



## **INFLUENCE OF GANDHIAN PRINCIPLES ON SAHGAL'S NOVELS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Lect. In English, It is a great wonder that an empire of the size of Great Britain was overthrown with S.K.P. Govt. Degree College, sheer non-violence. But it happened to our astonishment; not a drop of blood was shed in Guntakal. this political movement. Then, what kind of violence could be there? The answer is that the Anantapuramu Dt. truth of which Gandhi was a great aspotle, indeed. He experimented it in Africa with success. He defeated the ogre of imperial violence through Satyagraha, 'insistence on truth' as it is called. It adorned the subtle weaponry of the Mahatma. Imbued with Christian Virtues, Hindu and Buddhist Philosophy, he attained the status of a saint who was worshipped by the masses.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

To a world lost in error and beset by the illusions of time, Gandhi expounds the value of the timeless principles of the truth of God and believes that the love for fellow-men is the only basis to establish right human relationships. The inspiration of his life has been what is generally called religion, religion not in the sense of strict adherence to dogmas or complete affiliation to ritual but religion in the sense of an abiding faith in the absolute values of truth, love, and justice and a persistent effort to realize them on earth. Through prayers, fasts and the practice of love, he controlled the inconsistencies of his flesh and discursiveness of his nature to carryout God's work. He also understood that all religions at their best prescribe the same discipline for man's fulfillment. For Gandhi, religion was a personal involvement in the life of spirit. He was keenly sensitive to the pain of the world and longed 'to wipe every tear from every eye'. He believed in the sanctification of all life. 'Politics divorced from religion' was, for him, 'a corpse, fit only to be burned'.

To a people suppressed and humiliated for centuries by outsiders, he provided a new self-respect, a new self-confidence and a new assurance of strength in them. He took hold of



ordinary men and women and converted them into heroes. Gokhale noticed in Gandhi a certain rare virtue and commented:

*"He has in him the marvelous spiritual power to turn ordinary men around him into heroes and martyrs."*<sup>1</sup>

This great apostle of non-violence was a great votary of truth, sometimes cynical, as one may say. His *'The Story of My Experiments with Truth'* has this kind of cynicism. Certain incidents are puerile on the surface, but in the fulfillment of the vision of truth, they are relevant. In India and abroad, he is regarded as a holy saint. His ideal of non-violence is a puzzle indeed. Never before was this miracle happened. The way he led the country to achieve Independence teases the minds of even great apostles of peace. Elsewhere, it would have involved bloodshed and carnage on a large scale but India was spared of all this. The bloodshed took place, of course, not for Independence but it was during the partition of the country. He was for the oneness of the country, opposed to the two-nation theory of Mr. Jinnah. The partition can well be termed as the poison fruit of Indian communalism against which Gandhi fought with courage. Not so much as truth but one thing is certain that he lived up to the ideals of morality and sublimity, which he did not give up in the teeth of dangerous opposition. He is, indeed, to be revered by those who believe in morals. He was not a theorist but a practitioner of morals. He achieved this through self-purification. His sense of non-violence changed the concept of politics. Usually, it was considered with diplomacy but Mahatma Gandhi blended it with religion. Fed on the philosophy of Jainism, Buddhism and Christianity, besides the writings of Tolstoy, Ruskin etc, he developed such mental attitudes which favoured philosophical morality. Instead of remaining cloistered in the ivory tower of saintliness, he stepped into the active politics. The social injustice of the Britishers and their economic exploitation of the country made him start a movement which culminated in winning freedom to India.

However, the spectacle witnessed today does not agree with the philosophical ideas of Mahatma Gandhi. Man is very much engrossed in the sensual pleasures of living. The morals have been cast aside in favour of hectic living. The drinks and drugs are the order of the day and Gandhi, if alive today, would have revolted against it. He did not believe in the nuclear devices, and the mad race for armaments, but the expediency, more industrial than political, sees the dawn of nuclear entry in the country.

