Chapter IV

Political Consciousness

In spite of a great deal of controversy about what constitutes 'politics' and "the political novel," critics seem to veer round Irving Howe's comprehensive definition: "By a political novel I mean a novel in which political ideas play a dominant role or in which the political milieu is the dominant setting." 19) Townsend Ludington makes this definition more explicit by saying that the political novel "may treat political history, or it may be a work in which 'politics' form the backdrop against which human life plays itself out." (26) When viewed against such comprehensive and critical definitions, Stendhal's oft-quoted remark comparing the entry of politics into a work of literature to a pistol shot in a concert seems to be like a pistol-shot itself. Man is a political animal and it is impossible to segregate literature from the all-enveloping "infection" of politics. The interaction between political ideology, individual and the management of the affairs of the state takes on myriad forms.

The reality of political subjugation and economic exploitation by the British government or its agents—the zamindars, the mill-owners, the princes etc.—was naturally a major theme in pre-independence Indian novel. After the attainment of independence,
however, the political themes became more multifarious. The Partition and the disillusionments about the functioning of democratic institutions, the quality of the new leaders and the erosion of moral values in politics found their articulation in fiction. Except for the three or four small wars fought by the country, the most important event on the post-independence Indian political scene was the declaration of the state of Emergency which lasted from June 1975 to March 1977. Quite a few Indian writers in English have treated this theme in their own different ways—loudly satirical in Salman Rushdie, pungently transparent in Manohar Malgonkar, prophetically dystrophic in O.V. Vijayan, and made ridiculous by implied comparisons with mythological situations and characters in Shashi Tharoor. But it is in Nayantara Sahgal's Rich Like Us that the realities of this brief nightmarish period have been translated into human terms without any of their repulsiveness being lost. In it we find an intermingling of the individual and contemporary politics and how the suffocating political environment bears down upon the lives of a few sensitive people.

The Story centres round Sonali, a young lady who is Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Industry. Unaware of the secret deal between the minister and a foreign businessman and his Indian collaborator about the setting up of a fizzy drink factory, she writes an unfavourable note on the file because the project, so
unimportant for the country, is wasteful of precious foreign exchange. Poor Sonali does not know that the project is the tip of an iceberg, for it is really a cover-up for the import and storage of car-parts required for the manufacture of an 'indigenous' car by the Prime Minister's younger son. Sonali is promptly transferred to her home state on a lower post and her successor, Ravi Kachru, an old friend of hers, takes over as Joint Secretary. The factory is now quickly established, of course not without the payment of a lot of Indian and foreign money to the Minister who receives it through his daughter-in-law. The Indian entrepreneur involved in this shady business is Dev (or Devikins), the son of an old prosperous businessman, now totally paralyzed. Dev. forges his paralyzed father's signature and with the officially inspired connivance of the Bank Manager, withdraws huge sums from his father's account. The real loser is Dev's step-mother and Sonali's aunt, Rose, who becomes anxious about her own future. She voices her suspicions and anxieties, but before she can do anything, she meets an "accidental" death (officially dismissed as suicide) by drowning in a nearby well not easy for her to reach. Her death is really the handiwork of the toughs of the youth wing of the governing party. Ravi Kachru, who, by Sonali's wish, tries to intercede in the affair, goes out of favour and is about to be shunted out of Delhi. The dejected Sonali is picked up by a British couple who have come to see her paralyzed uncle Ram and she
plunges wholeheartedly in the study of the decorative arts of medieval India, one of the most glorious periods of Indian history, envying the "unbroken continuity" of the Western civilization and conscious of the long stretch of time ahead of her.

