

**MARITAL DISCORD IN NAYANTARA SAHGAL'S *A TIME TO BE HAPPY*****Mr. G. Baskar, M.A., M.Phil., SET., NET. & Dr. P. Santhi, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.,**

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**ABSTRACT:**

NayantaraSahgal is a well-known Indian writer. Her books are an individualistic and rational approach to her protagonists. The present research was an effort to uncover the roots of marital strife in NayantaraSahgal's *A Time to Love*. The novel portrays marriage as the ghastly experience of her characters. It talks about the origins of marital strife in the lives of the characters. The study suggested that either in the East or West institution of marriage, the lack of confidence, affection and understanding could contribute to discord. As marital dissonance arose from lack of harmony and trust, it is sometimes the traditional conventions of society that form the basis of separation and frustration in relationships. This paper deals with the marital discord between two partners in *A Time of Live*.

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Indian Writing in English has gone through a lot of changes since independence. It has become more vibrant, and many writers have composed their original works. The pre-independence notion of writing suddenly shifted to the future of the country. Writers obsessed about the future of the country, and they concentrated their efforts on highlighting the future of the country in the social, and its political form also.

When considering Indian writers only certain writers are very well known around the world. The writers of the post-independence era like R.K Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao are well known. The recent writers of international reputation like Salman Rushdie, Anita Desai, Kiran Desai, Vikram Seth are also well known. However, many feminist writers have also emerged, and they have written exclusively for the welfare of women.

NayantraSahgal novels are a perfect conglomeration of political and social problems. Her approach is three fold they are reliance on tradition, consideration for the individual and a dependence on moral values. Most of her novels will satisfy these criteria. She presents a different but a comprehensive socio-political world view. Her novels do not compromise on the autonomy, however they segment a formal concern for the fidelity of facts. A novelist who uses the social approach tries to interrupt the past and the present. They are concerned about the collective past and how it impinges on our present. It is imperative that a novelist concerns multifaceted and the political history of India does play a very important role. But it should be noted that a political issues can only be seen with the true social issue or social circumstance.

Though her novels are overtly political a large number of works deal with marital discord. This paper discusses about marital discord in her works. Marriage is part of a culture and it has always been an inspiration for literary works. From Edmund Spenser's Epithalamion to grand mythologies like Ramayana and Mahabharata everything has dealt with marriage. There are great songs about it, and it is part and parcel of the culture. Similarly marriage comes with its own share of problems. In the modern world the discord in marriage is has become a serious problem. The Indian social system is almost completely related to the institution of marriage. The most notable reason for problems arising in families is because of the change in the modern lifestyle. For instance, some decades ago women were not educated and so men were the sole

breadwinners of the family. They literally dominated the women. In today's world this is not the case. Women have become independent, and so living under the domination or narrow-mindedness of man is not quite possible.

If the definition of literature is the reflection of the society then the views of marriage would literally change from decade to decade. In the 1920s literature focused mostly on the natural desires of women. Then by 1950s feminism has come into force, and so equal rights in marriage, and rearing of children started to spread around the world. In India the earlier novels recorded the sacrificial nature of women, and how they laid down their life willingly when their husband died. By the 1980s Indian novels were deeply exploring the psyche of Indian women. The problems of marriage and how Indian women were suppressed on cultural and religious grounds were all explored in the modern novels.

There were some outstanding novelists who dealt with different notions. Some of the outstanding feminist novelists are Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Ruth PraverJhabvala, Gita Mehta, NayantaraSahgal, and Bharati Mukherjee is some of them. NayantaraSahgal's real life and her literary works have much in common. In fact most of her works are autobiographical nature. Marriage and marital discord are essential parts of her novel. The author cherished of marrying some history professor so she could do a lifetime of research about Indian history but all of this came to a halt when she met an ambitious young man named GautamSahgal. But he seemed too remote to have any idea about India's struggle, and her own philosophy and values were not compatible with him. So they divorced after eighteen years with three children.

This is one of the reasons for marital discord. If a man and woman have two different viewpoints then eventually at a certain time discord will come into their lives. In almost four of her novels she talks about marital discord. Namely, *A Time to be Happy*, *This Time of Morning*,

*Storm in Chandigarh* are some of the novels which such incidents of marital discord. In the novel *A Time to Happy* Sahgal takes up the theme of marital discord. In this novel she discusses how marital discord is caused among westernized and wealthy Indians. The life of a bureaucrat is portrayed in this novel, and the author mostly deals with ambitious characters who are part of IAS and IFS. These characters all seem to face some critical situations in their life and this is when they have to make some decisions which are moral than any other sense.

