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**THE FEMINIST APPROACH AND THE FICTIONAL
WORLD OF NAYANTARA SAHGAL:
A CRITICAL STUDY**

**A
DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE
SAURASHTRA UNIVERSITY, RAJKOT**

**FOR THE AWARD OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN
ENGLISH**

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2009

STATEMENT UNDER UNI. O. Ph.D. 7

I hereby declare that the work embodied in my thesis entitled as **THE FEMINIST APPROACH AND THE FICTIONAL WORLD OF NAYANTARA SAHGAL: A CRITICAL STUDY**, prepared for Ph.D. Degree has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University on any previous occasion.

And to the best of my knowledge, no work has been reported on the above subject.

And the work presented in this thesis is original and wherever references have been made to the work of others, they have been clearly indicated as such and the source of information is included in the bibliography.

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(Ms. Twinkle B. Manavar)

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CHAPTER – I

INTRODUCTION

I

During almost six decades of post-colonial history of Indian English fiction, a wide variety of novelists has emerged focusing attention on a multitude of social, economic, political, religious and spiritual issues faced by three coinciding periods of human experience. India as a subject matter of literary writing is uniquely placed because within a period of half a century it witnessed diversified upheavals and tremors caused by the coexistence of post-colonial nostalgia, the new colonial awareness as well as the post-modernist revivalism. Interestingly, the women novelists have been at the core of all literary writings of this phase. With the turn of the century the Indian English women novelists have surpassed their male counterparts outnumbering them quantitatively as well as by maintaining a high standard of literary writing, equally applauded in India and abroad, experimenting boldly with not only technique but also by incorporating tabooed subject matters in their novels and short stories.

Indian writing in English has gained immense popularity and recognition in the last two decades of the 20th century. From Raja Rao to Salman Rushdie, the fictional writers have concentrated on changing societal patterns, transformation of values, and on the individual's predicament in a society in transition. Rapid

industrialization, scientific revolutions and upsurge of information technologies, have all led to a devaluation of ethics and crumbling of culture. Indian writers have constantly tried to adapt themselves to the changing scenario. The seed of Indian Writing in English was sown during the period of the British rule in India. Gradually, there emerged a few talented writers of this living and evolving literary genre, who could lift this form to international status and universal recognition. The three names usually mentioned in the literary circles in this context are Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao. They are known as 'The Big Three', an epithet coined by the noted English critic William Walsh. Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand and R. K. Narayan in their own inimitable style adopted the English language to serve their purpose. The credit of bringing a name and reputation to Indo-English fiction goes to them. These three innovative writers have brought world recognition to the new genre namely Indian-English fiction.

While considering Indian-English literature, one can perceive 'Indianness' in Indian Writing in English. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar states, "What makes Indo-Anglian literature an Indian literature and not just a ramshackle outhouse of English literature is the quality of its 'Indianness' in the choice of its subjects, in the texture of thought and play of sentiment, in the organization of material and in the creative use of language."¹ Whereas Meenakshi Mukherjee observes, "Whatever be the language in which it is written, a novel by an Indian writer demands direct involvement in values and experiences which are valid in the Indian context."² What the Indian critics expect in

Indian Writing in English is only a feel of the shared experience of the tradition, culture and heritage which they have in common with the writer.

The themes of the Indo-English fiction are the problems of social, domestic and sex. The most prominent technique of narration in the Indo-English fiction is the stream of consciousness narrative. Mulk Raj Anand introduced this technique in the Indo-English fiction. Raja Rao adopted the autobiographical form of narration. The phenomenon of Mulk Raj Anand owes directly to the depression of the thirties and to India's quest for national identity. It should be easy enough to dismiss Anand as a mere social realist. The portrayal of middle-class life in R. K. Narayan's novels is realistic and authentic. The 'Big Three' are followed by other distinguished writers like Manohar Malgonkar, Khushwant Singh, Bhabani Bhattacharya and Balachandra Rajan.

In the galaxy of Indian novelists in English, Indian women writers too shine luminously like their male counterparts by their significant contribution to enrichment of Indian English novels. Though women writers attempted their hands at this new genre as early as 1879. Indian women novelists in English constitute a significant group. Fiction by women writers constitutes a major segment of the contemporary Indian writing in English. It provides insights, a wealth of understanding, a reservoir of meanings and a basis of discussion. In Indian novelists in English, women writers like R. P. Jhabvala, Nayantara Sahgal, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy, Shobha De, Bharati Mukherjee,

Jhumpa Lahiri, Rama Mehta, Manju Kapur and Geeta Mehta have heralded new consciousness, particularly the pathetic plight of the Indian women. Through women writer's eyes, we can see a different world, with their assistance we can seek to realize the potential of human achievement. Though a Western art form has been applied to an Indian mode of storytelling in the Indo-English fiction, the content of it seems to be Indian revealing the Indian sensibility and the Indian social and political situations. The comprehensive vision and philosophical insight of the Indian novelist makes him on a par with the writers of international repute. There were also some women novelists who adopted the technique of narrating a fiction. If the male writers concentrated on the individual's predicament, socio-economic-political changes; and an over simplification of the feminine; women writers have concerned themselves with the subtleties of oppression, issues of power in a patriarchal set up and the unjust marginalization of woman.

Since the beginning of the feminist movement in 1960s in the West, much has been written on women. Only a few feminist writers made their contribution to the women's movement against this oppression. Margaret Drabble, Doris Lessing, Iris Murdoch, Marilyn French and Margaret Atwood have contributed greatly to the movement and have been internationally acclaimed as feminist novelists. They announced a rise of a new wave of feminism across the world. Their influence on India resulted in a new breed of Indian feminists. The prominent feminist novelists in the breed are Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Namita Gokhale, Shobha De,

R. P. Jhabvala, Kamala Markandaya and Arundhati Roy. They occupy a prestigious position in Indo-English fiction. Their writings reflect a variety of shades, colours and visions. The assertion of identity in their writings deserves a better treatment at the hands of their male counterpart. They protested against the cruelty perpetrated on the women by portraying their responses and reactions. The spirit of revolt against mechanical life, mismatched marriages and wayward ways of their life partners was obvious in their writings. The protagonists of their novels are women of a typical Indian society. The plot of their story is woven around the women who negotiate the oppression of a patriarchal society.

The modern novels of 80s paid attention to the miserable plight of the contemporary middle-class, urban Indian woman. They attempted to reconstruct Indian womanhood, which has been characterized as ideally warm, gentle and submissive and the view that women deserved only to be kept in subordination to the male members of the family. Many of the Indian women novelists focus on women's issues; they have a women's perspective on the world. The prominent women writers like Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Shashi Deshpande, Namita Gokhale, Geeta Mehta, Rama Mehta, Shobha De, Arundhati Roy, Anita Kumar, Meera Syal, Meena Alexander, Manju Kapur and others have distinguished themselves for their boldness in presenting the status of woman in Indian society and for depicting man-woman relationship in fictional form. It is only after the emergence of women writers that we have been able to have a deep insight into the psyche of the Indian female.

Indian women novelists have turned towards the woman's world with great introspective intensity and authenticity. They have launched a voyage within to explore the private consciousness of their women characters and to measure them. In the novel of Anita Desai and Nayantara Sahgal, women are no more goddesses; they are human beings and move from bondage to freedom, from indecision to self-assertion, from weakness to strength. While these two women novelists deal with the urban upper class women, Shashi Deshpande delineates the middle class educated women to show that what man has made of woman. Her women are anti-patriarchal protagonists. Shobha De projects woman as a creative force that controls the dynamics of the society. Kamala Markandaya's women lord over the male. Markandaya makes her woman a domineering professor, an active victimizer of an adolescent male. She pictures a woman's world where the man is manipulated, purchased, commanded, exploited and taken around like a pet. There is a varied image of woman in the fiction by women.

Kamala Markandaya, the earliest of the top-ranking women novelists, shot to fame with her very first novel, *Nectar in a Sieve*, Kamala Markandaya has ten novels to her credit. Her novels reflect the East-West encounter in different contexts and project the resultant identity crisis. In novel after novel, she explores life in Indian in the context of the impact of modernity on the traditional Indian society and the cultural upheaval. She protests against oppression and domination. Kamala Markandaya's first novel, *Nectar in a Sieve* made her a lovable writer of great fiction. In the writings of Markandaya, the

female characters are subjected to binary pulls torn between tradition and modernity, between the desire for autonomy and emancipation and her need for nurturance, between her duty as a daughter, a wife and a mother and her dignity as a human being. Women in Markandaya's novels are beyond doubt victims of social and economic pressures and disparities. Markandaya has portrayed women from varied age groups and social backgrounds in her novels. She has also shown how changes in economic and social order adversely affect women more than men. However, her women emerge out of the darkness, bravely throwing off their legacy of humiliation, dependence and resignation seeking equality with their male counterparts. Her canvas is small but she fills it with living pulsating people — people in relation to one another. It is observed, "Personal relationships are Kamala Markandaya's forte — step by step she builds up relationships, analyzes them and dramatically makes them represent something larger than themselves."³

Shashi Deshpande is another significant writer whose novels are concerned with the woman's quest, an exploration into the female psyche and an understanding of the mysteries of life and the protagonist's place in it. A common pattern of the feminine aspirations can be discerned in all her novels. They deal with Indian woman in disharmony with her sexual, cultural and social roles. She tries to assert herself not only as a woman, wife or mother, but also as an individual. Shashi Deshpande, in all her novels exhibits a sharp psychological insight into the subtleties of the human mind and society. She focuses on the working of the psyche of her women

characters who plunge into periods of psychic disturbance due to traumatic experiences in life. Almost all the novels of Shashi Deshpande revolve round the pathetic and heart rending condition of women in a male dominated society. In her analysis of the post-modern dilemma of women, she concentrates on career women and the problems they face outside the threshold of their homes in a basically male-dominated social set-up. She has portrayed women of different ages and has reflected their psyche likewise. She has portrayed an essential woman's world where men are present only by the power they wield over their wives and daughters. Hers is a world where women suffer numerous losses but cope up with each crisis with the passage of time. Women have the aptitude for survival.

Almost all the novels of Shashi Deshpande deal with a crisis in the life of the protagonist. In this sense, her work is women-oriented. It is a mere in depth portrayal of a woman and the meaning of being a woman in modern India. About women being the focal point of her writings she stated:

Most of my writing comes out of my intense and long suppressed feelings about what it is to be a woman in our society: it comes out of the experience of the difficulty of playing the different roles conjoined upon me by society, out of the knowledge that I am something more and something different from the sum total of these roles. My writing comes out of my consciousness

of the conflict between my idea of myself as a human being and the idea that society has of me as a woman.⁴

Her women characters evolve along with the creator's understanding of women. Her writing is clearly a part of Indian literature and emerges from her rootedness in middle class Indian society. She uses simple language to describe simple life especially of the Indian women.

Anita Desai breaks a new ground in the world of Indian-English fiction by shifting the emphasis from the external to the internal world. She adds a new dimension to the achievement of Indian women writers in English fiction by probing into the inner lives of her women characters. She creates a world of her own which she fills up with extraordinarily sensitive beings. She is recognized as the pioneer of psychological novel in modern Indian English literature. The most remarkable feature of her art is the portrayal of characters. She penetrates psychologically deep into the inner working of women and externalizes their passive reaction. She delves deep into the psyche of her women characters where she finds them struggling to strike a balance between self and society. In many cases, the endeavour leads to a sense of loneliness and alienation while in several others there is a strong desire to overpower this as well. She deals with the mind and the soul of a character, his inner workings and hidden and silent thoughts rather than his outer appearances. She heralded a new era of psychological exploration of inner mind in her novels.

The novels of Anita Desai are basically female oriented. She writes of the woman as a victim in a patriarchal and father-dominated Indian family. The Indian woman is, forever, dominated by and dependent upon a male member of her family. These are the various phases of an Indian woman's life and the novelist sharply focuses upon the emotional reactions of the woman as she experiences these stages. She delineates the Indian woman as a fighter, a victim, a heroine and ultimately a winner because of her indomitable spirit and attitude of compromise. She depicts the exploration of the disturbed psyche of the Indian woman laying emphasis on the factors of loneliness and alienation. Her novels portray the inner lives of hypersensitive women who are in eternal quest for meaningful life. Her protagonists suffer intensely because of their futile attempt to find emotional contact, response and understanding. Her concern with and search for the causes of human suffering lends intensity and depth to her writings. She paints on a small canvas but succeeds in adding a third dimension to it. In fact, she has carved a special niche for herself in the world of Indian-English fiction.

Ruth Praver Jhabvala has also left an indelible imprint in the history of women novelists in English. She is variously described as inside outsider and outside insider. She was born of Polish parents in Germany and got her education in England but married an Indian and lived in India more than twenty-four years. She wrote eight novels and published collections of short stories. Her work highlights that India is her preoccupation. Most of her writings deal with the various shades of Indianness, apart from many other things. Repeatedly she turns to

the theme of the interaction between two cultures namely European and Indian. Her fictional world is pervaded by domestic atmosphere and deals with familial themes. She concentrates on the milieu familiar to her — the middle and upper middle class Indian society in Delhi.

Ruth Jhabvala as a major woman novelist is less concerned with the personality development of her women; she is attracted by the double standards of Indian women in general. She can be said to have dealt with distortion of modernity and women's liberation. Her women do not go against traditions out of any firm conviction. Jhabvala is concerned with the psychological state of mind of Indian women who undergo inexpressible sufferings in their marital life. She points out in her novels how agony in the mind of these women results from frustration in love, infidelity, betrayal, divorce and disintegration in their marital life. She mirrors the undesirable features of Indian social life and attributes them as the source of suffering of Indian women. Her interest in and keen observation of the cultural upheaval that India is experiencing and its impact on the common man find artistic expression in her novels. Her keen observation and awareness of life in Indian society combined with her critical penetration results in the authentic portrayal of the day-to-day life of individuals in different predicaments. She is especially aware of the position of women in Indian family and her novels portray the change that is brought in her attitude in the changing cultural context.

Shobha De is a modern novelist who is famous for portraying the sexual mania of the commercial world. She may rightly be

described as a very realistic writer portraying the world of glamour in the Indian upper middle class milieu without any inhibition. She is the author of twelve books. As a writer, she is gifted with extraordinary ability to discuss very sensitive aspects of human life. She narrates each and every aspect of human relationship wonderfully. She believes in frankness and open-heartedness in narration of incidents. Her popularity as a writer is her intimate understanding of the psyche of women and her problems. She is thus a feminist writer who concentrates on women's problems and gives a new approach to them. She has tried her best to expose the moral and spiritual breakdown of modern society in which a helpless and forsaken woman longs for pleasure and wants to fly freely in the sky of freedom.

Most of the women characters depicted by Shobha De are economically independent and socially uninhibited who are conscious of their self-respect because they are competent professionals working shoulder to shoulder with their male counterparts. Her characters are working women, socialites who are intrinsically attracted towards the world of glamour. Guided by the desire to earn quick money and also to get a place in the higher strata of society they compromise with some unbecoming demands of society. In her novels, the women are placed in their varied roles as daughter, sister, wife, mother and the career woman. Shobha De succeeds in painting a picture of a very different section of society. The women in her world are enterprising, bold, innovative and ever ready to accept challenges. Shobha De introduces the reader to the inner lives of the elite women of Bombay. She shatters the myth that these women have a life full of happiness

and contentment. On the contrary, she probes the psyche of her women characters to reveal the trauma, insecurity and agony that lies beneath the gloss and glitter. The women in her novels, however liberated, educated, assertive or confident do not totally rule out the idea of marriage in their lives.

Bharati Mukherjee, now settled abroad, is yet another significant woman novelist. Even though it is nearing three decades since she left India for the American continent, familial ties continue to bind her to the country of her birth. Her varied experiences in life find ample place in her writings both fiction as well as non-fiction. In fact, Bharati Mukherjee had to come to terms with her own identity in an alien land, caught as she was between two conflicting cultures. She can be described as a writer who has lived through several phases of life, first as a colonial, then as a national subject in India, then as an exile as a post-colonial Indian in Canada, and finally as an immigrant, later as a citizen, in the United States. She narrates her stories from a wide variety of perspectives, concentrating upon the concept of self within a large society. A study of her works would show us the transformation of the novelist from an immigrant author to an American writer. Her themes focus on the phenomenon of migration, the status of the new immigrants, their feeling of alienation as expatriates, and the Indian woman sojourning abroad and her struggle for identity.