The objectives and functioning of the Emergency and its effects on the lives of the people have been glaringly exposed and the nexus between politics, business and crime clearly revealed. The country is ruled by "one and a half people" (Rich 32) and the Emergency is "a disguised masquerade to prepare the country for family rule," (Rich 29) a dictatorship to ensure family succession in a "republic." In fact, as an editor, a typical representative of the subservient press of the Emergency, says in the novel, "Madam had in good faith thought it her constitutional duty to override the constitution," (Rich 94)'and a lawyer gives his professional opinion "that the Constitution would have to be drastically amended, if not re-written, to give Madam powers to fight disruptive forces and crush the vested interests she had been battling against since infancy." (Rich 94) The millenium had arrived disguised—as an emergency headed by a Mother Tsar (94-95) in whose support a number of delegations are going and her big toe is "already worn out with pilgrim kisses."(Rich 81) All this is a window-dressing for the repressive police raj let loose on the people. 50,000 to 100,000 people are under detention without trial (77) and "citizens broken on the wheel for remembering their
rights." (Rich 258) A citizen's hands are cut and he has to be a
handless beggar for life. (238) The suspicious Rose, as we have
already seen is silenced forever. The farmers and the workers are
exploited (15, 18) and the resources of the whole nation are quietly
siphoned off for the benefit of a few. There is exploitation galore.
In forced vasectomy camps even the old and the unmarried are not
spared. All this ugly reality is given cosmetic touches. There is
"the myth of a rational, human top" (Rich 236) quite unaware of the
ugly goings-on and an appeal to which can possibly lead to redressal.
There is a facade of discipline, punctuality and efficiency
accompanied by a hypocritical public and private swearing by the
ancient Indian scriptures, myths and ideals and repeated references
to Mahatma Gandhi and assertions, to serve the masses. But, in spite
of controlled press and "news-less newspapers," the people are not
taken in and there are whispering campaigns and open protests. Even
in the bureaucracy there are sensitive souls like Sonali who cannot
be a party to all this corruption and outrage against human dignity
even though they may have to quit the service. Even Ravi Kachru, at
one time the chief explainer of the Emergency, is at the end a
disillusioned man thrown out of favour only because he has pleaded
for Rose, a victim of deception and forgery.

All this sordid drama being enacted on the stage of Indian
politics has been viewed with a "double" vision—the objective
narration of the novelist and the filter of Sonali's consciousness. The moral and political stances of both are the same and so one perspective reinforces the other. As Ravi Kachru observes, Sonali has an inner quality of "burning brightness." (Rich 260) Her moral sensibility is enriched by a feminine intuition perceiving what is right and recoiling from what is wrong in her own subdued but nonetheless forceful way. Her narrative voice, witty and ironical, never rises above the levels of decorum and culture as when she talks about the attitude of the civil service towards the Emergency:

We knew this was no emergency. If it had been the priorities would have been quite different. We were all taking part in a thinly disguised masquerade, preparing the stage for family rule. And we were involved in a conspiracy of silence, which is why we were careful not to do more than say hello when we passed each other in the building, and not to talk about our work after hours, which made after-hours sessions very silent indeed. No one wanted trouble. So long as it didn't touch us, we played along, pretending the Empress's new clothes were beautiful. To put it charitably, we were being realistic. (Rich 29)

Sonali is a Kashmiri, but the Kashmiris' self-love and sense of superiority does not escape her mild chastisement:
Kashmiriness is the more powerful for inhabiting a territory of the imagination. The three-hundred-year-old migration from the Kashmir Valley to the Moghul court at Agra might have been three minutes. Our customs, food and complexions might have been plucked fresh today from the Valley......All Kashmiri Hindus are Brahmans—and their usefulness as administrators to the marauders, that saved them from slaughter or conversion by the Afghan invaders of Kashmir. Survival knit them tightly together, made profit and loss terms of position, and gave one of the world's oldest aristocracies its air of regal condescension towards the inhabitants of the Indian plains. And then Kashmiris had ruled India since independence so they, I mean we, were entitled to feel smug and special. (Rich 55)

Sonali is on the side of "we" in another sense also. The characters of the novel seem to be divided between "we" and "they," and Sonali, along with the novelist, belongs to "we," who are characterized by the resonance of sensitive comprehension and comprehensiveness. This literary device of narration makes us view the Emergency as it operates in the lives of women like Rose and Sonali, bringing out the contrast between their rich personalities and the stark ugliness of the world. The strength and resilience of
an individual like Sonali is demonstrated by the fact that the oppressive environment can only repel but not change her. It is absorbed as one of the strands making the individual personality richer and stronger moulded in its shaping even by those forces which were initially alien to it.

