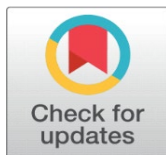
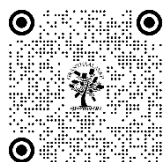


CLASH OF EXPECTATIONS IN NAYANTARA SAHGAL'S 'A TIME TO BE HAPPY'

Dr. Archana Trivedi ¹

¹Assistant Professor, SCRIET, C.C.S. University Campus, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, India



DOI

[10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i6.2024.5356](https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i6.2024.5356)

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Copyright: © 2024 The Author(s). This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#).

With the license CC-BY, authors retain the copyright, allowing anyone to download, reuse, re-print, modify, distribute, and/or copy their contribution. The work must be properly attributed to its author.



ABSTRACT

In modern time majority of the problem of husband-wife relationship relate to career-consciousness, status and self esteem. It is quite understandable that when a man and woman marry they bring with them differences of habits, attitudes and beliefs which necessitate compromises. Where adaptability fails or is too slow to cope with the demands of the situation, the consequence is discord in married life. As such it is expected of husband and wife that they should understand human nature and human relationships. It all depends on whether the couples recognise their needs, accord importance to each other within the ambit of their dealing or not. Conflict of personalities arises when they fail to achieve an agreement on common needs and wishes, or come to disregard the sense of confidence in each other.

1. INTRODUCTION

In modern time majority of the problem of husband-wife relationship relate to career-consciousness, status and self esteem. It is quite understandable that when a man and woman marry they bring with them differences of habits, attitudes and beliefs which necessitate compromises. Where adaptability fails or is too slow to cope with the demands of the situation, the consequence is discord in married life. As such it is expected of husband and wife that they should understand human nature and human relationships. It all depends on whether the couples recognise their needs, accord importance to each other within the ambit of their dealing or not. Conflict of personalities arises when they fail to achieve an agreement on common needs and wishes, or come to disregard the sense of confidence in each other.

The most important factor which brings to surface simmering discord in husband-wife relation is the diversity of expectations, desires and hopes. Husband and wives coming to live together in marriage from different familial or social backgrounds usually have their definite opinions on matters of day to day life. There is no doubt that there can be striking resemblances and common goals in a family but each individual approaches the patterns of his needs and goals with a different out look on life. When a man struggles to meet his need and desires he definitely comes into conflict with his wife. While trying to seek his identity, man may go much beyond the expectations of his wife. Intellectual incompatibility does spoil to normal relationship between man and woman.

The husband may be scholar and consider his scholastic pursuits much more important than the emotional needs of his wife. On the other hand, the wife may well wish to be duly appreciated by her husband. She may give more importance to the physical needs of her body which the husband may disregard believing in the strict discipline of his mind. The result is that the expectations of the two come in conflict with each other causing erosion in the harmonious relationship of the couples.

In Nayantara Sahgal's 'A Time to be Happy',¹ the clash of expectations, hopes, interests and desires come as a hurdle in the married life of Sanad and Kusum. The clash of their expectations Jasbir says, however does take place in them because Sanad by his determined quest for an identity and a sense of selfhood is able to reach so much that lies beyond the limited world of his upbringing."² Sanad who is a completely anglicized Indian blinded by the glamour of western civilization lives in world of make-believe with which Kusum belonging to the family with traditional moral values cannot correspond. Sanad marries Kusum whose family stands for the Gandhian values whereas Sanad's family represents the pro-British attitude. Kusum is very unhappy in her new surroundings. Sanad and Kusum did not seem pleased with each other, for as Nayantara Sahgal writes: "They must have quarreled over some trivial things – perhaps he had not returned her smile when he wake up or she had forgotten to do some little service for him which had become habitual between them" (P. 215).

Sanad, towards the end of the novel, decides to rub off his anglicized background and strives towards greater involvement with the common people. After his marriage to Kusum, who comes from a nationalist background Sanad tries to seek his identity. Sanad's main concern is how to regain his roots. He mourns his fate.

"... it is strange feeling to be midway between two worlds, not completely belonging to either. I don't belong entirely to India. I can't my education, my upbringing, and my sense of values have all combined to make me un-Indian. What do I have in common with most of my country men?" (P. 147)

Sanad becomes aware of the fact that he is an alien in his own country. His inner conflict about his rootlessness and unreal existence surface more often which implore him to be more of an Indian and less of a "carbon copy of an Englishman" (P. 232). Sanad has the talent to be happy and nothing can stop him from getting on; to identify one with one's roots is the time to be happy. He declares to resign from the British firm where he is working. By learning Hindi, wears Khaddar and by spinning home made cotton yarn, he finds a feeling a belonging to his roots. He comes to have a "healthy respect for tradition" (P. 266). Later in the novel, Sanad is found with "his attempts at analysis" and Kusum with "her valiant cocktail drinking and high heels ... taking an unnecessary devious path to happiness" (P. 243); for as Kusum herself says, "my body is in India, but my brain does not belong here. I might as well be an Englishman except for the colour of my skin" (P. 234). Through the happiness or unhappiness of Kusum, Nayantara Sahgal seems to be reflecting on her own happiness or unhappiness. The coming together of Kusum and Sanad, despite their clash of expectations is perhaps as wishful thinking on the part of the novelist.

