

## A STUDY ON POLITICAL AND HUMAN RELATIONS IN NAYANTARA SEHGAL'S NOVEL STORM IN CHANDIGARH

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### ABSTRACT

Nayantara Sahgal is the author of nine Novels, ten works of non-fiction and wide ranging literary and political commentary. She has received the Sahitya Akadami Award, the Sinclair Prize and the Commonwealth Writer's Prize. The Novel "Storm in Chandigarh" demonstrates Nayantara Sahgal's keen understanding of individual relationships and her remarkable ability to tell stories that continue to capture the attention of readers over years. The Novel is about the quarrel over boundaries, water and electric power between Punjab and the newly created Haryana. With the chief minister of Haryana, Harpal Singh, refusing to concede any advantages, the stage is set for a confrontation. The present paper is an attempt to explore the power of bureaucracy and politics with the small dramas and casual betrayals that are a universal feature of human relationships.

**Key words:** Individual relationships, quarrel over boundaries, casual betrayals.

### About the author:

Nayantara Sahgal writes Novels with political settings which is not a deliberate choice. She says, politics is all she has to work with. To describe a childhood, she can't come out of her's so easily. Her childhood filled with the sound and fury, and overflowing with the yearnings, of the national movement for independence, when all issues-from the cloth she wore to the food she ate and the company she kept – were political issues; When personal and political facts were inextricably bound, and political and social history merged with private lives, she could not distance herself from politics just like a shoemaker's child can't escape of shoe leather.

Her fiction was about a de-mythologized India, wanted to be free, and once free, they wanted to run their own lives. While doing so the golden landscape of freedom decayed, power

corrupted, and idealism became a ghost, but one that still haunted the house. Nayantara Sahgal's writings often offer a keen insight into the complexities of Indian society and politics.

### **Introduction:**

Nayantara Sahgal, a prominent Indian author, has written several novels that delve into political and social themes. Some of her notable works includes the novel "Rich Like Us" (1985) which novel explores the impact of political and social changes on the lives of individuals in post-independence India. Her another novel. "Plans for Departure" (1985) novel addresses the issue of political corruption and its effects on society. "Mistaken Identity" (1988) is the novel where work touches upon the themes of identity and societal expectations. "The Day in Shadow" (1995) is a novel that reflects on the historical and political events in India during the 20th century. "Storm in Chandigarh" (1969) is the novel, which depicts political and human relations in the city of Chandigarh.

Storm in Chandigarh deals basically with the problems of political tension and violence originating from its being; Chandigarh, the common capital of two states the Punjab and Haryana. The characters in the Novel behave like Moderns and at the same time do not isolate themselves from the tradition. This blend of tradition and modernity can be observed in their attitude to morality, education, eating-habits, man-man relations, attitude to love and even architecture.

Chandigarh, being a new city has nothing 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; this has also created a sort of confusion and cultural storm here.

### **Political Drama in Chandigarh with separate and sensitive identities of the two chief ministers:**

In the Novel Storm in Chandigarh, the author describes - India, once a uniform territory to administer, is now a welter of separate and sensitive identities resurrected after Independence. As the quarrel over boundaries, water and electric power between Punjab and the newly created Haryana intensifies, Gyan Singh, the chief minister of Punjab threatens to launch a crippling strike that will affect both states. With the chief minister of Haryana, Harpal Singh, refusing to concede any advantages, the stage is set for confrontation.

The story starts with the assignment of Vishal Dubey, the Centre's most able bureaucrat, by the home minister. He is sent to Chandigarh to alleviate the situation. Vishal feels relieved from his monotonous life and more than that he is impelled by the need.

Dubey finds that no one is interested in the obscurity of state administration. The small talk and small ideas of a confined society has begun to suffocate him. He feels that he is not only stale, he is curdled. He needs a shot of aspiration that brings life to the structure of administration. So the work assigned kindles a spark in him.

### **Meeting with the two chief ministers Harpal Singh and Gyan Singh:**

Chandigarh reflects the uneasy truce between the two states whose joint capital it is. Dubey is to meet one of the two chief ministers, Harpal Singh, after lunch. Sahgal through the character of Harpal Singh questions "What possessed men to stamp their name, their brand, their ego on every bit of God-given soil that came their way?"

When Dubey enters the Haryana Chief minister's office, he is struck by the tall, slim, grey-bearded figure at the desk in the center of the room who stands up courteously to greet him. Harpal wants Dubey to study a note stating his state's attitude towards Gyan Singh's strike threat and to prepare to make an appeal to all industrial establishments to keep their machinery working. The Haryana Government intended to keep its own concerns going. Harpal hopes that Dubey can change the attitude of Gyan Singh to call for a strike.