With due respect to the Mahatma, one may infer that he has not understood the true nature of man. It is with great efforts, man becomes good. His basic instincts do not agree with the societal morality. Being puritanical and orthodox, he founded his idealism on theories which are quite different from the presence of sadism and masochism in person. The idealism of Gandhi is no doubt praise worthy and it can form the basis of social ethics. The Indians have



understood it. The masses adored him. But when it comes to practice, the human nature, in its true form, surfaced with all its ugliness, forget his good teachings of the Mahatma.

He understood the tenets of religion and it is to his credit that he also practiced it. He purified his soul with fasts. He tried his best to remove communalism which is another form of violence. This, in the name of religion, penetrates all the evils. Many did not agree with him. His prayers were meaningful and only some understood their spirit. He also endeavoured to instill goodness in people. After his death, the people of India again lapsed into violence gradually in the name of language and other problems. The communal riots took place leading to the damage of public property and the loss of lives. The idealism of Mahatma Gandhi was shelved, though revered and praised in his anniversaries. It shows that the roots of human nature are dug deep and the caveman in man surfaces at the mere inkling of an opportunity. But in himself, he was a well-meaning person and it is due to this that he was able to wield such a wide influence not only on India but also abroad. He gained an international status. He was kind towards his adversaries. He had no ill-will against the Britishers. He simply wanted them to leave India to establish self-governance. His concept of 'Swaraj' had a great impact on the people of other countries. He hit the colonial concept hard. On his 78<sup>th</sup> birthday, October 2<sup>nd</sup> 1947, Gandhi said

*With every breath I pray to God to give me strength to quench the flames or remove me from this earth. I, who staked my life to gain India's independence, do not wish to be a living witness to its destruction.<sup>1</sup>*

We are too deeply entangled in our own past deeds and we are caught in the web we had ourselves spun according to the laws of our own twisted ethics. Communal differences are yet a wound, not a sepsis. But wounds have a tendency to reproduce sepsis. If one wants to check this attitude, one ought to adhere to the ideals for which Gandhi lived and died. We need to develop self restraint from anger and illwill, intemperance of thought and speech and from every kind of violence. The only way to honour his ideals is to accept and inculcate his way of approach; reconciliation and tolerance.

Nayantara Sahgal was drawn towards Gandhiji not only because of Jawaharlal Nehru who guided the political destiny of his own family but also because of Sitaram Pandit, the father of Ranjith Pandit who in many respects was Gandhiji's teacher. In her continuous adherence to Gandhian idealism, Sahgal has not only inherited but also cherished certain values and attitudes towards life which can be best described as a complex blend of political liberalism, social sophistication, economic moderation and cultural catholicity. She herself declares this in her article, 'Testament of an Indo-Anglian Writer'.

I am Indian by blood, nationality, upbringing and conviction and western by virtue of my English medium education. Starting with the local convent in Allahabad, I went on to five



years at an American school, Wood Stock, at Mussorie, followed after a gap, of four years at Wellesly College in the United States. The change to Wood Stock was due to Gandhiji's call to boycott British and government – aided institutions.. My father had tossed it (Security) over board when he threw up lucrative law practice to join the National Movement. My mother's family tradition and pattern of wealth and abundance had similarly been voluntarily discarded when her father, Motilal Nehru, decided to follow Gandhi. She herself had the greatest satisfaction in abandoning what 'Women's lib' now calls the 'Stereotype' women image and in setting out to succeed and sparkle in a hitherto masculine field – politics.<sup>2</sup>

Next to her parents, Sahgal owes her indebtedness to Nehru and Gandhi who have shaped her mental growth. Thus freedom, as a solid value, entered into her very bones at an early stage in her life. She is convinced that the freedom to think, to write, to be is what life is all about.

