CHAPTER III

RELIGION, CULTURE, TRADITION AND MODERNITY
UNDER INDIAN MILIEU

Nayantara Sahgal, as a novelist, is consistently concerned with religion, culture, tradition and modernity and her undiminished fictional treatment of religion, culture, tradition and modernity under the Indian milieu is of great literary and social value. Her deep sense of concern with the changing tradition of the facet of modern India as well as her measure of success in her artistic treatment in all her novels speaks volumes. The key to her novels lies in her deep and abiding faith in individual freedom, human rights and the cultural values of India. She seems to aim at an imaginative unification and a fictional identification of the fast changing countenance of India in crucible time. The objective correlative present in Nayantara Sahgal’s novels dramatize the contemporary Zeitgeist and the traditional elan vital of India.

India has had its own tradition and ancient religion and culture and tradition since time immemorial. It has had its own cultural heritage and milieu besides having its own language and literature. But the adoption of English as a medium of communication and the adoption of English as one of the official languages stimulated a new consciousness among the people of political and cultural nationalism. It encouraged the quest for the true meaning of the Indian experience of history in relation to the West. Equally important is the diffusion of Western thought and European literature which attracted the great minds of the 19th and the 20th centuries and laid strong foundation for the changing facet of
Indian Society in its approach towards Religion, Culture, Tradition and Modernity.
The encounter between Eastern and Western thought left a permanent impress on India’s Cultural ethos.

Nayantara Sahgal’s fiction has a sense of belonging and strain of history where race, religion, culture and caste can decide the course of a love affair. Different societies under foreign domination bring their own behaviour characteristics into play. Passivity can become an active choice, and at times, it adds strength among people where invasion and request have been the pattern of sustenance. Sycophancy is the hallmark of the survivor and all cultures have sycophants. In the traditional cultural history of India, all Indians are not Hindus but all Indians much reckon with Hinduism. Hinduism has been the dominant setting and provides the social and psychological platform for other religions such as Christianity and Islam to find a strong footing to change the facet of traditional and cultural boundary India.

When Religion and Culture are subject to dramatic changes, there is a kind of convulsion and conflict in the Indian consciousness and sensibility. This one could trace, when India was subject to various kinds of invasion. Under this cultural atmosphere and political environment, it is the duty of the conscious artist to bring all these elements alive in his/her writings. Hence Nayantara Sahgal is quite alive to the cultural changes that have taken place in the traditional Hindu dominated society due to the advent and invasion of Western culture. At this juncture, the very question of direction and treatment of theme is highly irrelevant, when the migration of cultures is open-ended and when the migration can take
place without even leaving one’s identity and soil. It is unpredictable where one culture begins and another ends, when they are housed in the same person.

Nayantara Sahgal’s early childhood was brought up in Nehru’s home. The home presented a wide range of experiences. It was not only the nerve centre of political activity but also an amalgamation and a confluence of the West and the East. India co-existed with the Western Philosophy of equality and independent identity. As she was the child of renaissance and reformation, she was quite conscious of the changes that had taken place during the pre and post Independent India. Nayantara Sahgal gave free and frank expression to all the changes that had taken place in the traditional, cultural bound and Hindu-dominated society. In all her novels, the characters and the situations provided the burrow for the Indian soil to plough deep in order to trace the visible changes in Religion, Culture and Tradition so that the Indian society could compete with the Western in all aspects.

The characters both men and women in her novels belong to the rich, urban milieu, consisting of politicians, bureaucrats, government servants, successful business men and their families are bound to act and react in the changing facet of modern India. These characters similarly placed in the novels move forward in the same way that the Indian society moves forward. The women characters in her novels have a mind and a will of their own. They are attracted by things deeper than those visible on the surface. Moreover they are bold and have no inhibitions in breaking away from the established norms of traditional Hindu dominated society. That is why one finds in her novels the heroines defying and even breaking away from the bonds of marriage to find a new life of fulfilment.
A visible theme that preoccupies the mind of Nayantara Sahgal in all her novels is with the Hindus and Hinduism. In fact her characters can be identified on the basis of their religions. In *The Day in Shadow*, Raj Garg, a Christian is confused and angry because he feels that Hindus use their religion to exploit others, especially their women. He says: “The whole question of what Hindu stands for has not yet to be sorted out” (*The Day in Shadow* 13) and “even the sun, Moon, and stars are under analysis today. Everything except Hindus” (119). In *Rich Like Us*, Nayantara Sahgal concludes: “Hinduism is not taught, nor does it seek converts. It simply is” (*Rich Like Us* 133). As such, her characters are faced with the conflict arising out of traditional religious beliefs and modern scientific education. Nayantara Sahgal herself is averse to the idea of Fate as accepted by the average Hindu, because her view gives rise to apathy, inaction and complacency. The idea of Fate prevents a Hindu from being dynamic. But Nayantara Sahgal’s heroines are seen rebelling against the established social inequalities and Hindu ambivalence. Whatever be her views on Hindu and Fate, Nayantara Sahgal is sufficiently embedded to her Hindu origin to achieve a state of mind and feeling that is firmly rooted in a particular sub-soil, but above ground has a more fluid identity that does not fit comfortably into any simple mound or formula.

Nayantara Sahgal is neither a traditionalist nor modernist. As an Indian, she shares the common Indian sensibilities. She is an individualist who presents the ideas in a unique and radical way. This is more so because she is a clear product of family heritage, traditional Indian upbringing. She has all along been influenced powerfully by the Western culture and American education. Added to this, she
was born in the Gandhian era which saw the birth of a new and independent India. Rightly, therefore, she carves for herself a special niche in this great tradition of Indian culture.

