changes in the functioning of the University but he is being forced to recall the expulsion of three students.
who had been expelled for rape. The alleged students attack and molest him physically. The politicians interfere in every law making decisions and create confusion for him.

Michael, a foreigner is also disappointed with the new political structure. He had come to India to write a biographical account of an important democratic leader whom he revered as his hero. He discovers to his surprise that a sea-change has taken place in the country, “this is something new .When I was here you could write anything you liked, photograph any slum” (Ibidem 92). Under the guise of prohibition, even the slightest criticism or offensive writing is banned from publication. A government official to whom literature is incomprehensible has to give a clearance to the publication of his biography. He is also being informed that a politically powerful person is writing that biography and hence he is not being given the clearance for publication.

Other insignificant characters also experience frustration and feel misplaced in the existing political organization. Rishad and Suvarnapriya become terrorists. Nadira becomes an opponent of Hinduism whilst poor Kirti satisfies her frustrations by occasionally relating her desires and hopes and emulating Indians of before Independence period.

In her recent publication Nicole Ward Jouve, a French Professor of English at York University, has expressed her belief in the significance of her experiences in shaping her literary critique. She assesses that these experiences help give a distinctive style to creative and critical ideas. In context of Nicole’s view it can be affirmed that references to personal life incidents play an outstanding role in A Situation in New Delhi. Devi represents Nayantara Sahgal’s mother who was suffering from acute depression and frustration during the period when Indira Gandhi was the
Prime Minister of India. Her disenchantment reached its zenith during the Emergency period Devi finds herself in the same predicament that perplexed Vijay Laxmi and her daughter Nayantara. In an honorable way, both tried to express their discontent in the quiet solitude of Mussorie. Vijay Lakshmi wrote her autobiography *The Scope of Happiness* (1979) whilst Nayantara wrote this fictional novel *A Situation in New Delhi*. The subject of disorientation dominates these two fictional works.

Nayantara also pioneers the enigma of rebellious discontent and lack of restraint among the students due to the impractical and unattainable policies and programmes of the government. She had repeatedly indicated in her previous novels that violence, a powerful monster, would pose threats to the administration. The novel also admonishes that a strict government will lead the country towards dictatorship that would further generate the problems of violence.

Devi is a complete woman endowed with glamorous and sensible qualities required to reveal her fully developed personality as the novel evolves. However, she is incapable of doing anything better than concentrating on various parties, attending sophisticated multicultural lovers, and continuing a superficial though friendly relation with her only son Rishad. When Michel interrogating Devi and asks her, “What outlet is there, for instance, for Rishad?” She replies, “I don’t know what you would do in his place?” *(Ibidem)*92 The candidness of a seasoned woman like her cannot be justified especially when she holds the post of Education Minister. She ignores the savage and damaging strife by the students in the university in which the Vice-Chancellor gets his one eye gouged. Next morning, he is seen lamenting about the air-conditioner rating highly about its allegorical importance. Normally, her phone would keep ringing till midnight making
her ready and alert to tackle eventful situations she is worried and concerned about more than inviting her son over a relaxed breakfast, “Can you tell me something about it?” (Ibidem 19)

On the political level, she is an attractive puppet who lends refinement and glamour to Shivraj’s parties and is gratified by the fact that Shivraj has urged her to be happy. She personally suggests and offers no political ideas but simply echoes the views of Shivraj. When Usman Ali refuses to become the Vice-Chancellor, a grieved and a dismayed woman entreats him to assist her. Usman Ali coerces her to accompany him after leaving the job. Her mind is perturbed and she muses fickle mindedly “But it is peculiar at forty four to find yourself stripped of your fabulous past and your limitless future. Suddenly you are nothing. Even what I have in the present in the way of my reputation- something that people recognize and respect will be blotted out the day I walk out of this house” (Ibidem 162).

In spite of all her talk, Devi is a typical domesticated Indian woman who needs a church always to lean on and when Shivraj dies, she would need Usman’s body and soul who makes love to her when she lies in her bed. Mourning for her husband Ishwar, she only knows to shimmer in white clothes and talk tiredly of her glorious past. Even in her love affairs she is neither honest nor mature, nor unselfish. Ishwar’s bed is still warm in her warm when Usman Ali occupies it. When Michael asks her about her lovers, she answers in an ambiguous way which didn’t quite seem compatible.