Bharati Mukherjee's novels are an engrossing study in the progression of women from feminine to female as stipulated by Elaine Showalter. Her women characters are sensitively portrayed and

therefore, are best appreciated in their psychological depths. Her characters come from all parts of the world with divergent ethnic, religious and cultural preoccupations. Her women characters suffer from a lack of cultural identity and are also victims of social oppression specially racism and sexism. However, the women in Mukherjee's novels are docile creatures who believe in wrestling with their own problems rather than trying to dominate their male counterparts. Her writings contain the idea of split between desire and reason, dependent security and autonomy, social and psychic identity. She believes in the present not in the past, for it will help shape her future. In fact, Bharati Mukherjee is placed amongst contemporary Indian women novelists in English.

Arundhati Roy as a writer of the nineties is a representative of the current Indian writing in English. She seems to be a harsh critic of the traditional way of Indian life especially the one that Indian women have been leading. She is modernistic in her approach to life as well as to art. Arundhati Roy emerged on the international fictional scene by her first novel, *The God of Small Things*, a Booker Prize Winner Book. In spite of the fact that the novelist has shown the brutal truth of society, she has not forgotten the norms of great art in terms of images and symbols, ironies and overtones and other aesthetic aspects of life. The novelist has a unique gift of being able to see even the smallest, apparently meaningless details and create a complex, significant and aesthetically satisfying mosaic of life.

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* is the truthful portrayal of the plight of women in society and their strenuous

struggle to be recognized as a human being in the male-dominated conservative world, the novel deals with the pathetic plight of a woman, Ammu, divorced by her husband and neglected by family. Arundhati Roy portrays a detail picture of Ammu's transformation from childhood to an adolescence, to the experience of marriage to a sympathetic and affectionate mother, to a rebel wife who challenges the age long hypocritical moral stand of a patriarchal family. In fact, the novel can be said to be about several things. We can call it a protest novel which is radical, subversive and taboo-breaking. Those interested in politics can also claim that it is a satire on politics. Perhaps the most striking aspect of the novel is the treatment of the dalits in the novel. It deals with the universal theme of social consciousness in terms of exposure of the tyranny and injustice to the untouchable, the insult and tribulations to the deserted and the defenceless in the police custody, and the class discrimination prevalent in the society.

This brief survey of Indian women novelists in English clearly shows that women have made their permanent mark in the field of English fictions. The women novelists constitute a major group of the Indian writers in English. Women writers are now enjoying an increasing popularity and prestige. They have an impressive record of success. Women novelists writing in English attempt to project woman as the central figure and seem to succeed in presenting the predicament of woman most effectively. The work of women writers has given a distinct dimension to the image of woman in the family

and society. In most of their writings, they have tried their best to free the female mentality from the age long control of male domination.

Among the women writers, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Ruth Praver Jhabvala and Nayantara Sahgal are foremost in the field. Women come to occupy the central position in the fictional world of the women novelists. As Jasbir Jain observes: “in almost every novel, Nayantara has a central woman character who gradually moves towards an awareness of her emotional needs.”⁵ The emotional world of woman is explored and analyzed with admirable insight and sympathetic perception. Anita Desai mainly explores the emotional world of woman, “revealing a rare imaginative awareness of various deeper forces at work and a profound understanding of feminine sensibility as well as psychology.”⁶ Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Shobha De and Bharati Mukherjee have written about women in a varied cultural perspective. They have probed the psyche of their creation and thereby have analysed their relationship with society at large. Among the women writers mentioned above, Markandaya alone has attempted to deal with the problem of subsistence. The range of Markandaya’s novels is varied and wide. The theme of East-West encounter fascinates both Kamala Markandaya and Ruth Jhabvala. While Kamala Markandaya is concerned with the disturbing impact of the Western influence on the economic, social and cultural life of India, Jhabvala studies the impact of India on the Westerner. Nayantara Sahgal’s novels read like commentaries on the political and social turmoil that India has been facing since independence. Her concern for the women who are

caught in the dilemma of liberty and individuality or stability and protection of marriage is understandable. The women writers have shown an admirable understanding of the problems and the predicaments of the women.

The above study reveals that a quest for identity, cultural conflicts, the impact of industrialization in India and the consequent social and economic changes, the problem of the expatriates and immigrants and the personal relationships especially between man and wife, are some of the common themes that are dealt with by the women writers under consideration. Women writers in English present, with insight and understanding, the dilemma which modern women are facing in recent times. The novelists have exploited their skill in projecting convincingly the agonized mind of the persecuted women. Their portrayal of women characters in the novels invariably bears authenticity to their feminist approach, outlook and perspective. Their keen observation of the life of Indian women and their interest in the study of their inner mind are evidenced by their vivid and panoramic portrayal of their plight. The women novelists focus in their novels on the existential predicament and travails of the subdued women in a male dominated society governed by rigid traditions and restricts. These writers dive deep into the inner mind of the repressed women by virtue of their feminine sensibility and psychological insight and bring to light their issues which are the outcome of their psychological and emotional imbalances.

II

Nayantara Sahgal is one of the distinguished Indo-English writers who write in the stream of national consciousness. The first generation of important women writers began publishing their work in the 1950s. Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Santha Rama Rau were all active on the literary scene. During this period, Nayantara Sahgal emerged as one of the most significant voices in the realm of Indian English fiction. Nayantara Sahgal's first book *Prison and Chocolate Cake* (1954), an autobiography, was published when she was only twenty-seven years old. The book describes the powerful associations and experiences of her childhood and provides invaluable insight into the shaping influences of her life. The political consciousness, which dominates her literary creations, is real and inseparable from herself and her surroundings. In the preface to *Prison and Chocolate Cake*, Nayantara Sahgal writes:

We grew up at a time when India was the stage for a great political drama and we shall always remain a little dazzled by the performances we have seen.⁷

In the same book, she says:

Our growing up was India's growing up into political maturity — a different kind of political maturity from any the world had seen before,

based on an ideology inspired by self-sacrifice, compassion and peace.⁸

Born in a family of freedom fighters, which had politics in its very blood, Nayantara Sahgal is indeed qualified to write political novels of high quality. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar rightly observes:

Mrs. Sahgal's feeling for politics and her command over English are rather more impressive than her art as a novelist. There is too much contriving, and the principal characters are hardly convincing; and there are satirical patches that stand out as though they have been lifted from Mrs. Sahgal's journalism.⁹

In her address to the colloquim at Radcliffe Institute, she said:

I grew up during the national movement. My parents went to jail repeatedly during our fight for freedom. My father died as a result of his last imprisonment released too late to be cured of the serious illness he had contracted in jail. My uncle became our first Prime Minister. I was born and brought up within the atmosphere and hopes and ideals of the Congress Party. Its leaders were familiar to me. Our home was their meeting place

and many decisions momentous to India were taken in it. I became a novelist and a political journalist, and all my writings, fiction and non-fiction, has been about contemporary India.¹⁰

Nayantara Sahgal was born in Allahabad on May 10, 1927 into one of India's most prominent political families. With her mother Vijayalakshmi Pandit as India's first ambassador to the U. N., her uncle Jawaharlal Nehru as India's first Prime Minister, and her first cousin, Indira Gandhi as India's third Prime Minister as well as the first woman Prime Minister of India; it is not surprising that politics and history inspire and underlie much of her writing. She is a prolific writer. She has to her credit nine novels, two biographies, two political commentaries and a large number of articles, contributions to various newspapers and magazines.

Nayantara Sahgal is the second of the three daughters of Ranjit Sitaram Pandit and Vijayalakshmi Pandit. Her childhood was spent in Anand Bhawan at Allahabad with her parents, her maternal uncle, Jawaharlal Nehru and her cousin, Indira Gandhi. Her childhood and adolescence were spent amidst India's political reverberations, the crusade for emancipation from the British yoke and the influence of Gandhian ideas of freedom and non-violence. She has, as A. V. Krishna Rao states, "inherited and cherished a certain set of values and attitudes toward life which can be best described as a complex of political liberalism, social sophistication, economic moderation and cultural catholicity in continual interaction with the Gandhian

idealism.”¹¹ She reminisces about her childhood in “This Time of Fulfilment” as —

I was conscious of being continually stretched in mind and spirit of being encouraged to be venturesome, of doing the daring rather than the timid thing, of taking risks rather than playing safe, and I was keenly aware of the joy of being myself, like every other person — a unique human being.¹²

The cherished independence and courage fostered at home, grew with her education at Woodstock, Mussoorie. After her schooling at Woodstock, a school managed by American missionaries at Mussoorie, Nayantara went to America for higher studies. She did her B. A. in history from Wellesley College, Massachusetts, in 1947. She experienced great shock when her father died in 1944. She realised the loss of her father only after her coming back to India in 1947. Then Nayantara got married in 1949 with an ambitious youngman Gautam Sahgal.

In her article “This Time of Fulfilment” she mentions the two turning points in her life. The first turning point was her marriage to Gautam, a businessman. She describes her marriage:

For the first time I came across the shocking assumption of inequality. A man’s ego and

ambition, I learned, must be served first. In case of conflict, the man's will and desire must prevail.... I was uneasy and restless, adjusting to the demands of a personality and an environment whose goals and texture were different from anything I had known or been comfortable with.¹³

The unhappy marriage ended in a divorce in 1967 which left her walked into the world fearlessly. Thus, the major theme in her works is disharmony and dissolution of marriage. The second turning point was her decision to live with a brilliant bureaucrat, E. N. Mangat Rai which she described in her own words, "not an affair but a revolution, a self discovery that life had to be lived more fully in order to be meaningful."¹⁴ Later in 1979, she married Mangat Rai, after many years of living together. She analyses her second marriage:

Neither of us was at all interested in getting married. But in 1979, the Janata government appointed me ambassador to Italy and that forced me to marry.... Fundamentally, there is not much difference between living together and being married. If you are loyal to each other, it does not matter. If there is loyalty and trust, one does not need marriage.¹⁵

Sahgal is a novelist and political commentator who has published nine novels and seven works of non-fiction. *Rich Like Us* won the Sinclair Fiction Prize and the Sahitya Akademi Award. Her earlier book *Plans for Departure* won the Commonwealth Writers Prize. She served as an advisor to Sahitya Akademi's Board for English from 1972 to 1975. She was a member of Verghese Committee for Autonomy to Radio & TV in 1977-78. In 1978, she was a member of the Indian delegation to U. N. General Assembly. She has also held the post of Vice-President of People's Union for Civil Liberties. She received the Sinclair Prize for fiction in 1985, Sahitya Akademi Award (Britain) in 1986, and Commonwealth Writers Award (Eurasia) in 1987. She was also a Fellow of the Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars, Washington from 1981 to 1982. In 1990, she was elected fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. In 1997, she was awarded an Honorary Doctorate for Literature by the University of Leeds. In 2002, Mrs. Sahgal was awarded the Alumni Achievement Award from Wellesley College. Her last novel, *Lesser Breeds*, was published in 2003. The Library of Congress currently holds twenty-four of her works. Sahgal continues to write and maintains contact with Woodstock from her home in Dehra Dun. In 2004, she spoke at the Woodstock's 75th annual Commencement, where she inspired yet another generation of students to make a difference in the world.

Sahgal is not only a novelist of repute but is also a journalist by profession. She confesses that fiction is her "abiding love", journalism her "conscience". Talking to Rama Jha in 1987, Sahgal said that her

two kinds of writing experiences — that of a novelist and that of a political journalist — though contrary to each other, are mutually sustained because, her central focus in both areas is the same — the concept of freedom in human beings, national and personal, increasingly feminist. She is a novelist of politics as well as a successful political columnist for different newspapers. Her writing is generally characterised by simplicity and boldness. Her writing is also famous for keeping in touch with the latest political ups and downs with a tinge of Western liberalism. Her novels truthfully mirror the contemporary Indian political theme. Her novels portray the contemporary incidents and political realities saturated with artistic and objectivity. All her major characters of the novel are drawn towards the vortex of politics. Besides politics, her fiction also focuses attention on Indian woman's search for sexual freedom and self-realization.

As a woman novelist, Sahgal recognises that her primary obligation is that of advocating the emancipation of women. She has gone deep into the female psyche in her novels. She describes in her novels how woman is exploited even during the modern times by both the individuals and the society. She tried to portray the sensibility of woman that how a woman looks out at herself and her problems. She feels that woman should try to understand and realise herself as a human being and not just as an attached to some male life. She introduces her theme of the quest for freedom through the delineation of male protagonists though she severely attacks the male dominated society.

Sahgal has so far nine novels and two autobiographies to her credit and has published a number of articles and two other books.

Sahgal's novels include:

1. *A Time to be Happy* (1957)
2. *This Time of Morning* (1965)
3. *Storm in Chandigarh* (1969)
4. *The Day in Shadow* (1971)
5. *A Situation in New Delhi* (1977)
6. *Rich Like Us* (1985)
7. *Plans for Departure* (1987)
8. *Mistaken Identity* (1988)
9. *Lesser Breeds* (2003)

Her non-fiction mainly includes her two autobiographical books:

1. *Prison and Chocolate Cake* (1954)
2. *From Fear Set Free* (1962)

Besides a history book *Freedom Movement in India* (1970), and a political treatise *Indira Gandhi: Her Road to Power* (1978), besides numerous newspaper and magazine articles.

Sahgal's first novel, *A Time to be Happy* has the reference to Congress activities and the events of 1942. The novel portrays the search for identity of a Westernised Indian youth sand, against the backdrop of India's struggle for liberation. It is also on a different

level, a submerged saga of Indian national movement with its inevitable and indelible impress on the minds of countless comfortable upper-middle class Indians. It covers a period of about 16 years from around 1932 to 1948. The central theme is the awakening of Sanad's conscience and his attempt at success in self-discovery and identity. Sahgal attempts to project a nation's consciousness through the fragmentary consciousness of an individual. Thus, while dealing with the particular, the novel also is concerned with larger issues. The novel is set in the immediate pre and post independent period, and deals with themes which are taken up by Sahgal in her later novels also. It is the story of Sanad, a nearly English youngman brought to be a success, puzzled and uncertain about his future. The novel is a first-person narrative. Sanad's story is filtered through the consciousness of the narrator. The women characters, in the novel, are highly individualistic but are still bound by conventions. The novel reflects Sahgal's interest and involvement with India in the process of change and portrays not unsuccessfully a particular phase in her history.

Sahgal's novel, *This Time of Morning* is a purely political novel which deals with what happens in the corridors of power, in the drawing rooms of politically very important people or in the lobbies in Parliament. Some of the characters of the novel are so beautifully and symbolically portrayed that they are equated with the contemporary political personalities. Much of the action takes place in Delhi, and the particular context is the decline and fall of one of the pillars of the Government, Kalyan Sinha. *This Time of Morning* can certainly claim to be one of the best political novels written by an Indian in English.

The novelist dramatizes the mood of uncertainty and the anxiety of the first decade of post-independent era. Rakesh, the protagonist of the novel, believes that the state of dialogue is possible only in an atmosphere of freedom.

Sahgal's *Storm in Chandigarh* deals with the problem of political tension and violence originating from its being Chandigarh, the common capital of the two states — the Punjab and Haryana. The novel depicts violence, chaos and the uneasy political situation of the late sixties in the partition of Punjab into two newly formed states — Punjabi-speaking Punjab and Hindi-speaking Haryana with Chandigarh as the common capital. The novel deals with the political upheaval in Punjab in the post-independence period.

Beside the political background, there is also a human background which has not received adequate treatment. The fictional situation of young hearts broken up by compulsions of marriage and call of new love suggests that marriage is not just sexual relationship; it means companionship on equal terms. The cause of disturbance in the relations between man and woman partly lies in man's own inherent debility to indulge in adultery and partly in the unnatural position of the husband or the wife in the family. Women characters in the novel no more like to remain confined within the four walls of their houses. They prefer to go to picnic to relieve the burden of boredom and monotony. The clash between Gyan and Harpal is a clash of ideologies. It is a fight between the cult of violence versus the idea of non-violence. Gyan who shows little concern for emotions and human beings always indulged in a ruthless attitude. Harpal on the other hand

is more concerned with human beings than with anything else. Each time there is a confrontation between the two Chief Ministers.