Nayantara Sahgal was the child of India at the infancy of its making in all spheres. She knows Gandhi directly through personal contact and discovers not only Gandhi, the leader but also Gandhi, the man. She reveals always her intense faith in Gandhi and believes that Gandhian philosophy is the only solution to India’s manifold problems. She is deeply impressed by Gandhi’s belief in the human being and human dignity. Gandhi’s philosophy of Non-Violence basically recognizes the importance of other human beings. It is born of strength and not of weakness.

Nayantara Sahgal is fully aware of the increase in violence and the decrease of human values. She regrets the moral decline and makes her novel the medium of portraying the importance of Gandhian philosophy in everyday life. But she does not turn into a political novelist by propounding Gandhian ideology. She also disagrees with the idea of cow-slaughter and celibacy. She projects her characters in situations where they triumph not on the basis of any specific political ideology, but on the strength of human values and human relationships. Nayantara Sahgal is against the propagation of ideas of Marxism or Communism in her novels.

In the novels of Nayantara Sahgal, India herself is a multi-faceted personality and it is a pulsating character as much as other characters. She is concerned with the texture of Indian life, its customs, its traditions and the cultural
patterns at home and family life. She is quite aware of the nuances of India’s cultural ethos with its types of religion, caste and race and the conflict that arises of East and West and the tradition and the modern. All these elements have found equal expression in the novels of Nayantara Sahgal.

All her writings have a very personal and individual quality which reflects Nayantara Sahgal’s personality and creative sensibility. Her creation reveals the constant struggle between the Old and the New, the ancient and the modern and above all the spirit of reasoning and faith in *Karma*.

Many things influenced Nayantara Sahgal and her personality began growing powerful and dominant. Her ideas became clear and her views firm and rigid. The values and principles of Gandhi, the personality and the ideas of her uncle Nehru, and the courage of her father and mother shaped and moulded her personality and she expressed freely and fearlessly her views and ideas on religion, culture, tradition and modernity.

Commenting on her character, Shyam M. Asnani writes:

> She and her sisters were among the youngest of India’s children to be touched by the spark with which Gandhiji illuminated country. It touched their lives in innumerable small ways and penetrated their consciousness gradually so that as they grow up, it became a living part of them. (Asnani, “Prison and Chocolate Cake: A Study” 54)

The divine spark of Gandhiji provided her an idea that the contradictions among nations, people and within an individual could be avoided, if they properly adjusted among themselves. If there is a proper adjustment among people,
between states, nations and within the minds of the individuals, there will be peace, friendliness and happiness in the world.

To follow the path of Gandhi, there was one model that stood for unified India. It was Nehru who stood as a model. She found the influence of Gandhi in the policies and pursuits of Nehru. Nayantara Sahgal openly confesses: “It was Mamu, among the first to respond to Gandhiji’s call, when he came to India from Africa in 1916” (Sahgal, Prison and Chocolate Cake 14-15).

Nehru’s adherence and attachment towards the Gandhian values somehow changed the total outlook of Nayantara Sahgal. The effects can be seen in the writings of Nayantara Sahgal whatever ideas and views she expressed can be repeatedly seen in the Religious Doctrines of all Religions. Christ symbolizes love and forgiveness, Buddha’s message is peace, Mohammed’s message is friendship and Mahatma’s message is of peace and non-violence. Liberal, humanistic, Gandhian and social reform—a combination of all these prevailing ideologies in Nayantara Sahgal’s work retains the core of religious values from Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity, plus a selective acceptance of essentially bourgeois’s values from modernity.

In A Time to Be Happy, the narrator introduces the family of Shivpal. Their household consists of Shivpal, Ammaji, Govind Narayan, the father of Sanad, his wife Lakshmi, his modern brother Harish and his wife Maya. They are leading a life exactly in the pattern of zamindarism with a battalion of servants and maids. Govind Narayan’s main occupation includes smoking hoodka and chewing pan.
Sanad, the centre of consciousness faces the problem of cultural identity. There is a visible conflict in the mind and heart of Sanad and that is the reason for his alienation both from his own country and from the British company where he is working. It is better to state his problem in his own words: “My body is in India, but my brain doesn’t belong here. I might as well be an English man except for the colour of my skin” (*A Time to Be Happy* 232).

The statement of Sanad seems to appear as a biased verdict. But it stands for more than what it denotes literally. By learning a language, those who learn it are introduced to the culture associated with that language. One can learn many languages and at the same time retain one’s own cultural identity.

Indians have become inheritors of another culture, namely Western culture because of the impact of British rule and the English education. The two Hundred years have changed the entire social system of India to a great extent. The impact of the Britisah Raj, by its language, dress and cock-tail parties mostly have restructured the life style of upper-class Indians. In Sanad’s case, being the only son of a rich man, he goes to English convent. The education he has received adds to his prestige and glamour. But the influence of the narrator places him in cross roads of culture and makes him wonder whether he can continue or resign. He is in dilemma and he is in conflict with his own self.

There is snobbishness on the part of Harish and that is the characteristic feature of the English-speaking aristocrats of the pre-Independent India. They are critical of what comes from the Indian hand. Even Harish has stopped celebrating *Deepavali*, the famous Hindu festival. Many human beings are dying without food
during Bengal famine but the affluent are insensitive to it and they never stop their cocktail parties and china clay dinners. They talk mostly about the game of Tennis, or the changing fashion in Paris. Sanad stands in between. He realizes the situation. Yet he is not in a clear mind to give up his luxurious way of life. He contrasts the dying mass of human beings and the Chatterjis: “It made the contrast I had already seen in Calcutta very distinct in mind. And the dinner highlighted them …Tennis and Government House- an infallible combination for acceptability” (101).

