

Fictionalization of Indian History in Sahgal's *A Situation in New Delhi*

This research paper makes an effort to explore Nayantara Sahgal's *A Situation in New Delhi*, the writer here tries to express her frustration and also she shows the condition of Indian politics after the death of Nehru. The title *A Situation in New Delhi* itself is presented ironically by the author because it is not only the situation of Delhi but whole India was suffered. In the novel writer presents the fictional character named Shivraj as a historical figure Nehru, similarly the novel expresses the duality of existences of a politician's life by focusing the character Devi as a historical figure Indira Gandhi who faces a dilemma in her stubborn insistence on living at the personal and political realms of experiences. As we know that Sahgal is the critic of Indira Gandhi hence researcher tries to show how Sahgal has criticized Indira Gandhi through the fictional character named Devi.

New historicism is a currently developed literary theory which attempts to refigure the relationship between text and the cultural system in which it is produced. In new historicism, a literary text can only be evaluated in its social, historical and political context. Therefore, a literary text cannot be considered apart from the society that produced it. A literary text is another form of social significance which is produced by the society

The plot of the novel revolves around the uncertainty of India's political and social climate at the time of Jawaharlal Nehru's death. One such critical moment came in the eventful history of modern India at the death of Jawaharlal Nehru who had not only led the movement for freedom but had guided the destiny of the country as its first Prime Minister. This novel depicts the political scenario after the end of Nehru's era. The image of Nehru is projected as a charismatic Prime Minister

(Shivraj). His ideals and aspirations have been forgotten and the students experience a total vacuum in the absence of leadership. This is the fictional account of events in the history of Indian politics is textualized in the novel.

New historicism focuses on blurring of generic boundaries. The distinction between history and facts are blurred in *A Situation in New Delhi*. Moreover the biographical elements of Nehru has been presented through the fictional character named Shivraj who is already dead in the novel as well as the biographical elements of Indira Gandhi the first female prime minister of India has been presented through the fictional character Devi who is an education minister in the novel. New historicists concern themselves with the political function of literature. *A Situation in New Delhi* is something that gives an idea of the contemporary Indian politicians and their policies. This novel occupies a significant position in the author's work, acting as a bridge between the two phases of Indian history.

Joining the words 'new' and 'historicism' the term new historicism was coined by the American critic Stephen Greenblatt whose book *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (1982) is usually regarded as its beginning (Barren 172). It took shape in the late 1970s and early 1980s as opposed to new criticism, old historicism and to the critical deconstruction. Because of its ideology open-ended. New historicism is a theory which studies literary as well as non-literary texts tests in equal parameter with reference to the contextual factors in which they are produced and interpreted. According to John Brannigan, new historicism is a mode of critical interpretation which privileges power relation as the most important context for text of all kind (7). He explains that everything is infected with the influence of ideology and power. Mode of representations has the power to modify reality. It produces that version of reality which serve as a vehicle of someone else's vested interest.

Similarly, new historicism examines how the textual representation includes traces and fragments of historical truth in unspoken manner. It also examines how the fragment of historical truth and cultural ethos enter the textual world in micro form. The truth which enters the text in this manner is subjectivized and textually manipulated. New historicism becomes influential with the works of prominent new historicist, Stephen Greenblatt, who first of all took it to analyze particularly the works of renaissance period. Regarding this, Greenblatt makes the following remarks:

New historicism changes its view to history as objective monolithic, linear, casual, static and authentic and equally views that every text is the product of socio-economic, political and cultural context. Thus, new historicist takes history as the matter of interpretation, perception and it is subjective. So, new historicism, in this way, breaks all the traditionally established facts and proceeds by taking history as heterogeneous, unstable and progressive. (65)

A literary text is embedded in its context. It is in a constant interaction and interchange with other component inside the other network of institutions. It believes in cultural power relation and practices. Once spoken or written words enter a form of circulation, it then turns away from their point of origin.

Likewise, Harold Aram Veenser, introducing an anthology, *The New Historicism* (1989), noted some key assumptions that continually reappear in New Historicism they are:

that every expressive act is embedded in a network of material practices, that every act of unmasking, critique and opposition uses the tools it condemns and risks falling prey to the practice it exposes, that literary and non-literary "texts" circulate inseparably; that no discourse, imaginative or archival, gives access to unchanging truths, nor expresses inalterable human nature; [...] that a

critical method and a language adequate to describe culture under capitalism participate in the economy they describe. (xi)

New historicism insisted that to understand a literary piece, we need to understand the author's biography and social background, ideas circulating at the time, and the cultural milieu. New historicism interests themselves in the interpretive constructions which the members of a society or culture apply to their experience.

Different critics have analyzed Sahgal's *A Situation in New Delhi* from the multiple perspectives which preserves the universal importance of the novel.

Makarand Paranjape, in review "*The crisis of contemporary India and Nayantara Sahgal's fiction*" says how one way of characterizing modern India would be by considering it a society in transition, a great tradition. He says:

Nayantara Sahgal's novels in terms of how her women characters respond to the phenomenon of change. How do they cope with the rival pulls of tradition and modernity in their search for identity, independence, fulfillment, and love, whether within marriage or outside it? How, in their journey to selfhood, do they negotiate with various personal, social, religious, and political issues? In brief, how do they cope with their lives in contemporary India.(1)

In *A Situation in New Delhi*, Sahgal places her women characters in conflict with the parochial society and depicts their struggle to pop out of their shells. The book is most likely to a character named Devi as an education minister. Being a female she has developed her own identity. In the whole novel we can see that she has never been dominated by the male character or became the victim of patriarchal society. Though most of Sahgal's women characters possess good educational background, yet they are compelled to pass through the dilemma of stereotyped identity imposed upon them by society.