Devi gets romantically attracted towards Michael. She praises when asked by Michael to give few details pertaining to her liaison with him, she offers none.
Michael is yet another dummy character who is tied by the string the modern ruler has stretched around his sister’s neck as marriage between the two is improbable. A famous reporter meets the well informed sister of an influential politician and their only attainment was a nefarious dash over how to have illegal sexual relations without having any liking. The lady does not wish to enter the generally accepted custom of marriage tie. The paramour boy comes back to marry and divorce twice. He puts on physical weight due to mutual satisfaction not due to his mental achievements of writing three biographies. As he reads the news of Shviraj’s death Michael breaks down and plans to go to India to write his biography. Ironically, he returns to make love to Devi.

Lydia and Nadira are ladies who indulge in illegal sex during “the day and have no other occupation but linger on in bed for the rest of the twenty four hours” (Ibidem 33). They both are oppositeto Devi in being unhappy married women in contrast to the happy widow enjoying lustful physical affairs with the partners of the former.

The scenario in Rich Like Us reveals the situation one month ahead of the Emergency. It is supposed that the present situation would be viewed after a careful screening of the exalted past which had a different spirit altogether. The incidents of the past detailed consecutively are purely inspired by the desire to display the radical change experienced by leaders, their ways and aims and organization. The Emergency is illustrated in detail to show the diplomatic and rational arguments that it faces. The trade unions have been subdued completely, news withheld, administration is not free but political interference is there.

The title is mocking and vague. Who are ‘rich’ and who are ‘us’. It is disgraceful to be rich in the way we are. The wealthy, evil-minded, and
fraudulent business men, administrators, politicians are rich in material wealth but cankers where fine qualities or principles are concerned; they are not rich in spiritual wealth. The poor and disabled are rich in antagonism, courage and regality in contrast to the aforesaid men. The commencement of the novel points out:

*The first thing those local elites do is to get for themselves the biggest, latest model foreign cars and why not? We like the way we live, we can’t blame them to live like us* (Sahgal, Rich 30).

Sonali comes to the conclusion that her education in public affairs had not oriented her to tackle the new situation where politics and diplomacy reigns over administration.

“*once upon a time, who had thought of the civil services as ‘we’ and politicians as, they, two different sides of the coin. ‘Wee’ were bound by more than discipline. We partook of a mystique our job was to stay free of the political circus. We were successors to the I.C.S. the steel frame British had ruled India with, but with more on our hands since independence then the steel frame had in two hundred years……. The distinction between the service and politics had become so blurred that over the last few years, it had all but disappeared, the two sides were hopelessly mixed with politicians meddling with administration*” (Ibidem 24).

Sonali does not intend to twist the rules to suit people or clarity them in an unbiased and lenient way. Hence she suffers the stigma of transfer and demotion on and off.

Over-optimism, legacy, individual uniqueness, loyalty, human, interrelation all these are not valid in the present circumstances. She understands how decay has taken place, how tranquility demands more
decency and how honor and courage have become apparently inconsistent. Consequently:

*Nothing anywhere made sense, since in a moral universe either everything must have meaning or nothing. Memory dragged me backwards to reports I had read with monetary shock and then deliberately pushed away because they were too terrible to remember (Ibidem 29-30).*

There are instances of burning the bride for dowry, prisoners being slaughtered, justice is not delivered to the people, if they defy or resist oppression they are subdued with an iron hand. She had not paid heed to the news for the sake of subsistence which is also jeopardized. Democratic rights were the entitlement of the upper class and there was no reason to be sorry if the lower class suffered or the higher class. The administrative services bow down to political authority. The western culture is dominating over the national culture and tradition.

On the other hand, Dev counterfeits his father’s signature and the bank manager officially but secretly assists him in withdrawing large sum of money from his father’s account.

Through her story-telling Sahgal shows how the fake Emergency has infected the private lives of people and how it has choked their civil liberty. She reveals how subtly it destroys the morality of the individual character. “Teaching the virtuous life when virtue is in short supply is treason” (Ibidem 156).

She nostalgically recalls the genuine spirit of nationalism, concern for others welfare and forfeiting the civil rights of those who were involved in the freedom struggle before partition and compares it with the avaricious selfishness and the impudence of the present-day politicians.
Works Cited


