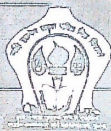


Phule Samaj Sudharak Samiti's
SHAHIR ANNABHAU SATHE MAHAVIDYALAYA,
MUKHED, DIST. NANDED (M.S.)

Jointly Organized with
S.R.T.M. University, Nanded.

One Day National Seminar
On Language & Social Science



Gender Inequalities in Patriarchal Society

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Human Relationships in Nayantara Sahgal's Storm in Chandigarh and Doris Lessing's the Grass is Singing: a Study.

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Dist. Nanded

INTRODUCTION

As men and women are the two major pillars in institution of marriage. They require equal love, respect and support of each other as well as from the family members, and society. It is the relation of love affection, concern and trust rather than submission, and enslavement. Ironically having the same requirements and responsibilities men consider it is the sole duty of wife to; compromise, sacrifice and suppression of her desires, in fact her ambitions, values and interests should go well with her husband. Apart from all this it is also the moral duty of a wife to keep her husband and his belongings satisfied and happy. It is her individual responsibility to run house hold well and take care of children. A woman's duty does not complete here only but to keep content not only the husband but his parents, relatives and whole society. Destiny of women never confined to her family only but it is the society also; which determines the fate and personality of women. In spite of this a woman always craves for the equal love and support from her partner and family. She never wants to get rid of her duties but also doesn't want to crash under the heavy weight of expectations and moral obligations. When women do not find the equality and love, she feels herself trapped, betrayed and suffered in marriage. Marriage which, cherished as the sweetest dream in the tales of her mother and grandmother, proves to be the traumatic experience. She fails to cope between her childhood dreams of marriage and the actual harsh veracity of her marriage.

Along with this she tries to make her marriage successful but without the similar inclination of her husband she again fails. She tries to restore her entity by separation and breakup but again shattered after seeing the brute face of social conventions for a divorced woman. The

present paper narrates the same saga of nuptial dissension in Nayantara Sahgal's *Storm in Chandigarh* and Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing*. As marital dissonance springs from lack of harmony and trust, sometimes it is traditional conventions of society which ground separation and frustration in relationships. In fact there is no sole reason of discord; it depends on individuals, family, culture and society also. The present study is an attempt to find out those grounds in two different cultural and social backgrounds. On the one hand I have taken Sahgal's *Storm in Chandigarh*; which is the picture of after independence Indian culture and the social order. In India after freedom it is not only politics which affected but also the life and family of natives also. Partition period and Emergency, in India not only influenced the political fronts but also life and living of its people. I shall highlight those ups and downs in relations of individual in reference with marriage, in Nayantara Sahgal's *Storm in Chandigarh*. On the other hand I have chosen Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing*; that is the representation of Southern Rhodesian farm life. It presents Mary who tries to cope with hardships of farm life along with her loveless marriage. It also indicates the fact that how traditional society forces individual to marry indeed without their wish and choice. The novel is the representation of loveless and miss match marriage, it illustrates how the protagonist suffers throughout her marriage and ultimately got murdered.

In the novel *Storm in Chandigarh*, Nayantara explores the harsh reality of society that if women willingly accept the traditional image of a wife and a mother created by male patriarchal society only then she can be happy as it is the definite fate of a woman. But that is also a reality that woman has her own independent existence in the world apart from her husband, father and son. In institution of marriage both the partner plays equal role no one is superior or inferior; both need equal love respect and care. But unfortunately reality is much different, society always expect more love, sacrifice, care and loyalty from woman but when these traits turns towards man, at the same time things become for granted. As in India a woman's loyalty is judged by the parameters of chastity but when it comes to man it is not a big deal to have extra affairs. For the sake of family, sacrifices are expected from woman not from man first. Somehow discrimination in between husband and wife creates the cause of marital discord. The present work is an attempt to find out those causes of marital discord in Nayantara Sahgal's *Storm in Chandigarh* and Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing*. Both the novels