Sahgal's novel, *The Day in Shadow* deals with the struggle of a young, beautiful and daring Indian woman trapped under the burden of a brutal divorce settlement and the agony and unhappiness she experiences in the hands of cruel and unjust male-dominated society of India. The novel is a fine example of the female literary tradition in Indian English literature. The Western wave of stream-of-consciousness technique affected the writings of the novelist and she also plunged deep into the inner world of her characters. The novelist shows that though Indians have got freedom yet it is only on the surface level as in their attitudes to love, morality, sex, marriage, education and religion, they are still the slaves of the West. The novel is richly inspired by the political movement of the society. Though the main theme of the novel is politics, yet the problem of divorce and disintegration of the marriage in a typical Indian setting are also beautifully dealt with.

The metaphorical expression of the title is suggestive of the need for freedom. Sahgal combines the political and social issues that pose a threat to a developing country. The central preoccupation of Sahgal's novel is the suffering caused to woman in the prison-house of love-less marriage and her suffering when she makes a break way. She adopts an interesting method of creating her characters in the novel in order to promote her theme of women's suppression and revolt in the socio-political set up in modern India.

Sahgal's fifth novel, *A Situation in New Delhi* depicts the aftermath 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. The novel is very much based on fact. It is a novel of political dislocation on two levels, on the level of the novelist's own life and on the level of her creation means her characters. *A Situation in New Delhi* points out the Naxalite movement and student unrest, and above all, the aftermath of Nehru's death. The novel deals with the problems of alienation and frustration of the younger generation of Indians in the context of opportunistic politics pursued in New Delhi. The novel begins with the news of the death of Prime Minister Shivraj, the idealistic and charismatic leader of India. In the novel, there is no gap between the private world and the political world; both the worlds are reciprocally treated in which actions and characters are co-mingled. The novel is indeed representative of the situation in the whole of India.

Sahgal's novel, *Rich Like Us*, presents a picture of India after Independence but shows primarily the state of affairs in the country under the Emergency imposed by her cousin, Indira Gandhi. The novel is set in the period when the Emergency was just one month old. The novel is many individual histories, and many voices in one — a vivid and compelling tapestry of India's past and present. *Rich Like Us* is a fearlessly presented account of the harassment caused to all sections of people during the period of National Emergency. It deals with the impingement of politics on the personal lives of people and

studies the impact of Emergency on a vast panorama of characters. Here is a successful attempt to record history through the totality of its immediate effect on those who participate in it. The novel runs on the oddly parallel life tracks of two very different women. A time promising wealth for the corrupt, but terrifying with sterilization for the poor and jail for the critical, the Emergency changes forever the lives of both women.

Sahgal's seventh novel *Plans for Departure* which has won the Eurasian Regional Award in the Commonwealth Fiction Prize registers an important stage in her growth as a novelist. The novel is both a love story and a mystery, set in a continent poised for revolution and a world on the edge of war. It is a novel of haunting power and superb craftsmanship, rich in intrigue, gentle humour and exquisite observation. The novel is a fiction of history beyond a shadow of doubt because of the locale, the time of action and the men and women that inhabit its landscape. The novel takes the reader back to the colonial past and presents a picture of the subcontinent poised for revolution in the backdrop of the world on the edge of a cataclysmic war. The novel is a many-faceted novel. It is a step forward in Sahgal's powerful and convincing portrayal of her women characters. The novel adopts a different narrative mode, but here also there are at least two points of view projected through the narration.

With *Rich Like Us* and *Plans for Departure*, Nayantara Sahgal shows how there is a growing concern in her with the novel as expressing the collective fate of a nation releasing itself from subjugation.

In *Mistaken Identity*, Sahgal frames her narrative against a turbulent period of Indian history. The novel paints the currents and cross-currents engulfing the country and other parts of the world in the first three decades of 20th century. It is a political novel imbued with socio-political events in India during the British regime in the year 1929. It was the time when the country was gradually awakening to nationalism and witnessing unrest, strikes and mass arrests. The novel is a graphic document of the twilight years of the Raj in India and may well serve as a reference point to many events and actions of the freedom movement. Sahgal had watched history in slow motion. The novel provides a glimpse into Sahgal's hawk eye for details and sound grasp of the world history. *Mistaken Identity* is a major modern novel in its theme and craft that converge on a mode of revelation characteristic of contemporary literature. It is a singularly significant novel in the Indo-English tradition as the theme of identity; it develops a unique blend of its modern Western sense with unmistakable historical and cultural ambivalences of the Indian tradition.

The novel is written from the point of view of Bhushan Singh. On a train journey back to north India after months of travel abroad, the play boy Bhushan Singh, son of the Raja of Vijaygarh, is arrested and thrown into jail. Charged with treason, Bhushan finds himself in a filthy prison cell surrounded by elderly trade unionists as innocent of any political crime as he is himself. But the year is 1929, the country is torn by strikes, and a jittery government sees sedition under every stone. As they wait for the trial that never seems to come, Bhushan enthrals his cell-mates with stories from his colourful past. As news of

violent world events penetrates the prison walls, Bhushan reaches the climax of his story: the monstrous trick he discovers fate has played on him, and the crime he can never forget. Full of mystery and gentle humour, *Mistaken Identity* is a story of love and obsession that brilliantly summons up the turmoil of India in the twilight years of empire.

Sahgal's concern with the political themes and issues of current importance has been readily recognised. We may say that politics is inextricably interwoven in the novels of Nayantara Sahgal. In "Passion for India", she herself reveals that:

Politics was, of course, my background, and my environment, and it became my natural material. I grew up at a time when literature and politics went hand in hand, and helped to illumine and interpret each other. It was a time when songs, poems and stories were the focus for the struggle against foreign rule. Who can forget the songs: *Sar faroshi ki tamanna aaj hamare dil mein hai*; and there was a song in the streets of Allahabad when I was a child, *Bharat ka danka aalam mein bajwaya veer Jawahar ne – azaad bano, azaad bano, kahwaya veer Jawahar ne*. But I am not a political animal myself, and my political philosophy is very simple. I do not believe in kings, queens, or political dynasties. I have no

ideology. I've never belonged to a political party. But in this country, politics – if by that we mean the use and misuse of power – invades our lives every day, both at the private, domestic level, and at the national level. This is a country where women are murdered for dowry, roasted alive on funeral pyres, crushed into conformity, sold into slavery, raped in police custody, and all this goes on and on happening.... So, how can we, in this country, keep life and politics, literature and politics, apart? Political awareness is thrust upon us.¹⁶

Sahgal's novels thus not only constitute an impressive segment of the Indian English novel but also sum up the saga of India's struggle for freedom and the changes it has brought about in the traditional social set-up in India. Sahgal is unique in her artistic sensibility as well as in her particular manner of projecting national consciousness.

All the novelists write in their own way and style. They reveal their thoughts, experiences and sharp vision in day-to-day life of the people in their novels as per their own convictions. Nayantara Sahgal has also constructed her views in her novels. Sahgal's novels present an authentic picture of India before and after independence. She considers her novels political in content and intention and in her view; each of the novels more or less reflects the political era we were passing through. The use of political genre is one of the main aspects

of her novels, the others being the exploration of the religious theme and the problems of women in contemporary society. Though Sahgal has been hailed chiefly as a political novelist, her feminist concern is obvious and her fighter spirit quite vocal in her fiction. In all her works, there is a juxtaposition of two worlds: the personal world of man-woman relationship and the impersonal world of politics.

The fictional journey of Sahgal from *A Time to be Happy* to *Mistaken Identity* shows her deep concern with the parlous state of women in the parochial society. Almost in all the novels, Sahgal has gone deep into the female psyche. She is able to go deep into the psyche of her female characters and study them with sympathy and understanding. She tried to portray the sensibility of a woman, how a woman looks out at herself and her problems. Husband-wife alienation resulting from lack of communication, East-West encounter, extra-marital relationship, existentialist problems and temperamental incompatibility form the major themes in Sahgal's novels.

Feminism is a modern movement expressing protest against the male domination. Today many people feel that feminism has almost come to an end because it has nearly won the war at most of the fronts by achieving for women equality with men in all walks of life — political, social, economic etc. However, the fact is that the feminist movement is still going quite strong all over the world with the prospects of getting stronger in the near future. Women in India have been subject to discrimination, sexual exploitation, malnutrition and social taboos since the early 19th century. The emancipation of women was initiated by the Brahmo Samaj and is said to have come a long

way especially after India's independence. However, looking at the overall social status of women particularly in the rural and backward areas, one cannot deny that male chauvinism still rules our society. Sahgal has also highlighted the real problems which women were facing in their day-to-day life in male-dominated society. The same problems are being faced by the women even today in 21st century of modern technology.

Above mentioned literary survey of women writers, Sahgal's feminist approach as well as her focus on Indian political scenario before and after independence in her novels appealed me the most to select Sahgal's fictional world for my research. I have tried to focus on Sahgal's portrayal of women characters in her novels. The portrayal of her memorable women characters and the feminist tone in her fictional discourse make Nayantara Sahgal as one of the most outstanding feminist Indian novelist writing in English.

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CHAPTER – II

FEMINISM

The term ‘feminism’ was derived from the Latin word ‘Femina’ meaning ‘woman’ and was first used with regard to the issues of equality and Women’s Rights Movement. Ever since antiquity, there have been women fighting to free their half of the total population of the world from male oppression. Feminism is neither a fad nor a logical extension of the civil rights movement, but the protest against the legal, economic and social restrictions on the basic rights of women which have existed throughout history and in all civilizations. Naturally, the principles of feminism have been articulated long ago.

The definition of the term ‘feminism’ differs from person to person. According to the French models of feminism, it implies sexual expression. If we take into account the British models, all feminists slowly become respectable, or acclaimed into the male world order. If we consider American models, they are more outspoken. Chaman Nahal in his article, “Feminism in English Fiction”, defines feminism as “a mode of existence in which the woman is free of the dependence syndrome. There is a dependence syndrome: whether it is the husband or the father or the community or whether it is a religious group, ethnic group. When women free themselves of the dependence syndrome and lead a normal life, my idea of feminism materialises.”¹ According to Simone de Beauvoir:

One is not born, but rather becomes a woman. No biological, psychological or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine.²

According to her, women are considered secondary in relation to men from the ancient time. It is not necessity of feminine feature but it is the result of education and social tradition under the control of men. Women's dignity failed but they stand on the same ground of intellectual and professional equality. This has given rise to social evils also.

Feminism is a movement influenced by the ideas postulated, popularized and precipitated by thinkers and authors like Alice Walker, Naomi Littlebear, Judith Felterbey, Michele Wallace, Lillian Smith, Elaine Showalter, Simone de Beauvoir, Kate Millett and others. It is a modern movement expressing protest against the male domination. It provides strategies for change. The aim of feminist is to understand women's oppression keeping in mind race, gender, class and sexual preference.

Today many people feel that feminism has almost ended because it has nearly won the war at most of the fronts by achieving for women equality with men in all walks of life — political, social, economic etc. But the fact is that the feminist movement is still going

quite strong all over the world with the prospects of getting stronger in the near future. The origin of violence against women is seen in the subordination of women in the world. In 'Manusmriti', Manu has given secondary place to women. The same thing is reflected in Islam and Christianity. Great thinkers like Aristotle, Rousseau, Hegel, Sartre, Freud and Nietzsche consider women inferior.

According to Simone de Beauvoir, "The situation of woman is that she is a free and autonomous being like all human creatures — nevertheless finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the other."³

Two of the most important works of contemporary feminist theory — Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* and Mary Daly's *Beyond God the Father* derive their ideological premise from the twentieth-century philosophical movement, existentialism. This body of ideas was itself rooted in the theoretical constructs of several German philosophers: Hegel, Husserl and Heidegger, but had its most popular formulation in the works of French thinker Jean-Paul Sartre.

The early editions of The Oxford English Dictionary defined feminism as a state of being feminine or womanly as did the 1901 edition of The Dictionary of Philosophy. By 1906, however, the Dictionnaire de Philosophie defined feminism as a position favourable to the rights of women. The Webster's Dictionary defines the term 'feminism' as the principle that women should have political rights equal to those of men. Toril Moi says, "The words 'feminist' or 'feminism' are political labels indicating support for the aims of the new Woman's Movement which emerged in the late 1960s."⁴ Simone

de Beauvoir writes in *The Second Sex*, “The terms masculine and feminine are used symmetrically only as a matter of form, as on legal papers.”⁵ Feminism is a philosophy that fights against such definitions of masculine and feminine, and aims at placing women in a just perspective. The word ‘feminism’ however, must be understood in its broadest sense as referring to an intense awareness of identity as a woman, and interest in feminine problems. Its meaning should not be restricted to the advocacy of women’s rights.

Feminism tends to be thought of as a movement of women, and many feminists absolutely reject the idea of allowing men into it. However, men can be as strongly opposed to the injustices from which women suffer as women can. Feminism is not concerned with a group of people it wants to benefit, but with a type of injustice it wants to eliminate, even though on the whole the elimination of that injustice is beneficial to women than men, yet feminism is not just a movement in favour of women, but it is a movement in support against injustice.

Toril Moi has used the term ‘post-feminism’ to cover the different configurations of feminism and post-modernism present today. Present-day feminist theorists believe that, strictly speaking, feminism is an impossible position. The agonistic definition of feminism sees it as the struggle against all forms of patriarchal and sexist oppression. Such an oppositional definition posits feminism as the necessary resistance to patriarchal power. Logically then the aim of feminism as an emancipatory theory becomes to abolish itself along with its opponent. “In a non-sexist, non-patriarchal society, feminism will no longer exist.”⁶ Feminism is committed to the struggle for

equality for women, an effort to make women become like men. But the struggle for equal rights historically and politically emphasizes the value of women as they are. The very argument rests precisely on the fact that women are already as valuable as men are. But in the situation of women's lack of equal rights, this value must be located as difference, not as equality. Women are of equal human value, when feminism represents the value of women as women, it efficiently counters the systematic devaluation of women under patriarchy. Julia Kristeva suggests,

A third space for feminism to operate — the space which deconstructs all identity, all binary oppositions. But again, in deconstructing patriarchal metaphysics, the risk of deconstructing the very logic that sustains the two forms of feminism — of sameness and difference — cannot be avoided. And so the three 'spaces' of feminism are logically and often strategically incompatible.⁷

The post-modern feminists are wary of definitions of any kind. Alice Jardine states:

Who and what, then do we mean by "feminist"?
That word...poses some serious problems. Not
that we would want to end up demanding a

definition of what feminism is, and therefore, of what one must do, say, and be, if one is to acquire the epithet; dictionary meanings are suffocating, to say the least.⁸

Jardine states: “Feminism is generally understood as a movement from the point of view of, by and for women.”⁹ She suggests feminism as a movement by women which takes on different and very specific forms in different contexts.

The contents of the early feminist theory reflect the declining power of women of rank and the enforced domestication of middle-class women. Yet this theory derived strength from the new powers of education some of these women had at their command. In the 1630s and 1650s, many of the radical English sects supported religious equality for women. In this situation, there were women who liberated themselves from the male authority. In the 19th and the early 20th centuries feminism focused on the acquisition of a few basic political rights and liberty for women. The period from 1920 to 1960 is known as the period of intermission in the history of the women’s rights movement when a sense of self-satisfaction prevailed. For contemporary feminists, different processes of socialization account for a larger part of the observed differences in the behavior of men and women. Today feminists protest against the way the social institutions, supported by cultural values and normative expectations force women into an unreasonably narrow role.

Feminism is a philosophy that fights against such definitions of masculine and feminine, and aims at placing women in a just perspective. However, the term 'feminism' must be understood in its broadest sense as referring to an extreme awareness of identity as a woman and interest in feminine problems. Its meaning should not be restricted to the advocacy of women's rights. Feminism has become an international school. There are different schools like Liberal, Marxist, Socialist, Existentialist and Postmodern etc. These theories cover several aspects of life aiming at women's liberty. There are different Feminists Theories also such as:

- (1) Liberal Theory: It arose from liberalism. It aims at doctrines of Justice, Liberty and Equality to women. This feminism views liberation for women as the freedom to determine their own social role and to compete with men on terms that are as equal as possible. Mary Woolstonecraft, John Stuart Mill, Betty Friedan are the exponents of this theory.
- (2) Marxist Theory: It insists on the economy of women. The understanding of relations between class and sex are important. Woman was treated as a property. This was exploitation. The special oppression of women results primarily from their traditional position in the family.
- (3) Radical Theory: This theory considers the oppression of women as the ugliest form of cruelty. It insists on the independence of women. They believe that women are not child-bearing

machines. The radical feminists hold that the roots of women's oppression are biological. The origin of women's subjection lies in the fact that because of the weakness caused by childbearing, women become dependent on men for physical survival. This theory rejects social institutes like family and marriage.