Dubey tries to meet Gyan Singh, but he is unable to meet him, as his P.A. always says that he is not there in his office. Then without an appointment Dubey meets him at the cable plant. When Dubey enquires about the strike, Gyan Singh replies that the strike is a lawful measure. He also says that the strike will be a peaceful demonstration to back up a popular demand. Dubey understands that it is not possible to change the direction of his decision and he decides to face the situation by making necessary arrangements.

When Dubey attends the meeting arranged by Gyan with the workers, he finds Gyan using history conveniently to influence the workers. He feels that place is filled with an air of unreality. What he hears has been an audacious, an inverted genius blazoning an equally fantastic legend. He understands that men can be convinced of almost anything. And men like Gyan usually wins their grace. Between Gyan and Harpal, he now realizes, there is more than a political battle, a battle of philosophies.

He orders all the police to be on duty and see that there is no interruption to power supply and transportation. He also arranges everything for the smooth running of the system. He further orders the workers and the management in the Factories not to come out and continue with their work till the strike ends. He also orders the police not to allow anyone to destroy public property or provoke people on the streets.

### **Human relationships, betrayals, and family dramas:**

Storm in Chandigarh demonstrates Nayantara Sahgal's keen understanding of individual relationships and her remarkable ability in framing the story to make readers enthralled throughout. One can find the liveliness of the characters and the emotions of individuals. The story churns out the urge to be true to oneself and to others.

Vishal Dubey who is on assignment to Chandigarh is drawn unexpectedly into the lives of two couples – Saroj and Inder and Mara and Jit. Vishal's marital life is an unsuccessful story leaving him a stranger to his wife Leela. Leela's unexpected death does not make any difference in his life. His relationship with Gauri, wife of Niki's also does not give him any satisfaction. The relationship with Gauri is not out of his interest but it is only with Gauri's attraction towards him.

When he meets Saroj, the relative of Nikhil in Chandigarh, he is drawn towards her innocence and generosity. Saroj is an ordinary woman who is undisturbed with the artificiality of western culture. She is a young mother of two children and is pregnant. She is busy with her children and household work. She enjoys every moment of the time spent with her children Bunny and Muff. Her pregnancy, the fatal moving in her stomach, the rose flowers and plants in her backyard, the evening walk to the nearby lake are her all-time favorites. She always searches her peace and security in Inder. She often encounters his wildness, but she is too dependent on him. She is a dedicated wife and mother and never dares to come out of her cocoon.

Saroj finds a good friend and companion in Dubey. She shares her feelings and surprisingly finds acceptance and realizes that she does not need to be dependent. Vishal gives her strength, and he likes her softness and her truthfulness. He has been searching for that natural expression of thoughts from the caves of the hearts. He has been waiting a long time for such boldness in sharing of true minds and hearts.

Inder is a careless and double standard man who can't identify the sanctity of Saroj. He takes her granted and shows interest in Mara. Mara is a woman with individuality, but she is unable to identify her own self. She wants all the worlds she could lay hands on and the best of each – the softness of Jit (her husband) and the hardness of Inder. She has everything a woman could want, except children, and in place of her own she has the school.

Mara is attracted towards Inder, but she feels jealous of Saroj. When she tries to advise him to get rid of Saroj, she understands the double standard of Inder. She then realizes her own comfort is within her family and in the relation with her husband Jit. So, she avoids Inder. When Inder is rejected by her, he can't bear the insult and steps out of her house leaving Saroj alone in the party.

Inder is attacked by the workers of his factory and tries to file a complaint in the police station. But the Inspector crosschecks him and asks for evidence. He feels annoyed and when he reaches the house, he can't bear the presence of Vishal in his house. He tortures Saroj by shutting the door and not letting her into the bedroom. Saroj can't sleep on the floor as she is a pregnant, but he does not have any consideration.

### **Conclusion:**

The Novel ends with Saroj's boldness and her focus at her own needs. She agrees to Vishal's proposal of going to Gowri's house. The political drama also comes to an end with the sudden demise of the home minister. Gyan Singh calls off the strike as a token of respect to the great patriot. But Vishal feels annoyed because he is called back to Delhi by the head office relieving him from the assignment. This makes him dissatisfied because there is no one to give his report. Thus, the Novel Storm in Chandigarh reflects two storms one political, the other the storm in human relationships.

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