Similarly, an exquisite depiction of conflict of Devi as a woman and Devi as lady minister has been shown by Sahgal. The woman hood in her did not allow to end her life at Ishwar's pyre and politician in her could not get her desired satisfaction although after having associated with Usman and Michael. D.N. Bandyopadhyay in his writing "*Politics and Passion: A Teleological Perspective in A Situation in New Delhi*" is of the view that Michael fell in love with Devi, but the relationship never materialized into a socially acceptable institutionalized form of marriage. This was all because of Devi's inability to break free of her allegiance to the apotheosis personality of Shivraj as an ideal political leader. (37)

One more shade of this women character is that she spends the first half of her life in the shadow of her brother Shivraj. She is not bothered about her quest for identity till Shivraj was alive. After his death, the other part of her personality achieves more authority which previously remained dormant. Devi now expresses her freedom and established binding with Michael as well as with Usman. Under their companionship she feels more relaxed and pampered. Women are full of emotions. Devi is also a women and she feels relieved by just the voice of Usman. In short, "*A Situation in New Delhi*" articulates the mood of the nation after Shivraj's death and "what had died with him. Describing violence in the social fabric of the Indian society, Sahgal points out that its root lies in the political set-up which has been deeply poisoned by the ambitions of power hungry politicians.

According to Jasbir Jain as Devi was a widow and her sensual pleasures were shunned due to it so she had gratifying connection with Michael and Usman: Devi has a fulfilling relationship with both Michael and Usman. She needs this physical expression to sustain her emotional being. Both these relationships comment on the

physical deprivation, placed on widowhood by traditional norms. They also recognize the body. (Jain 4)

On her review, Jasbir Jain says as “Devi was a widow and her sensual pleasures were avoided due to it so she had gratifying connection with Michael and Usman”. Devi has a fulfilling relationship with both Michael and Usman. She needs this physical expression to sustain her emotional being. Both these relationships comment on the physical deprivation, placed on widowhood by traditional norms. Devi uses male characters for her benefit. She does not have any regret about this. She does not attempt anything new to have radical changes in her life. However, in later stage she started to become self-aware in gradual manner. This is reflected in building of her relation with Michael but at the same time her refusal to marriage with him still confirms her lack of courage in breaking conventions.

Sahgal has presented a modern Indian women's search for definitions about the self and society, and the relationships that are central to women. She portrays in her novels that her 'new woman' is trying to search for her identity and wants to create for herself a new place in the society. She is conscious of her existence as an individual who has her own rights and wishes. She firmly asserts that these women are the ones who have the guts to raise their voice against it, hence creating awareness for the rest. "The new woman is assertive and self-willed searching to discover true self. A woman's identity crisis is that where she struggles to achieve as a human being in its full sense against those forces of society who bind her in chains and reject her as a being in comparison to man. Earlier, women sought her identity in the relations of as a wife, mother and daughter. She accepted this identity willingly. But now time has changed and a woman rejects this relational identity. Now she is able to understand the duplicity of this identity that is imposed on her by society so that she may restrain

herself as a being. But now woman wants to stand on her feet as a full human being, equal to man in society.

G Sankar on his review on *Social Realism and Psychological Transformation of Women* Protagonist in Nayantara Sahgal's *A Situation in New Delhi* reveals as: A Situation in New Delhi fictionalizes the uncertain state of education and politics in independent India, and was banned during the emergency. It was first published in abroad and then reprinted in India. The novel concentrates on a sense of disintegration giving way to chaos and disorder that engulf the capital. In the novel, Sahgal weaves a narrative around a number of characters: Devi, the sister of the dead Prime Minister Shivraj, who is Nehru in disguise; her son Rishad, a young college-going boy, member of a Naxalite group, who dies in an explosion in a cinema hall; her friend Usman, the Vice-Chancellor of Delhi University, an admirer of Shivraj's policies; and Michael Calvert, an old acquaintance of Shivraj and Devi, who returns to India from England to write his biography. (Sankar 4)

There were eras and characters in history in whom public and private issues met and became one. If Shivraj, the dead Prime Minister, provided an example for this idea in the past, Devi and her two friends, Usman Ali and Michael Calvert stand up to it in the present. In this novel Sahgal portrays Delhi as torn apart by the political leadership and violent student unrest. Usman Ali, the Vice Chancellor of Delhi University, rightly comments that "The problems on our hands are the problems of change. And nowhere has it been as unwieldy as in education". (SND 57)

Moreover, Nayantara Sahgal in *Jawaharlal Nehru: Civilizing a Savage World*: This book presents an intimate view of the influences encounters, and defining historical moments that forged the vision of Nehru. Discussing the significant issue of independent India foreign policy -characterized by the nonalignment principle and the

establishment of relations with the United States, Britain, the Soviet Union and China - Sahgal reveals much about Nehru's political wisdom, realism and a version to rigid economic principles, as well as the profound impact India's nonaligned policy had on the world of the time. She was moved to write in memory of her uncle, whose life was given to Indians struggle for freedom and to the building of free society. Nehru's charismatic personality both as a man and statesman, as the unquestioned leader during the most turbulent upheaval in the fabric of Indian life, opened the eyes of the nation and the world like to the concept of a great and unified India. As a liberal progressive -minded ruler and the man of humanistic culture, Nehru civilized the thoughts and the actions of India through his dualism his historic sense, his vision of Bharat , his faith in democracy and freedom in widening the vision of a might country from savage burden to civilized progress.