- (4) Psychoanalyst Theory: This theory believes that women's oppression takes place because of Oedipus Complex. Freud said that sexuality is male centric and so women suffer.
- (5) Existentialist Theory: All these theories are not enough to express women's otherness. Existential theory says that women are oppressed because of her otherness.
- (6) Post Modern Theory: This theory criticises the patriarchal order. The writing of certain postmodern writers favours freedom for women. They believe that women must develop feminine writing to change the world which is defined by men.

Thus, feminism appears in various forms such as radical, socialist, marxist, lesbian and so on but at the root, it is basically a concept concerned with the question of identity among women who share similar experiences in life. Traditionally, feminism was a mass movement in the sense that women clamoured for political equality, civil rights, job opportunities etc. Today the movement has assumed an individualistic nature where women demand human rights and

personal independence. They are aware of their exploitation, conscious of their rights and willingly compromise with situations.

The term feminism itself demands a broader definition. In a generic way, it has come to mean a movement to support the demand for equal, political and economic rights with men. Feminism does not mean only an awareness of women's plight but also a determination to change the situation. The treatise 'Half the Sky' defines feminism as "the awareness of the women's position in society as one of disadvantages or inequality compared with that of men and also a desire to remove those disadvantages."¹⁰ According to Simone de Beauvoir, the woman is "defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute — she is the Other."¹¹ Man always thinks that he is in the right, while woman is in the wrong; all the negative qualities are assigned to her. He is afraid of feminine competition. De Beauvoir discusses about the topics like sexual initiation, sexual pleasure for women. She states that woman is not a free agent in choosing the man of her erotic destiny. Man is never consistent; he wants his wife to be passionate with him but indifferent to other men as a whole. He wants her to be entirely his. Thus, she is betrayed from the day he marries her. Bound to one man, with children to tend, woman's life is over. She finds no future other than of her husband's. De Beauvoir says that the bond between man and woman should be based on common love and consent. She also deals with different issues such as unwanted

motherhood, the unmarried mother and abortion. She concludes that women should be freed from the bonds of slavery.

Once Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India said, “you can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its women.”¹² This is perfectly true. Woman of any nation is the mirror to its civilization. If women enjoy good status, it shows that the society has reached a level of maturity and sense of responsibility.

The change in the status of women in India is a slow, steady and continuing process, It began a century and half ago when Raja Rammohan Roy and his successors and followers focused attention on the social evils. The social status of women in any community is largely dependent on the culture and tradition of the community. In ancient times, Aryans were the main inhabitants of India. These people were mainly Brahmins and they used to give the status of goddess to the women. At that time, the status of women in the households was like ‘Lakshmi’ (Goddess of wealth). A famous Sanskrit shloka signifies the status of women in that age, ‘Yatra naryastu pujiyante, ramante tatra devta’ means, the place where women are worshipped, god themselves inhabit that place. Women in that time had place even superior to men. At that time, no religious ritual was supposed to be complete without the presence of the women. One incident of Ramayana is a proof of this as when Lord Rama was performing ‘Ashvamedha Yajna’ at that time his wife Sita was not with him and Rama had used the gold idol of his wife in her absence.

Ancient Indian women had the right to choose their own life partners. The process of choosing the life partner of own choice was

known as 'Swayamvar' in which grooms assembled at the house of bride and she used to choose the one whom she liked. In Mahabharata, Draupadi's father arranged for her 'Swayamvar' and Arjuna successfully managed to fulfill the conditions and became eligible to marry her. In Ramayana, Sita's father, Janak Raja arranged for her 'Swayamvar' in which kings of different states participated and Lord Rama won her over by breaking the 'Shiv Dhanusha'. This right was given not only to the princely women but the common women were also given the same rights. In ancient time, women were so important that many of the major battles were fought for them. Women were not just confined to domestic arena but they were also part of religious teachings.

Medieval India was supposed to be the Dark Age for women. Medieval India saw many foreign conquests, which resulted in the decline in the status of women. At that time the foreign conquerors like Muslims invaded India, they brought their own culture with them. According to them woman was the property of her father, brother or husband and she does not have any right of her own. This has affected Indian people and they also began to treat their own women like this. One more reason for the decline in the status and freedom of women was that the original Indians wanted to shield their women folk from the barbarous Muslim invaders. These Muslim invaders picked up any woman they wanted and kept her in their 'harems'. Therefore, to protect them Indian women started using 'Purdah' which covers the body. For this reason, they were not allowed to move freely and this led to the further decline in their status. Due to this problem, they

began to consider a girl as misery and a burden. They believe that a girl child needs extra care and protection from the eyes of intruders. All this gave rise to some new evils such as Child Marriage, 'Sati', 'Jauhar' and restriction on girl education.

The decline in the position of women dates back to the period of Manu-Smriti that is 500 B. C. to 1800 A. D. Centuries back while laying down the social codes Manu said:

Pita Rakshati Koumare, Bharta Rakshati
Yauvane, Rakshanti Sthavire Putra, Na Stree
Svatantra Marhati.¹³

Manu's code provided a legal and ideological legitimating for a pattern of social structure which lasted for more than a thousand years. At that time, male domination had not grown to monstrous proportions. Women were happy under their protective veil and enjoyed their due respect. The birth of daughter which was not a source of anxiety during the Vedic Period became a source of disaster for the father in later Vedic Period. Therefore, it was said that the birth of a son is bliss incarnate while that of a daughter is the root of family misery. But the structure of the society has changed due to different political and social ideologies. Then, women had to come out of their 'Purdah' and help their counterpart in fulfilling the social obligations. Apart from the traditional role which was imposed on her, she took up the burden willingly. In this process, she was not appreciated, but insulted, scorned and humiliated.

It has been said: “India of the Vedas entertained a respect for women amounting to worship; a fact which we seem little to suspect in Europe when we accuse the extreme East of having denied the dignity of woman, and of having only made her an instrument of pleasure and of passive obedience.”¹⁴ He also said, “What! Here is a civilization, which you cannot deny to be older than your own, which places the woman on a level with the man and gives her an equal place in the family and in society.”¹⁵

It is strange that ages after Manu made his code, some people in modern India try to defend this primitive barbaric attitude towards women. Manu was no better and no worse than most ancients were in their general attitude towards women. All ancient societies treated women as a property on which the owner had absolute power. In Manu’s code, women are many times equated with slaves who also constituted property. In order to emphasize the low status of women, Manu constantly classifies them with the shudras and slaves. This can be observed very clearly in the following shlokas created by Manu:

“Like a shudra, a woman is entitled to only one sacrament that is marriage.”

(Manu II: 66-67, IX: 126)

“A wife, a son, a slave, a pupil and a younger brother who have committed faults may be beaten with the rope or a split bamboo.”

(Manu VIII: 299)

“Let him who desires bodily purity first sip water three times and then twice wipe his mouth; but a woman and shudra shall perform each act once.”

(Manu V: 139)

“If a woman or a man of low caste performs any act leading to unhappiness, let it be practiced diligently.”

(Manu II: 233)

Manu and his colleagues prohibited women from getting education and property. He is specific in denying particularly from studying Sanskrit like the ‘Shudras’, so that they can never know and defy the authority of the ‘Shastras’. Manu made sure about this so far as the ‘Shudras’ and women were concerned. He stated:

“A wife, a son, and a slave, these three are declared to have no property; the wealth which they earn is acquired for him to whom they belong.”

(Manu VIII: 416)

“For women, no sacramental rite is performed with sacred texts. Women destitute of strength and knowledge of the Vedas are as impure as falsehood itself.”

(Manu IX: 18)

The progress of culture and civilization of a society is to be measured by the position occupied by the women in that society. The idea of chastity and the faithfulness to the husband is never challenged even by moderns. In one of the shlokas (*VIII: 371*), Manu stated, the punishment for the adulterer is that she should be thrown to the dogs for being devoured in a public place. Manu highlighted many women related things which can be observed clearly in the following shlokas:

“Women do not care for beauty, nor is their attention fixed on age. It is enough that he is a man; they give themselves to the handsome and the Ugly.”

(Manu: IX: 14)

“No man can completely guard woman by force.”

(Manu: IX: 10)

“It is the nature of the women to seduce men in the world; for that reason, the wise are never unguarded in the company of females.”

(Manu: II: 213)

“Women are able to lead astray in this world not only a fool but also a learned man to make him a slave of desire or anger.”

(Manu: II: 214)

“One should not sit in a lonely place with one’s mother, sister, daughter, for the senses are powerful and overpower even a learned man.”

(Manu: II: 215)

In this way, Manu in Manusmriti highlighted a lot of about women. The protection of women thus became a pressing issue for the society and the men had to shoulder this responsibility. The critical need to protect the women during the ancient period is clearly reflected in the following verse of the Manusmriti:

“Father protects in childhood, husband protects in youth, and sons protect in old age. A woman cannot be left unprotected.”¹⁶

Thus, the husband became the protector of his wife. This led to a social structure in which a wife was expected to cling to her husband for protection.

Then the pre-independence period marked the beginning of awareness of the suffering of women due to oppressive social customs. During this period, a favourable climate was created to improve the status of women through legal reforms. At that time, there were two major movements, which affected the position of women. These were the Social Reform Movement of the 19th century and the Nationalist Movement of the 20th century. Both these movements raised the question of equal status for women. The Social Reform Movement has been regarded as a key to the intellectual process that

went into the making of modern India. The issues which attracted the attention of the 19th century social reformers were Sati, the ill treatment of widows, the ban on widow remarriage, polygamy, child marriage, denial of property rights and denial of secular education to women. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, M. G. Ranada, D. K. Karve, Rabindranath Tagore, K. C. Sen, Mahatma Phuley, Durgaram, Dayananda Saraswati and others from all parts of the country raised their voice against some of these unjust practices while revivalist believed in reviving the old Vedic society presumed to be the ideal society for women.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy started the first school for the girls in Calcutta in 1825. It was not until the passing of the Hindu Women's right to Property Act in 1937 that a limited estate was available to the Hindu Widow from her husband's property, thus freeing her from the dependence of the son and the other relations of her husband. Then, in the constitution of India proclaimed on 26 January 1950, women have equal rights with men. Equality before the law, equality of opportunity for education and employment are all guaranteed as fundamental rights. Thus, women became citizens of a free country without any discrimination based on sex. In this way, the constitution of India and the legal codes bestowed upon women the privilege of equal rights with men, the same facilities of education, the same opportunities of profession and employment, women have also equal opportunity to participate in the national struggle for freedom under the leadership of Gandhiji. Hence, equality was won by women in the natural course of national development. Before independence, there was discrimination

against women in the matter of wages, women receiving always less than men. Nor was there equality of opportunity in employment. But all these pre-independence restrictions regarding opportunities for employment ended because the constitution is clear that there shall be no discrimination based on sex.

Apart from the equality of education and employment, women have the same religious and spiritual freedom as man. The differences between individuals exist only at physical level. There are no spiritual differences between man and woman. The husband and wife are the two sides of the same coin. For this Swami Vivekananda rightly states, “The husband and wife are the two wings of a bird.”¹⁷ And so, a man and woman must work in unison in order to achieve greater harmony in life. Hinduism provides same religious rights and privileges to women as it does to men. Neither is woman superior to man, nor is man superior to woman. Both are “perfect halves to make perfect whole.”¹⁸

Here are some quotations from other scriptures that confirm the equality between men and women in all religious and spiritual aspects:

“May our prayers and worship be alike, and may our devotional offerings be one and the same.”

(Rig Veda Samhita 10, 191.3)

“Unite, O Lord, this couple like a pair of lovebirds. May they be surrounded by children living both long and happy.”

(Atharva Veda Samhita 14.2.64)

“Let there be faithfulness to each other until death. This may be considered as the summary of the highest law for husband and wife.”

(Manu Smriti 9.101)

All the above scriptures tell us that the marriage in Hindu religion is a life-long partnership between a man and a woman. The highest religion for them is to be faithful to each other, as they born for each other. Both are the soul in bondage and their prayers and worship should be alike. A well-known saint Babu Hari Dass says that:

Wife and husband are like two equal halves of a soyabean. One half-alone will not grow. If two parts are separated and planted in the earth, still they will not grow. The bean will grow only when both parts are covered by one skin, which makes them one.¹⁹

The following are quotes by Mahatma Gandhi who tells about women as well as husband-wife relationship.

“To call women the weaker sex is libel; it is man’s injustice to women.”²⁰

— Mahatma Gandhi

“The wife is not the husband’s bond-slave but his companion and his help-mate and an equal partner in all his joys and sorrows — as free as the husband to choose her own path.”²¹

— Mahatma Gandhi

Therefore, it is said that Hindu society is still striving for complete and total equality of women on an individual and social level. Like a man, she is the soul in bondage and the goal of her life is the same as that of man.

In modern India, the position of women has changed considerably. Her position in modern Indian society is equal to that of men, socially, economically, educationally, politically and legally. Now, she has the equal right to receive education, inherit and own property, participate in public life and political life of the nation. She has become economically independent as man. She can seek employment anywhere and remains not a domestic slave. Therefore, she is certainly enjoying the equal status with man in all fields of life. There are so many factors like women’s education, reform movements by many social reformers, women participation in politics and much social legislation are responsible for this change in the status of women. Education of women is considered the most sensitive index of development. In the past, women folk were confined to the four walls of the house. But since the Industrial Revolution in Europe, there was gradual change in the world economy and especially in the outlook of women. After World War II, there were more and more devastations, reconstructions, technological advancements, scientific discoveries,

and change in the family system, ethical, moral, spiritual values and so on. In the second half of the 20th century, women have emerged in all fields and all walks of life. It is undoubtedly, education which has emancipated women from within the four walls of the home. But the position or status, the restrictions on their role in society, the gender stereotypes, the level of empowerment, the level of gender sensitivity, the amount of emancipation due to modernization; differ from country to country, from state to state, from region to region, and from one religious group to another that leads to problems of varied dimensions.

The status of women in modern India is a sort of a paradox. If on one hand, she is at the peak of the ladder of success, on the other hand she is mutely suffering the violence afflicted on her by her own family members. As compared with past women in modern times have achieved a lot but in reality, they have to still travel a long way. In the modern times, Indian women were given liberties and rights such as freedom of expression and equality, as well as right to get education. But still today, we are fighting for crisis such as dowry, female infanticide, sex selective abortions, health, domestic violence, malnutrition, sexual exploitation, molestation, rape and even murdered. The sex ratio of India shows that the Indian society is still prejudiced against female. There are 933 females per thousand males in India according to the census of 2001. There are many problems, which women in India have to face daily. These problems have become the part and parcel of life of Indian women and some of them have accepted these problems as their fate.

Today women are educated but illiterate in terms of knowing their rights properly. There is no doubt that women education in India is on an increase, but still it is lagging behind when compared to other countries. Still millions of women are deprived of the basic right to education. We can see a wide gap between the education of men and women in our country. The position of women reflects the cultural attainment of a society. Women's development is directly related with national development. The education of women has become a worldwide necessity, as half of the world's population is women. Thus, women education immensely influences fertility rate, informal morality, population growth, age of marriage, life expectancy, national productivity and also the self-esteem, confidence and equal partnership in all walks of life.

Another harmful practice is the Dowry system where gift of money or valuable things given by the bride's family to the groom's at the time of their marriage. If a girl brings large amount of dowry she is given respect and is treated well in her new home and if she does not bring dowry according to expectations then she has to suffer harassment. Women are killed if they bring fewer dowries after marriage. And for this reason, many girls are aborted in the womb itself because many people do not want a girl child, as they cannot pay dowry. Female infanticide is still prevalent in some rural areas. Dowry has been one of the main reasons for female infanticides in India.