The Western culture has slowly eaten the Indian culture, well-nurtured and well-established in the fabric of Indian society. Hindu religion which has safeguarded the Indian culture has begun to shake the very foundation of the Indian society and has given way to the Western culture. But there are people who remain undecided which way to go-the old Indian culture or the new Western culture.

In *This Time of Morning*, Kailas Vrind is the chosen exponent of the origins of the Gandhian Revolution. Kailas Vrind is right, when he says:

Hindu Society has produced extraordinary contrasts has it not? ...

While one expresses humanistic faith; the other expresses intolerance and non-violence and narrow mindedness. Tolerance and intolerance, violence and non-violence are born out of duality of Hindu Religion which sanctions and upholds both acquisition and renunciation, and these pervade the political and the personal world.  

(*This Time of Morning* 52)
Hari Mohan is highly religious but his religious faith does not encourage him to help others at times of need. For him, the religious faith is only a means of self-preservation. There are some characters who adhere to the usual religious norms. But at the same time, they are not quite aware of the fact that Hinduism ignored the existence of evil and this failed to realize that it was self-destructive. It needed to be destroyed. Men always wanted power over each other and religion had been only one weapon in their hand.

In *Storm in Chandigarh*, Vishal Dubey, a man steeped in the Hindu tradition believes that there should be no compromise with evil. Evil should not be met halfway. He observes:

…The divisions of the Hindu world were based on narrating hypocrisies and what needed was not acceptance or compromise but undivided integrity. The ability of a Hindu to evade an issue was responsible for the general decay in the quality of life and this Dubey called “the funeral March” of Hinduism…The religion would have to acquire the ability to change and to think fresh…Religion should enable people to grow and progress. (*Storm in Chandigarh* 48)

Nayantara Sahgal projects the view that though religion is a significant base for a normal conscience, the concept of religion must change and realize itself in order to make a meaningful contribution to the political and emotional life of a people.

Since *Storm in Chandigarh* deals basically, with a problem of political tension and violence originating from it, the theme of tradition and modernity is
quite discernible in it. The characters in the novel behave like moderns and at the same time do not isolate themselves completely from the tradition. The blend of tradition and modernity can be observed in their attitude to morality as education, eating habits, man-woman relations, attitude to love and even architecture. Chandigarh being a new city has nothing to boast of its traditions. A new type of society has emerged in this town and the people who have come to live in it have brought their beliefs, ideas and customs with them. This has enriched the culture of this town and this has also created a confusion or cultural storm here. We have here details of complex human relationship against the backdrop of India’s current political discontent.

Modernity in India is often confused with the Western style of life. What confirms to the Western ways of dressing, eating, drinking and social get together is regarded as modern. It is civilization that we attach importance to. The people from Chandigarh drawing room society consume whisky and relish late night dinners. To the modern Mara, smoking and drowning herself in wines are not the signs of dishonour but of high status. Women characters in this novel no more like to remain confined within the four walls of their houses. They prefer to go to picnic and parties to relieve the burden of boredom and monotony. Mara telephones Saroj to complain that she is “sick of this crisis talk” and suggests that they all should go to picnic to Pinjore Gardens. They do not hesitate to take whisky in the company of men. When Inder invites Dubey to a drink, Saroj says, “I will have one too.” She feels fussy, when she is suggested to avoid alcohol during the pregnancy. This cultural change is almost manifest in their attitude towards guests. When Vishal Dubey tries to decline pettily Inder’s invitation to
take him along with his friend Ajit Shalni’s house, Saroj intervenes to say. “It’ll be perfectly all right. This is Chandigarh” (72). Her emphasis on the name of Chandigarh speaks volumes of the modernity of Chandigarh society.

_Storm in Chandigarh_ also touches upon the theme of tradition and modernity in terms of ethics and morality. Ethics and morality, though interrelated and often confused, have been given distinct identities and meaning by the modern educated people like Trivedi and Vishal Dubey. For instance, Vishal Dubey would not substrate to “so what is commonly understood as morality.” Trivedi’s suggestion that Vishal Dubey might believe in free love, and that sort of thing makes Vishal Dubey laugh. He, while declining his inclination towards free love, declares that he does not accept the established idea about morality and not to be bound hand and foot. He behaves in “Higher morality” that he defines as below: “It is a search for value, and an attempt to choose the better value, the real value, in any situation, and not just do what’s alone or what is expected” (80).

The moderns do not spend their Sunday morning on going to temples and churches. They aspire to take the most out of life. For that, they prefer horse riding, a swim in the club, or a game of tennis. Sanskrit or the oriental language of worship or scriptures, does not interest the modern educated man. English has become his obsession. For instance, Vishal Dubey agrees to have breakfast with his Madrasi clerk, Ramasamy because he is an M.A. in English.

Morality touches the oldest and the most cherished prejudices of the people. It is more akin to tradition, and comparatively little related to modernity. The news item relating to Vishal Dubey’s affairs with some one else’s wife does
not perturb him only because he has no regard for the traditional view of morality. His explanation for this to his personal assistant Main Singh is: “It was not a matter of doing what are values. It was a matter of being what are valued and being was a daily affair, not an occasional activity” (157).

Closely related to morality is the subject of man-woman relationship. Both modern and traditional views are blended in the novel so far as this subject is concerned. For instance, the so called man and women, sitting together in leisurely movements may discuss each other’s marital and even extramarital relations. It was not so in the bygone days. As Inder remarks. “There was time when such conduct be spoken even through, except with shame. There’s no shame nowadays, no barriers, everything is taken lightly and woman talk and behave like men” (102).