In her essays on contemporary political issues, Sahgal advocates that Gandhi's life has proved beyond doubt that non-violence is an active and powerful force even in the modern times. The liberal humanism of Gandhi embraced various experiences at various levels of human consciousness. According to Francis G. Hitchins,

*Gandhi tied together the personal and the natural, the ethical and the political, the emotional and the spiritual into a coherent world view.*<sup>3</sup>

Like Gandhi, Sahgal also harmonizes the personal with the natural as she is always interested to present a comprehensive portrayal of the society. His humanness facilitated her to look at people with follies and foibles with tolerance and sympathy.

As a person who had firm belief in the concept of individual freedom, Gandhi stressed the importance of raising the status of women in Indian society. He invited them to participate in the freedom struggle on equal terms with man as he had great confidence in their capacity. He believed

*A woman must defend her honour against assault, even with teeth and nails and every ounce of her strength. She would be motivated by the spirit of non-violence.*<sup>4</sup>

Gandhi's appeal for the transformation of women's status boosted the confidence of Nayantara Sahgal as a champion of their emancipation. It is her unswerving allegiance to Gandhism that reveals her emphasis on the individual in her novels. Her concern for human values has not gone unnoticed in her works.

The narrator in *A Time to be Happy* disappoints his father by not taking up the family business. The glaring disparity between haves and havenots in Sharanpur disgusts him a lot.

He is under the influence of Ruskin and Gandhi who have shown profound sympathy for the exploited community. The narrator has not seen Gandhi in person but his charisma and deportment have changed his thinking. He realizes that India does not require more Gandhis and the one like him is more than enough. The narrator rightly understands Gandhi's concept of freedom according to which,

*"Freedom would be a reality when we had succeeded in wiping the tear from every eye."*<sup>5</sup>

The novel has the pre-independence context as part of its background. Gandhi loved villages for they were the places where India throbbed. He struggled to preserve the traditional rural civilization which symbolized peaceful coexistence and harmonious interaction. The ambitious spirit of man feels itself strong and free, in the villages with their open spaces and green belts. In the country side, people feel that they are responsible individuals effectively involving in its life. Sharanaspur, which very much resembles a village, becomes the centre of action. The narrator is determined to protect and preserve the rural culture.

He follows the way that Gandhi has shown to the youngsters of the period and begins to work in villages. He tells us about his response to his National Movement.

*For me it was the clarion call that drew me out of my adolescent confusion and threw open my future course, where as it inturn sought me out eagerly, for it was a growing thing and had in need of many like me if it would expand to maturity. Its leader was just a name to me, for I had never seen him but the words he spoke about village India, her desperate plight, her crushing burdens of debt, seemed to echo in the urban tragedy I saw all around me. Gandhi made symbols of the lowliest commodities, salt and cloth, both vital necessities of life, and both heavily taxed. (7)*

The Gandhian perception of the individual as the carrier of the divine spark within him and consequently being the measure of all things has another significant dimension in the novels of Nayantara Sahgal. Sanad, a young anglicized wealthy Indian craves for independent way of life. As he is not interested in aping the ways of the western civilization, life becomes an ordeal for him when he realizes that a part of him has already westernized unconsciously. Sanad's problem may be best stated in his own words as

*My body is in India, but my brain doesn't belong here. I might as well be an English except for the colour of my skin. (232)*



Having come under the influence of the Independence movement, he tries to identify himself with his country by learning Hindi and spinning. He makes his choice clear when he determines to marry Kusuma Sahai, a girl from a nationalist family.

Having fed up within marital bondage, Maya, Sahgal's first woman, finds fulfilment in social work. She actively participates in the rehabilitation of refugees from Pakistan for real happiness. She tries to find self realization within the bonds of marriage through social work. Her decision is not well received by the members of her family as they feel that a woman of respectable family working in villages degrades their family status. But she feels that a woman should not be confined to four walls of the house. She yearns for individual self and finds pleasure in service.

The narrator, Sanad and Maya follow Gandhian ideology both in theory and practice. He follows Gandhian principle of village development, While Sanad emancipates himself from the foreign influence and identifies himself with charka or spinning wheel. Maya finds fulfilment in life by involving herself in social work.