Violence against women is a common evil; the level of domestic violence is also high in India. Women are subjected to physical and mental violence; they are not safe anywhere either at

home or outside. Every hour a woman is raped in India and every 93 minutes a woman is burnt to death due to dowry problem. There are lots of girls sold to the rich people for satisfying their sexual needs or kidnapped to make them prostitutes. In many rural families, girls and women face nutritional discrimination within the family, and are anemic and malnourished. This nutritional deficiency has two major consequences for women first they become anemic and second they never achieve their full growth, which leads to an unending cycle of undergrowth as malnourished women cannot give birth to a healthy baby. The malnutrition results in poor health of women. Indian women work more than men but their work is hardly recognized as they mainly do unskilled work. In India, a large percentage of women do not have power and they cannot take decisions independently. They have to take permission of male members for each and every issue. They do not have any right to say in important household matters and not in matter even related to their own life. In this way, women as a whole face a large number of conflicting situations in their life way.

In her book *Status of Women in India*, Dr. Swati Sharma highlights the survey regarding various issues related to crime against girls and women such as²²:

- **EXPLOITED GIRL CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS**

- **Foeticide and Infanticide:**

- (1) Between 3 million and 5 million female foetuses are aborted in India each year. In one Bombay clinic, 7,999 out of 8,000 aborted foetuses were female.
- (2) More than 10,000 girl children each year are killed when they are born. Girl children are murdered by suffocation.
- (3) The Intentional deprivation of girl children through insufficient breast-feeding and denial of food and health care leads to malnutrition and death. This mistreatment along with foeticide and infanticide, has led to 50 million women 'going missing' in India's population.

➤ **Rape and Immolation:**

- (1) Sudhir Kakkar has estimated that at least 600,000 to 700,000 Indian children are likely to have experienced sexual abuse, most by members of their own families.
- (2) For every crime reported against children, there are hundreds that are not reported.
- (3) The incidence of rape of girls under age 10 has increased day by day.
- (4) 20 percent of the pregnancies of adolescent abortion seekers in Mumbai were due to rape and incest.

➤ **Trafficking:**

- (1) Between 70,000 and 100,000 prostitutes were working in the six major cities of Bangalore, Mumbai, Calcutta, Delhi, Hyderabad and Chennai in 1991.

(2) 15 percent of Indian prostitutes are children.

➤ **Child Marriage:**

(1) 36 percent of girls in rural India are married between ages 15 and 19, with percentages much higher in some states. In Rajasthan, 56 percent of girls married before the age of 15. Of these, 3 percent are less than five years old, and another 14 percent are under age 10.

(2) Many girls have their first child while they are still teenagers. These young mothers face the stresses and risks of childbirth before their bodies have matured.

(3) Young married girls have little control over when and how often they have children. 37 percent of live births occur within two years of the previous birth. Infant mortality for these children is more than twice as frequent as it is for those more widely spaced.

• **WOMEN EVER EXPLOITED**

➤ **Violence in Families:**

(1) In spite of the fact that most spousal abuse goes unreported, more than 70 percent of women in some regions report physical abuse by their husbands.

(2) Wife beating is often seen as a husband's right. Divorce is not an option for battered wives.

- (3) Alcohol abuse contributes to the likelihood that men will beat their wives.

➤ **Bride Burning for Dowry:**

- (1) As many as 15,000 women annually are killed by their husbands in disputes over dowry. Reported dowry deaths have increased by 170 percent in the past decade.
- (2) Thousands more are beaten and injured because the husband or the husband's family, is dissatisfied with the dowry brought by the wife.

➤ **Cause of Widowhood:**

- (1) Widows in India are frequently harassed, beaten and even murdered.
- (2) 15,000 widows are abandoned to temples where they have no protection from sexual violence.

➤ **Psychological Abuse:**

- (1) The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women cites psychological harm as a major form of violence against women.
- (2) Women suffer from belittlement, threats, taunting and confinement. This can lead to depression and even suicide.

➤ **Violence in Motherhood:**

- (1) India's maternal mortality rate at 570 deaths per 100,000 live births is among the highest in the world.
- (2) Battered pregnant women are twice as likely to miscarry and four times as likely to have a low-birth weight baby.
- (3) Children born to battered women are 40 times more likely to die before age five than children of non-battered mothers are.

According to National Crime Records Bureau²³ — Offences against women are most common. India reports a crime every 17 seconds according to the National Crime Records Bureau's unique 'Crime Clock'. As per 'Crime Clock-2005' which tracked criminal activities over 2004 — the country reported one molestation every 15 minutes; one crime against women every 3 minutes; one dowry death every 77 minutes; one rape every 29 minutes; one murder every 16 minutes; one riot every 9 minutes; one arson every 60 minutes; one dacoity every 120 minutes; one sexual harassment case every 53 minutes and one cruelty by husband and relatives every 9 minutes.

Among the crimes listed by the crime bureau, rape, molestation, sexual harassment, murder and dowry deaths were reported more frequently than dacoity, arson or counterfeiting. In 2005, the country reported 50, 26, 337 crimes, including 18, 22, 602 relating to offences under the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

The National Crime Records Bureau compiled the crime figures after receiving statistics from all states and Union Territories. A National Crime Records Bureau official said the figures could be

much higher as only those crimes which were reported to the police were listed on the clock.

The above survey of the victimized women shows that violence against women is a common evil in India. This highlights that the women is not safe anywhere neither at home nor at outside the house. There are incidents of cruelty against women held every minute in India. There are many laws such as The Hindu Marriage Act of 1955, The Hindu Succession Act of 1956, The Hindu Widow Remarriage Act of 1856, The Hindu Women Right to Property Act of 1937, The Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961, to protect women and punishment is severe but the conviction rate of crime against women is very low in India. With the help of these social reformers, woman of India slowly started recognizing her true potential. She started questioning the rules laid down for her by the society. As a result, she herself achieved and earned a respectable position in the world.

Women of today are assuming different roles besides the role within their homes. They have excelled in each and every field from social work to visiting space station. Urbanization, industrialization, education and employment which are the contributions of socio-economic evolution have provided women with new avenues to express and assert themselves. The changed social milieu along with the new wave of modernization has altered their roles and relationship. Today there is no arena, which remained unconquered by Indian women. Whether it is politics, sports, entertainment, literature, technology and almost everywhere we can hear applauses for her. Today the law grants immense power to the women. She has the right

or equal status in the social, cultural, economic and political fields. The present day society demands more roles for a woman. In our society, at the one end, there are trends of modernization, westernization, urbanization and at the other, there are traditions, conflicting values, gender stereotype, and differing levels of empowerment. Both positive and negative trends motivate women to emerge out of the homes. As a result, there is either emancipation of women from the bondage of dust to the top position.

Women of India are highly active today in the political area. Vijayalakshami Pandit, Sarojini Naidu, Sucheta Kriplani were the torchbearers for the women of India. Vijaya Lakshmi Nehru Pandit was an Indian diplomat and politician, sister of Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, and the first female President of the United Nations General Assembly. She was the first Indian woman to hold a post in the cabinet and thus paving the way for other women. The most important name in the category of women politicians is Mrs. Indira Gandhi. She was the one who made world stop and notice the talent and potential of Indian women. She was the first women Prime Minister of independent India. Today her daughter-in-law Mrs. Sonia Gandhi is following her footsteps and leading the Indian National Congress. Present day, there are so many other women who have made their name in politics of India are Pratibha Patil, the present President of India, Soniya Gandhi, Uma Bharati, Shiela Dixit, Jayalalitha, Mamata Banerjee, Vasundhara Raje and many more.

Today Indian women have achieved great laurels for the nation in every sport. Whether it is cricket or hockey India have national

women team for every game. Indian women cricket team has won Asia Cup of 2004 and 2005 and made country proud. In India, there are some women sports icons in various games such as Sania Mirza in Tennis, P. T. Usha in Athletics, Diana Edulji in Cricket, Kunjarani Devi and Karnam Malleshwari in Weight Lifting and so on.

Today women of India have achieved great prestige in the field of literature. Indo-English literature in the recent past has attracted a widespread interest, both in India and abroad. Nayantara Sahgal, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Arundhati Roy, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Shobha De, Kiran Desai, Shashi Deshpande and Jhumpa Lahiri are famous names in Indian literature. Arundhati Roy has been awarded with the Booker Prize of 1997 for her work *God of Small Things*. Kiran Desai has been given Booker Prize of 2006 and Jhumpa Lahiri got recognition in the form of Pulitzer Prize.

The field of art and entertainment is full of Indian women. Today Indian woman is a painter, a singer, a dancer, an actor and a beauty queen. We have many names like Lata Mangeshkar, Indian Nightingale, Asha Bhosle, AnuRadha Podwal, and M. S. Subbulakshmi as famous singers. Madhu Bala, Shreedevi, Madhuri Dixit, Rekha, Rani Mukherjee, Karina & Karishma Kapoor, Aishwarya Rai, Priyanka Chopra and many more as Bollywood queens.

Today Indian women reach at the highest peak in the corporate field. Kiran Majumdar Shaw is the undisputed corporate queen of India. She is the richest Indian woman. She is the MD of Biocon India. She is the wealthiest entrepreneur of India. She wanted to become a

doctor but could not get admission in medical colleges but even then, she did not lose courage and went on and on and become corporate queen.

Forbes magazine's list of 100 most powerful women in the world includes Congress president Sonia Gandhi, chief executive-designate of Pepsico Indra Nooyi and ICICI Bank's Lalita Gupte and Kalpana Morparia. Sonia Gandhi occupies the 13th position on the list while India-born Nooyi finds herself as the 4th most powerful women. Joint Chairpersons of ICICI bank Lalita Gupte and Kalpana Morparia are on the 93rd position while Vidya Chhabaria, Chairperson of Jumbo Group is at the 95th spot. Apart from this, we have another names such as Naina Lal Kidwai, Vice Chairperson and Managing Director of HSBC Securities and Capital Market, Sullaijja Firodia Motwani and Mallika Srinivasan as corporate ladies.

Today there is no field without the entry of women. Of late, women have been accepting many challenging tasks in many fields like engineering, architecture, aeronautical etc. In the present day literary world, there are several great creative women writers in all Indian languages. And many of these writers have taken up issues related to the stations of women in India. If a woman is capable of making a mark in her profession, she should be recognised and treated as an equal. The contemporary woman does not want to conform to the traditional image anymore. She wants her due, her rightful place alongside her male counterpart in Indian society.

Women in India have been subject to discrimination, sexual exploitation, malnutrition and social taboos since the early 19th

century. The emancipation of women was initiated by the Brahmo Samaj and is said to have come a long way especially after India's independence. But looking at the overall social status of women particularly in the rural and backward areas, one cannot deny that male chauvinism still rules our society. In spite of the tall claims made by people who are at the helm of affairs in our country, women equality is a myth, not reality. Despite our powerful judiciary, the National Women's Commission, State Women's Commission and the Human Rights Commission, the crimes against women are continuing unabated. The fair sex continues to be relegated to an inferior social status than men. The declining sex ratio in almost all parts of our country as revealed by recent demographic statistics bear a testimony to the fact that women are neither a preferred sex nor well looked after in our society.

No amount of political sermonising, legal manipulations and official smokescreen has been able to bring equality, justice and respect to women in our male-dominated society. Today they are subject to all sorts of evils and crimes like female foeticide, child marriage, maternal malnutrition, sexual exploitation, molestation, rape and even murder. Her status is always inferior and secondary. The history of mankind has been male-dominated. Women have been used for sensual pleasures. In spite of progress in economics and politics, women are discriminated. Thousands of married ladies are physically assaulted by their in-laws for dowry demands. It is common knowledge that the perpetrators of crime against women often escape

with minor punishments. In many cases, they are not indicted at all due to lack of witnesses or false witnesses that favour criminals.

The progress that has been made in recognising women's role in our society is limited to the developed, urban areas and emancipated educated women who have the courage to fight against heavy odds. The number of such women is limited. The condition of a vast majority of women, most of which are illiterate; financially dependent on others, in poor health remains miserable. Fortunately, things are changing although at a slow pace. More and more women are engaged in improving their lot through education and employment. A lot many of them are able to reach positions of eminence as doctors, engineers, officials, managers, teachers, lawyers and political leaders. But to bring a radical change in society, due cooperation from males is always necessary.

It is natural that Indo-English writers should dwell in the problem of the cultural transplant's quest for identity. The confrontation between the East and the West, the strange love hate relationship that exists between the two, the cultural alienation and the loss of identity faced by the expatriates and immigrants are some of the aspects that are presented with a deep insight by writers like Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Anita Desai and Nayantara Sahgal.

Since the beginning of the feminist movement in 1960s in the West, much has been written on women. Only a few feminist writers made their contribution to the women's movement against this oppression. Margaret Drabble, Doris Lessing, Iris Murdoch, Marilyn

French and Margaret Atwood have contributed greatly in the movement and have been internationally acclaimed as feminist novelists. They announced a rise of a new wave of feminism across the world. Their influence on India resulted in a new breed of Indian feminists. The prominent feminist novelists in the breed are Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Namita Gokhale, Shobha De, R. P. Jhabvala, Kamala Markandaya and Arundhati Roy. They occupy prestigious position in Indo-English fiction.

After the gender revolution in 1970s, writing by women about women has become a socio-political act. Women writers feel compelled to justify their fears, tensions, conflicts and observations. With a strong element of protest, like their Western counterparts, Indian women writers have deliberately sought the novel as their medium of expression. Through it, they capsule the situation of the modern woman. Their writings reflect a variety of shades, colours and visions. The assertion of identity in their writings deserves a better treatment at the hands of their male counterpart. They protested against the cruelty perpetrated on the women by portraying their responses and reactions. The spirit of revolt against mechanical life, mismatched marriages and wayward ways of their life partners was obvious in their writings. The protagonists of their novels are women of a typical Indian society. The plot of their story is woven around the women who negotiate the oppression of a patriarchal society. Subverting social dogmas, ethos, tradition, beliefs and looking at the world from a woman's point of view, is the crux of new woman

fiction. The characters of these women novelists are bold, courageous and fight for their survival.

The modern novels of 80s paid attention to the miserable plight of the contemporary middle-class, urban Indian woman. They attempted to reconstruct Indian womanhood, which has been characterized as ideally warm, gentle and submissive and the view that women deserved only to be kept in subordination to the male members of the family. Many of the Indian women novelists focus on women's issues, they have a women's perspective on the world. The prominent women writers like Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Shashi Deshpande, Namita Gokhale, Geeta Mehta, Rama Mehta, Shobha De, Arundhati Roy, Anita Kumar, Meera Syal, Meena Alexander, Manju Kapur and others have distinguished themselves for their boldness in presenting the status of woman in Indian society and for depicting man-woman relationship in fictional form. It is only after the emergence of women writers that we have been able to have a deep insight into the psyche of the Indian female.

Sahgal started writing before the feminist movement was launched in the sixties, yet she independently takes up issues concerning women which were to become major issues in the feminist movement. In her fictional depiction of women attempting to free themselves from repressive relationships, Sahgal is more direct in her feminist sympathies. She makes a systematic and sustained effort to demolish deeply ingrained attitudes regarding women, before indicating ways in which a new image can be formulated. With an admirable steadfastness, she upholds her commitment to man-woman

relationships based on mutual trust and honest communication between two equal individuals. In almost all the novels, Sahgal has gone deep into the female psyche. She explores the nature and scope of the trauma of womenfolk in all her novels.

A great deal has been said about Sahgal's feminist stance in her fiction. This, however, is not the strident feminism of the Western writers. Sahgal believes that the potentialities in women are not exploited to the full. Her attitude and ideas come close to writers like Simone de Beauvoir and much less writers like Betty Friedan, Kate Millett and Germaine Greer. Her female characters are individuals who can remain independent within the framework of society into which they were born. She has portrayed women's sufferings without sentimentality and with such vividness that she may well be described as "anatomist of the feminine psyche."²⁴ Sahgal tries to portray the sensibility of woman: how a woman looks out at herself and her problems. She feels that woman should try to understand and realize herself as a human being and not just as an appendage to some male life. In the novels of Sahgal, there is a very sensitive depiction of the way women suffer due to the sexist bias in the patriarchal society, which gives a subordinate position to women and always treats them as second-rate citizens. Sahgal has a very different idea of virtue and virtuous woman, different from the stereotype virtuous women in India. But women in her novels represent different kinds of virtues. They do not suffer but take a stand. Indeed, she stands for the new morality, according to which woman is not to be taken as a mere toy, an object of lust and momentary pleasure, but man's equal and

honoured partner. Sahgal's feminist approach in her novels is discussed in detail in Chapter-IV.

