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Tradition and Modernity in Nayantara Sahgal's This Time of Morning

T. Ananda Kumar

Part-Time Ph.D. Research Scholar , Regn.No.MKU20PFOL9943

Dr. T. M. S. Maideen

Assistant Professor of English, Research Department of English
M S S Wakf Board College, Madurai

Abstracts

In this particular piece of writing, the researcher chooses to focus on *This Time of Morning* (1965) as the text to analyse since this book is more closely associated with the overarching issue of the struggle between tradition and modernity. When it comes to the portrayal of her female characters, Nayantara Sahgal separates them into two distinct groups: those who adhere to conventional principles and those who embrace contemporary ideals. The majority of Indian women, in general, are so conditioned and bound by the customs and regulations of society as a result of the fact that Indian culture has such powerful conventional standards and laws. In addition, the culture is primarily a Hindu society, which means that women are given a position that is lower than that of males, yet they are nonetheless constrained by social convention and religious beliefs. On the other hand, non-conformist women are making their way into every space that was formerly male-dominated. They are quite autonomous and have the ability to make some adjustments and modifications to their life. They do not rely on the decisions that men make for them but instead make their own choices. Women in today's society do not see the point in submitting to authority. They want independence in every conceivable aspect of life. They have the ability to steer their own destinies, which translates to their capacity to make conscientious efforts to make life worth living by virtue of their individual or collective will in the areas of economics, social and political life for a common objective or for an individual person. This skill allows them to steer their own destinies in the direction that best serves them. Within the scope of this research paper, an effort will be made to investigate the tension that exists between modernism and tradition. There are two distinct categories of ladies that appear in Nayantara Sahgal's work. The first category comprises of women who are content living within the bounds of Hindu orthodoxy, while the second consists of women who have a strong sense of individualism and an analytical mind, but who are constantly shifting their values back and forth between traditional and contemporary ones. In her book, *This Time of Morning*, Sahgal paints a clear picture of the many women who play roles.

Keywords: Conflict, Modernism, Conventionalism, Mr. Narang, Mrs. Narang, Nita, Individualism

A topic of this magnitude is "tradition and modernity." Because of the distinctive social structure

that is widespread in India, this issue seems to carry a lot of explanatory force. We are considered a "traditional" civilization when compared to the norms of the West; nevertheless, when weighed against our own history, we are considered "modern." This tension, conflict, and struggle between what we have inherited and what we desire to become is something that continues to play out in our lives from one generation to the next. As a matter of fact, one approach to describe contemporary India would be to think of it as a society that is undergoing change; or, as Robert Redfield described it, a great tradition that is becoming more modern. To put it another way, the chronicle of contemporary India is essentially a tale of conflict between tradition and modernity. Therefore, every book, poem, and piece of artwork produced in contemporary India, whether openly or indirectly, is one version and articulation of this major cultural and national movement. Because of this, the tradition-modernity paradigm is used to define our culture, and our culture, in turn, is responsible for determining the topic parameters of the texts that it develops via the work of a variety of writers.

Because of the unusual social construction that is common in India, the topic of "tradition and modernity" seems to contain a lot of explanatory force. We are considered a "traditional" civilization when compared to the norms of the West; nevertheless, when weighed against our own history, we are considered "modern." This tension, conflict, and struggle between what we have inherited and what we desire to become is something that continues to play out in our lives from one generation to the next. As a matter of fact, one approach to describe contemporary India would be to think of it as a society that is undergoing change; or, as Robert Redfield described it, a great tradition that is becoming more modern. To put it another way, the chronicle of contemporary India is essentially a tale of conflict between tradition and modernity. Therefore, every book, poem, and piece of artwork produced in contemporary India, whether openly or indirectly, is one version and articulation of this major cultural and national movement. Because of this, the tradition-modernity paradigm

is used to define our culture, and our culture, in turn, is responsible for determining the topic parameters of the texts that it develops via the work of a variety of writers.

Both modernism and tradition are inherently diametrically opposed to one another. There is a heritage of modernity in and of itself, just as there is the possibility of modernity and change within traditional practises. In a similar vein, tradition is not inherently corrupting.

The research paper by Maman Singh entitled "Subjugation of Women in Nayantara Sahgal's Novels *This Time of Morning* and *The Day in Shadow*" (2004) she found out the patriarchy, which holds the view that men should strive for honour and women should strive for virtue, the subjection of Indian high society women who are victims of old social system, yet at the same time they reject the norms that have been established by traditional society, Nita and Simrit are educated person so they want independence and work hard to break free of traditional practises and religious dogma. The researcher concluded that the female characters of Sahgal's desires independence in making choices about her marriage and her job.