Sahgal personifies Gandhian ideology in Kailas, the freedom fighter in *This Time of Morning*. He is a strong exponent of Gandhian doctrines and an arch opponent of Kalyan Sinha, the political opportunist. The British gave independence to India but it is Gandhi who attached human angle to it. The Gandhian perception of the individual finds its full expression in Kailas who believes,

*"The only thing that does matter is the human being, his calibre, his dedication" (130).*

Kailas exposes the cause of the individual most vehemently. He considers dedicated human beings "the most indestructible material in the world." The feeling of individual strength is truthfully voiced by Rakesh, the protagonist, in his school days.

*Give me some men, who are stout-hearted men, Who will fight for the right they adore Start me with ten men who are stout hearted men And I'll soon give you ten thousand more... (52)*

The mission of Kailas is to raise people to modern time with their own consent. Using persuasion as an effective method, he motivates men and women in nation building process. He vehemently opposes authoritative methods which in turn lead to violence. As a true Gandhian, he accepts imperfect circumstances without severing away from travesty of truths and strikes the balance between morality and expediency. He believes,

*Any game was a dirty game when dirty people played it (188.)*

He is against corrupt practices and opportunistic politics of Kalyan. He never deviates from the truthfulness and morality in unfavourable conditions. He bears with Kalyan Sinha's undemocratic methods patiently and ultimately his ideology of individual freedom and morality in politics draws him near to the Prime Minister and becomes the lonely choice of the PM to be the C.M of Madhya Pradesh.

Kalyan, an arch-enemy of Kailas, swears by a group and stresses the need to protect society from the predatory individual. He firmly believes that the battle in this country is still for survival and victory lies in close identity of aim and effort and in a merging of interests. He advocates that the group can accomplish what individuals cannot and regrets that there is not enough group effort or even awareness of its necessity. He fights for humanity without being loved by it. Being de-humanized and survived by a chance in his childhood, he pursues his objectives in life with a monomaniacal concentration and pathological obsession. His anger against the world of the past develops in him 'a consuming belief in himself and a fanatical intolerance of even basic human values.' He is unable to connect meaningfully to any one and remains unmarried and unrelated.

Kalyan's concept, disdain for the individual human being, opportunistic methods and corrupt practices land him in deep troubles. Through Nita's unselfish love, he gets redemption and moves towards self identity. Rakesh, an IFS officer, who observes Kalyan Sinha from close angles, comments,

*It was the assurance that every man counts, that life is the sum total of moments, that human being through exercise of his reason is the instrument of all progress. A group was individuals. What was needed was not the burial of the self but its rebirth and celebration, for surely the only hope for people anywhere was that they should recognize and foster each others's humanity as individuals. (136)*

Kailas firmly believes that Gandhism is to be seen as a dynamic faith rather than a closed myth. This certainly involves a constant reappraisal of the creed. According to Kailas, such an exercise is overdue so that the incidental may be isolated and only the essential concentrated on. The whole edifice of his philosophy is to be revitalized to sharpen its efficacy in solving the problems of the country.

Kalyan, on the other hand, gets personal redemption through unselfish love of Nita though he stood in the shadow of defeat.

Sahgal in *Storm in Chandigarh* convincingly presents the re-establishment of fundamental needs of man such as love and understanding through communication and Gandhian values

of peace and codes of conduct in national progress. According to Jasbir Jain, “Human beings need emotions, and communication, and love.”<sup>6</sup>

The linguistic bifurcation of the already communally truncated Punjab into two states – Punjab and Haryana with Chandigarh as their joint capital rouses passions equal to that of other great partition at the time of independence. Both Gyan Singh, the Chief Minister of Punjab and Har Pal Singh, the Chief Minister of newly created Haryana, are determined not to concede any advantage to the either, and the stage is set for violent confrontation.