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CHAPTER – III

SOCIO-POLITICAL CONCERNS IN THE NOVELS OF SAHGAL

Nayantara Sahgal is acclaimed as the only political novelist, at least among women writers. As A. V. Krishna Rao observes, “Nayantara Sahgal is perhaps one of our best socio-political novelists today.”¹ She confines her novels to the affluent society involved in politics. Her main contribution thematically has been her deep involvement and concern with politics. However, her absorbing concern with politics is not divorced from humanistic concern. Her characters, though very much involved in political situations are very human. Their personal predicaments, sometimes, run parallel to the political crises they face. Sahgal is a champion of individual freedom which is reflected profusely in her novels. Her novels portray the various social and cultural changes that take place in India and the individual’s response to them. Her familiarity with the society which she portrays in her novels lends them authenticity. In spite of her sound understanding of woman’s plight and concern for the dilemma of the new woman, she is restricted by the very political background of hers that lent authenticity to her novels, and deals with the predicament of only the elite and the affluent.

Sahgal has first-hand knowledge of politics and political figures in India, for she spent most of her childhood in Anand Bhawan, the ancestral home of the Nehrus in Allahabad. It is beyond doubt that

politics is in her blood. Jawaharlal Nehru was her mother's brother, while her father died because of an illness he suffered in prison when he was jailed for participating in India's freedom struggle. The important political events form the background for each of her novels. As Sahgal herself comments,

I am a novelist and a political journalist. My novels have a political background or political ambiance. I didn't plan it that way — I was dealing with people and situations — but looking back, each one seems to reflect the hopes and fears the political scene held out to us at the time. In the course of a lifetime one is many things, fiction is my abiding love, but I need to express myself on vital political issues. Political and social forces shape our lives. How can we be unaware of them? I believe there is a "poetics of engagement" where commitment and aesthetics meet and give each other beauty and power.²

Sahgal's novels present obviously a chronological account of Indian politics from the last phase of the freedom struggle to the breakdown of democracy in mid-seventies. She herself explains that politics is embedded in her "bones and marrow",³ and in her "emotional and intellectual make up"⁴ to such an extent that she can no longer remain a mere passive spectator to the happenings with far-

reaching fall-out affecting vital human interests. Her family — parents, cousins, uncles and aunts were very actively engaged in the country's struggle for freedom and were at the centre-stage of the Indian politics — “All around them political and moral ideas were being discussed and formulated and the girls were a part of it. If it was Nehru's idealism which has influenced her political stance, it is her own father's gentleness and courage which has influenced her moral stance.”⁵ Sahgal has earned a name for herself as a keen and fearless political commentator.

Sahgal's writing is famous for keeping in touch with the latest political ups and downs with a tinge of Western liberalism. Her novels truthfully mirror the contemporary Indian political theme. Her attitude in the novels is tantamount to that of Nehru that is co-mingled with the Western outlook. Unlike the other political writers, she never professes any specific political ideology or favouring any political creed or political movement. All her major characters of the novel are centripetally drawn towards the vortex of politics. She herself comments:

Politics was, of course, my background, and my environment, and it became my natural material. I grew up at a time when literature and politics went hand in hand, and helped to illumine and interpret each other. It was a time when songs, poems and stories were the focus for the struggle against foreign rule. Who can forget the songs:

Sar faroshi ki tamanna aaj hamare dil mein hai; and there was a song in the streets of Allahabad when I was a child, Bharat ka danka aalam mein bajwaya veer Jawahar ne — azaad bano, azzad bano, kahwaya veer Jawahar ne. But I am not a political animal myself, and my political philosophy is very simple. I do not believe in kings, queens, or political dynasties. I have no ideology. I've never belonged to a political party. But in this country, politics — if by that we mean the use and misuse of power — invades our lives every day, both at the private, domestic level, and at the national level.⁶

Sahgal's novels weave aspects of India's social, political, and cultural history into their narrative framework and subject them to a close critical examination. The period covered is roughly between the 1930s, when there was a mass awakening in the country to rise and revolt against the British empire, and the time of emergency in 1975. Her novels make covert and some rare overt references to significant political happenings, especially the novels she wrote during 1970s and 1980s; critics have also considered her a political novelist or a novelist with political consciousness. She deals with issues related to historical reconstructions more self-consciously. In her earlier novels too she combines personal and public history by intertwining the past of individual lives with India's historical past. She has been the turmoil

both before and after the independence in 1947. Sahgal writes in her autobiography *Prison and Chocolate Cake*:

Our growing up was India's growing up into political maturity — a different kind of political maturity from any that the world has seen before, based on an ideology inspired by self-sacrifice, compassion and peace.⁷

In her novels, on one hand, she exposes the power-hungry politicians and their vaulting power-ambition and on the other, she highlights the ardent freedom fighters and their sacrifices for their motherland. She says, “The heroes in my novels were patterned on pre-independence examples and the villains on contemporary personalities.”⁸ In all her works there is a juxtaposition of two worlds: the personal world of man-woman relationship and the impersonal world of politics. Her observations of the universal behaviour and reactions of the people, her humour and her depiction of the changing social conditions in contemporary India are quite interesting.

The major themes in Sahgal's novels are socio-political backdrop of the country, East-West encounter, man-woman relationship and man's quest for identity. Her fiction also focuses attention on Indian woman's search for sexual freedom and self-realization. The important political events form the background for each of her novels. Her first novel, *A Time to Be Happy*, presents the dawn of Indian independence. *This Time of Morning* comes later,

when the initial euphoria has worn off. *Storm in Chandigarh* deals with the partition of the Punjab on linguistic lines just when the state had recovered from the trauma of the 1947 partition. *A situation in New Delhi* presents the Naxalite Movement and student unrest and moreover, the aftermath of Nehru's death. Her autobiographies, *Prison and Chocolate Cake* and *From Fear Set Free* are more effective than her earlier novels. *The Day in Shadow* is profusely inspired by the political movement of the society. Sahgal gives an authentic picture of high-profile politicians and bureaucrats, wrapped up in their cocktail parties, worried more about themselves than about the problems that the country face. Her novels are concerned with the present decadence of India, and how creative use can be made of its past. It is this concern with the country which led her to protest against the Emergency imposed by her cousin Indira Gandhi.

Sahgal wrote her first volume of autobiography to the time of the publication of her latest novel. She has shown interest in the history and culture of her country. The two autobiographical works, *Prison and Chocolate Cake* and *From Fear Set Free*, present the changing social and political climate of the times in which she grew up. She describes what it was like growing up with her uncle; Jawaharlal Nehru during the years of Mahatma Gandhi's prolonged freedom movement. They also provide clues about the essential core of her thinking which informs her understanding of India's past, which she constantly invokes in her later novels, to make sense of the post-independence times. The book was published when she was only 27 years of age. Both the autobiographies become important because they

provide the basis for a better understanding of the novelist and her novels. *Prison and Chocolate Cake* presents the powerful associations and experiences of Sahgal's childhood and provides invaluable insight into the shaping influences of her life. The political consciousness, which dominates her literary creations, is real and inseparable from herself and surroundings. In the preface to *Prison and Chocolate Cake*, Sahgal points out:

We grew up at a time when India was the stage for a great political drama and we shall always remain a little dazzled by the performances we have seen.⁹

In the same book, she writes:

With us the growth of political awareness was a gradual and unconscious process and the most important influence in our lives.¹⁰

The book provides evidence of Sahgal's impression of the two most important leaders of modern India, Gandhi and Nehru. The two were household names for her, and the impact of their thoughts and ideas is found in all her writings. Though at first she had contrived a dislike for Gandhi's moral lapses but very soon his rare qualities like compassion, love for all, trust and regards for truth, spiritual uprightness etc. impressed her very favourably. In a very short time,

Gandhi became a strong force and an unavoidable presence. In *Prison and Chocolate Cake*, she says:

Our parents were adults when Gandhiji appeared on the horizon. Our children will never see him. They will hear of him, but to them he will be only a name, one of the many illustrious names of Indian history. But we are truly the children of Gandhi's India, born at a time when India was being reborn from an incarnation of darkness into one of light. Our growing up was India's growing up into political maturity...based on an ideology inspired by self-sacrifice, compassion and peace.¹¹

Sahgal's second autobiography *From Fear Set Free* depicts an account of events and happenings in Sahgal's personal life. The book chronicles her life in India and abroad and gives some memorable anecdotes of her eminent mother. It incorporates the events from India's social and political history, because of which we get to know more details about her views on several issues, which form the central core of her later fiction. It is the work of a mature married woman with an increasingly clear vision of life. She is still very much under the influence of Gandhi and Nehru. The title sums up the burden of her narrative, which is to demonstrate how the most vital concern of her growing up was to learn to free herself from fear, which had also

become the aspiration of the vast majority of people in the country. The book consists of eighteen chapters which deal with her meeting and marrying Gautam Sahgal, the birth of their three children, the consolidation of national freedom under the leadership of Nehru whose aloneness in the world of the spirit increases with advancing years.

Sahgal's first novel, *A Time to Be Happy* has the references to congress activities and the events of 1942. The novel presents India's struggle for independence and the changing socio-political life of the country presented through the upper middle class. The novel is located in the time immediately after the freedom of the country, but its narrative space is dominated by pre-independence times. The protagonist of the novel recalls his past life, especially the changes in his thinking and actions brought about by Gandhi's call to the people of India. Apart from this, the protagonist links it with the story of the children of his close friend, concentrating mainly on the youngest son Sanad, who finds himself a total misfit in independent India. The narrator recreates past events partly from his memory and partly on the basis of details given by Sanad. The problem of Sanad is one of identity or self-discovery. The novel takes off from a crisis in Sanad's life, when he seriously meditates giving up his job with a reputed foreign company. Sanad feels ill at ease in the company of his British officers. The relationship between the narrator and Sanad is deeply personal because Sanad absolutely regards him as an idealist whose integrity is extraordinary. Sanad's dilemma about himself is typical in

the cross-currents of the East and the West. He explains his problem by saying:

I've studied English history and literature. I've read the English poets. It's all the more real to me than the life I live every day. Don't you see, it has been burned into us. We're branded with it. My body is in India but my brain doesn't belong here. I might as well be an Englishman except for the colour of my skin.¹²

Sanad's marriage to Kusum coincides with India's independence in 1947. Sanad and Kusum come to terms with life — Sanad by accepting the new changes in the country with an unusual degree of understanding and developed sensibility; and Kusum by gradually recovering from the traumatic experience of Sahadev's cruel and irrational death and by finding the comfort and solace in Sanad.

The novel presents that because of immense differences in the levels of living and thinking of its people, there was a simultaneous coexistence of several layers of past incidents in the country, which made people respond differently to the British. They either chose to remain unmoved and fixed, like Sanad's father or evolved new ways for combating their influence by invoking a part of their native tradition. Some, like the protagonist, gave up their rich and prosperous life for joining Gandhi's social and political programme. Others, like Sanad, chose to follow the British blindly, because they considered it

both enlightening and rewarding — a civilized mode of living and an effective road to success. Thus, the novel deals with the themes which are taken up by Sahgal in her later novels mainly the East-West encounter, the impact of English or Western education, the desire for identity and marriage. Sahgal tries to depict a nation's consciousness through the fragmentary consciousness of an individual. Thus, Sahgal provides a multi-layered social and political history in the novel.

This Time of Morning is set in the early post-independence years, when a new republic eagerly looks forward to a future full of hope. It gives a daring expose of the happenings in the world of politicians and administrators of the South Block as the power changed hands in 1947. It is a purely political novel which deals with what happens in the corridors of power, in the drawing rooms of the political figures. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar states it as:

This Time of Morning is written with much greater ease and sophistication than its predecessor, and it can certainly claim to be one of the best political novels written by an Indian in English.¹³

Here it has been hailed as an impeccable novel, most remarkable for its sheer effortlessness. Much of the action takes place in Delhi, and the specific context is the decline and fall of one of the pillars of the Government, Kalyan Sinha. As one reads the novel, and summarizes the political events in India in the last years of Nehru's prime

ministership, one cannot resist the temptation to equate some of the characters in the novel with historical figures. But of course, the novel deserves to be read as a piece of fiction rather than as a piece of history. “*This Time of Morning* can be aptly described as a song of loneliness”¹⁴ where the novelist dramatizes the mood of uncertainty and the anxiety of the first decade of post-independent era.

In *This Time of Morning*, independence is already a few years old. Unfortunately, there is more chaos than order in Delhi. It is a deeply disturbing novel with a high degree of artistic maturity and technical virtuosity. Some of the characters of the novel are so beautifully and symbolically portrayed that they are equated with the contemporary political personalities. The novel deals with the vivid facets of the role of the civil service in the country, which impinges heavily on the country’s choice of a suitable political and administrative structure for its new needs. For examining different facets of the Gandhian mode of governance as one of the options, a good part of the pre-independence past of the country is brought into the narrative. The most significant aspect of the novel is that it brings to attention to the pivotal role of civil servants in the Indian state at the time when they did not figure in the writings of the historians. The novelist states that:

The old Civil Service jealously guarded its rights and privileges against the encroaching new services, both foreign and internal, and the polite tension between the old and the new affected this

and every other Ministry as India struggled to squeeze a revolution into the bureaucratic mould and adapt dramatic plans and programmes to everyday consumption.¹⁵

Sahgal's universe of discourse in this novel is peopled with politicians of every description, highly placed and influential bureaucrats, artists and journalists with varying levels of achievements, prominent parliamentarians and gossiping, liberated and libidinous society ladies as well as traditional educated housewives. There are glimpses of current history or history in the making. The main characters in the novel are Kalyan Sinha, the Minister without portfolio; Kailas, P. M.'s reliable assistant nurtured in the Gandhian Congress Movement; Rakesh, a young I. F. S. officer; Sir Arjun Mitra, the pragmatic and seasoned Secretary General of the Ministry of External Affairs; Hari Mohan, a businessman and for a while the Minister of Industries in the Government of Uttar Pradesh; Mira, the devoted wife of Kailas; Rashmi, the only daughter of Kailas and Mira; Nita, the daughter of the Narangs and a newspaper columnist; and Uma, Arjun Mitra's lawfully-wedded, beautiful wife. The central theme of the novel is as Rakesh, the protagonist of the novel states it:

It was the assurance that every man counts that life is the sum total of moments, that the human being through the exercise of his reason is the

instrument of all progress. A group was individuals. What was needed was not the burial of the self but its rebirth and celebration, for surely the only hope for people anywhere was that they should recognize and foster each other's humanity as individuals.¹⁶

Rakesh, a young officer in Foreign Service, who had grown up at a time when young men were ardent nationalists, returns to Delhi after a six-year absence to find many changes. He meets the new Advisor on Foreign Affairs, the controversial Kalyan Sinha and is once again drawn to the magnetic personality of the politician whose ruthless manipulations are, in a way, precursor of the moral corruption in the years to come. He is soon caught up in the whirl of politics, social life, careerism and intrigue. It comes to his realization that people like Kalyan Singh, are a threat to social freedom because they try to enslave through personal magnetism. So he cannot think of arguing a point or discussing a topic with Kalyan. The growth and development of the individual consciousness of Rakesh, as well as that of Kalyan, is the measure of the artistic achievement of Sahgal. Rakesh, longs for the warmth of a normal family like that of Kailas, Mira and Rashmi:

Rakesh, sitting down to dinner with Rashmi and her mother, warmed to the familiar glow of their company. This was a family, even with Kailas

away. These were people involved with one another. He and his father were just two people, not a family.¹⁷

His return to New Delhi and Rashmi's separation from her husband re-ignite his personal interest in Rashmi which may well mean the beginning of a new and mature relationship on the emotional plane. Finally, he determines to communicate with Rashmi as they have quite a good deal of common to share.