From different perspectives, According to Stephen Greenblatt, "New Historicists aim simultaneously to understand the work through its historical context and to understand cultural as well as to investigate the intellectual history and cultural history through literature". (Greenblatt 76)

New historicism is a literary theory. It is based on the idea that literature should be studied and interpreted within the context of both the history of the author and the history of the critic. New historicism acknowledges not only that "a work of literature is influenced by its author's times and circumstances, but that the critic's response to that work is also influenced by his environment, beliefs, and prejudices" (Greenblatt 14). A new historicist looks at literature in a wider historical context. He or she examines both how the writer's times affected the work. A new historicist work reflects the writer's times.

Studying the history shows more about the text. Studying the text means facts about the history. The new historicist also acknowledges that his examination of literature is damaged by his own culture and environment. New historicism stresses the temporariness of literary criticism. Current literary criticism lies on the beliefs of our times in the same way that literature reflects and is reflected by its own historical contexts.(Greenblatt 17)

A symbol of the fight against colonial rule, a hero who had resurrected a legend so much of Asia shared and given it modern meaning renouncing gilded case to sleep on prison plants. A leader the leader at least in inspiration, of so many beyond his own borders. And for Indians, a man who took the people with him on uncharted Journeys, on the frail, unbreakable, so very on political bond of trust. A political who tell the day he died had never learned to make a political speech, or to trim his sails by the exigencies of breed. (2)

This was the very first thought of Shivraj (Nehru). Nehru has become the inspiration for all the Indian people as he his contribution is beyond the imagination. He was the one who lead country to success and he also helped the Indian to form a modern colony. The day he died was the black day for Indian people and Indian history. The history can be interpreted and twisted, anyone in the power can modify the truth. The truth can be hide or it can be over -exaggerated. Regarding to its historical context this novel was written around the time of Indira Gandhi's Emergency, after the hope of the immediate post-independence years had been shattered. Sahgal is, in fact, a member of the greater Nehru family, but is well known as one of her cousin Indira's strongest critics. After the death of Nehru the whole India has fallen into the depression. Indira Gandhi hold a power position in her hand

later there comes a many ups and down in political, economic, social and cultural aspects.

The new historicist recognizes that this is not a simple answer that can be teased out by studying the text. This work must be judged in the context. Cultural history can be revealed by studying the work. Studying the history shows more about the text.

Studying the text yields greater facts about the history. The new historicist also acknowledges that his examination of literature is damaged by his own culture and environment. New historicism stresses the impermanence of literary criticism. Current literary criticism lies on the beliefs of our times in the same way that literature reflects and is reflected by its own historical contexts.

Sahgal begins novel as:

That whole novel began with my curiosity and interest in the Naxalites who were just then quite a force. This is 1971. I am speaking of when I made a visit to Calcutta. It was a very brief visit but it sort of got growing in my mind and these is a chapter in *A Situation in New Delhi* . . . about the young man Rishad who breaks into a house and . . . breaks up everything and leaves the house a wreck . . . It began with that and then it was around that I built this book . . . (43).

Being near to the member of political family she witnesses all the political ups and down in Indian politics after the death of Nehru. She explained how she was inspired to write a book. She tries to fictionalize the real political happening by providing the fictional characters in the novel. In her novel she tries to show the gross injustice India spreading rapidly after the death of Nehru. After his death the whole India became a ship without a rudder. It begins with Michael who is a renowned English biographer

who spent his childhood in India. He visits India to pay his respect to the great hero by writing his biography.

Moreover history for new historicism is not the collection of the facts and actual events only but it is the story of both facts as well as fiction written from the perspectives of powerholder. The whole novel is written through the perspectives of novelist “Nayantara saghal” who witness the Indian politics during that time. Being a reader we do not know about the facts of the Indian political history. The political story of *A Situation in New Delhi* depicts the outcome of a great popular Prime Minister Shivraj, who dominated the political and national scene for a full decade. He was the one who sacrificed his and his aristocratic family’s comforts for the freedom of India. Now he is dead. And with his passing away the country which he had ruled so well begins to fall apart.

Greenblatt recognizes how language both keeps readers at the distance from the past. He also draws readers to it in a quest for understanding. Greenblatt points to in his raising of question about the text’s assumption but doesn’t develop. He says that he is “committed to the project of making strange what has become familiar” (8), but he has nothing but an imaginative response. He still offers it as some kind of finite explanation.

These purely formal approaches lay emphasis on the fact that since text is the ultimate reality with the reader, he needs not go beyond that and should try to find out finer meaning. Moreover, New Historicism aims at rehistoricization of text. He further says:

New historicism is a term applied to a trend in American academic literary texts and at the same time (in contrast with older historicisms) the ‘textual’ nature of history. As a part of a wider reaction against purely formal or

linguistic critical approaches. New historicists, led by Stephen Greenblatt, drew new connections between literary and non-literary texts, breaking down the familiar distinction between a text and its historical 'background' as conceived in established historical forms of criticism." (Greenblatt 171)

History cannot be accessed except in its textual form and this canon of textuality of history and historicity of text pulls down the line of demarcation between literary and non-literary text. As a part of wider reaction against purely formal or linguist, the new historicists, laid by Stephen Greenblatt drew new connection between literary and non-literary texts, breaking down the familiar distinction between a text and its historical background as conceived in established historical form of criticism.