The orchestrations of the richness and depth of individual personality subsuming the oppressiveness of the environment is matched by the vastness of the historical perspective which reduces the Emergency to an erratic and transient moment is the centuries of greatness through which India has passed the juxtaposition of the past and the present highlights the relative insignificance and paradox of the Emergency against the vast backdrop of time and the glorious struggle for independence. The journey of the country "from Mahatma to Madam" (49) shines through the patina of the narrative. Business in the past was quite different from what it is now:

What you call entrepreneurship, now, or however you pronounce it, is one minute you are nothing and the next minute you're a bloomin' millionaire where's all the money come from all of a sudden, I'd like to know? (Rich 12)

As regards the civil services:
Where had the tradition we were trying to build gone wrong? The distinction between politics and the service had become so badly blurred over the last few years it had all but disappeared. The two sides were hopelessly mixed, with politicians meddling in administration, and favourites like Kachru, the prime example, playing politics as if his life depended on it. (Rich 28)

Some of the important landmarks in India's recent past leading to the Quit India Movement, the formation of the I.N.A., the revolt of the naval ratings, the Partition and the enthusiasm generated by independence have been mentioned at several places and sharply clinched at one point:

We were not guilty of Hiroshima, Nagasaki or sending Jews in cattle cars to gas ovens. We could afford to remind ourselves of a past others were trying to forget, and we joined ours seamlessly to the present. (Rich 165)

But the slightly more remote past of India is also projected through her grandfather's manuscript that Sonali finds in her dead father's box. The manuscript vividly portrays the cruelties, especially of "Sati" that Indian women of those generations, including Sonali's great-grandmother, had to undergo and the strong reaction they provoked in the hearts of sensitive men like Sonali's grandfather.
The long manuscript seems to join the past with the present "the subterranean layers of ourselves we cannot escape." (151) Sonali's own reaction to the long account reflects the continuity of cruelty and rebellion in India's history:

Illumination seems to come to me in the dark. When I switched off my bedside lamp I saw a world revealed, but strangely enough it was not the evil in it I saw. On a narrow parapet enclosing a funeral pyre I saw a boy of nineteen balancing dangerously, unconscious of the danger to himself, as he fought savagely to kill his mother's murderers. Not all of us are passive before cruelty and depravity. He had not been. Nor the boy in Connaught Place who had struggled desperately all the way to the police van. Nor even Rose's beggar, undaunted by his armlessness, slipping and slithering from his tormenter's grasp while those with arms and legs walked mutely into captivity. And I fell asleep to dream of heroisms whose company I was scarcely fit to keep. (Rich 152)

Rich Like Us glorifies such heroism manifested, under different circumstances, in the past and in the present. It demolishes the stupid Emergency as it had tried to demolish the equally stupid "Sati" in the past. Like the "Sati," the Emergency is doomed to take
its place among the frightful tableaux in the unending cavalcade of our history, for in all ages there have been strong and sensitive people to fight out such cruelties. Sonali's taking up at the end of the novel the study of the seventeenth century, one of the greatest and richest periods of Indian history, seems to suggest that the past of India is not all cruel and barbarous but that there is much in it that appeals to sensitive souls. The aroma of these richesses and heroisms, both of human souls and of history, subsume and overwhelm the nauseas like those of 'Sati' and the Emergency. The novel ends on an unambiguous note of optimism, reminding Sonali that she was young and alive, with her own century stretched out before her waiting to be lived. (266) Such an approach to the past and the present impinging on heroic souls highlight the fact that the spirit of India is too powerful to be overwhelmed by such fiery trials and it will arise phoenix-like to discover its richness and enlarge its domains. Against such vast historical and psychological perspectives, the Emergency, for all its nauseating cruelties, dwindles into a transient moment both in time and consciousness.