To those remarks Mara rejoins, “perhaps they just behave more like human beings and less like possessions” (102). It is the tradition in Inder that leads him to believe that a woman has to live under the protection of man. Individuality in women disgusted him and he feels that man-woman relationship will always be one of domination. He felt that a wife who was “one half of a surprise and is meant that she is fit to “preside over her husband’s home and children and further husband’s career” (2). He thinks that a woman would always need a master the Man who would own and command her; she would continue to respect that man. Here, in spite of his modernity, he is thoroughly traditional. Steeped in tradition, he sees the man-woman relationship only a husband-wife relation. But he fails to
see that even the mere labels of husband-wife do not protect us from our private torments.

_The Day in Shadow_ primarily deals with the struggle of a young, beautiful and daring Indian woman trapped under the burden of a brutal divorce settlement and the agony and unhappiness she experiences in the hands of cruel and unjust male dominated society in India. On one level, the novel also exposes the life of the political leaders, business barons, journalists and thinkers in the ebb and flow of the daily living in New Delhi. Nayantara Sahgal has presented the social life of the people living in India, in the early sixties when India, was on her way to progress after the attainment of Independence. Though Indians have got freedom, yet it is only on the surface level as in their attitudes to love, morality, sex, marriage education and religion, they are still the slaves of the West.

The theme of Tradition and Modernity has been continued by Nayantara Sahgal in _The Day in Shadow_ through not in as subtle manner as she had done in earlier novels. The main characters of the novel – Som, Raj, Simrit, Sumer Singh, Brij and Ram Kishan – behave like moderns but at the same time, they find it quite difficult to isolate themselves completely from the old traditions of their own country. Delhi has got its precious past. It has now become completely a modern at “blossoming into new street lighting, fountains and parks, restaurants, shops and discotheques.” Bearing no resemblance to the sad, dark, stricken Delhi of the refugee migration just after independence but it is still proud of its mosques, temples and other historical places. Undoubtedly its past is lost in antiquity and it has not remained the same virtuous place running a slow and smooth life. Now the
life here is full of confusion, chaos and disorder and “there was a vision and vulgates about New Delhi today as there was about any process of growth and change” (The Day in Shadow 48).

People in India think that they can become modern just by imitating the Western style of life. The people in New Delhi love organizing parties, drinking and flirting with women other than wives. They enjoy late night dinners and ball room dances. The Day in Shadow opens with a gala get-together at Intercontinental Hotel and the very first sentence of the novel underlines the glow, the glitter of this modern society of the capital city of India. “The huge mirror of Zodiac Room…in glassy architecture” (1).

All this shows the superficial modernity of the Indian people who blindly imitate Western style in their fashions and manners, little knowing that these things are taking their away from the traditions and customs of their own country. Trimmed hair, slim body and naked stomachs are considered to be sign of modernity. Similarly in order to be modern, these people arrange parties and spend money lavishly. They think that a man living in Delhi has got to attend parties to know more and more people. Raj wants Simrit to do the same. But Simrit feels out of place in such parties. In the same way, the Indians also go for holidaying like the foreigners. “Som and Sumer go for holidaying, though it is not always holiday time and there is lot to do at home. They call it a European’s idea of holidays” (46). In such a modern society, vulgarity is considered to be the sign of modernity. We find Som kissing his wife in the presence of his friend Lalli. And in the same way Simrit’s friends do not like her ex-husband Som as they consider him to be a bully.
According to these people, “A man had … in that category … come in this very category” (4). There is Shaila also who is quite traditional in her views and when Raj holds her arms in the market, she asks him not to do so and says he is creating a scene. Moreover, it is one’s reputation and the labels that help one in solving the problems. Simrit is having problems to give up telephone connection because she is not an accredited journalist and she thinks: “Accreditation…a label went a long way…” (4), “their character, morality re-education but by what kind of things they keep in their houses. In the age of science, man’s position in society is judged not by his character and, what mattered… kept in other bedroom” (61). Thus people are losing touch with natural gifts of God considered so precious by our godfathers and are running after the artificial luxuries provided by science which no doubt give their comfort and save their tune but making them idle.

Love of foreign languages has become an obsession with the modern man. Som learns German phrases while in the contact of his friend Vetter. He wants to look like a foreigner in his mannerisms also moreover, in New Delhi the reputation of a civil servant has nothing to do with his merits but he must be good in English diction and good mannered.

In *The Day in Shadow*, there is not a single character whom we can call completely modern or traditional. Almost all the major characters are a mixture of both these elements. They are modern in some aspects but traditional, or we may call orthodox, in many other things. For example, there is Som who tries to be modern in each and every manner and blindly imitates the Western style of life.
He speaks their language, learns their mannerisms and adopts their fashions. As Simrit recalls: “He had German phrases…looked foreigner” (19).

But he can never be away from the traditions of his own country. It is tradition in Som that urges him to believe that woman has to live under the control of man. He hates women’s individuality and their freedom and believes in male domination to such an extent that he gives the least freedom to his wife. He expects her to conform to his ideal of subdued womanhood, and considers the inequality of their relationship to be the right order of things. Though Som is modern in other aspects, he is completely traditional in husband and wife relationship. He gives no voice to Simrit even in the ordinary decisions of everyday life.

Som lives in a male-centred world and does not view women as persons and finds it early enough to condone Lalli’s murder of his wife. Moreover, he shows no affection for his daughters and comes to value only his son Brij. Similarly, Simrit is a blend of both the tradition and modern element. She wants individuality and freedom and feels suffocated and unhappy in the husband-centred world and gets divorce from Som. Thus she rebels against the conventional security of marriage and yearns for a free communication of ideas with her husband beyond the sensations of sex. In this respect, she is an awakened woman of modern age who shows the courage of living alone in this world. But she does not get peace of mind after the divorce and it is tradition on her that makes her feel that by taking divorce she has offended something old and ordained. Like Rashmi in This Time of Morning, she feels that a part of her world
however modern, an Indian woman can never go away from the old traditions and customs of her own country.