The title depicts not only the situation of the nation's capital but the political vacuum of the country itself. Michael's reaction to Shivraj's death, when the novel opens in England establishes his intimacy with Shivraj. And immediately it reminds India's colonial relationship with Britain. Michael figures out as:

Michael a minute to collect that for the past two years he had been at work on the biography of Lord Canning, that two months earlier he had finished the manuscript and that for those two months he had got up each morning conscious a new of liberation from his task a released earned. It was a queer intended vacuum then, from which every scrap of preoccupation had been evacuated, into which his savage grief had flowed, filling him, he now recognized, with the tension of renewed purpose. (3)

Michael Calvert is going to write a biography about Shivraj. According to him Shivraj is a young energetic revolutionary activist who fought for the nation and died.

Michael has stayed with Shivraj in India and he got a chance to know him from near.

After he heard the news about the death of Shivraj and he wanted to write his biography so that everyone will get to know him from near. *A Situation in a New Delhi* is a text with references to historical context and the situation.

Similarly, Greenblatt's thesis on self-fashioning in the Renaissance also shows how words are ultimately never enough. The world will not allow identity to be formed through language alone. While Greenblatt draws the important connection between language and time, the temporal problem of history never quite becomes a theme in its own right. Although Greenblatt begins "with the desire to speak with the dead," he admits "all I could hear was my own voice" (1). However, he believes that the solution to this impasse lies within himself as an historically situated subject saying "my own voice of the dead, for the dead had contrived to leave textual traces of themselves, and those traces make themselves heard in the voices of the living" (1). It is, of course, a new historicist saw that knowledge of the world is determined by the position of the observer.

As a member of the political family, Sahgal has had sufficient opportunity to observe the Indian Socio-Political scenario. Sahgal presents the corrupted political leaders and the inability of the people to know what was good for them. She also presents the colonial relationship between the violent colonizers and the non-violent colonized as a straight forward binary opposition through the intimacy between Devi and Michael. The real characteristic of India is the violence which structures the country's history, politics and gender relationship. She paints a clear picture about the problems behind the Hindus and the Muslims that prevails in India during the post-independent era. The history of post-Independence India has been marked by violence on an enormous scale. Violence and non-violence is the main source for many contemporary Indian writers like Nayantara Sahgal. Apart from contemporary politics

one of the major theme of Sahgal's work has been constant faith in non-violence. Sahgal sticks on to Gandhian principles in every novel. Sahgal clarifies: No single fact had done more to reorient the thinking of an entire nation than Gandhiji's semi-nakedness. It had shifted the political spotlight from town to village, jolting the town-dweller into an awareness of the peasants' existence and plight. (25)

Gandhism fascinated her because of its dependence on moral values and the importance given to the individual. Gandhism was unique as it chose non-violence as the method of resistance. For Sahgal, Gandism today means taking a stand against injustice. Whereas Indira Gandhi don't support the Gandhism totally. The period of Indian politics during her time was not much in progress. She holds all the political power in her hand. Likewise in the novel Devi being a minister capture all the power in her hand she became blind in her power so that she censor the biography of Shivraj in the threat that if biography was published then people will revolt against her. The following line indicates.

This is something new. When I was here last you could write anything you liked, photograph any slum. Some uncomplimentary stuff got published, but it never did much damage and nobody here bothered about it. Shivraj took the view that any danger to India could only come from its own people, not from outside. (119-20)

Due to an effective censorship, Michael Calvert manuscript of his biography of Shivraj is courteously returned by the Joint Secretary with his oral suggestions which are really objections. Another foreigner, Sir Humphrey, diplomatically tries to defend the government's undeclared censorship. Michael was very much upset because his manuscript must be censored. He tries to convince the British High Commission that Shivraj was next to God for him and nobody, but nobody has the right to check his

biographer in this holy work. The following lines indicates about the marriage life of Devi:

Rain in January clearing the air to on unbelievable radiance. Unexpected rain that day long ago when Shivraj impatiently putting aside the umbrella offered ... had spoken, drenched, to the huge wet, unmoving go the ring of women, and Devi had ecstatically pledged, mixing up her life with her, I'll follow you to the ends of the earth, while gain pastured her hair and clothes against her.

(12-13)

Devi wakes up one morning, in the thought of Shivraj. Her marriage to Ishwar had been passing pause of happiness. Her parents had chosen husband for her but unfortunately she had fallen, distracted in love with him. However, this was a short lived episode in her life and Ishwar dies, leaving his wife and a son. Her Shivraj death, she was only in thoughts of Shivraj. She feels no need for desire to remarry. According to biography written by American author Katherine Frank, Indira Gandhi had many affairs. Indira Gandhi admitted to Pupul Jayakar that while a student at Shantiniketan she'd fallen in love with a German named Frank Oberdorf who taught her French. Even after marriage with Feroze Gandhi, Indira Gandhi continued relationship with Frank Oberdorf. According to Pupul Jayakar, who wrote biography of Indira Gandhi, "In reply to a letter from Frank Oberdorf in early 1946, after a silence of nine years, she wrote: "In March of 1942 I got married. Unlike you I have not been able to have any domestic life. Now I have a small son and he will soon be two years old... We are still leading very busy lives – with a great deal of travelling all over the country. All of us never seem to be in the same town at the same time. As you see from the above address, I am now living in my father's house." According to Katherine Frank, one affair of Indira was with Jawaharlal Nehru's assistant M.O.