Arjun Mitra, a top bureaucrat with a Western background, at the age of thirty-three marries a young and beautiful girl Uma. The brilliant, responsible, and successful officer, however, remains absorbed in his officialdom. He represents the merits and demerits of the position. Uma longs for his love and company, but Arjun "condemned himself to an isolation where she could never reach or touch him again."¹⁸ His indifference makes her so desperate emotionally and sexually that she takes to drinking and moving alone with men, deviating from the social norms. Kalyan Sinha, on the other hand, swears by the group and emphasizes the need to protect society from the predatory individual. He believes that the battle in this country is still for survival and victory lies in close identity of aim and effort and in a merging of interests. Kalyan's enemy is Kailash, a Gandhian type of freedom-fighter and social worker whose statement as head of the selection board that would choose candidates for the election just before the partition of India underlines his complete disagreement with Kalyan. But the Prime Minister supports Kalyan

following Kailas's complaint against his disregard for official code of conduct at the U. N.:

Men of Kalyan's type do not always function in the routine, ponderous, bureaucratic manner. That is their value. They have the ability to shed all non-essentials and go directly to the heart of the matter and get things done. It is an irritating quality at times, but a useful one.¹⁹

However, the women like Barbara, Celia and Nita all come under his romantic influence, yet Kalyan fails to connect himself meaningfully to any of them and perforce remains unmarried because he cannot communicate through personal love.

Thus, the first two novels deal with the effect of the colonial encounter on the pre and post independent India through the institutional structures which the British had established in the country. It is true that the political setting in the novel is the contemporary scene in New Delhi; it is difficult to accept a critical analysis:

As a work of fiction, the novel is not successful. Mrs. Sahgal does not seem to care much about her characters and there are passages which are too polemical. The novel is in one sense a political assessment of India's capabilities put

forward with much beating of the official drum. The characters in the novel such as Kailas Vrind, Hari Mohan, Somnath and Kalyan Sinha are not real, for they really have no lives: they are symbols representing Gandhian ideals or pragmatic politics of power.... Mrs. Sahgal points out the moral behind the novel: that in India it is not expected to pay homage to the politician, it is the politician who must pay homage to the people.²⁰

Of course, this is a sample of critical illiteracy and does not merit our attention beyond the explanatory statement that Sahgal's controlling and clarifying vision of art gives full scope for the development of every character in the novel as has been shown in the foregoing pages. Thus, her art is more mature medium of communication as well as more satisfying process of illumination of the experience of life with all its stresses and strains in the highly sophisticated society in Delhi.

The *Storm in Chandigarh* is one of the best political novels written by Sahgal. It deals with the partition of East Punjab on linguistic lines just when the state had recovered from the trauma of the 1947 partition. Violence of the sixties becomes the central concern in the novel. The novel deals with the problem of political tension and violence originating from its being, Chandigarh, the common capital of the two states — the Punjab and Haryana. It analyses the political crisis in the newly divided Punjab and Haryana, and portrays the

personal tensions resulting in the failure of marital ties. The theme of the novel is violence, not necessarily an obvious physical violence, but an invisible and the more subtle form of violence — the infliction of one person's will on another. Though superficially the novel depicts violence, chaos and the uneasy political situation of the late sixties, it also reflects Sahgal's human spirit in a traditional culture milieu and its characteristic response of freedom to meet the challenges of change. The novel deals with the political upheaval in Punjab in the post-independence period. Sahgal focuses her attention on the national illness. In this sense, she is authentic in portraying the reality of the political situation. The metaphorical term 'storm' in the title of the novel works at two levels: one is the political, following on the partition of Punjab into two states and second is the personal or emotional crisis in the marital conflicts between husband and wife. The two backgrounds — the political and the personal run parallel to each other and are well integrated in the theme of her fictional work.

The characters in the novel behave like moderns and at the same time do not isolate themselves completely from the tradition. This blend of tradition and modernity can be observed in their attitude to morality, education, man-woman relations and attitude to love. There are details of complex human relationships against the backdrop of India's current political discontent. Women characters in this novel no more like to remain confined within the four walls of their houses. They prefer to go to picnic and parties to relieve the burden of boredom and domestic monotony. They don't hesitate to take whiskey in the company of men. Sahgal demonstrates that violence has spread

into social relationships also, especially in relations between men and women which she has consistently explored and commented upon in several novels. The valuable thing about her treatment is that, like what she does about other aspects of India's social and political life, she traces its roots in the country's past. Besides the political background which is very well projected, there is a human background also.

Sahgal's fictional world is represented by a variety of people, politicians, high-ranking civil servants, and wealthy businessmen with international connections. On the political side, the two new Chief Ministers, Gyan Singh of Punjab and Harpal Singh of Haryana and also the Union Home Minister have figured. Vishal Dubey, Trivedi, Prasad and Kachru represent the civil servants. The prosperous textile industrialist, Nikhil Ray and his wife Gauri, the manager Inder Mehra who runs Nikhil's textile company in Chandigarh and his wife Saroj and the liquor manufacturer Jit Sahani and his wife Mara complete the business set.

Harpal Singh and Gyan Singh, the Chief Ministers of Haryana and the Punjab respectively, had been friends and colleagues once, but are now obliged to make menacing gestures. The political fissure between Gyan Singh and Harpal Singh was caused over state boundaries, water and electricity. The hostile Chief Minister of Punjab has threatened to lead a strike at Bhakhra. This situation resulted in a grave crisis in Chandigarh. The novel opens with the Union Home Minister's statement: "Violence lies very close to the surface in the Punjab"²¹ which reflects the stormy atmosphere in the two states. As

the tension mounts up, New Delhi deputed Vishal Dubey to watch the situation at Chandigarh. After a careful appraisal, Vishal backs Harpal and persuades him to accept Gyan's challenge of a general strike. Violence breakouts inevitably and Harpal is wounded and hospitalized. A critic states: "The *Storm in Chandigarh* can be attributed, at one level to the estrangement between Gyan Singh and Harpal Singh."²² The clash between Gyan Singh and Harpal Singh is a clash of ideologies. It is a fight between the cult of violence versus the idea of non-violence. Gyan Singh who shows little concern for emotions and philanthropy always indulged in a ruthless attitude. Harpal Singh on the other hand is philanthropic more concerned with general safety and well being, each time there is a confrontation between the two Chief Ministers. Between them Dubey realizes there was more than a political battle.

Vishal Dubey, the protagonist of the novel is an idealistic and upright civil servant. He displays admirable detachment and endurance when Leela, the girl he married turns out to be an adulteress. Even though he knows it well that she is disloyal to him, he thinks he himself is doing her a wrong by depriving her of her marital rights and affection. Talking about Vishal Dubey and his wife Leela, Sahgal writes:

She had selected what she wanted of him: the distinguished escort at parties, the successful civil servant with a promising future, the husband who could be relied upon to take pains with whatever

problems she took to him. And she had ignored the rest. She had given herself selectively too, what she had considered it prudent and convenient to give, and left him empty of the reality of herself. Even her vitality had needed an audience. She scintillated in company. Time and again he heard her talk animatedly of what had happened a day or a week earlier, of an article she had read, an idea she had had, at a party. Alone with him she had little to share. Had their failure been their fault, or was there something at the very core of human dreams and longings that was fatal to fulfilment through marriage?²³

Thus Vishal's life itself becomes an illustration to the fact that suffering is the mark of such honest people for whom life is a persistent quest for the Higher Morality, which means "a search for value and an attempt to choose the better value, the real value, in any situation, and not just do what's done or what is expected."²⁴

Vishal's marriage with Leela had turned out to be a vanishing search for communication. They were bound by nuptial 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.²⁵

Throughout their lives, they 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. A widower, he is deriving satisfaction in a liaison 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 on sex.

The novel is the symbolic representation of stormy activity for social and political background. The political violence between the two newly-formed states is reflected in the personal violence of Inder and Saroj. In Chandigarh Vishal gets acquainted with two young couples: Inder-Saroj and Jit-Mara. Both Inder and Jit are young industrialists in Chandigarh. Inder looks after Nikhil Ray's nylon plant in Chandigarh and Jit is the whiskey manufacturer. Saroj and Inder present a picture of typical traditional Indian family in which womanhood is captured in the possessive spirit of the husband. Their

relationship is purely mechanical and superficial without any feeling of affection and tenderness. “This, the touch without sexual significance, the caress of affection, was different. It cost him an effort to make it.”²⁶ His treatment of his wife and children is extremely immodest. He treats them as if they were non-living objects. Inder’s problem with his wife arises from his view of the destiny of women which has descended down the generations, in which she has to live according to a fixed role, pre-determined for her by the male-dominated society. The temperamental incompatibility caused disharmony in the marriage of various characters of the novel. In the novel, there are extra-marital relationships among the characters which Sahgal portrays through the relations such as — Mara, Jit’s wife, has relations with Inder, Inder’s wife Saroj has with Vishal Dubey, and Gauri, a Bengali Businessman’s wife also sighs for Dubey’s love. Saroj’s pre-marital relationship becomes the cause of failure of their marriage, which Inder has not forgotten and neither he let her forget it. Saroj’s quest for communication and sharing naturally leads her towards Vishal, whom she finds more understanding and considerate.

Another couple in the novel, Jit and Mara, also suffer from a similar malady. They are a childless couple who blessed with all the world comforts from life; suffer from emotional void in their life. The search for communication makes Mara come towards Inder. But soon she is disillusioned when she finds him a hypocrite, and breaks all relations with him. By that time Jit also realizes that there is something lacking in their relationship and attempts to come closer to

her. The realization makes them be reconciled and remain true to each other.

The novelist's main concern seems to be the depiction of the social life of Indian people of post-independence days. The storm is blown off on both planes the political and the personal, at the end of the novel. Sahgal's awareness of the historical and political developments in Asia and Europe is quite evident in this novel. The one event that is continually kept in the backdrop is the partition of India in 1947. It acquires a special ironic significance in this novel because of the second partition of the Indian part of the Punjab on the basis of language into Haryana and Punjab with Chandigarh as the joint capital. Thus, the novel depicts the violence that enveloped the free India in the sixties:

The map of India, once a uniform piece of territory was again suffering the pangs of another bifurcation of the two states of Haryana and Punjab, and had become a welter of separate sensitive identities resurrected after the independence.²⁷

Sahgal's next novel, *The Day in Shadow*, which she has called her most personal novel, has the autobiographical touch in it. Sahgal combines the social and the political issues that pose a threat to a developing country. The novel concerns itself not only with the release and recognition of the individual consciousness but also with

its growth and maturation. The novel deals with the struggle of a young, beautiful and daring Indian woman trapped under the burden of a brutal divorce settlement and the agony and unhappiness she experiences in the hands of cruel and unjust male-dominated society of India. In the novel, Sahgal represents a variety of people, the political leaders, business barons, journalists and free thinkers. Sahgal has presented the social life of these people living in India in the early sixties when India was on her way to progress after independence. The novelist shows that though Indians have got freedom yet it is only on the surface level as in their attitudes to love, morality, marriage, sex, education and religion, they are still the slaves of the West.

In the novel, the major theme is the continued domination and exploitation of the woman by her husband despite the constantly increasing awareness of the need for liberation felt by every educated person following the achievement of independence and abolition of slavery to the British. The central pre-occupation of Sahgal's novel is the suffering caused to woman in the prison-house of loveless marriage and her suffering when she makes a break way. The crisis is already over when the story opens. The continued tendency toward exploitation of the woman by man provokes her to revolt against the social system and reconstitute it on her terms. The chief characters of the novel are — Som, Raj, Simrit, Sumer Singh, Brij and Ram Krishan. People in India think that they can become modern just by imitating the Western life-style. The people in New Delhi love organizing parties, drinking wine and flirting with women other than their wives. They enjoy late night dinners and ballroom dances. The

novel opens with the glow and the glitter of the modern society of the capital city of India:

The huge mirrors of the Zodiac Room at the inter-continental, festooned in carved gilt, reflected everyone of consequence in the Ministry of Petroleum, and a lot of other officials besides. And their wives. And some of their daughters — the supple, flat-stomached young, with their saris tied low showing their navels, their hair swinging long and loose, or piled high in glassy architecture.²⁸

This shows the superficial modernity of the Indian people who blindly imitate Western style in their fashions and manners which take them away from the traditions and customs of their own country. They try to be modern as much as possible by following modern life-style, as they arrange parties and spend money lavishly. Against the glittering socio-political backdrop in New Delhi, the Indian cultural paradox inherent in its predominantly Hindu character is presented as a crucial aspect of the background.

The novel is basically concerned with the emotional effects of divorce. It centres on the traumatic post-divorce experience of a middle-aged woman, Simrit. Simrit's marriage to Som, an industrialist turns out to be disaster. Som and Simrit have been married for long years and have three children. As a businessman, Som's ambition in

life is to move up fast. At one point, Simrit is shocked to find that she has become irrelevant in his scheme of things. After moments of hesitation and with guilty feelings, she finally walks out of her home, because she finds a supportive friend in Raj. She leaves all the wealth to Som but takes the children with her at the time of divorce. Simrit suffered from marital incompatibility. She respects certain values of life more than material prosperity. Here Sahgal portrays how lack of proper companionship, communication and equality between man and woman can cause wreck to marital relationship resulting in divorce. It is the clash of ideals that leads to their separation. Through Simrit, Sahgal expounds various aspects of divorce and its implications for a lonely woman. Here Sahgal reflects her own shadow of life after her divorce. Sahgal confesses it in an article:

In this book I tried to figure out something that has happened to me — the shattering experience of divorce. I wanted to show how even in a free country like ours, where women are equal citizens, a woman can be criminally exploited without creating a ripple.²⁹

Simrit's friendship with Raj provides her the anchor and helps her to come out of the shock and stupor and establish a life of her own. First, the mind then the body open up to new responses and life affirms itself in a sense of fulfilment in her relationship with Raj. "The relationship which she builds with Raj is thus an entirely different one

— it is born out of a real need, not a habit and it begins with the mind, not the body.”³⁰ In fact, Raj never discusses marriage with Simrit but only encourages her to be assertive and independent. But in the last part of the novel, he suddenly declares that they are going to be married. He can be aptly described as, “a Christian by birth, a liberal thinker by temperament and training and a fearless exponent of his ideas as a matter of faith....”³¹

The novel is set in Delhi and close to the seat of power and justice. The inability of the law courts to translate legal theory into action is vividly brought about by Sahgal in the novel. On the political scenario, it depicts the rise of politicians such as Sumer Singh, who are inclined towards super powers for collaboration and not to non-alignment for self-sufficiency. The corrupt private life of Sumer Singh with a widow-turned sex companion Pixie is only a typical illustration of the life lived by such top-ranking public servants with a feudal background. He maintains a private flat where he has appointment with Pixie twice a week. Even the taxi driver who drives him there knows about his affair for “No Minister could be anonymous for long in Delhi and he had been using this side entrance for three months, though he had kept his own car before and left long before morning.”³² It is a clear reflection on the private lives of the Ministers who had been misusing their public positions. Ram Kishan, the spiritual mentor of Raj and a good old friend of his father, is instrumental in bringing about the union of Simrit and Raj — the separated Hindu Brahmin woman and the unattached middle-group Christian bachelor. Firmly rooted in the Indian tradition, Ram Kishan has lived a life full of

action, both physical and mental; steeped in the Gandhian philosophy and programmes, he believes in and practises non-violence as a living value and practical virtue. Ram Kishan is a unique character in the novel for he takes up fight against everything antisocial or antinational. The novel demonstrates through his view of things the application of the feminist principles emerging in the West to the situation of Hindu women in particular.

The Day in Shadow is a fine example of the female literary tradition in Indian English literature. The Western wave of stream-of-consciousness technique affected the writings of the novelist and she also plunged deep into the inner world of her characters. She adopts an interesting method of creating her characters in the novel in order to promote her theme of women's suppression and revolt in the socio-political set up in modern India. Her characters are not so much individuals as types pointing to contrasting themes. She creates such contrasting pairs as Som and Raj, Sardar Sahib and Sumer Singh, N. N. Shah and Ram Kishan. The writer reproduces the thoughts and the vision of the future India dreamed of and put before the nation by its first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. According to Nehru, science and technology were the means by which India could realize its dream of a better future in the science-dominated world.

Sahgal's next novel *A Situation in New Delhi* fictionalises 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, points out the Naxalite movement and student unrest and, above all, the aftermath of Nehru's death. In

this novel, there is no gap between the private world and the political world; both the worlds are reciprocally treated in which actions and characters are co-mingled. It deals with the problems of alienation and frustration of the younger generation of Indians in the context of opportunistic politics pursued in New Delhi. The novel concentrates on a sense of disintegration giving way to chaos and disorder that engulf the capital. The title of the novel suggests that the situation in New Delhi summarizes the situation of the entire country. The novel depicts the aftermath of a great popular Prime Minister Shivraj, who dominated the political and national scene for a full decade.