Sadashiv Pawar (2000), in his research work, "Issue of Relationships in Nayantara Sahgal's A Time to be Happy and *This Time of Morning*" examined man-woman interactions with distinct aspects, relationships with women before and after marriage. The researcher concluded her paper that women refuse to compromise on the question of their individual independence in the male-dominated society and woman is frequently emotionally injured and hampered by man's arrogance, cynicism, and apathy, in addition to physical aggression.

Numerous studies have been conducted on a variety of topics, including theme analysis, character analysis, the psychological problems of the characters, issues in relationships, an independent decision to choose her life partner, sociopolitical issues, racial discrimination, identity crisis, existentialism, imperialism, and generally discussing the conflicts between conventionalism and modernism, amongst other topics. Nobody has made an effort to examine the conflict

between tradition and modernity from the perspective of Mr. Narang, Mrs. Narang, and their daughter all at the same time. In addition, the researcher is of the opinion that Nayantara Sahgal's contribution has to be extensively investigated. This includes the fight between traditionalism and modernization within the specific family that is shown in his characters. It is anticipated that the outcomes of this sort of in-depth examination would disclose newly discovered facts about his accomplishments.

This paper does a content analysis of *This Time of Morning* using modernism theory. While the primary source is the novel and secondary sources include the previous research papers, reviews, M.Phil, dissertations, Ph.D thesis and a few texts related to modernism and traditionalism theories. On the whole this paper analyses the conflict between the modernism and conventionalism reading of this novel.

The following research questions that guide this work.

1. Does this novel deal the ideas of modernism and traditionalism?
2. Does this novel have the conflict between tradition and modernity?

The present study aims to focus on the modernism and conventionalism. Further, it analyses the conflict between tradition and modernity of the political novel writer Nayantara Sahgal. The works under consideration of *This Time of Morning*.

The roles of Nita and her father, Dr. Narang, are portrayed by her in the book *This Time of Morning*. Nita's father has an interest in both Eastern and Western culture, despite the fact that his daughter is a young and attractive contemporary girl. Even if the father has a great longing for such a way of life, he can be sure that he will respond in the most conventional manner possible by placing severe limits on the mobility of his ambitious daughter. It is possible to see Mrs. Narang and Rakesh having a conversation about the blue Cross ball in order to provide more evidence for this claim. At this point, Mrs. Narang addresses Rakesh with the following:

Were all the tickets for the Blue Cross ball sold out this year? I'm sure it will be a success. But don't keep Nita out too late. Her father hardly ever allows her to go out to these Club dances. He's ever so strict, but since it's you ...

She called out to the bearer again and instructed him to call Nita. There's no hurry, 'said Rakesh hoping his own quiet lone would put his hostess at ease. 'I came a little early. No one ever gets there much before nine (This Time, 38).

The fact that Mr. and Mrs. Narang's primary worry is for the safety and security of their daughter, Nita, is evidence of the Narangs' adherence to the principles of their traditional upbringing. The author of the work, on the other hand, has a strong distaste for the ideas that treat women as commodities and discourage uniqueness in females. When a girl hits puberty in a culture that is culturally traditional, it is common practise for the girl's parents to place significant limitations on her freedom of movement. Despite the fact that Nita is a forward-thinking young woman, her parents won't let her smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol at any party, or go to club dances until after she's married. Nita lights up a cigarette when she goes to a wedding with Rakesh one evening, despite the fact that her parents have forbidden her from doing so and do not allow her to consume cigarettes. Rakesh offers her a cigarette after first determining whether or not she is permitted to light up. After hearing that, Nita addresses Rakesh with the following:

I really would like a cigarette. Rakesh says to Nita. 'You can't have one Nita says to Rakesh. 'Well I keep cigarettes in my room. Daddy doesn't know. Isn't it silly not being allowed to do anything until one is married? Suppose I don't marry till I'm forty five?' (40).

As previously mentioned, Dr. Narang, Nita's father, is a participant in the customary practises of Indian culture, and as such, he makes preparations for the wedding of his daughter. Mrs. Narang, who is proficient in English, will be seated around the playing cards table with other acquaintances so that she can talk about the wedding plan of her daughter Nita with them. This is the case even if the family members of

the Narang have grown more contemporary in some probable ways. Nita, on the other hand, is not a fan of the concept that people in her day were married according to a predetermined plan. Therefore, she has no intention of going through with the marriage that has been planned for her by her parents and their friends and relatives. She has a strong interest in observing the man-woman interaction in Indian culture, as well as marriage between the sexes, and she hopes to do so throughout her stay there. Her viewpoint is that both parties in a marriage need to be happy with the arrangement for it to be considered successful.