Mathai. Mathai claimed to be lover of Indira for 12 years and also made Indira pregnant. Mathai lost out to Indira's yoga teacher Dharendra Brahmachari and later Dinesh Singh who was a minister of her cabinet.

Likewise in the novel *Devi* after the death of her husband Ishwar she had a multiple relations with several boys. She fell in love with Michael a biographer of Shivraj who come to India and had also a relationship with Usman a cabinet minister:

“Person for the king's consort to which she objected strenuously Shivraj was not a king and this was no kingdom, but a republic. He could look at her when she said that, with his keen, assessing, grey eyes and reply quite accurately, But were nostalgic for kings or charismatic leaders, or some shining example that islands out from the millions, republic though we might be five thousand years of memories and attachments don't vanish at the sound of three syllables. (22)

Devi badly needs the help of Usman's idea in all her movement in political way and to come out from this problem. Usman a scholar, humorous, clear, compassionate, had all the qualities he had once been considered enough to preside successfully over a student community

New historicism focuses primarily on view of discourse. Discourse is social language created by particular cultural condition. Foucault concerns discourse in terms of knowledge. Discourse cannot adequately explain culture of social power, rather discourse is formed for getting different sorts of power and is imposed in the society. Michel Foucault adds more about discourse “to maintain dominance of power must circulate in numerous discourses namely religion” (301).

Foucault has been always interested in mechanism of society, human "thought and ideas, concepts, experiences, discourse formed in any society or culture. He also focuses that on divergent interests get intersected with each other in different issues like power, knowledge and truth" (121). His ideas are not only on mere power but it is manifestation and different technique which produces truth to lead an individual to subjection. Regarding such concept Foucault writes:

Resistance is more effective when it is directed at technique of power rather than at power in general. It is technique which allowed for the exercise of power and production of knowledge; resistance consists of refusing this technique. But the unearthing of power technique in their modern configurations requires conceiving of the social body as the multiplicity of force relation. (86)

Foucault suggests that power is intelligible and susceptible to analysis to down to its smallest details, in terms of the historical strategies and set of tactics designed to mobilize these techniques to political advantage. But importantly, oppressive forces of domination do not hold "the monopoly in the capacity to invent tactic. Foucault questions the historical condition for the emergence of truths" (77). For such purpose he demonstrates the historicity of different disciplines and the concepts of objects related to such discipline along with power relation.

Likewise in the novel Devi needs the help of Usman who help Devi to take decision in political affairs. Devi alone could not make a decision about the violence that was going on in the street led by Rishad about the Rape of Madhu. Being a minister instead of handling the problem she goes to attend the pinky's engagement party. The following extract exemplifies the point.

I need your help Usman you have it and we have to act without delay. But I shall need yours, too. We won't go into all that now, "he said in answer to the

enquiry in her eyes. “Later sometimes”. What about the poor little girl?’ she asked. He gave her the details he had. (23)

Even Usman is a nationalist; a communist-turned-democrat who always dreams of political revolution; here is a change for him to realize his dream to make education autonomous, to free Delhi University from “the direct hold of the Centre.” He has always lived for a cause without giving the slightest thought to security in his life. New historicists concern themselves with the political function of literature. *A Situation in New Delhi* is something that gives an idea of the contemporary Indian politicians and their policies. This novel occupies a significant position in the author’s work, acting as a bridge between the two phases of Indian history. There is a revolution political leaders and the students of Delhi University who are fighting for their rights led by Rishad. The following extract illuminates the point:

The demonstration yesterday had flared like a fierce brief fire leaving charred remains around it. Like dry timber, forest of it ready for a careless match, the universities waited and small and big fire raged. They had needed all her energy and ingenuity since she had taken office, to put out. And they never quite went out. The smoke never cleared. The sickness was too deep. Till recently Delhi University has free from trouble but what made her think the capital was immune? (18)

“*A Situation in New Delhi* “is essentially the student unrest at Delhi University. A small group of students, illegally led by Rishad, is involved in acts of violence against the University in general and the Vice-Chancellor of the University, Usman Ali, in particular. Usman recognizes that part of the reason for the student unrest at the university is that every job requires a degree-thus there is horror if any student is expelled or denied a place in a university. Most importantly, from Rishad’s point of

view, there are gross injustices in India which are operated to a great extent by the caste system.

New historicism focuses not only on discourse, power and truth but equally on marginal issues. It critically analyzes narrative of high politics and deconstructs the hierarchy existing in history and foregrounds the suppressive hierarchic existing in history and foregrounds the suppressive hierarchical narrative of marginalized group like such as women, poor, working class people and so on. The historical narratives of some groups are becoming more and more numerous such as those of women and people of color.

New historicism is a method of literary criticism that emphasizes the historicity of the text by relating it to the configuration of power, society or ideology in the given time. It associates both history and literature together in order to show their inter-connectedness.