Gyan singh provokes the masses by linking the history of pre partition Punjab to Post – independence Punjab and manipulates them to strike at Bhakranangal dam for power and water. He says,

*At partition the Indian Punjab was given a meagre niggardly share, some areas of it hilly, some unirrigated. That was what they had been left with. But they had also been left with Punjabi peasants, Punjabi engineers, and a Punjabi determination to set their crippled economy to right (125).*

Knowing the art of instigating the masses well, he rouses them towards violent methods to achieve his ends. He follows moral turpitude and political rascality. Being in the office of the highest democracy, he continues to shrink and hide his conscience. He calls for a general strike to demonstrate his strength. According to Dubey, the young intellectual administrative officer,

*What Gyan Singh plans is a demonstration to show the strength of his demands. He'll call it off once he makes his point. It's a political trick, not a mass movement (167).*

Gandhi viewed politics as a branch of ethics and religion. It is not a struggle for power and wealth, but a persistent endeavor to enable the submerged millions to attain good life, to raise the quality of human beings, to train them for freedom and fellowship, for spiritual depth and social harmony.

In contrast, Harpal Singh is always cautious and believes in non-violence. As a large hearted integrationist, he is the political counter foil to Gyan Singh. The confrontation between them is more significant than a mere clash of personalities. It is fundamentally a conflict of ideas; the cult of violence and the creed of non-violence.

When the situation takes a serious turn between the two states, the central Home minister, *last surviving figure of Gandhian era* (7) assigns the task of rapprochement between the opposing sides to Vishal Dubey, an honest central officer who is known as trouble shooter.



Immediately after assuming charge as a central officer, he makes the plans with his subordinates to diffuse the crisis between the two warring states. He delegates power to his local civilian officers and moves them actively to calm down the turbulent situation. Meticulously executing his plans, he becomes a model to his subordinates.

Dubey operates from his philosophical convictions and acts through commonsense. He questions the integrity of the politicians (Gyan Sing, the CM of Punjab and Harpal Singh, the CM of Haryana) who are devoid of the ethical mores of the Nehru – Gandhi ilk and wonders how,

*The onus of the transition from servitude to freedom, a mighty task by any standards (had fallen up and these politicians). And today they were divided not on principles or convictions, but by nauseating hypocrisies (251).*

Dubey is a selfless worker and fights to preserve human dignity in refugee camps. He is a true heir to Gandhian ideology and inspires others to do his signature of cleaning the latrines. He is suspicious of sustaining Gandhian Philosophy in post independence India. He laments the sudden demise of his mentor, the home minister and muses with genuine sadness, thus:

*Old Bones had done his share and more...(The funeral ) would be considerable, the most that a nation could give a hero... It would mark the end of an era known as Gandhian. In politics that had meant freedom from fear, the head held high, the indomitable will in the emancipated body of India. Gandhian politics had also meant the open decision, the open action, no stealth, no forgiveness, and therefore no shame. Every act proudly performed in the sunlight (245).*

Gyan Sing calls off the strike when it turns into sporadic violence. Harpal Singh gets shot and wounded amid the milling crowds, emotionally over wrought. He gets self purification in the Gandhian tradition. Finally, Vishal restores peace between the two states through his moral courage. He acts without hypocrisy and pretence. The violence and tension in contemporary Punjab-Chandigarh resembles the trauma of India-Pakistan fracture at the time of partition. Dubey mirrors some of the actions and Philosophies of Gandhi and finally succeeds to establish peace.