She asserts that a marriage should be the result of an intimate friendship, and that choosing a spouse for life is an extremely challenging endeavour for both sexes. This is because she is aware that a groom and a bride must tie the knot after evaluating themselves both intellectually and morally, rather than performing the marriage hastily at first sight. Since she is aware of this fact, she believes that a marriage should not be performed hastily. In point of fact, Nita is a shame to society when she is engaged to be married to Bijay since she is opposed to having her marriage predetermined. At this point, she experiences feelings of withdrawal in response to the possibility of fulfilment. Therefore, she asks Rakesh to convince her parents to call off her engagement so that she may be with Rakesh. Nita says to Rakesh:

‘I don’t want to marry a man I can intimidate, ‘she said firmly. ‘I don’t want to marry at all just yet. Now you’re back, Rakesh, do persuade Mummy and Daddy I should have a job, its ghastly doing nothing (41).

Nita may have first disobeyed her parents by rejecting their proposal for her to marry Bijay, but she is no longer in a position to oppose her parents. As a direct consequence of this, she is willing to ultimately get into an engagement with Bijay. Nita is a progressive young woman, therefore she has sexual relations with Kalyan Singh before she is engaged to him. Jasbir Jain has the following opinions on her sexual relationship with Kalyan Singh:

With Kalyan Singh, sex comes naturally to her

not because he loves her but because she has unconsciously allowed herself to love and advise him and turn to him in her desperation at being hedged in by convention (42).

Even though Nita is about to marry Kalyan Singh, she is still emotionally reliant on Kalyan Singh, and ever since the two of them met, she has showered all of her kindness to him. It would seem that Nayantara Sahgal is critical of the conventional marriage system that is prevalent in Indian culture. In this system, the life partner is selected by the parents, who then arrange the marriage for the newlyweds in order to ensure that they have a happy life together. In addition to this, she vehemently criticises the cultural norms of marriage and denounces the hypocrisies of the wealthy upper strata, namely the way in which women are pushed to consume alcoholic beverages or smoke cigarettes in the name of liberty and modernization. In a nutshell, the majority of the novel's primary characters, including the protagonist, are an amalgamation of modernity and traditionalism. This is due to the fact that although they are contemporary in many respects, they are also conventional in numerous other respects.

Nayantara has a vision of a society in which the needs, functions, and virtues of women are valued equally along with those of men and where there is mutual respect and peace between the sexes. These things indicate that she does not have anything against men and that her demand is for women to be seen as equally vital partners in marriage and other types of relationships.

Nayantara Sahgal is able to offer a rich experience to humanistic values, which state that a woman should not be viewed as a "sex object and glamour girl... lulled in a passive role that requires no individual identity,"(Quoted Asnani, 112). We are also permitted to declare that Nayantara Sahgal brings experience to humanistic values. She offers compelling portraits of the New Woman fighting to keep her selfhood and to breathe freely amid the smothering surroundings of loveless, unhappy marriages in *This Time of Morning*. In point of fact, she is not a woman who is interested in pursuing a career; rather, she is a woman who is devoted to

her family and who humbly requests that her independence be respected, as well as marriages that are not only social conveniences or socially sanctioned methods of male dominance. Nayan-tara Sahgal, who has firsthand experience with the agony of a broken marriage, writes well and sometimes eloquently about the predicament of women who are caught between conventional preconceptions surrounding gender and the stirrings of individuality. She serves an obviously feminist purpose in that she exposes the hollowness of man-woman relationships that are founded on socially established patterns of gender inequality. This duty is fulfilled by her observing the disclosure of the emptiness of man-woman interactions. The New Woman is resolved not just to live, but to live in self-respect, which, in its most basic form, calls for a realignment of the parameters on which marriages work.

In the novel "The Time of Morning" by Nayan-tara Sahgal, the main characters are grappling with the question of whether they would adhere to the contemporary norms of Indian society or if they will uphold the traditions that have been passed down to them. But Sahgal demonstrates without a shadow of a doubt that individuals living in contemporary Indian society would do well to adhere to the laws of modern society while maintaining a number of significant aspects of traditional life. This is because human beings need both aspects of traditional and modern life in order to live fulfilling lives. After hearing Sahgal's perspective, we are unable to conclude that modernism is superior to traditionalism or that traditionalism is superior to modernity. Those who desire contemporary aspects will simply choose modernism, while those who adore traditional features will undoubtedly favour traditionalism. Those who want modern components will just favour modernism.

In light of the above, the conclusion of this study is that the struggle between tradition and modernity is comprehensively investigated in *This Time of Morning*. As a result of the fact that Nayan-tara Sahgal has a strong aversion to the age-old tradition of the Indian civilization, she has brought to light the flaws that are associated with this custom. In this book, the age-old

customs that continue to restrict women in Indian culture of their rights and benefits are described in a way that is both extremely obvious and very attentively recognised. As a direct consequence of this, it is impossible for Indian women to have the same legal rights as Indian males. The writer makes the demand that male power and the oppression of women by men should come to an end so that women may be freed and made to move without being under the control of their spouses. This would allow women to become more independent. Only at that point can women's rights, many of which have already been taken away from them, be preserved.

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