The sacred institution of marriage has also come under the impact of modernism. In traditional Indian society, marriages were arranged by the parents and after marriage the husband and the wife had to live with each other under all circumstances. It was considered to be a contract or bondage made in the presence of God which had to be obeyed. But in modern society, people do not believe in arranged marriages and see that 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. After her divorce from Som, she plans to marry Raj. So marriage in the modern society is fixed by man himself and not by God as it was thought in the traditional Indian society. But still there are some people who stick to these rites. Though Shaila and Raj loved each other, they could not get married as Shaila went against her parents wish and got married to a man of her parents’ choice.

Women are still regarded as servile creatures by people like Som, Sumer Singh, Lalli and many others. They are regarded as belonging to the sphere of sex and procreation. Men like Som expect them to live under their control. Simrit is an educated woman who yearns for a free communication of ideas with her husband but feels isolated and ignored like a piece of furniture used only for physical comfort whenever needed by them. She wants freedom, love, warmth, affection and understanding but Som never bothers about her feelings. Som never understands that money cannot give her what she wants. Simrit is fed up with this
life and takes divorce from her husband. Divorce has become quite easy in the modern days, the earnest ones. Simrit says that “it takes a year to get a Birla car, five to get a fiat but; you could get a divorce… 20th century blessing” (*The Day in Shadow* 5).

In the matters of man-woman relationships and even in the laws established by the government people have double standards. For example, no doubt, divorce is made so easy by the common by law in the modern society but it is not so easy a decision in such a society where women married and stayed at home no matter how unhappy and confining their marriages had been. Moreover, as in the case of Simrit we see the terms of divorce settlement are harsh and involve a heavy responsibility for taxes. Thus we see that though law has changed, the attitude of the people is not. Simrit feels uprooted and abandoned in the male dominated world as she finds that nobody tries to see divorce from her point of view as a person seeking freedom and fulfilment. Both Moolchand and Shah see nothing wrong with the divorce settlement, though it is a complete injustice with Simrit. So, even law can not do justice to a woman in this society as the society is male-dominated where all are made by the man himself. No doubt modern man has changed a lot but he has still not given up that old traditional view of considering women as an object of possession.

Nayantara Sahgal seems to be deeply concerned with the need for women. Kusum, Saroj and now Simrit and Pixie in this novel want to stand on their own feet and enjoy individuality, self-expression and self-dependence. It is Simrit’s longing for freedom and individuality that urges her to take divorce from her
husband. Simrit does not want to be known as her husband’s wife but as her own self. When someone asked her about the profession of her husband, she thinks: “Wasn’t it odd, when you are standing…. And women wanted for them” (6).

Pixie in this novel also moves towards self-awareness but she is quite different from Nayantara Sahgal’s other women characters. She is a working girl who does not have security of an affluent background. When she decides to break her relationship with Sumer Singh she has to weigh it against her need for a job and a roof over her head. But still she decides to break which show her courage to seek self realization. Similarly, after a lot of struggle, Simrit also turns out to be a woman of her mind to start life a new with Raj from whom she can get what she longs for and expects from her husband: love, warmth, affection and understanding.

Modern man is more materialistic. He gives more importance to money and power than human feelings. For men like Som, money is the most important thing in life and this love of money becomes the root cause of his separation from his wife. “Simrit’s faith, money has been part…a farm of pride, even of violence” (60).

Man has become so much money minded that there is no place left for human feelings and emotions in his heart. He weighs everything with money. Even husband-wife relationship and father-son relationship are weighed in terms of money. Som feels that only money can give happiness to Simrit. When his children win prizes, Som awards them with money and other maternal things and not with love and affection. It is to earn more and more money that Som breaks relationship with his friends Lalli and Vettar. Even Brij is fascinated by the money
world and decides to ignore his mother’s side of the case as he thinks that it may upset his relations with his father. Simrit’s daughter also lives in the dream world of affluence projected by the rich advertisements in the magazine. Thus we see that some pay any attention to anything of value emotions, involvement and attachment, and only the superficial acts of life engage their attention.

Hunger for power and money are considered to be the sign of modernity in today’s political world. Nayantara Sahgal has successfully portrayed the lives of the modern political leaders and shows how these leaders are departing away from Gandhian views and ideas. Sumer Singh relates everything to power and position. He uses politics and his political position as a road to personal ambition. Hari Mohan aims at drastic changes overthrowing tradition and religions values. He is interested more in his own future than that of his country. Power, in this modern political world, instead of being a means to an end has become an end in itself such a disastrous change breaks us from the past. No doubt, there are Shaila, people like Sardar Sahib who even while lying in the hospital worried about welfare of people. He is an indirect contrast to Sumer Singh. But such people are very rare in this world.

In the traditional Indian society extra-marital relations were considered immoral but such relations are becoming quite common in the modern society. In *The Day in Shadow* Raj and Simrit are having an affair though Simrit is divorced and a mother of so many children. Earlier Raj was having a relationship with Shaila and even after her marriage with another man he longs to meet her. Similarly Sumer Singh has physical relation with Pixie and so many other girls.
Though the people are becoming modern in every possible manner, in some cases they do not want to shed their traditional attitudes. For example, in the modern times though people are educated they are still unwilling to understand that there is no difference between a son and a daughter. A male heir is considered very important in a family and people give more importance to sons. Som shows no affection for his daughters and is considerate only to his son Brij. Even after the divorce he cares only for Brij.