Clash of expectations also vitiates the relationship of Maya and Harish, in the same novel. Maya Shivpal at the age of sixteen was married to Harish Shivpal, a flamboyant, extravagant and anglicized man. For Maya marriage was doomed from the beginning, chiefly on account of the opposite personalities of her husband and herself. She had a cool purity of the eucalyptus, as compared with his extravagant Gulmohar. She was the mirror-smooth lake to his rushing waterfall. She fails to establish any emotional understanding with her husband. She values the recognition of her existence more than the possession of material things. She is highly individualistic but still bound by conventions. She suffers because she refuses to submerge her individuality and cling to her personal identity at all costs. Maya feels stifled and suffocated in the modernistic atmosphere of the life of her husband.

The first onslaught on their marriage is felt when Maya does not succeed in becoming a grateful hostess to Harish's European friends as she is hesitant to dance or play with them due to her shyness. Harish feels it a sort of insult, for the people present there begins to taunt him with the remark that "a man so obviously intended for advancement should have so apathetic a (P. 20). Further, Harish has never found time in his life to pause in wonder or to show admiration for his wife whom he had considered as "a slab of marble" (P. 20). This is due to the fact that he is too much preoccupied in playing tennis or relaxing with a cigar or a glass of port.

This clash of wills is further accentuated after Maya's sixteenth birth day, for her emotions become subdued whereas her husband's are still strong. And Nayantara Sahgal writes:

"She had the cool purity of the eucalyptus, as compared with his extravagant Gulmohar. She was the mirror smooth lake to his rushing waterfall" (P. 42).

Further, their married life is: "Sterile, if exotic bloom, having all the enviable facade – the looks, the money, the position that are deemed important by the World – but not the fragrance or the productivity inherent in a living breathing spirit" (P. 42).

It seemed to her to be deprived of joyous atmosphere of that full bustling home which provided her with the warmth she sought so much so that she ceased to expect it and believed that she even did not want it. On the eve of Diwali, again, when the narrator asks her why she does not illuminate the house, she admits that she has asked the servants to do so since Harish "does not pray, and I cannot pray in an empty house" (P. 43). So the gulf between them continues widening and Nayantara Sahgal adds "it was tragic that two young people who should have been ideally suited were, infact, as remote from each other as strangers" (P. 43).

Nayantara Sahgal here seems to be suggesting something from her own personal life that "a man's ego and ambition, I learned, must be served first. In case of conflict, the man's will and desires must prevail."³

Govind Narayan's father and Ammaji in the same novel have clash in their married life because Govind Narayan's mother is a woman of compromising nature whereas her husband never tries to understand her emotions, desires and hopes. She desperately tries to find a meeting point between her husband's opinions and her own but fails, for Govind Narayan's father is an "indolent pleasure – loving man" and, as such, cannot understand her, "nun-like disdain of luxury or her stubborn refusal to submit to the mould in which he had tried to cast her" (P. 25), and she compromises herself with her lot, becomes passive like a typical Indian woman: "All my needs are here within the house", she declared, "what is there for me in the world outside? You who are young, must enjoy yourselves. For me the worldly life is over and the time of contemplation begun" (P. 31-32).

To conclude, clash of expectations, desires and wills cause conflict in married lives of couples. Nayantara Sahgal mainly confines herself to the physical and intellectual world of her characters. She seems to suggest that this marital discord can be avoided if partners show readiness to bend by having compromises rather than break by adopting rigid attitudes. So marital discord which occurs due to the clash of expectations, wishes and desires is resolved finally in most of the cases and the unhappy couples resort to the ideal of conformity in order to avoid further split in their matrimonial alliance.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

REFERENCES

- A Time to be Happy – Sterling publication, New Delhi, 1975.
Jasbir Jain 'Nayantara Sahgal' (New Delhi : Arnold Heinemann, 1978), pp. 89.
"Turning point – This time of fulfillment" Femina, 7-20, May 1976, pp. 15.
Marital Discord in Indian English Novel – K.K. Khurana, K.K. Publications, Delhi.