depict marriage as the ghastly experience. I shall highlight the roots of marital discord in the lives of the protagonists. As Sahgal and Lessing both belong from different social and political background so the basis are also much different but its repercussions are somehow similar. Nayantara Sahgal's *Storm in Chandigarh* depicts the suffering of marital friction apart from the political and social up downs, it narrates the life of Inder and Saroj. Sahgal pens down the suffocating experience of marriage for both the partners. Most importantly, the writer highlights those wrong traits in marriage which causes separation. Sahgal, in this novel, deals with marital as well as political crises alongside, division in political front and fraction in marital relationships are the main themes of the novel. Duality and deceptiveness is prevalent in politics and marriage. In this novel characters come close to each other but without any emotional attachment and sincerity. There is no sensitiveness or loyalty in their relationship; it is just for time being. In the novel *Storm in Chandigarh* Sahgal narrates how the attitude of dictatorship destroys harmony of marital status. Marriage which strongly needs love and faith of both the partners, can breakdown also in presence of doubt and frustration. The main protagonist of the novel Saroj has experienced an unforgivable mistake before marriage. She has her first sexual encounter with one of her friend before marriage. When Inder came to know that, he started tormenting his wife physically as well as mentally. In spite of that Inder himself indulges in extra marital affair with Mara. Love and satisfaction, is not much prevalent in this affair also. Basically Inder is a character who always denies individuality of women. He considers women as a parasite; who could survive only with the support of a male figure. Here writer portrays the pathetic situation of Saroj who tries to show her love and affection towards her husband but fails to do so. The novelist projects Inder's authoritarian attitude as:

....he wants her to be at warm once warm and cool in bed he requires her to be wholly his and yet no burden; He wishes her to establish him in a fixed place on earth and to leave him free, to assume the monotonous daily round and not to bore him, to be always at hand and never importunate; he wants to have all to himself and not to belong to her; to live as one of the couple and to remain alone. Thus she is betrayed from the day he marries her.

(*Storm in Chandigarh* 1969: 94)

Sahgal basically projects the whole male patriarchy system, who considers women as sex gratifying object one side and on the other

side; they charge the duty to run their house and children separately. It has been assigned the first duty of a married woman. Anyhow if she fails to do the same or requires the support and co-operation from her partner, she is marked as incapable, incompetent, and incomplete. Her whole identity will be judged only by these works. De Beauvoir states the same:

Even the primitive societies that are not aware of the paternal generative role demand that woman have a husband, for the second reason why marriage is enjoined is that woman's function is also to satisfy a male's sexual needs and to take care of his household. These duties placed upon woman by society are regarded as a service rendered to her spouse: in return he is supposed to give her presents, or a marriage settlement, and to support her. (Beauvoir 1983:149-50).

Inder tries to control Saroj and her behaviour on his finger tips and impose certain set of rules on his wife. But Saroj is a kind of women who is quiet aware to her identity. She does not tolerate long, torture and hatred of her husband. She could not find love and harmony in her marital knot, as well as she fails to provide the same to her husband, Inder charges mistake after mistake over his wife. He tries to realize the blunder committed by Saroj. Saroj takes this incident just as the result of curiosity and excitement. So Saroj's promiscuity becomes the major reason of separation between two. But in spite of that Inder,s treatment towards his wife and children is extremely immodest. He treats them as if they were non-living objects. As Simon De Beauvoir points out in *The Second Sex*:

Woman is not concerned to establish individual relations with a chosen mate, but to carry on the feminine functions in their generality,[...]. In regard to her erotic fate, two essential consequences follow: first, she has no right to any sexual activity apart from marriage; sexual intercourse thus becoming an institution, desire and gratification to the interest of society for both sexes; but man, being transcended towards the universal worker and citizen, can enjoy contingent pleasures before marriage and extra-maritally.

(De Beauvoir 1983: 156-57)

After disappointment and shocked by her husband's duality, Saroj starts taking interest in Vishal Dubey, a frequent guest to their home, whose presence consoles Saroj. Inder project his code of morality on this issue also, as the interference of any other male in Saroj's life is intolerable for Inder. His frustration for Vishal pours as:

What the devil is this all about? said Inder. The silence grew heavy with dread and guilt, with All the things she refused to own. "I like to talk to him," she said in desperation, "He's a good man." He flung at her, inflamed, I Don't give a damn if he's Jesus Christ.
(Storm in Chandigarh 1969: 195)

Infact Vishal's marriage with Leela had turned out to be a vanishing search for communication. They were bound by wedding knots but failed to maintain the marital rights and obligations in the midst of all odds.