Usman also recognizes the problem of caste system. He points to Shivraj's "aristocratic" Shivraj and Nehru was of Brahmin caste and Usman suggests that this background must have ultimately influenced in every political act that Shivraj had undertaken. Although this novel was first published in 1977 and should be seen to an extent as a reflection of this time, problems of the caste are still an issue in India. The family of Sahgal was deeply involved in the freedom struggle that the political and the personal were inseparable in such an environment and it left a deep impression on her mind. She clearly states that:

The political situation is the background of all my books. I noticed that nobody else in India at least writing in English, has used the technique of having a political situation – a specific political situation is the backdrop of every single novel. There have been novels of political situation, isolated ones

but I have developed this as a genre, as a whole style of political novel, which uses the political background but tells the story of human life against that. (10)

Foucault did not believe there was any purpose for society and all laws are unnecessary. Foucault takes man and woman simply as the effects of prevailing social practices, codes and disciplines. Since no normative or natural code exist to guide man and his collective activities, human beings find themselves in deadlock if they are solely driven by Foucauldian thought.

If sovereign power or sovereign state exists, only then the question of overthrowing it with suitable alternative comes. Foucault delivers the following views regarding how thought of Foucault weakens the power of revolution:

It is precisely the idea of society as a system, a set of institutions that must give way to something. To abolish power systems is to abolish both moral and scientific categories. Man is a free human subject is a subject of a certain sort, naturally good, warmly sociable, kind and loving. Men and women are always social creations, the products of codes and disciplines. (61)

Man and woman is the product of social relations. The same system gives birth to a new consciousness which is subversive. Foucault has not given explanation about how a new vision and idea arise against that very system out of which these new vision and idea arise. Foucault's thought does not inculcate belief in the possibility of revolution.

Being a feminist writer, the author's feminist concern in this novel is for a rape victim, Madhu. Her gang rape is a symbol of violence against women. Devi's son, Rishad's turning into a Naxalite is symbolic of the lack of motivation among the younger generation as the result of want of inspiring leaders with patriotic fervor to lead the younger generation in the right path. Rishad believes that to bring justice to

the poor and to eradicate social and economic inequality, all the existing political and social structures have to be razed to the ground.

The main thing is to remember is that there is no room for philosophy where there is hunger and terrible inequality. There is only room for surgery to remove them and they have to be removed like a cancer, like filth he made an incisive gesture followed by her scarlet eyes. The only way that will not work is with words. There have been enough words we have to act. (72)

The society that Nayantara creates in *A Situation in New Delhi* is one which fails to protect women even on the university campus in the capital city of the country as here Madhu a student of Delhi University is raped in the Registrar's office. The boys who rape Madhu clearly consider Madhu only as an object of lust to be used at their disposal and have no regard for her feelings will and self-respect. One may raise an objection and argue that the whole society should not be disparaged for what three boys do, because if this society has produced these three boys it has also produced Usman Ali the Vice-Chancellor, who only expels the three guilty boys but also braves a physical assault and finally resigns as Vice-Chancellor in the order to organize people against fights the forces responsible for the rape of the girls, but the fact remains that his efforts bear little fruits and at last, the girl realizes that even her brother would be thankful when he was relieved the responsibility of her" and commits suicide in a state of helplessness by sacrificing herself.

In *A Situation in New Delhi* the novelist has attempted to analyze the political situation in its totality. It goes further than any of her earlier novels in its concern for reasons and solutions. It has neither social nor personal problems. It is a novel full of political ideas. It is nowhere connected with novelist's own experience of politics. In

fact the political happenings of two decades have been shown. The following extract throws light on the scene of political situation:

Leadership did not join the ferment, scream with the mob. Leadership led.

Funny, it was not Shivraj's enemies who were undoing what he had done. It was his friends, his followers, those who had written poems in praise of him.

Strange that the individuality, the diversity of India had been congealed by this, the poets and heralds of freedom and the new dawn, the savant grade, into a glutinous mass of verbiage that abounded in clinches. (SND 28-29).

Shivraj's death marks the decline in Indian politics and he had done nothing during his period to anticipate and prevent it. He has lot of experience and idealism in him, but failed to groom the proper person to succeed him left a political vacuum to be filled with such uninspired vision or values.

A Situation in New Delhi sensitively analyses the cause of disturbed man-woman relationship especially the husband and the wife relationship. She has dealt with woman's problems with greater empathy and understanding. She views the problem of human relationship with the consciousness of a humanist and a fictional artist. In her earlier novels, man-woman relationship themes have run parallel to the political themes and in her latter novels, politics and the consequences of political decision make up the central theme.

Devi had forgotten how uncomplicated he was, easily assailable in a mixed crowd, no strains and pulls about him. Usman and she, herself were very much more complex. Usman could be broody and difficult. She heard Vijay's roar, amiable thunder, saw his hand clap. Michael's shoulder to free him from a discussion and propel him to another part of the room. Later, Devi heard Veena say to him. There must be so many, people you know here'. And

Michael reply, "I used to but I'm very out of touch. A writer either knows hundreds of people or practically none. I belong to the latter category. (99)

New historicism accepts the idea that times changes and human understanding of great literature also changes. Historical criticism insisted that to understand a literary piece, it is necessary to understand the author's biography and social background, ideas circulating at the time and the cultural scene.