Literature cannot remain unaffected by the social and the political, for political awareness forms an integral part of the artists' consciousness as a human being. But the artist's dialogue with the social and the political forces must be subsumed within the creative process which transcends the
horizons of society only when integrating the hell and paradise of human life into the symbols of the whole. The primary of the imaginative experience is characterized by immediacy and closeness. Ideology, on the other hand, is general and—though intellectually it may be inclusive, it is not easily reconcilable with individual, authentic, imaginative experience. For that reason, it may be so much extraneous matte, for the novelist. With an overload of ideology, a novelist is so much more vulnerable but when he succeeds, he reaps far richer dividends. At its best, artistic alchemy generates such intense heat that the ideas it appropriates are melted into human gestures and fused with the emotions of its characters. However, for that, ideas have to come to life and be endowed with the capability for moving characters. Rather than being, in Stendhal's phrase, "a pistol shot in the middle of a concert", (19) politics in the novel has to be integrated with the patterns of life traced, and has to function as the germinal nucleus fermenting the human story. Politics, thus, is to be presented in art through the medium of living men and women and their actions. When die fundamental urges and interests of people are thwarted by a repressive set-up, they get involved in the institutional parameters of their immediate environment. They are motivated, primarily, by their search for fulfillment, and ideology, thus, gets coalesced with and adds immeasurably to the
human content What follows is a study of this coalescing of the 'claims' of art and life inclusive of politics, in the novels of Sahgal.

Sahgal makes her fictional universe throb with beings of flesh-and-blood rather than abstracted ideologues, she suggests the general through the particular. The narrator, Sohan bhai, Sanad (from Happy), Kailas Wind, Prakash Shukla, Abdul Rahman, the President (from Morning), Vishal Dubey, Trivedi, Harpal Singh (from Storm), Raj (Shadow), Usman, Devi Rishad (from Situation) and Sonali (Rich)—all present their constructive political ideology in an essentially human idiom. Sahgal goes farther in her commitment to the humanization of political rhetoric. She presents her characters in life-like grey as blends of virtues and vices. She succeeds most in those characters where she penetrates deeply into their psychology to discover the instincts which propel them to action, whether it be worthy of approbation or not in Kalyan Sinha in Morning we have a character viewed in entirety. The novelist notes his concern for die exploited the weak and the helpless as well as his recourse to exploitation and whatever other means he deems fit for quick progress in Storm. Harpal is presented in the wholeness of his personality with his successes and failures, idealism and frustrations. Gyan Singh is both the down-to-earth
charmer and the demagogue. Rishad in *Situation* gets a similarly through treatment with both the ahuman terrorist and the humanist reformer rolled in one.

Another aspect of Sahgal's delineation of her characters, unencumbered with the dictates of ideology, is her even-handed portrayal of people subscribing to different creeds. This is all the more remarkable if we consider the fact that her primary occupation is with the theme of the antiquatedness of Hinduism vis-a-vis other faiths which, she feels, are more in tune with the requirements of the present critical times. Sahgal doesn't let her impression of Hinduism cloud her perception of life and people as an artist Liberalism and obscurantism are not exclusive to any one religion in her novels. Mclvor in *Happy* and Raj in *Shadow* are liberal Christians. Saleem and Saira in *Morning* and Usman in *Situation* are humanist Muslims. On the other hand the Ganges in *Happy* and Nadira in *Situation* represent the pull of fundamentalism. However, the fairness or the ability to catch the grey areas rather than being conditioned by the few streaks of black or white in one's personality is sadly lacking in other characters like Hari Mohan (Morning) Gyan Singh (Storm) and Sumer Singh (Shadow). Nevertheless they are not reduced to one-actions are inextricably intertwined with their internal mechanics. As we have seen earlier", it is the internal
psychology, of Kunti Behn, Harilal Mathur, Sohan Bhai (all from Happy), Kalyan Sinha, Hari Mohan (both from Morning), and Sumar Singh (Shadow), that makes these characters/credible and thus carry the ideological weight the novelist puts on them. The manner they conduct themselves under this 'handicap' helps the novelist present her interpretation of the political situation in thoroughly human terms.

