

Comparison Between The Day in Shadow Male Protagonists Raj and Som and Home Male Protagonists Yashpal and Premnath

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Abstract

Indian English fiction has remarkably contributed to the exploration of gender, family, and identity in postcolonial India. While many critics focus primarily on female protagonists and women's oppression, male characters also reveal the deep complexities of patriarchal society. Nayantara Sahgal in *The Day in Shadow* and Manju Kapur in *Home* depict male protagonists who symbolize different dimensions of masculinity, authority, and emotional conflict. Raj and Som in *The Day in Shadow* represent contrasting attitudes toward marriage, individuality, and emotional relationships in urban modern India. Similarly, Yashpal and Premnath in *Home* reflect the traditional patriarchal values of the joint-family system and the pressures of maintaining social respectability. Through these characters, both writers critically examine how patriarchy shapes male behaviour and influences family relationships. This paper strives a comparative study of these male protagonists and analyzes their roles in representing changing masculine identities in Indian society.

Introduction

Indian English literature after independence witnessed a major transformation in themes and characterization. Writers began focusing not only on nationalism and politics but also on domestic life, gender relations, social conflict, and psychological struggles. Women writers such as Nayantara Sahgal and Manju Kapur made chief contributions by presenting realistic portrayals of Indian families and social structures. Although these writers are often related with feminist concerns, their male characters are equally important because they expose the functioning of patriarchy within society.

The purpose of this paper is to compare these four male protagonists and examine their personalities, attitudes toward women, family responsibilities, emotional limitations, and social values. Through comparative analysis, the paper highlights how Sahgal and Kapur critique patriarchal structures and present changing images of Indian masculinity.

Raj as a Symbol of Patriarchal Authority

Raj in *The Day in Shadow* is shown as a successful and socially respectable man who values control and authority in personal relationships. His marriage with Simrit lacks emotional intimacy because he treats marriage more as a social institution than as a partnership based on mutual understanding.

Raj's personality displays the traditional patriarchal belief that a husband possesses authority over his wife. One of the most significant aspects of Raj's character is his emotional coldness. Even after divorce, he continues to dominate Simrit through financial pressure and legal restrictions. The unfair divorce settlement demonstrates how patriarchy operates not only emotionally but also economically. Raj uses his social power to maintain superiority and to punish Simrit for seeking independence. He also symbolizes the modern educated male who outwardly appears progressive but internally remains conservative. He belongs to the urban elite class, yet his mindset reflects traditional male dominance. Sahgal uses Raj to criticize the hypocrisy of upper-middle-class Indian society, where modern education and social status do not necessarily lead to gender equality.

Furthermore, Raj's inability to understand Simrit's emotional needs shows the limitations of patriarchal masculinity. He values discipline, order, and social image more than emotional connection. His character reveals how patriarchy damages not only women but also men, making them emotionally distant and psychologically rigid.

Som as a Sensitive and Intellectual Male Figure

In contrast to *Raj*, *Som* is represented as a compassionate, intellectual, and emotionally aware individual who understands Simrit's loneliness and emotional suffering. Through *Som*, Sahgal presents an alternative model of masculinity based on empathy and companionship rather than authority and domination. His relationship with Simrit is based on emotional understanding and intellectual compatibility. Unlike *Raj*, he respects Simrit's individuality and encourages her emotional growth. He does not attempt to control or suppress her identity making him an important contrast to the patriarchal male image represented by *Raj*.

However, *Som* is not portrayed as a perfect or revolutionary figure. He too struggles with social expectations and personal uncertainty. Although he is emotionally sensitive, he often hesitates to challenge social conventions openly. This hesitation suggests that even progressive men remain influenced by patriarchal culture. Sahgal uses *Som* to exemplify the possibility of emotional equality in relationships while also showing the difficulties faced by men who attempt to move beyond traditional masculine roles. *Som's* character reflects the emergence of modern liberal masculinity in post-independence urban India.

Yashpal and the Traditional Family Structure

In *Home*, *Yashpal* represents the conservative patriarchal male deeply rooted in family traditions and business culture. He belongs to a traditional joint family where discipline, obedience, and family honor are considered supreme values. *Yashpal* believes that the stability of the family depends upon maintaining hierarchy and authority. He works hard for the economic welfare of the family and expects others to follow traditional norms. His identity is closely connected with his role as provider and protector of the family. Like many traditional Indian men, he sacrifices personal emotions for social respectability.

At the same time, *Yashpal's* rigid adherence to patriarchal values creates emotional distance within family relationships. He struggles to understand the desires and individuality of women and younger family members. His authority often suppresses open communication and emotional freedom. Kapur presents *Yashpal* realistically rather than critically condemning him. He is not intentionally cruel, but he is conditioned by social traditions that define masculinity in terms of control, responsibility, and discipline. Through *Yashpal*, Kapur explores how patriarchy becomes normalized within everyday family life.

Premnath and the Conflict Between Tradition and Modernity

Premnath is another significant male character in *Home* who represents the tension between personal ambition and traditional expectations. Unlike *Yashpal*, *Premnath* is less rigid and more emotionally expressive. He desires individual freedom and occasionally questions family norms. His character reflects the transitional nature of Indian society where traditional values coexist with modern aspirations. He wants to enjoy personal independence, but he cannot completely separate himself from family obligations. This internal conflict makes him a complex and realistic character.

Although *Premnath* appears more flexible than *Yashpal*, he still benefits from patriarchal privilege. He enjoys greater freedom than female characters and possesses authority within the family structure. His emotional sensitivity does not completely free him from patriarchal conditioning. Kapur uses *Premnath* to show how modernization affects male identity in contemporary India. Men are increasingly exposed to ideas of individuality and personal freedom, yet they remain tied to traditional expectations regarding family responsibility and social honor.

Comparative Study of the Four Male Protagonists

Raj, *Som*, *Yashpal*, and *Premnath* represent different forms of masculinity shaped by Indian society. *Raj* and *Yashpal* embody patriarchal authority, valuing control, discipline, and male dominance. *Raj* expresses this through urban, emotional and legal control, while *Yashpal* represents traditional authority within a joint family system. In contrast, *Som* and *Premnath* are more emotionally sensitive and less authoritarian, but they still cannot fully escape patriarchal influence. All four characters struggle with emotional expression, as societal expectations force men to appear strong and suppress vulnerability. This often leads to emotional distance and conflict in relationships.

The novels also differ in focus: *The Day in Shadow* explores urban psychological conflict and alienation, while *Home* highlights domestic life and traditional family structures.

Feminist Perspective

From a feminist viewpoint, both novels show patriarchy as a system that shapes both men and women. The male characters are not simply oppressors but products of social conditioning. *Raj* and *Yashpal* reflect emotional rigidity, while *Som* and *Premnath* show limited resistance to social norms.

The novels suggest that gender equality requires changing masculine identity as well as women's roles. By presenting complex male characters, Sahgal and Kapur critique patriarchy and its emotional consequences.

Conclusion

The Day in Shadow and *Home* explore masculinity, family, and patriarchy in Indian society. While *Raj* and *Yashpal* represent traditional authority, *Som* and *Premnath* reflect softer masculinity. However, all remain shaped by social expectations. The novels highlight the need for emotional understanding, equality, and change in gender roles, showing how Indian English fiction reflects social transformation.



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