She was dedicated to the cult of conformity, to observing forms that his most intense pleas had not been able to penetrate. The whole mindless mess going on down the ages with never a shaft of new light on it. Men and women contorted into moulds, battered into sameness, the divine spiritual spark guttered out. ... Somewhere under the sun there must be another way to live, with relentless honesty, where the only cruelty would be pretence.

(Storm in Chandigarh 1969: 25)

Throughout their lives, Vishal and Leela remained strangers to each other. He is possessed by a deep sense of guilt for living with her without love. After bearing the tortures of remorse with which his relationship with Leela abruptly ended due to her death. Vishal's marriage had been a failure. Being a widower, he is deriving satisfaction in a connection with Gauri, a Bengali businessman's wife who finds security in arranged marriage but she needs and establishes a relationship with Dubey which is based only on sex.

Sahgal narrates the status of women in marriage, who normally fails to achieve as well as provide the harmonies relations to their partners. Also exhibits the difference between the tendencies of partners, leads them to extra marital affair. As Saroj's pre-marital relationship becomes the cause of failure of their marriage, which Inder has not forgotten and neither had he let her forget it. Saroj's quest for communication and sharing naturally leads her towards Vishal, whom she finds more understanding and considerate. Sahgal tries to convey a lesson to reader also, as extra- marital affairs are not the solution of the marital disharmony. In fact it increases the pain, frustration and loneliness in the lives of individuals. The novelist shows concern with the plight of a woman, being caught between an aggressive lover and a husband who turns passive to her wifely demands. As Sahgal says:

The man in Inder has not learnt the fundamental principles which can

sweeten marriage and transcend the trivial sexual prejudices and resultant emotional turmoil. That is why he is symbolic of defeat and despair in absence of communication, and sincere companionship to accommodate each other's needs and interests.

(Storm in Chandigarh 1969: 121).

The novelist explores the quest of women, to cope with a wrathful lover and suspicious and indifferent husband. In the present novel, Sahgal also exhibits how partners try to find love and harmony outside marriage. The novel is a satire on those partners who fail to provide love to their partners but ready to shower it outside marriage. As Inder attempts to get satisfaction and tender from Mara but never pay heads to his wife's crave for the same love and understanding.

After observing Nayantara's protagonists marriage lives the present chapter will focus on Doris Lessing's characters and their marriage lives. Lessing's approach towards her protagonist is quiet pragmatic. She attempts to present her characters true to life and society. She narrates her heroines and their life before and after marriage. I shall discuss how marriage marital discords spring in the life of individual not only in India but in Western culture also. As in general marriage is expected to be a matter of joy and celebration, both partners should have positive and cheerful notions. Especially girls are expected to take it more fictionally and fly high on the wings of imagination. Marriage plays an important part in the lives of individual as well as society. This has become an inseparable component of human beings.

Lessing generally narrates the twenty first century women's life. Her women characters live the life in their own way. They are independent as well as confident; her protagonists are in search of their own identity. Although these heroines don't bow down toward social conventions and are quite moderate, but in spite of being free they feel loneliness. In the first renowned novel of Doris Lessing's "The Grass is Singing", the novelist narrates the life of Mary; who married to Dick Turner. Here Lessing presents Mary's life before marriage which was independent and care free. Mary works in town is self satisfied who live alone there and does not want to have any relation with her family. In the opening pages of the novel Lessing clears Mary's idea regarding marriage and family as:

When Mary thought of „home she remembered a wooden box shaken by passing trains; when she thought of marriage she remembered her father coming home red eyed and fiddled; when she thought of children

she saw her mother's face at her children's funeral- anguished, but as dry and as hard as rock.