In spite of Sahgal's general success in making her characters credible, one cannot simply wish away abstractions like the Cabinet Intellectuals and the minister of Mierals and Metals in Situation and the ogre-like Madam and her son in Rich, where the political columnist in the novelist seems to have taken over. Rich, especially, is interspersed with vague apprehensions, unsubstantiated allegations and wild fantasy-all undigested in art—which could perhaps go well with journalism of a particular hue but do not with serious literature. Rich leaves one with the impression that political consciousness is rendered here in political rhetoric without being fully integrated with the gamut of life presented; it remains extraneous to art.

Sonali, the novelist's persona in the novel, uses terms and situations reminiscent of the political reality without the novel. They do not seem to emanate from the fictional experience
incorporated. At one juncture, she thus expresses herself about the Emergency-dispensation: "You know perfectly well everything is controlled by "one and a half people" (32). This computation of the ruling coterie had been earlier made famous in the novelist's political columns. This is how the 'Son' is described to have started, by:

vasectomizing the lower classes, blowing up tenements and scattering slum-dwellers to beautify Delhi, setting up youth camps with drop-outs in command, loafers and ruffians who would otherwise have been no more than loafers and ruffians... Look at the way held sprung full-blown, up and doing, into the power structure, while grandpa had to spend years in jail and mummy had doll processions before making it to the executive suite (Rich. 83).

There are other references in a similar vein. K.L., another voice given the mantle of narration ruminates thus: "... suppose Madam's son had stayed a hijacker of cars and not become leader of cultural evolution" (Rich 188). This is how K.L. reacts to the news of J.P.'s being in hospital:

After they've finished with him, he'll be ready for his grave. Hospital's where they'd keep him, wouldn't
they? It is more convenient for bumping him off, with all that hospital care around him. They'll say he was old and ill... (Rich 76).

Rose, another character, who is presented sympathetically in the novel, presents farther reaches of such conjecturers. She imagines:

She was listening to a doctor-butcher prescribe an appallingly simple prescription for death behind bars, to be followed by two days' national mourning for an old and misguided freedom Fighter, who had regrettably, died of old age in prison... (Rich 46).

Rich obviously has politics not fully subsumed in art. While politics can certainly form a legitimate subject-matter of art, it should be fully integrated with the human narrative. That is where the rub lies in Rich. The novel is so much interspersed with political rhetoric out of harmony with fictional context that one can't help seeing beyond the curtain. What one discovers is the undeifying spectacle of the novelist pulling her mannequins by strings and guiding their responses. Sahgal had succeeded in legitimizing her indictment of the pseudo-radicalism and the dictatorial propensities in the post-Independence set of leaders in her earlier novels because it had
sprung in human terms from out of the fictional context painstakingly created within these novels. The expose of the machinations of the Madam and her son in Rich is so much excrescence, for the intensity of the artistic process here hasn't fused it with the human action delineated.

Rich seems to be more a lyric of political experience than a slice of life captured dispassionately. It signals the defeat of the congenital novelist in Sahgal even if it had facilitated a personal catharsis, as she herself confesses:

With Rich Like Us, I have reached the end of die road.
It exercised that whole shame-making national experience from my system. (Voice 33)

Like Bhattacharya seeking emotional release from the trauma of famine stricken Calcutta in novels like Hungers and Tigers Sahgal, in Rich, seems to seek release from the nightmare of Emergency. And the release gets the better of the artist here.

