Exploration of Man-woman Relationship in the Selected Novels of Shobha De and Nayantara Sahgal

Introduction

This proposed research work chiefly seeks to attempt minutely the major novels of Shobha De and Nayantara Sahgal with special focus on exploration of man-woman relationship.

Consequently, a comprehensive study will illustrate that the major novels are analyzed in the light of man-woman relationship that bears a critical focus of characters as abstractions of ideals or ideas. Furthermore, it is inclined to shape the improved lines of the relationship and accordingly De and Sahgal have been depicted the soul and psyche of man and woman. Of course man-woman relationship is the major theme in their realm. The human approach instructs the closer examination of all characters at micro level that consequently put us at the threshold of other themes concerning society, culture, identity, politics and other.

Life and works of Shobha De and Nayantara Sahgal:

Born in Maharashtra in 1948, De emerged on the literary scene in 1988. She has tasted the sweet fruits of success through her prominent novels: Socialite Evenings, Starry Nights, Sisters, Strange Obsession, Sultry Days and Snapshots.

Like Sahgal, De focuses on man-woman relationship and offers a fresh approach towards it. She is a modern novelist who distinguishes the disarticulation and marginalization of women and attempts to put these experiences in her writings. Raising her voice against exploitation of women in the hands of men, De does not spare even the close relatives from her attack. She considers that for the negative impression in the relationship of woman the man is the only responsible fellow. She voices against the dominating relationship and strongly despises the marginalization of women. In her novels women are essentially represented as sexually liberated and free thinking in man-woman relationship.

Nayantara Sahgal (b.1927), the daughter of Vijayalakshmi Pandit and niece of Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, has done the double duty to literature, one for personal world and another for impersonal world. May be, she is the first ever woman writer, who has explored and analyzed the socio-political life with great insight by love-hate relationship. She opens the door of inner world of our mind, where she throws light on the labyrinthine complexities of human being. She boldly puts on display affairs of human to depict love-hate relationship in her narrative.
Sahgal’s fictional world assimilates both the worlds of personal and political life with prismatic vision. Her creative art binds towards the new voice for the betterment of society. For that reason, her ideal world has its origin in humanity, morality, understanding and generosity.

A prolific writer and political columnist, Sahgal has drawn into the international limelight by her artistic endeavour. To this date her credibility rests on nine novels: A Time to be Happy (1957), This Time of Morning (1965), Storm in Chandigarh (1969), The Day in Shadow (1971), A Situation in New Delhi (1977), Rich Like Us (1985), Plans for Departure (1986), Mistaken Identity (1988), and Lesser Breeds (2003). Her eight non-fictional work including Autobiography: Prison and Chocolate Cake (1954), From Fear Set Free (1962), and Relationship; Politics, Addresses and Essays: Indira Gandhi: Her Road to Power, A Voice for Freedom (1977), and Point of view; History: The Freedom Movement in India (1970), and Before Freedom: Nehru’s Letter’s to His Sister 1909-1947; Besides, number of articles in leading newspapers and magazines. Her career as a prolific writer has spawned out of her birth in an aristocratic family.

Definitions of Key Terms:

If is hypothesized that the theme of man-woman relationship has enormous influence upon the work of De and Sahgal’s novels. The present work of research aims at the need and justification of the theme of man-woman relationship in the major novels of these novelists. It simultaneously bears the following hypotheses:

i) Human relationship;
ii) The way of characters are portrayed in their fictional world;
iii) The effects of human soul and psyche on the societies;
iv) Increasing weightage of De’s and Sahgal’s novels as the model of Modern Indian literatures in English;

Relationship between man and woman is an outcome of the difference between the sexes of man and woman. The family relations like husband and wife, son and mother, daughter and father, sister and brother are recognized by socially/ culturally code of conduct between genders to form family institution. While looking at these relations, we have to consider various aspects and approaches like physical, economical, cultural, social, religious and psychological too. There are some elements which govern these relations like the physical factor, an emotional factor, in the relation of mother and son and father and daughter etc.
Emotions are always there in relations between a man and a woman. A mother is fully attached with his son through this bond of emotion and like this the son does anything for her mother. Nearly all the family relations are governed by emotions. In Indian perspective a wife never looks her husband as an equal partner but culture teaches her to look at him like a God, and this God looking in her husband makes her emotionally attached with her husband.

Economic factor is also there in man woman relations. A husband here in India generally proves the economic base for his wife. He owns the source of income and he fulfils every demand of his wife. Wife stays dependent here and accepts the mastery of her husband in their relationship. Like this in all relationships like husband wife, father-daughter, mother-son, sister-brother, the economic factor plays a vital role in governing these relations.

Like emotions and financial factor, culture plays major role in stimulating relationships between man and woman. Culture has been leading us how a woman and a man should be the social and familiar ground as far as relations to each other are concern. Culture, emotions governs the relations between man and woman where as the sex causes the main role in formation of relations. Husband wife, boy’s girlfriends and Girl’s boyfriends, these relations are mainly governed by their physical relations.