(The Grass is Singing 1950: 46)

The very impression of marriage and family conveys this picture to Mary. If she thinks of marriage, her parents loveless life appears, if she thinks for marriage her own mother's tragic life rounds in front of her. So willingly Mary is not interested in marriage and family. But as institution of marriage is a social phenomenon, society plays dominant role in Mary's life also. Mary Wollstonecraft penetratingly writes in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*:

It is acknowledge that they spend many of the first years of their lives in acquiring a smattering of accomplishments; meanwhile—strength of body and mind are sacrificed to libertine notions of beauty, to the desire of establishing themselves- the only way the women can rise in the world by marriage. (Wollstonecraft 1975: 10)

As I said the heroine is self contented in her free life, but once she heard her own friends talking about her age and much delayed marriage. Mary shattered down. Her own beautiful and joyful world has broken into pieces. Her friends say:

How old is she?.. Why doesn't she marry? She must have plenty of chances Something missing somewhere. She'd make someone a good wife.

(The Grass is Singing: 48)

Conversation of her friends compelled Mary to be married anyhow. Now she quickly searches for a partner who may marry her as soon as possible. She wants to marry anyhow as it is the sole aim of her life. After having bitter experience with a widower; with half grown children, she married Dick Turner. Same with Dick, he wants to fill the loneliness of his life. Subsequently he starts liking Mary. Lessing writes: "And the he began to like her, because it was essential for him to love somebody; he had not realized how very lonely he had been." (57) We can see the self-centered reasons of both partners. Her wedding knot is not tie by love, trust or affection instead of these both has their own motives to marry each other. But unfortunately in the course of the novel both failed to be happy. Now Mary is trying to fulfil her incomplete life through marriage. She thought that being married the problem of her life could be solved. But after marriage also she is unable to pile up the missing place in her life. She is not happy with her husband as well as the environment. Lessing narrates Mary's life after marriage: "A few months

after her marriage she found there was nothing more to do". (74) Now Mary is in complete distress. Lessing portrays the life of a girl who could not be satisfied with her childhood and now after marriage also she is restless. Mary finds herself in the same condition of her mother. She is facing the problems similar to her mother. Her mother's life is replacing to Mary's also. Mary cannot cope with her loveless marriage, now she regrets her own decisions of life. She is craving for her town life, her relations with her husband is not pleasant. She dislikes her husband as her home. Lessing pictures pathetic condition of a town girl who every time suffers and repents her decisions to marry but remain silent as it was her wish to marry a farmer. Every time she wants to quit the farm life, and desires to begin her life once again. Her frustration of this failure of marriage pours on the home servants, every time she is full of wrath and disgust. Dick's state is not very different to Mary; gradually he starts dispense his anger over Mary to marry him: "I told you when I married you what you could expect. You can't accuse me of telling you lies. I explained everything to you." (96)

At this time we can find distaste of both partners neither Mary nor Dick was happy with this marriage. There is much cultural dissimilarity in their lives. For Dick farm life is the only place to like and live but same is not with Mary. She abhors farm life as well as farm people. As she cannot bear the life on the farm anymore, she returns to the town, regardless of the consequences. Mary craves for her life before marriage one done day ran away from farm to town. But she has forgotten her actual status now. She is no more young and single now. She has not welcomed by the society and people. Here Mary gets another shock; her long cherished desire to be settled in town could not materialize. She feels helpless; there is no place where she could go. As Lessing represents Mary: "She began to cry, weakening into self pity. She cried for hours, till she could walk no more. She staggered back into bed, feeling bruised and beaten. The tension between them lasted for an intolerable week..." (97) Here not the male patriarchal system which dominates here but Mary's childhood experiences and racial prejudices also play vital role. It is her own psychology which influences her decision. Mary wants to marry and she did but after that also she is not happy now. Mary hates farm life and black natives which is the inseparable from Dick's life. Both try to survive, but fails due to unchangeable surrounding and financial crises. Mary and Dick ties themselves in a loveless marriage, moreover they are not happy with

their post married life. Unlike other protagonists of Lessing, Mary is not suppressed by her husband, directly. Main tragedy of this couple is; mismatch marriage. As:

"Similarity in personality between partners can predict for a marital stability and quality, and is a contributing factor subjective well being." (Arrindell & Luteijin, 2000)

Actually both of them have quite different likes and dislikes. Where Mary likes town life,

Dick is satisfied with farm life. It is his firm determination to stay at farm, due to her marriage Mary drowns day by day. She is in complete frustration. She turns to spend her time somewhere; where she may enjoy some quality time. Because of Dick's financial position and stubbornness she disappointed. She suggests Dick to plan a holiday or child, where both may restore their health and energy. But she has been denied by Dick due to lack of money.