The way a novelist draws the curtain suggests the tenuous agreement between the artist and the ideologue. Hence an examen of the manner wherein a finale is brought about would be an index of the success attained in the artistic rendering of the vision. The ending of Bhattacharya’s novels go to reveal where
the novelist's priorities lie. A neat philosophic denouement is not what Bhattacharya is after. The denouements in his novels are psychologically conditioned rather than ideologically directed. *Hungers* leads to the completion of Rahul's search for self-fulfillment which had been suggested at the outset. *Music* heralds the triumph of the modernist, reformist inclination in the face of stiff resistance from an unthinking reverence for old ways—a denouement very much on the cards. In *Tiger*, Kalo's eventual change of heart and confession of his fraud appears anything but contrived, placed as it is at the end of a long series of agonizing moments for Mangal Adhikari when he himself had gnawing doubts and when his own dear Chandralekha gets ready to sacrifice herself to keep the pretence. *Gold* concludes with the coming forth of the minstrel to espouse overtly what the action therein had covertly suggested. In *Ladakh*, however neat and pat the conclusion may sound in isolation, a little consideration would reveal how the novelist by infecting Bhaskar's modernism with discontent and making Satyajit's Gandhism propped on an edifice of repression, had cleared the decks for a synthesis of the two. Sumita's metamorphosis from a pale shadow of the austere Satyajit to a woman feeling passion on her pulse, "the wave that sweeps you away on its crest" (373) is also eminently prepared for.
Except for Sahgal's political lyric in Rich the endings of her novels are dictated by the inner alchemy of the characters rather than by the ideological directions of the novelist. Sanand's coming round to self-realization under the influence of his wife, Veena (Happy), Kailas's taking to activist politics to stem the rot (Morning); Vishal's coolheaded appraisal of the deteriorating situation in Chandigarh and his resolve to face it boldly (Storm); Raj's concern for the vanishing 'tribe of India-lovers' (Shadow); Usman's coming to the streets to lead a popular movement against the government (Situation) Sonali's resolve not to be cowed down but work for the future of her country (Rich) the endings are psychologically motivated rather than ideologically conditioned. Rather than being superimposed on mannequins, the final responses grow imperceptibly from the innermost being of the characters. Consequently ideological panaceas, if any, appear to be inevitable products of an intensely human dynamic situation.

The endings of Malgonkar's novels reveal the artistic and the ideological strains in the novelist, in differing degrees of cohesion: The disintegration and death of Winton, with which combat concludes, has an artistic inevitability about it which is highly commendable. Even though Ganges presents the two protagonists-Gyan and Debi-in colours of glaring contrast at the
outset, the anagnorises they reach towards the end are thoroughly prepared for. The validation of love through both Gyan and Debi is most convincing and thus the ideological impression of the primacy of personal bonds over political theorizing is reached inevitably in a human idiom. In a similar vein, Princes has a denouement in perfect accord with its one-sided perspective. The novel closes with Abhay's fathercourting death like a hero by conscious choice in preference to life in 'colourless' India after Independence. On the other hand, there is Kanakchand who whines and groans as Abhay administers to him the horsewhipping he 'deserved'. The ending, however, causes few eyebrows to be raised for the narrative had taken such a one-sided turn ahead of the finale. However, Drum betrays the guiding hand of the ideologue in Malgonkar. The novelist acknowledges the contribution of Duggie Sawhney, "who cut out two chapters from the book" (Drum 5), of Pattie Somdutt, "Who thinned out the remainder" (5) and of Pat Totter-dell, who made me change the ending" (5). Nevertheless it is Malgonkar alone who is to be blamed for the contrived finale wherein the protagonist survives all obstacles-personal, social, professional and political. 'The they-lived-happily-there after' ending of the novel signals more the wishful thinking of an ideologue than faithful depiction of the probable situation by a novelist. Thus while the human narrative in Bhattacharya and Sahgal generally leads the reader
imperceptibly to a particular ideological conviction, in the fictional universe of Malgonkar, one has the impression, at times, of being led by the nose.