Devi is depiction of women belonging to elite class as she is a cabinet minister. The womanhood in her did not allow to end her life at Ishwar's pyre and politician in her could not get her desired satisfaction although after having associated with Usman and Michael. Devi is also a women and she feels relieved by just the voice of Usman. She feels comfortable when she talks to him on telephone. It is reported in the novel. They spoke on telephone more often than they met, usually on official matters, but telephoning too had become an outlet too for Usman's gifted and versatile sensuality. Today insensitive to everything but recurrence, she felt only relief at the sound of his voice and the gratitude that any contact with him brought her. (47)

Drawing on the traditional model of power as repression, many types of feminist theory have assumed that the oppression of women can be explained by patriarchal social structures which secure the power of men over women. Increasingly, however, this assumption is being called into question by other feminists who are concerned to counter what they regard as the oversimplified conception of power relations this view entails, as well as its problematic implication that women are simply the passive, powerless victims of male power. In the context of this debate, Foucault's work on power has been used by some feminists to develop a more complex analysis of the relations between gender and power which avoids the assumption that the oppression of women is caused in any simple way by men's

possession of power. On the basis of Foucault's understanding of power as exercised rather than possessed

When talking about Nayantara Sahgal's fiction one would have to emphasize on her combination of artistic projection, with historical truth. The phrase "history nothing is true but names and dates, in literature everything is true but names and dates, is applicable to Sahgal's fiction". Though in giving expression to political happenings and historical reality, she indulges in artistic license but never compromises on the truth. Sahgal tries to give expression to the issues she feels strongly about, through her fiction, as she has done through her journalistic writings. Humanitarian values, freedom and social responsibility are the issues she is concerned about and feels that such positive qualities should be highlighted in social and political life. Nevertheless she often touches on the history of India's struggle for freedom. The following extract reveals about women. I try to create the virtuous woman, the modern Sita, if you like. My women are strivers and aspirers toward freedom, toward goodness, toward a compassionate world. Their virtue is a quality of heart and mind and spirit, a kind of untouched innocence and integrity. I think there is this quality in the Indian Women. (57)

Lydia and Nell, the two ladies who become Michell's wives successive in novel, have to seek divorce because they find the husband's behavior to be intolerable when Michael was Lydia's husband, "his drinking had blossomed into epic proportion" and his behavior towards her was far from satisfactory likewise Nell began to feel soon after her marriage with him he was only using her, as is evident from her remark: "you go on using (women) up like matches. Since in each of these cases it is the husband who is at fault, it can be safely inferred that the novelist lays

blame for the failure of each of these marriages at the husband's door and regards the wife as a victim of the male domination in society.

.Nadira feels herself to have to be wronged by her husband, as she has come to know that he is in love with Devi, even though she herself has not shown even one single symptom of weakness. Nadira is faithful to her husband inspite of the fact that Usman Ali married late as a result of which there is a wide gap between their ages. Nadira is hurt to find that her husband is availing himself of more freedom than a married man has a right to avail himself bymaking love to Devi.

There is nothing unnatural or extra ordinary in a wife's desiring her husband to be exclusively hers as there is nothing unnatural in a husband's desiring his wife to be exclusively his inevitably, he has hurt Nadira very deeply, as is evident from the following exchange of remarks between them:

“Everyone has a past said Usman and the past has a way of continuing into the present. We can't at some point say It's over and done with. Bits of it linger and they should. It's part of the perfume of life'. I gave up everything when I married you, said Nadira. ‘That you did not. You brought it with you, your attitudes, you prejudices. We all do. Nadira drew a hand across her eyes very well Usman. What I mean is he As long as our life was more or less normal I could put up with her. But now I don't know what to expect. (130)

The way Nadira suffers is, in Mrs. Sahgal's opinion typical of womankind, as her narrator in the novels reports:

“(Nadira) turned around, her eyes with their look of more than childlike defenselessness, a creature of slaughter and sacrifice. Either that or a prized possession. In any case, womankind, not woman” and provides an aperture for

the reader to peep into Mrs. Sahgal's mind and read there that for her womenfolk just as Nadira has been at the hands of Usman Ali.(137)

The novel ends with the death of Rishad which suggests that violence or terrorism cannot bring reformation but will bring danger and destruction to those who believe in it. Non-violence is the best way to lead the nation in the right path even in this time of craze for more and more destructive weapons. Rishad knew that the movement they begun was collapsed, and had not been able to create a proper revolutionary center. Their members were scattered and disorganized. Rishad wanted to cry:

Live! Only live, and we will do what we have to do together. that the end might come here in this room, in this decrepitude and dirt, for what remained of Naren, product of the best school in India, an honour graduate from Harvard, a PhD from Oxford. How simple he had remained in spite of all that, involved with other men's miser, when he could have had the earth and its prized to do what he liked with." Due to an unobtrusive but effective, Michael Calvert's manuscript of his biography of Shivraj is returned by the joint secretary with his oral suggestions. Michael, though a foreigner, also has his share of disillusionment in the new political set-up he had come all the way to India to write a biography of the great democrat and leader whom he almost hero-worshipped. But now he finds a great change. It is no more the same democratic country. (118-19)

Shivraj's death marked an end of an era of idealism. Michael Calvert, Shivraj's biographer sums up. One of God's remarkable creations . . . a symbol of the fight against colonial rule . . . renounces the gilded case to sleep on prison planks . . . A

man who took the people with him on unchartered journeys, on the frail, unbreakable, so very unpolitical bond of trust. (6)