In the novel *Nayantara* Sahgal presents about two couples. One couple is Harish and Maya and the other couple is Sanad and Kusum. Both these couple go through marital discord. Even though they have all the luxuries of life they do not seem to be happy. Just at the tender age of sixteen Harish was married to Maya. Harish was quite the antithetical person when compared to Maya. He was flamboyant and an Anglicized man. But Maya was a simple and shy personality. Sahgal portrays them in this way by saying, "Harish's very presence was flamboyant, while her's was subdued. She had the cool purity of the eucalyptus as compared with the extravagant gulmohar"(A *Time to be Happy* 39). This contrasting personality in itself is one of the important reasons for marital discord.

As mentioned before the modern Indian family structure is different from the old one. In the old Indian family structure everyone was in a joint family. But in the modern system everyone is in a nuclear family. Maya was brought up in a joint family, and Harish on the other hand did not know anything about such a life. It should be clarified that he was not a blind imitator of the British. He was in fact a person who was of his own making. He was so obsessed with his own life and his career advancement that he did not consider his wife in any way. He did not reciprocate any of her docile wishes. He failed to see her as a person who will have her own wishes, and also desires. He simply wanted her to conform to his way of life.

Maya as mentioned before was brought up in a bustling home, but after marriage she is quite alone. Married life seems to have taken away all her joy, and her husband seems to be of a poor company in any kind of emotional response. The major problems are started with the when Maya failed to act as good host when some European friends of Harish came to their home. She did not sing or dance with the guests. One person present in the groups makes an insulting remark by saying, “a man so obviously intended for advancement should not have such an apathetic wife”(18). This is when Harish feels that he has made a mistake of marrying such a girl who did not even know how to behave or host a dinner.

These are some of the incidents that eventually makes Maya quietly retreats within herself. She starts to behave like a lifeless object. She is also seen to engage in Village Upliftmentprogramme as she comes to a conclusion that she cannot be part of her husband's lifestyle and so she makes a firm decision to continue with her social engagement. The novel certainly brings out male domination and how westernized husbands loath woman who don't confine to their ideas. There is actually no conflict that triggered the discord between the couple. In fact from the very beginning it was a doomed affair. They both were not compatible by any means.

The other couple who have a troubled relationship in this novel is Kusum and Sanad. Sanad is a handsome completely Anglicized person. He likes to play British games, and eats like them as well. But sadly he married a girl from a middle class who was not accustomed to any of the Anglican ways. She comes from the traditional side, and she is not able to correspond with her aristocratic grandness of her mother-in-law's house.

The difference between Kusum and Maya is quite different. Kusum instead of succumbing to the new English lifestyle actually starts to adapt into that lifestyle. Within some

time she is seen drinking gin, and also dressing up with such high fashion. She constantly tries to keep up with the Englishness of her husband, and quickly she changes the house into the way she wants it to be. It is not an easy transformation, she puts in lot of effort in her transformation. The ironic thing is that her husband also seems to be transforming little by little. He begins to respect traditions, and his questions about identity.

I've studied English history and literature. I've read English poets. It's all more real to me than the life I everyday...My body is in India but my brain doesn't belong here. I might as well be an Englishman except for the color of my skin. I don't want to feel like a stranger among my own people (232).

His mind is completely English, but his body is in India. He finally understands that he is not born as a European, and that he is simply playing a dual role. Finally he decides to match his identity with his Indian self. But both the couples do not break their marriage. For them marriage is still a scared thing.

As far as Maya is concerned she simply spends her time in the community while her husband spends time in the club houses. They both adapt to their own lifestyle and they do not conflict each other's wishes. It is unfortunate to see that both Kusum and Maya were simply selected for their beauty. Harish and Sanad find their wives incompatible for their ambitions. They had a naïve idea about marriage. But this brought a great havoc in their married life. So, in this novel the main reason for discord is because of male dominance and also because of westernization. As far as the author is concerned happiness means being free. Saghal portrays these characters to show how fragile human relationships can be. From a cultural and political point relationships become complicated over time.

All the women characters in Sahgal's novel are shown when they are in the stage of transformation. All the girls consented to marriage in a young age, and to some extent some of the problems are due to them as well as marriage is an understanding between two people. The major reason for unhappiness of Indian women is the way they are brought up in life. The author is against such a suppressed upbringing that the girls when they grow up find themselves in difficult situations.

As far as marital discord is concerned Nayantara Sahgal seems to be emphasizing a lot about love and understanding between the couples. She also makes it quite clear that each individual is different and only mutual respect between the two will solve this crisis. In short if there is no love and understanding between the couples then there is no point staying together as husband and wife. This is the conclusion of the author.

**References:**

Sahgal, Nayantara. *A Time to Be Happy*. Jaico Publishing House, 2002.