In the traditional Indian society, religion strongly influenced the minds of the people. People used to have strong faith in the theory of *Karma* and they accept their fate unwillingly. They used to have full faith in the supreme power of God. In *The Day in Shadow* there are such characters like Sumer Singh’s father who believes that of there is any faith in his son, “Only providence or miracle would put it right” (134). Similarly, when Simrit is thinking about Brij’s moving towards his father, Raj tells ‘Some power outside her controlled it all. Not God or any rational conception. Just fate’” (136). “We see that Simrit willingly accepts the tax as she believes that it is in her fate. But science has influenced the minds of the people in modern society and they have their new ideas and awareness of the presence of reality as an undeniable fact” (3). Simrit accepts everything as her fate. But Ram Kishan and Raj wish Simrit to take a stand against injustice and not to yield to a sense of helplessness and victimization. Raj refuses to accept fate as our answer to human problems. Ram Kishan tells Simrit: “Retribution catches up…important to fight it. He identifies religion with devotion to (233-34) do good. Doing good to the people of God is the real devotion of God.” Thus Nayantara
Sahgal’s concept of religion is secular religion as she gives importance to men as human beings.

To conclude in the words of A.V.Krishna Rao, the novel is an “imaginative rendering not only of the pulls and pressures of public life but also of the agony and ecstasy of the private lives of man and women of consequence in contemporary India” (Nayantara Sahgal 4). Though mainly the novel revolves around Simrit and her struggle for a new life, the novelist has also successfully handled the modern life of political leaders in the urbanized society and has launched a fierce attack on the imitative superficial world.

Nayantara Sahgal seeks to excoriate the diseased and the decoded part of the Indian tradition. But she protests the conformity of tradition in favour of some alien idea of social justice. On the contrary, she dives deep into the sustaining springs of composite cultural traditions of India and comes up to affirm that aspect of Indian tradition which possesses and promises a survival value. She is neither an out and out conformist nor a thoroughbred non-conformist. She is neither too submissive to the dictates of an orthodox tradition not too much in love with revolutionary romanticist. She accepts the composite character of Indian tradition and affirms its catholicity which allows for the human beings maximum freedom. A.V.Krishna Rao assigns for Nayantara Sahgal the middle path between tradition and modernity.

Every Indian writer can be located on the axis of tradition versus modernity. In every writer, we shall find a mix of both. But the task is to identify which aspect of tradition a writer endorses and which she opposes. “There is much
in tradition a writer which she values and a great deal in modernity which she rejects” (Jain 33). But she fails to point out exactly what Nayantara Sahgal values in tradition and what she rejects in modernity.

Religion has all along been a domineering force in traditional Indian society. The belief in the *Karma* theory has taught Indians to resign to their fate. Whatever they do, and whatever happens to them is viewed as a result of their past *Karmas* and the will of fate. This has led to a strong hold of religion and all human activities. But the modern Indian society has witnessed a sea change regarding religion including, the *Brahmins*. There is even an undercurrent of doubt about the competence of scriptures to instruct people to live meaningfully.

Religion is supposed to provide the basis of love and understanding but it is not possible in the modern society wherever people are governed by their surface interpretation. As in the case of Inder, though he is not religious in the real sense, still he derives his idea of male superiority from religious sources. In the novel, we see that he views Saroj’s premarital relationship from the limited angle of physical chastity” (Sahgal, *Storm in Chandigarh* 3).

Modern Indians have confined religion to rituals and those who practise it know not what for they do so. People are steep deep in tradition in the past and they could not make (such) outbursts. It is only the change of attitude towards religion, the people are so vocal. May be, to some extent, it is the result of the modern man’s obsession with material success. Result-oriented thinking has led modern man to show disregard for religion and religious ceremonies, because he
does not want to be slow and tedious. Inder’s mind projects the modern man’s disinterestedness in religion.

The traditional love for agriculture is being steadily replaced by love for industry. The traditionalists regard land as their mother and never thought of parting from it. The moderns on the other hand prefer industrialization to farming. Land and its cultivation are now regarded as a drag on progress and prosperity. For instance, Gyan Singh thinks that the peasant does not change and, therefore, it is safe to leave the land to him. He strongly believes that land is not Man’s invention and as such it does not give the required inspiration to progress. He feels that the land should be left alone and every effort should be made to change the cities. If industry is developed in the cities, the peasant would go to the cities for job and change would automatically take place. Thus, “the smell of petrol and grease on his hands, the stain on the white Khadi of his Kurta gave Gyan Singh a sense of solid satisfaction” (Storm in Chandigarh 112).

The subject of tradition versus modernity in Storm in Chandigarh is also touched upon by Nayantara Sahgal through her reference to architecture. Architecture is, perhaps the most modern thing about Chandigarh. The people are, initially, forced to measure upon this architecture. As Ajit Sahni, Mara’s husband, remarks: “The architects could not find the right breed of human beings to inhabit their perfect blue prints” (49). The architecture of Chandigarh is dear to those who live in this city and regard themselves as a class apart from the rest of the Indian society. To those who develop a fascination for traditional type of constructions, this architecture seems strange and preposterous.
We Indians take pride in looking modern. Harisa Ram, the owner of a fashionable restaurant, explains to Vishal Dubey, “People like a Western atmosphere.” But in spite of catching up the good points of the West, we are imbibing their weaknesses. The novel depicts a blend of modern and traditional values. It is through the characters of the novel, and their commentary on contemporary India that we form our opinion about the theme of tradition and modernity in it. The novelist’s main concern seems to be the depiction of the social life of the Indian people of post-Independence days and to achieve this end, she has used Chandigarh as a symbol. The storms, turmoil, conflicts and upheavals (political and social) taking place in the social life of Chandigarh represent the changes taking place in modern India as a whole. No watertight demarcation can be drawn between the traditionalist and the moderns.