It is her unswerving allegiance to Gandhism that Nayantara Sahgal reveals her emphasis on the individual in her novels. Her concern for human values has not gone unnoticed in critical circles. The individual is the most important factor in her thinking. She judges all issues pertaining to politics, religion, social and ethics through the individual. Raj, a Christian by birth, in **The Day in Shadow**, is a liberal thinker. He is an independent M.P dissociating



himself from political parties. He is a true patriot with a genuine feeling for his motherland. He is fed up with the way politicians fulfill their selfish motives. Raj says,

*The trouble with us is that we have not discovered ourselves. There are Russian lovers among us and the America lovers... What we need is a new breed of India lovers. (16)*

Raj possesses a high degree of intellectual independence, creativity and communicativeness. An adventurous wanderer working for a clue in personal as well as public matters, he can be a fearless dissenter from the Government policy or its practice. His opposition to the oil policy as expounded by Sumer Singh, the insincere minister in the union cabinet, is a clear symbol of his mental freedom and deep insight into the happenings around him. He deplores the violation of Gandhian principles in the post- Independence era. Sahgal deeply bemoans the ignorable retreat from Gandhisim, so much so that if the spirit of the Mahatma survives anywhere in the world, she says, *"It is certainly not India."*<sup>7</sup>

Raj compares Gandhi with Christ and is disappointed to discover the truth that the latter left behind the church to follow, but Gandhi could only give political pigmies inflated with power. He feels that amassing public wealth has crept into politics leaving aside welfare of the society. Like a lone crusader, Raj keeps Gandhian tradition alive and fights single handedly against pseudo politicians.

He combines in himself the two essential qualities: Justice and gentleness. He always views things on the humanistic scale of values. He provides much needed help to Simrit, wife of Som, who is the victim of male dominant society. He also rescues her from the consent terms which she signed innocently. Through his understanding and communication, he gives a new lease of life to her.

Ramkishan, a good old friend of the father of Raj, is his spiritual guide. His attitude to life in India is neither anti-Indian nor blindly pro-Indian. Deeply rooted in the Indian tradition, he has led a life full of action at both levels physically and mentally. Engrossed in the Gandhian ideology, he believes in non-violence as a value worth leaving legacy to posterity. He advocates that non-violence makes the co-existence peaceful and ensures a natural continuity and permanence of the institutions. He urges her to live for freedom and becomes instrumental in bringing Raj and Simrit together.

Raj dedicates his life to public service where as Simrit continues her work as a free-lance journalist. Both of them decide to create. *"A new breed of Indian lovers"* with due regard for the composite character of Indian culture for non-violence and non-alignment with in the frame work of parliamentary democracy.

Sahgal dwells on the failure of political machinery in the absence of a good leader referring to the sudden demise of the Prime Minister, Shiv Raj who in many respects resembles her uncle Nehru in *A Situation in New Delhi*. She also expresses her concern for the depletion of Gandhian ideology in the post independence period as corruption and opportunism have become rampant in political circles.

It is the unmistakable emphasis on the individual as the lynch pin of any apparatus of state that Sahgal has imbibed from Gandhi. It is this individual oriented philosophy which gets faithful representation in Sahgal's fiction. The individual according to Gandhi is "the one supreme consideration."<sup>8</sup>

Usman, the principal character, faces disconcerting circumstance of rape on the Delhi University campus while the precipitous decline in his moral authority forces him to resign to the post of Vice-Chancellor. However, he stands firm in the face of the trouble.

He firmly decides to ameliorate the deteriorating moral and academic standards by working for the welfare of the students. Gandhi relentlessly worked for people without the glamour for the chair. Usman strictly adheres himself to these ideals of the Mahatma. He bluntly rejects his wife's suggestion to leave the country for the sake of his security. He rightly understands that nothing can be achieved by evading the problem. For Gandhi, satya or truth is the reality. It is Almighty in the soul of man. Truth and non violence, satya and ahimsa are related to each other as two sides of one coin. If we are able to recognize the superiority of spirit to matter and the supremacy of the moral law, we will certainly succeed in overcoming the travesty of power. Non violence is not a negative attitude. It is positive and dynamic. It is a belief in the power of spirit, the power of truth, the power of love by which one can overcome one's will through self suffering and self sacrifice. Gandhi understood the efficacy of non violence and said,