A Situation in the New Delhi after Shivraj's death is that left with nothing positively encouraging or hopeful. The new tendencies now surfacing violence, authoritarianism, censorship, committed bureaucracy, a hypocritical concern for "Social justice" in the name of which any wrong can be done and an undefined fear in the common mind are symptoms of the new, the looks of the approaching storm. The book on Shivraj biography was censored by the government because of political instability. The extract illuminates about censorship of biography:

It didn't go he told her about his book and that he had felt too much irritated to work after handling it to the ministry. Devi who took the proprietary interest in the manuscript which he was certain she wouldn't have if it had been about Suleiman the magnificent of some other colorful character said with severity, "I still have some influences- I think. I can speak to the information minister. (126)

Over, Sahgal tries to give expression to the issues she feels strongly about, through her fiction. We see that she combines the account of real political happenings with certain basic, values to which she as a writer and human being has always been committed. She preserves these fundamental issues to show the absence of these by placing her stories in a historically recognizable locale. Her major contribution to the art of fiction in Indian English writing is giving shape and essence to the political novel in its present form.

In *Devi* (Indira Gandhi) Sahgal has tried to bring out the conflict between the woman and the cabinet minister. She searches for fulfillment at both levels, in the public and political front. She tries to live up to the ideals of her charismatic brother,

Shivraj,(Nehru) by projecting clean and value oriented policies in the ministry and also seek fulfillment in love with Michael and Usman. She goes through frustrations and tragedy at her son's wayward violent ways and rejection of her proposals at the cabinet meeting, but achieves fulfillment in the mass movement. But as a woman she is doomed, in amysterious search for personal fulfillment. In the character of Devi, Sahgal creates a rare combination of feminine intuition and a political leader of principle and foresight-a positive image of the Indian woman with her strengths and failures.

Devi uses the men in her life for personal survival. She does not have the courage to defy convention or free herself from her past. Devi, is an exceptional character from the general woman category as well as amongst the women characters as portrayed in Nayantara Sahgal's novels. She never displays any sign of weakness being a feminine character. Instead of feeling feeble she uses womanhood for her advantage. Devi takes benefit of her freedom in establishing relationships with different persons. Although being single she never appeared to be an easy prey for men as usually happens in the case of ordinary women. Same-wise in the history of Indian politics Indira Gandhi seems to be engage in different affairs with different person. It is also said that her political career was devastating. Like in the novel the following line clarifies the points "When the tension reaches its peak Usman advises Devi to resign from post and from the party."

Yes, my love, my dearest Michael. But it is peculiar at forty four to find yourself stripped of your fabulous past and your limitless future. Suddenly you're nothing. Even what I have of my present in the way of reputation. Something what people recognize and respect. Will be blotted out the day I walk out of this house. That will be the fate of those of us who have minds of

our own Usman will be attacked and reviled and I will be blotted out . . . It would be hers till the day she died, and however long she lived she would that it passed for mystery and magic. Magic was indeed a word men had associated with Shivraj that whom no more human or straight forward being had existed” (186-87)

Usman suggests Devi to leave the post because it becomes impossible to control the mass of the people. Being blind in power she didn't care about public but being a woman she herself didn't care about women's problem. In the name of modern she becomes ultra-modern and ultimately she loses all her post and prestige.

A Situation in New Delhi presents a disturbingly realistic picture of Delhi in post-independence era. Sahgal tries to show the failure of political machinery in the absence of a good leader. The novel also exposes corruption democratic government. She describes the all-pervading influence of Shiv Raj, the deceased Prime minister who in many respects resembles her uncle Nehru and points out that there is every need for a rededication to the values for which he stood for. But she expresses her deep concern for the decadence of values in Indian democracy in the post Nehru era.

In conclusion *A Situation in New Delhi* is a story of violence as the worst of decaying factors in the health of a nation. In this novel we find the remarkable expose of politics and society in India complete with fake, hypocrisy, meanness, corruption and manipulations. She strongly believes that fiction is about the people, basically about the character. Nor is it necessary for every writer to deal with the every class of people and every problem of the society. It depends upon the subject matter or the theme on which he/she is writing about. Her novels cover the lower to upper middle class. Devi is an aristocrat by birth and privilege and opportunity. As a socio-political

novelist, she has grounded all the historical events and shaped them into a work art in order to realize the historical consciousness.

As we see the history of Indian politics from June 1975 to March 1977, the period was marked by massive media censorship, restrictions on civil rights and a forced mass sterilization campaign. There was an article published which clearly mentions that “1975 emergency was imposed not because India was in danger, but because Indira Gandhi was”. Democracy had been hijacked to serve personal interests”. In the same way *A Situation in New Delhi* is a fiction based on historical event. Real characters are portrayed in a fictional way to make the novel look more realistic. Sahgal presents her fiction through her own experiences. The novel is very much based on history Sahgal has captured the facts of Indian politics of 1970s and has expressed her opinion by criticizing Indira Gandhi through the fictional character Devi. Devi being an educational minister she didn't care about the demonstration going in the university in the rape case of Madhu, she even tried to hold all the power in her hand as well as she even censored the biography of Shivraj for her personal motif at last she became powerless and has resigned from the post. In this way the whole novel tries to express the writer's dissatisfaction with the political leader during that time. By providing the fictional character named Devi and Shivraj, the writer Nayantara Sahgal paints the clear picture of 1970s Indian politics and also shows how the country and the people were affected after the death of Shivraj(Nehru).

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