Values are something that one lives by and every culture is endowed with certain eternal values, which it seeks to re-establish continuously. Whenever there is a threat, external or internal, to these values, individuals as well as nations undertake a frantic search for values. The enormity of the threat determines the intensity of search. In this sense, any post-colonial discourse is bound to embody a search for values and the multilateral interplay of erections and attitudes that this search involves in colonial rule ably gives a jolt to the traditional values of the colonized country. The novel *Storm in Chandigarh* makes an attempt to explore the labyrinths of the post-colonial Indian psyche from the socio-political and personal levels of existence.
This novel scrutinizes various approaches and explores their efficiency. The political background and the title have very appropriately been chosen because as the capital of two states Punjab and Haryana. The novel studies the situation from the prospective of its protagonist Vishal Dubey. Western by virtue of English medium education and Indian by blood and up-bringing, Vishal Dubey represents that class of Indian youth in whose psyche the East and the West coalesce.

Colonialism is something of a haunting and distant memory that has affected all its characters in overt as well as covert ways. Colonial rule not only brought a change in the socio-politico economic structure of the country but also in order to legitimize this change it presaged the superiority of human individual. Colonialism disrupted existing social and economic structures, undermined the political system, formerly it retarded growth inevitably and in the process it diverted traditional institutions and values of their vital function on society. The colonial rule also negated the existence of traditional values.

Native society is not simply described as a society lacking in values. The native is declared insensible to ethics and represents not only the absence of values but also the negation of values. The Indian youth belong to the clever elite who in spite of their ability to analyze the ambient values in the light of changing times and their rational attitude have failed to strike a balance between their ingrained convictions and the White world around as they are few in number. Example: Vishal Dubey and Trivedi.
A general attitude of irrational adoration and admiration among the people is to be blamed for this state of affairs and as a consequence of which politicians like Gyan Singh succeeds in exploiting people. Gyan Singh uses history to weave an atmosphere which in his words has “a strange mixture of truth and admiration which has the lure of revival” (Storm in Chandigarh 184). Religion too falls short of its required role. It encourages the people to get entangled in their tasks and follow which they can not understand. Religion has turned into “a worship of subtleties and abstractions” and encourages irrationality in life. Trivedi says “we worship not what we can but what can not understand” (79).

Thus the society portrayed in this novel is a society caught between the two worlds one dead and the other powerless to be born. Vishal Dubey, Trivedi, Harpal, and Saroj probe to comprehend the society themselves and their role in the irrational society.

The values of any society are determined by the preferences of the people of that society and the need of the time. In the post-Independence phase, while the traditional Indian values did not fit the changed circumstances, the Western values were not acceptable to masses. Tremor of discard between these opposing sets of values can be felt at all levels of existence in this novel. It has given birth to violence in all its manifestations in political as well as personal life. Violence of attitudes, violence of emotions and even a lack of violence with a smack of it are the results of our own human manifestations in response to the stimulus of the situations. The problem of Punjab and Haryana is that of violence of attitude and the attitude of people in refusing to understand the actual lives of problems and
reject all but one solution. “Violence lies very close to surface in Punjab” observes Home Minister.

The third manifestation of violence which is its absence with a feel of it is the worst to face. The state between the rejection of the old and the evolution of the new has given birth to a kind of stagnation in society which is dreadful. Vishal Dubey observes “one could come to grips with a storm and agitation but what could one do with paralysis?”(37) and adds “this is not a mere outward paralysis but an inward one a state of limbo born out of our dragging on with the old values which are out of term with time and our denial to change to hold up what we call sacred to light and examine it and throw it away if necessary” (88). Vishal Dubey dreams of making Chandigarh a very important symbol of progress and perfection. But the ensuing storm that engulfs it amplifies an erosion of his dreams and it proves that any attempt at imposition of order and balance from outside is a mere illusion and it is truly a matter of time before the whole façade crumbles down. The Chandigarh architecture becomes synonymous with democracy and without achieving the inner harmony in ourselves any attempt to combine the best of the West and the best of ours results in total failure. If nationalism is not made explicit, it leads up to a blind alley. If is these blind alleys, born out of deep discrepancies among mass passions, individual choices and the socio-political needs that the novel attempts to capture are not united, there will be failures on political plane as well as in personal life also.

The important point about Nayantara Sahgal’s narrative trajectory is that it does not hesitate to incorporate gender narrative within its ambit. The novel takes
into the account the question of gender vis-a-vis the value of classes in a post-colonial society in dialogic relationship of mutual accountability. The narratives engaged with the dynamics of nationalism tend to underplay the gender politics.

Traditional Indian society always attaches great importance to values of chastity and submissiveness in women. However, the post-Independence India with its nuclear families and industrialized urbanized society upheld the same values and they deteriorated into a forced repression of individuality of woman as happens in the case of Saroj. But in the modern society, they all learn to treat each other as human beings and not merely as men and women.

This movement towards “transformation and humanism” takes place on the other planes. All the characters who live in the world of ideologies and personal values are forced to reconcile to the traditional and historical framework of concrete realities. The birth of a new man signifies the defending of Gandhian era and new goals have to be set and new attitude have to be adopted.

That the novel seems to work out is that if the solution to Indian problem does not lie in dragging out with the past, it also does not lie in the outright rejection of all that is old and appears redundant. The new socio-economic set up requires “a synthesis of traditional values with the modern ideas, there too not a wild yoking but a mild collaboration without damaging the spirit of the cultural framework. The people should learn to adopt a rational attitude towards our own culture” (116).