*My creed of non violence is an extremely active force. It has no room for cowardice or room for weakness there is hope for a violent man to be some day non violent but not for a coward. I have therefore said more than once in these pages that, if we do not know how to defend ourselves, our women, and our places of worship by the force of suffering, i.e non violence, we must, if we are men, we are at least able to defend all of them by fighting.*<sup>9</sup>

He also stated in *young India*, that

*"The world is not entirely governed by logic. Life itself involves some kind of violence, and we have to choose the path of least violence."*<sup>10</sup>



Having understood the true sense of non-violence, Usman affirms his faith in openness, truth, non-violence and love for which Shivraj, the deceased charismatic prime minister stood for. He believes that the great ideals should not remain as mere words in the scriptures. In fact, the scriptures live only when the people follow them. He tells Devi, the sister of Shiv Raj, that non-violent protest against a dictatorial regime is the only way out in his own words,

*There never was another way, besides, do you realize, it's the only way most people in this country understand and will give their allegiance to (116).*

Usman, being fully aware of the rich humanistic heritage of the country, has an abiding faith in the individual readiness for hardship. He is ready to sacrifice his life to inspire people to fight against the opportunistic politicians. He vehemently opposes the political intervention in the educational institutions. Leading the students' gathering which takes the "Odd Shape", like the

*"sign of cross, a wobbly cross but a distinctive one" (P.163). He, significantly enough, feels "an arsenal of heat mounting hourly, since sunrise was poised to strike earthward" (163).*

Usman's personal crusade for political reformation seems to have led him to light.

Devi, the sister of Shiv Raj and a minister in the Union cabinet, is completely aware of the multiracial and poly religious tradition of Indian history. As she is fed up with the opportunistic attitude of her cabinet colleagues, she resigns from the Union cabinet and wants to dedicate herself to the cause of the people for which her brother stood for. She symbolizes the continuation of the search for freedom both on the personal and the public levels. The woman in her "would not end her abundant emotional life at Ishwar's (her husband) pyre" (29). The search for fulfillment takes her to Usman. Having realized the "professional evasion" (P.17) of the "fiery idealists" and the apathy of 'the cabinet professors' (P.41), she joins hands with Usman in his constructive endeavors to stem the rot and place the individual at the very centre of things.

*A Situation in New Delhi* once again reveals a saga of violence as the worst of corroding factors in the health of a nation. Rishad, Devi's only son and his companions had no faith in Gandhian ideals and hence they turned in reverse direction, adopting naxalite methods to find remedy for India's maladies. His dreams were brutally shattered when his leader died in an explosion. In his case too, adopting Gandhian principle of individual, Sahgal brings Swarna Priya, his beloved as a source of his enlightenment. He realizes that life without peace could be ugly. Unfortunately, his realization comes only too late when the situation is incorrigible. Tom Mulcaire writes

*The passive revolution of Shiv Raj is contrasted with violent revolution of Rishad. It is when Usman assumes the mantle of revolutionary leadership left vacant by Shiv Raj that there is an indication of hope for the future.<sup>11</sup>*

A more pathetic death was not possible for Rishad who was killed in a bomb blast. Rishad, thus represents the disappointed directionless youth of his times. Humanitarianism is much more than a mere “under current”<sup>12</sup> in Nayantara Sahgal’s fiction. She sincerely believes that no amount of material progress can replace the individual instinct to realize itself in a free environment according to its own potentialities. The individuals have come to their own selves for

*No human problem will be understood or solved unless human beings regard one another as equals.<sup>13</sup>*

Guarding freedom is a common sense as freedom is not a gift. It is “an achievement” and every generation has to do its bit to “continue and preserve the tradition of freedom.”<sup>14</sup> Sahgal has consistently opposed any move to curb individual freedom but supported all progressive legislation through the columns of various newspapers.

There is a need to put consorted efforts to eliminate communalism and strengthen the heterogeneous society. In each of her novels, Sahgal reveals herself as a social and political visionary most seriously, with all her positive heroes revealing shades of Gandhi in them.

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