Here not the male patriarchal system which dominates here but Mary's childhood experiences and racial prejudices also play vital role. It is her own psychology which influences her decision. Mary wants to marry and she did but after that also she is not happy now. Mary hates farm life and black natives which is the inseparable from Dick's life. Both try to survive, but fails due to unchangeable surrounding and financial crises. Mary and Dick ties themselves in a loveless marriage, moreover they are not happy with their post married life. Unlike other protagonists of Lessing, Mary is not suppressed by her husband, directly. Main tragedy of this couple is; mismatch marriage. As: "Similarity in personality between partners can predict for a marital stability and quality, and is a contributing factor subjective well being." (Arrindell & Luteijin, 2000)

Actually both of them have quite different likes and dislikes. Where Mary likes town life, Dick is satisfied with farm life. It is his firm determination to stay at farm, due to her marriage Mary drowns day by day. She is in complete frustration. She turns to spend her time somewhere; where she may enjoy some quality time. Because of Dick's financial position and stubbornness she disappointed. She suggests Dick to plan a holiday or child, where both may restore their health and energy. But she has been denied by Dick due to lack of money. Now a woman, who finds herself trapped in institution of marriage, could not find. Now a woman, who finds herself trapped in institution of marriage, could not find any way to overcome her frustration. As Mary is having racial prejudices and

complete hatred with black natives, gradually sinks into fascination towards one of her servants. Her feeling of hatred turns into love to her houseboy whom; she struck once. Mary suffers psychological conflict, due to this her dissatisfaction succeeded mental breakdown. Mary's psychology largely affects by her mismatch marriage and incapable circumstances. Mary was quite happy in her independent life but society leads her towards marriage. More over it is the miss-match of partners which becomes the boon of breakdown. Mary's physical and psychological breakdown is the result of her suffocation inside marriage, in fact Dick is also not in very good state. From which she tries once to get rid of but could not do so as unfortunately she does not has any option. Mary was sinking day by day it seems as she is waiting for her murder and at the bottom of her heart she is ready for that also. The novel ends with absolute breakdown and murder of a woman in a farm with loveless marriage. In the present novel Lessing projects the life of Mary and Dick, their consequences of marriage. The novel narrates her anxiety towards her life, husband, home and the whole environment. Apart from this Dick also repents over Mary's pathetic state due to this marriage. Mary cannot cope up with these things and ultimately shattered. Here marital discord springs from many reasons; as Mary and Dick bind themselves in marriage but both have different grounds. They try to adjust with each other but fail due to Mary's racial prejudices with natives her unpredictable behaviour, and Dick's farm life and poverty. Somehow their financial condition also causes Mary's frustration towards her husband and marriage. Moreover Mary's impulsive and Dick's submissive behaviour can also not deny. Dick does not prove to be a right partner as Lessing writes: "She (Mary) needed a man stronger than herself, and she was trying to create one out of Dick." (156). Thus they share contrast backgrounds, likes and dislikes. In this novel protagonist suffer primarily due to loveless and miss-match marriage, which ends with Mary's murder by her native servant.

After analyzing both novels protagonists marital lives, here we can say that lack of trust, love and understanding is the boon of marital discord in *Storm in Chandigarh*. As in spite of living under the same roof, Saroj and Inder are quite indifferent to each other. They crave for love outside their marriage, but couldn't inculcate it inside their relationship. On the other hand, in *The Grass is Singing*, we can observe lack of commonness and understanding to each other's concern is the core foundation of marital failure. As Dick and Mary share the house but not interest, in the

course of the novel we cannot notice any instance of commonness between them. Apart from this Mary's racial prejudices and Dick's submissiveness is the root cause of their unhappy marriage. We can conclude as:

Marriage is also a commitment that involves responsibility, requires work, and may be stressful. Although marriage has the power to provide much happiness, it also has the ability to provide the impetuses to ruin lives. A chronically dysfunctional marriage can lead to depression and anxiety. (Prolux et. Al., 2007)

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