The society is made of men and women. All a relations haves men and women. Every work of art is related with these relations. Literature as a work of art focuses on these relations. It is a kind of try to put forward the inner side of these relations between them. Literature represents society, which constitutes both men and women, and while doing so it focuses on various angels and shades of these relations.

**Development of Indian English Novel:**

In our times, Indian English Literature or Indian Literature in English is granted a receipt favorably by aficionados of both sides of the Atlantic. The entire world is amazingly surprised to its unique position. As might be expected the unlimited credit goes to the great Indian masters and muses, who have propagated the ideal power of pen by the varied taste. Consequently, it has found the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. However, it is an inseparable part of Indian Literature, the distinct product of Indian soul and psyche. It is indeed the souvenir of the vital organ of every Indian. As a result, it succeeds to cross all the barriers of time and place.

Indian English literature has become an integral part of English literature reflecting and echoing events of significance in the history of India. The history of Indian writing in English is
not very old. Indian writers have tried their hands in all four genres of literature-poetry, drama, fiction and criticism. But they could not make any noteworthy footprint on its own in the field of drama and criticism. We do find richness in poetry and novels. Indian poetry written in English is huge and rich in variety, taste and colour. It is considerable in quality and quantity, and compared to poetry and drama, fiction had a delayed start like delayed aspirin in the Indian English literature. Though development of novel in Indian English literature was late, but achieved much height, due to its imaginative art, which gives artistic expression to the relationship of man and society. Novel as an art form came to India with British. Not only in Indian English but in regional languages too, novel has been written by leaps and bounds. It achieved a fame of prominent genre in Indian English literature. It is the novel that has fetched the greatest number of awards, royalties, global relationship and acceptability. The development of Indian novel in English follows gradual progression from the imitative stage to the realistic to the psychological and then to the experimental stage.

Like English novel, Indian English novel too remains true to the aspects of novel writing through its concerned with society, realism and interest in man. Nearly all great novelists from Bakim Chandra, the father of Indian English novel to Arun Joshi, Salman Rushdie and Arundhati Roy all are concerned with social realities and written for social purpose.

The year 1857 is significant in the history of India. The Indian army under the British rule staged a mutiny, which created a favourable atmosphere for the British Queen to focus her attention on the problems of India. Due to the attention by Queen, there was brought a number of administrative and educational reforms during 1857 to 1900. A number of schools were established and taught in schools, which created a favourable atmosphere so that number of people took to the English education. It led political awakening among the educated experts resulting that into the spirit of nationalism. It began to take roots in the 19th century due to the notions of democracy, freedom, equality, which was creeping into the Indian consciousness.

The Indian English novel begins with Bakim Chandra Chatterjee's work 'Rajmohan's wife' in the year 1864. It was a significant start for the Indian English novel. 'Rajmohan's wife' had the touch of historical, social and philosophical ideas and a serious realistic melodramatic story of Hindu wife. Bakim Chandra paved the way to the future to the Indian English novel, and came to be known as 'Father of Indian English novel'.
At the end of the 19th century, there were four women novelists, who played a major role for breathing and leading to this genre. They are Raj Laxmi Debi (*The Hindu wife*, 1876), Toru Datt (*Binaca* 1878), kruplani Satthianandan (*Kamla: A story of Hindu life*, 1895) and Shevantibai M. Nikambe (*Ratnabai: A sketch of Bombay High Caste Hindu young wife* 1895).

Then next important figure on the literary scene was Rabindranath Tagore. He exhorted a tremendous influence on the minds of the people with the choices of themes. Later on appeared so many novelists, but I do like to mention only few prominent novelists viz. S.C. Dutt's *The young Zamindar* (1853), Jogendranath Chattopadhyaya's *The Girl and Her Tutor* (1891). We do find Gandian impact on some novelists, like K.S. Venkataramani's *Murugan, The Tiller* (1927), Then there are 'foundling fathers' Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand and R.K. Narayan. Bhabani Bhattacharya, Khushwant Singh, Chaman Nahal, Manohar Malgaonkar, Nayantara Sahgal etc. who enriched the Indian English novel and brought it on a fully matured stage.

During the mid-twentieth century, there are Arun Joshi, Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth and some well known women novelists like Kamala Markandaya, Ruth P. Zhabvala, Attia Hussan, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Kamala Das too played major roles for pouring richness in the novel.

Indian English novel is a part of truly Indian novel and not only simple extension of English fiction. The critical analysis of the works of major novelists clearly shows that the majority of writers since the beginning of genre dealt with social realities. Indian novelists in English cover a wide range of themes—social, cultural, political, historical, romantic, rural, and psychological. The Indian English novels seem influenced by the great thinkers and by their thoughts on contemporary society.

**Significance of Study:**

The significance of the present research work can be cited in view of following points:

i) Exploration of man-woman relationship

ii) The way characters are depicted in their world. Increasing weightage of De and Sahgal’s fiction as the famous work of Modern Indian literatures in English.
iii) Significance of De and Sahgal as the eminent novelists of contemporary Indian English Literature;

iv) Their fight against various injustice in the society;

v) Focus on burning issues in the relationship.