India is seen as a traditional society always resistant to change. In Nayantara Sahgal novels, the resistant to change is visibly seen among the men
characters and the pursuit of change is violently felt among the women characters. What is needed is the inborn courage among women to wrought change in society. Courage belongs to neither tradition not modernity.

Tradition-modernity theory operates in personal relationships also. This is where Nayantara Sahgal is the most suggestive and allegorical. By personal relationship, we mean, the values that characters represent and endorse, when they are intimately involved with another person. A whole web of traditional values are affirmed in the heroines of Rashmi, Saroj, Simrit, Devi, Rose and Sonali. These values are called traditional because they are found in the religions, traditions of most of the major religion of the world. Thus we see a range of related oppositions alteration-selfishness, compassion-cruelty, non-violence-violence, materialism-spirituality, and above all love-loveless ness.

We may observe that the men like Dilip, Inder, Som and Ram are all selfish. They put themselves and their needs, physical, emotional and material above those of others. This selfishness reaches pathological proportions in Dev who is portrayed as a monster of peculiarities mutual or moral. Dev murders his own stepmother.

The women, both biologically and emotionally, are givers. They love to share themselves with others. They are not totally self-centred. They are more sensitive to other people needs. As mothers and housewives, they always attend to the needs of their children and husbands. Saroj and Simrit, when pregnant have an almost ecstatic fascination with the new life growing in them. They are life-affirming.
The husbands on the other hand, seem to be incapable of love. They have a kind of abnormality in their characters which substitute the domination of love. Likewise the women are basically materialistic. They value comfort and prosperity but they are not emotional and spiritual in their attitude. As Som gets richer, he also becomes more beastly, corrupt, and unvarying. He is noticeably dehumanized. Som’s wealth comes from making weapons of mass destruction. The violence he seems to abet in the world outside returns to destroy his own family. Inder, too, beats Saroj in the earlier novel. Simrit nearly goes mad in such an atmosphere of material greed and inhumanity.

In our traditional perspective, Nayantara Sahgal views love as a universal bond of human relationship and the “goal of human relationships is true everlasting love...real give and take, a love that transcends misunderstanding” (The Day in Shadow 84). Love is no more traditional than courage is modern. The kind of love that Nayantara Sahgal seems to describe is what the religions and traditions of the world emphasize. In brief, women generally represent love, charity, compassion, kindness, altruism and a preference of the emotional over the material. The women embody the own of the ethical and moral code of most religions. At heart, Nayantara Sahgal’s women are religious and traditional but modern in their approach and fight for freedom and self-identity. Women in general believe that non-violence and compassion and sharing will solve the problems of the world. Men in contrast to women all are greedy, materialistic and violent representing unpalatable underbelly of capitalism and modernity. Their actions result in mass destruction and poverty.
The values of the heroines of Nayantara Sahgal are conservative and traditional. As Saroj says, they involve a homage which consists in “not throwing, things away, but holding on… and never give up” (*Storm in Chandigarh* 42). This is basically idealistic and humanistic in that it refuses to accord privacy to the material. Sonali’s critique of maxims arises from her refusal “to submit to the domination of either a Eurocentric world view or to a master discourse. She remarks “I had no intention of chaining myself to any doctrine, when I had just lost source of any chains” (*Rich Like Us* 101).

The recombination of the characters is the best idea of the kind of synthesis that Nayantara Sahgal endorses in the contemporary Indian society. That can be expressed in the following equations.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Rashmi + Rakesh} \\
\text{Saroj + Vishal} \\
\text{Simrit + Raj}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\text{the formula for contemporary India}
\]

This synthesis consists of humanistic and spiritual heritage which comes from tradition combined with reformative or heterodox Hinduism and Western liberalism. From the latter, ideas and values like individuality, freedom, and the quest for happiness are accepted. Overall, the package may be called Liberal Gandhism.

It was Jain who characterized Nayantara Sahgal as a person with the conscience of a liberal and the spirit of a non-conformist (9). Nayantara Sahgal in a letter to this writer says “I am a conservative (that is careful about stepping out into the new) who has best constantly driven to being a revolutionary by the forces
of circumstances and the nature of events around me” (10). With her privileged family background, she could have attained any high office she might have desired; instead she constantly tried to be a VIP in her *Passion for India* (87).

Nayantara Sahgal’s position gets to be defined vis-à-vis the tradition-modernity questioning in the following tables:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRADITION</th>
<th>MODERNITY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rejects:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Rejects</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The Sati idea of virtue</td>
<td>Materialism, organized violence capitalism, and its dehumanizing effects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manu’s idea of an ideal wife</td>
<td>Eurocentricism, belief in a master discourse like Marxism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patriarchal gender relations</td>
<td>The new politics of the Indra Gandhi era</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppression of women in the name of religion</td>
<td>Suitability or usefulness for a purpose, through not necessarily fair or moral.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The inertia, passivity and hypocrisy of Hinduism.</td>
<td>Experiences, opportunism, corruption, authorities, violence and fascism in politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social injustice sanctioned by religion.</td>
<td><strong>Accepts</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accepts</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values, orientations and life choice offered in various religions, traditions</td>
<td>Concept of anonymous individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassion, charity, altruism love and other non-material values</td>
<td>Freedom, including sexual freedom for women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Gandhian ideology with its stress on non-violence. Truth, simple living, <em>Satyagraha</em>, removal of social injustice, and so on</td>
<td>Equal rights for women social reform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Protection of civil liberties</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Communicative rationality as a means of solving problems.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Choice as opposed to fate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nehruvism values of democracy, civil liberties, freedom, and progress.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nationalism, liberal humanism, idealism.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ultimately it is a judicious mixture of tradition and modernity which constitutes the underlying value system of Sahgal’s novels.