Sahgal makes the political self of her characters but an extension of their individual beings. In Happy, Nootan's public posture is but a means to seek the fulfilment of his inner craving for fame (85). Sir Harilal Mathur's angulomania is a public manifestation of this gratitude to the English who had released him from a compulsive inferiority complex (155). Kunti Behn's professed Gandhism is a sublimation of her repressed desires (Happy 60). Kalyan's penchant for quick-results as a minister is related, along with his manifest contempt for Gandhism, to his early orphaned life (77). Vishal's political constructivism is built on a broken marriage (Storm, 29). Gyan Singh's populist rhetoric is to be seen in the context of his turbulent childhood (Storm 126). So is Harpal's humanitarianism to be appreciated against the background of a guilt complex (Storm 48). Sumer Singh, in Shadow, is smarting under a desperate need to prove himself. That makes him 'half-bent' in whatever he does whether in politics or in bed. In Rich Nishi's support for the Emergency-regime is but a ploy to buy peace for her father incarcerated under Emergency provisions.
Morning not only presents freedom on the political plane but also extends it into the subterranean springs of human action. It is of as much importance to politicians—Kailas, Kalyan, Hari Mohan, Prakash Shukla, the president—as it is to the individual human beings like Nita, Rakesh, Mira, Uma, Leela, Celia and Barbara. Storm depicts violence making inroads not merely into the body politic but also into the personal lives of the people. Inder, with his "ancient tribal, male roots" (102), feeling 'squeamish' about the expression and comprehension of human emotions, is made the prototype of the rabble-rousing, demagogue, Gyan Singh, on the personal level. Vishal, the central observer of the scene of political violence and the individual observer of violence in human relationship, sympathizes with victims of both equating explicitly Harpal Singh, the Haryana CM. with Saroj—both victims of violence in the public and the personal realms respectively (222). In Shadow, too, the explicit linking of Sumer Singh, with his penchant for quick progress and Som, with his fascination for gadgetry, comes long after the two have been linked through implied situations and undertones. Like the world of Sumer, engrafted with "other people's solutions" (155), the world of Som and Vetter revolves round an alien axis. Both Sumer and Som, in the political and the personal realms respectively, stand for "a cleanup, a breakaway" (192) with "the
whole Indian past" (129). The lament about the conspicuous absence of the breed of "Indian-lovers" (120) can apply with equal validity, to the representatives of the two domains. Rich again highlights the same issues—unscrupulous greed, rampant corruption and heartless misuses of authority—which are afflicting the nation, as well as the individual people like Sonali, Rose and others.

Situation interlocks the personal and the political selves of its major characters in a very artistic way. Devi finds her public self-impinging on her private aspirations. Her son Rishad finds his parasitic personal existence meaningless. However, both are depicted as growing from a "clandestine" life, private and public respectively, to a stage of anagnorisis where the duality is harmonized. It is through his personal relationship with Suvampriya Jaipal that Rishad achieves political maturity. And it is Devi's personal commitment to her brother, the deceased PM, Shivraj, that decides for her the political course she is to take. Joining forces with Usman, who is leading a mass-movement for the restoration of the Values Shivraj cherished, Devi finds she is coming home. The personal tragedy of the gang raped Madhu is symbolic of the plight of the nation where the individual is deemed to be 'only an instrument of the process' (125). Usman realizes that such private disasters can
be checked only through political means, by arousing the youth to feeling of individual responsibility.

Taken together, her works present a fairly representative as well as authentic example of the transmutation of political consciousness into art through the medium of the imagination which integrates individual as well as social psychology and reflects its working in both personal and public action.