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. The novel attempts an estimate of the dead leader's personal qualities, his approach to nation building, and his power to influence the lives of people. The novel builds a contrast between the times before and after Shivraj. The novel begins with the news of the death of Prime Minister Shivraj, the idealist leader of India. Here, the three characters, Shivraj, Usman and Michael, represent the three main religious segments of the Indians, namely, Hindu, Muslim and Christian. The chosen time of action is the late fifties and early sixties when Rishad, Devi's son joins a secretly

operating group of student-terrorists. The nineteen years old Rishad gets killed in one of his underground operations and his girl friend Suvarnapriya becomes the protege of Devi. The novel is the portrayal of the city torn apart by the failure of political leadership and violent student unrest. It would be true to state that the entire book is a tribute to Nehru.

Shivraj 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. His intimate followers; Devi, Usman and Michael try to live with Shivraj's ideology. Devi, the most intimate follower of Shivraj is invited to be the Education Minister,

They hadn't known, when they asked her to join...though how it could have escaped them was ironic...that she had a mind of her own and in a position of authority she would use it. Wasn't that what authority was for?³³

Devi, a beautiful lady, a widowed mother of a college student, now in her early fifties, takes up the reins of the office in her strong hands and starts asserting herself. She appoints Usman, an old follower of her late brother and her dear friend as the Vice-Chancellor of Delhi University. Usman is forced into accepting the offer as it comes from Devi who needs him to survive in the office with the political ideology they share. Usman is over-burdened with the troubles of unrest and

violence in the University campus. Usman believes that the great ideals should not remain as mere words in the scriptures. In fact, the scriptures live only when the people follow them. He condemns the political interference in the academic world and laments for the loss of a leader like Shivraj who had a unique sense of perception, Usman had taken the Vice-Chancellorship to bring about some fundamental changes. He is being pushed into taking back three rusticated students for a rape case. His wife Nadira always blames him for accepting such a post and she proposes to leave the country for any other country if not Pakistan. When the tension reaches its peak Usman advises Devi to resign from the post and from the party. He realizes the futility of his efforts to free the University from political influences. He decides to give up the Vice-Chancellorship. When Shivraj dies, Devi needs Usman body and soul, who makes love to her as she lies on her bed, mourning for her husband Ishwar. Even in her love affairs, she is neither honest nor mature, nor unselfish. Ishwar's bed is still warm when Usman occupies it.

Michael, who can be considered another important character of the novel, is a renowned English biographer who spent his childhood in India. As a young British boy, he was fascinated by Shivraj. He visits India to pay his homage to the great hero by writing his biography. Both, Usman and Michael have very special relationship with Devi. Both loved her once, and they still love her. She had accepted their love in a very natural way and she still accepts it. Though he is a foreigner, he also has his share of disillusionment in the new political set-up. Michael had observed Devi closely in relation

to her brother. Michael remembered Devi as a young girl, who had many admirers but chose only her brother as a companion. He could remember her enjoying boat rides and horse rides with her brother and he could also remember:

...a picture as distinct, of a family enlarged by friends and relations at a long polished table reflecting light from the candelabra above it, the boy and girl, cherished as roses, facing each other across it. Leaving it later to walk arm in arm in the light of the stars. The Pharaohs had married their sisters.³⁴

Her commitment to her brother was too strong and firm. Sahgal shows a strange relationship between brother and sister. Sahgal has never shown clearly whether their relationship was sexual or not but they behaved like lovers, or rather as husband and wife would behave towards each other. Michael had noticed that ‘physical contact’ between the brother and sister “was so constant, hand touching, his head bent to hers.”³⁵ Duty to a husband, or wife or child, Michael could understand. But what duty was this?

With herself, with Shivraj, it was all the same thing, they were so much flesh of each other’s flesh, their very souls mixed. He had been jealous of Shivraj.³⁶

To conclude, the novel is a finely crafted book, with its neatly structured action in sixteen chapters. Sahgal's analysis of the problems that confront a newly independent and developing country by focusing her creative attention on the young men and women of free India is convincing and sensitive. The Situation in New Delhi is really representative of the situation in the whole of India.

Rich Like Us is the coveted Sahitya Akademi award and Sinclair Prize winning work of Nayantara Sahgal. It is probably her best novel in which the action dates back to the period of India's National Emergency during 1974-75 when the Parliament was in a state of suspended animation. The novel presents a picture of India after Independence but shows primarily the state of affairs in the country under the Emergency imposed by her cousin Indira Gandhi. Sahgal's searching look at India during the Emergency reveals that democracy and spirituality are only skin-deep. She delineates the socio-political scenario of India particularly during Emergency, the backdrop of which is Delhi. The novel projects the failures, frustrations and exploitation of woman — a faithful wife, a middle-aged unmarried civil servant or a cockney English woman. There is a remarkable blend of the two worlds here, the public and the private. The novel is a fearlessly presented account of the harassment caused to all sections of people during the period of National Emergency. As Dev, one of the principal characters, states early in the novel:

This emergency is just what we needed. The trouble makers are in jail. An opposition is something we never needed. The way the country's being run now, with one person giving the orders, and no one being allowed to make a fuss about it in the Cabinet or in Parliament, means things can go full steam ahead without delays and weighing pros and cons forever. Strikes are banned. It's going to be very good for business.³⁷

Besides depicting the anguish during Emergency, the novelist takes the reader to the scenario of the Second World War and nostalgic pre-partition days and describes the magnetic, transforming influence of Gandhi on the masses.

The novelist weaves a narrative around a number of characters: Ramlal Surya; his English wife, Rose; his Indian wife, Mona; Sonali Ranade, the I. A. S. Officer, the narrator; Dev; Ramlal's son Ravi Kachru and Kishori Lal are the principal characters while the Prime Minister and her staff are in the background. Beginning with an ironic title with multiple meanings, the flow of action in the novel constantly fluctuates between the past and the present through two consciousnesses, one of Rose and the other of Sonali. Both Sonali and Rose are typical Sahgal women. Here, Sahgal introduces three major female characters. Each one of them is different in her outlook and background.

Sahgal traces the impact of the Emergency on a large number of characters, simultaneously highlighting the responses of these individuals to the social tension created by the Emergency. Among the many victims are Sonali, a conscientious Civil Servant; Rose, a cockney shop-girl turned an Indian businessman's foreign wife who tries her best to make a passage to India and at last meets her death in the hands of a 'youth camp tough' employed by her step son, Dev, one of the small tyrants the Emergency has created; Kishori Lal, a petty merchant, arrested and harassed by the police for being associated with the RSS; a youth from the Nehru University severely manhandled and imprisoned for being a member of the Marxist Party; and Ravi Kachru, a shrewd administrator who manages to ride the tide of popularity in the early days of the Emergency. These are the representative of the common predicament shared by the majority in the period of National Emergency.

Rose's life is changed after she meets Ram. When Ram first meets Rose, she is a twenty-year old lower-class cockney English girl. She is the daughter of a factory worker. Her life before Ram had not prepared her for a life-time of commitment to someone like Ram, far less to his life-style. Rose had broken her settled engagement with Freddie in order to marry Ram, a Lahore based businessman. Though she knew all about Ram's first marriage and a son of him, she married him for love. She believes in the ideal of love. There was something romantic about her attitude to Ram:

She had entered an emotional labyrinth and she was drawn magnetically on, with Ram doing no more than holding her hand for the entire two weeks before he asked her, a victim of casual unthinking sorcery, to marry him. And it was a sign of the distance she had travelled.³⁸

Rose has undergone silent suffering with an undeclared war around her in Ram's house and the bonds of blood and flesh and the laws of the Hindu Undivided Family coming in the way of her freedom and privacy. She realizes that "without a child of her own she would never be the mistress of the house not even her half of it."³⁹ The cold war between Rose and Mona reconciled only after Mona's attempt to commit suicide. Once again, Rose finds herself the unwanted third in a love-triangle when Ram falls in love with Marcella. In all her troubles, Sonali remains her friend and fights for her right to property. And finally, she is murdered. But people are made to believe that she invited the death on herself.

Mona, Ramlal's first wife comes from a typical conservative traditional Punjabi family. She takes refuge in, and draws strength from prayers, 'bhajans' and 'Kirtans'. She leads a conventional life. In fact, Rose in those early years at Lahore had never seen her, even though they lived in the same house. She is secure in her status as the lady of the house. She instructs the servants in the daily running of the house, sometimes only to assert her role. Mona has unshakeable faith in astrology. Her marriage with Ram had been arranged with the help

of astrologers and horoscopes. But all this had not prevented Ram from taking another wife. Even then, Mona continued to be ruled by the predictions of astrologers. When she focuses all her attentions on Dev, her son, all dreams and hopes for her son's future are once again ruled by the planets. Earlier Mona was suffering because of Ram's love for Rose and then Rose also suffers in the same manner because of Ram's love for Marcella. Ram enjoys life fully with both the wives, with Mona looking after the household affairs and the child, and Rose providing sensual pleasure and a company in business. Both the women feel wronged, lonely and insecure. Sahgal strongly condemns the attitudes which reduce women to an object. In her study of Sahgal and Doris Lessing, Neena Arora observes:

Man considers it as normal male behaviour to satisfy his desires at both the emotional and the physical level outside marriage while at the slightest hint of any deviation on her part which may not involve sex, man turns violent and hostile towards his wife and starts persecuting her.⁴⁰

Sonali is a thirty-eight year old I. C. S. officer who as a narrator, is far from being a passive observer. During the Emergency, her strong opinions on democracy cost her job, an event she accepts as symptomatic of changing times. In Sonali, we find a woman whose life is deeply affected by the various twists and turns that the Indian

body politics takes. We see Sonali falling in love with Ravi Kachru soon after independence. The novelist focuses on Sonali Ranade, an I.A.S. officer and joint secretary in the Union Ministry of Industry. The three characters — Sonali, Kishori Lal and Dev are act as the centre of consciousness. There is inter-action among each of these three characters and the events which brings out the inner tension between diverse points of view and raises a number of socio-political, moral, ethical and human questions. She gets demoted and transferred to U.P. because of her honest adherence to the Governments declared industrial policy in rejecting a multinational company's application for a licence to produce a fizzy drink called Happyola. She is replaced by her former class-fellow and present colleague, Ravi Kachru. She resigns from the service rather than be cowed down by a hypocritical government. She recalls her past days when fifteen years back she had topped the list in the competitive examination for the civil service. On this achievement, her father had tears in his eyes with the hope that her new responsibility could bring a peaceful historical change. Though the fires and fevers of Sonali were different from her father, it touched both of them with its magic. Her memories of it had been her inheritance. The distinction between politics and the service had become badly blurred over the last few years,

The two sides were hopelessly mixed, with politicians meddling in administration, and favourite like Kachru, the prime example, playing politics as if his life depended on it...suddenly he

was indispensable here, there and everywhere, the right hand and left leg of the Prime Minister and her household....⁴¹

The action of the novel begins after the declaration of the Emergency and does not take us to its end, Sonali is thirty-eight and having been born in 1937 she is old enough to have absorbed the idealism and the hope of the pre-independence period. She has something from the past to which she can compare the present. Sonali, as an honest and out spoken person, finds that the reasons given by the government for the imposition of emergency were not true. Her witty and ironical voice never rises above the levels of decorum and culture as when she talks about the attitude of the civil service towards the Emergency:

We knew this was no emergency. If it had been, the priorities would have been quite different. We were all taking part in a thinly disguised masquerade, preparing the stage for family rule. And we were involved in a conspiracy of silence, which is why we were careful not to do more than say hello when we passed each other in the building, and not to talk about our work after hours, which made after hours sessions very silent indeed. No one wanted trouble. So long as it didn't touch us, we played along, pretending the

Empress's new clothes were beautiful. To put it charitably, we were being realistic. We knew we were up against a power we couldn't handle, individually or collectively. Though I am sure the true explanation is that we are blind from birth, born of parents blind from birth.⁴²

The novel deals with the changes brought about by the emergency brings in the social and political fabric of the country by analyzing the response it evokes among individuals, classes and groups. Here Sahgal provides for two narratives, the main narrative and the shorter narrative of Sonali. The novelist vividly dramatizes the historical scene and comments elaborately on some of the crucial issues thrown up by the times. The novelist shows primarily the state of affairs in the country under the Emergency imposed by her cousin, Indira Gandhi. Her own abhorrence of the Emergency got expression in resigning her membership of the Sahitya Akademi's Advisory Board for English. Her description of the Emergency shows how tyrants of all hues were created by that one act of Indira Gandhi and how they operated with impunity.

Sahgal has special regard for patriots like Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru. Some passages in the novel reveal her true respect for Pandit Nehru. She pays a tremendous tribute to his overall personality:

What a man, what character, what integrity, what ability, what democracy. What refinement such as never-before seen.... Relationships, anecdotes, encounters with Panditji popped up like jack-in-the boxes.⁴³

To conclude, the novel delineates different incidents such as the murder of the narrator Sonali's great grandmother in the name of suttee, the mutilation of the sharecropper because he asks for his due, the rape of the village women by the police because their men folk dare to resist the landlord, and the murder of Rose, the large-hearted Englishwoman in New Delhi just because her frank talk is an embarrassment to her stepson Dev, are all described in an entirely credible manner. The narrative technique is interesting; the narrator is Sonali, but alternate chapters deal with her father Keshav's friend Ram, a businessman who loves Rose and then Marcella even though he has a wife named Mona. The novel ends on a note of hope that in the midst of sycophancy, there are persons like Kishori Lal, a petty shopkeeper, who have the courage to protest against tyranny.

Sahgal's seventh novel *Plans for Departure*, winner of the 1987 Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Eurasia registers an important stage in her growth as a novelist. The novel takes the reader back to the colonial past and represents a picture of the subcontinent poised for revolution in the backdrop of the world on the edge of a cataclysmic war. With the novel, Sahgal moves away from her familiar contemporary political era. The major part of action takes place at a

hill station in North India between 1913 and 1914. The novel is about a young woman's rendezvous with India at a time when the status of both women and India was on the edge of change. It is a subtle, sharply imagined novel, skillfully plotted and elegantly written. A reviewer of this novel in *The Guardian* observed that Sahgal handled her ingredients — love, compromise, anguish, serenity, the writing on the wall — with lucent sincerity and a feeling for both kinds of history, outward and inward. The novel is both a love story and a mystery, set in a continent poised for revolution and a world on the edge of war — a novel of haunting power and superb craftsmanship, rich in intrigue, gentle humour and exquisite observation. The novel is the most successful and brilliant fiction of history, re-enacts the drama of socio-cultural change in the Raj in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Plans for Departure is set in the hill station of Himapur in India, on the eve of World War II. An elderly Indian scientist, alone with his new Danish secretary, has taken a summer cottage to continue his research. Other members of the local 'gentry' are a dynamic missionary and his boorish wife, and the local magistrate who has become disillusioned with British rule in India. The plot turns around the secretary, Anna, her sympathies to the Indian independence movement, and her reaction to the mysterious disappearances of the magistrate's wife and murder of the missionary's wife. Although somewhat dry and slow moving, the intelligent writing and popular setting make this novel appeal to some readers.

The major characters in the novel are: Sir Nitin Bose, the sixty-year-old botanist; his secretary, Anna Hansen, a young Danish woman with a mind of her own; Henry Brewster, the District Magistrate at Himapur, a serene hill station and the Missionary couple Mr. and Mrs. Croft and Nicholas, her boy-friend in England. It is the story of Anna Hansen, a Danish girl, a protagonist of the novel who postpones her marriage to an English diplomat, Nicholas, because of her desire for self-realization. She wants to understand life and asserts her right to be her authentic self. For this aim, she sets out on a travel for one year, visiting Copenhagen, London, Madras, Calcutta and finally Himapur. She gets the job of a Secretary-companion to Sir Nitin Basu, a renowned botanist who has come to Himapur during the summer to carry on his work. During her stay in Himapur, she comes into contact with Henry Brewster, the District Magistrate and feels attracted towards his personality. Gradually, she falls in love with him and is thrown into confusion as she and Nicholas have decided to get married.

The major themes in the novel include human relationship, East-West encounter, status of the woman, British imperialism and the Indian National Movement. Anna's unyielding independence and her sense of freedom provide a striking contrast to the British imperialism and the suffocating political situation of the 1914. She is conscious of the span of India's history, its cultural tradition, as well as its present. She reflects:

The struggle for self-mastery was all that was really real. If that was Hinduism in a nutshell...it was a pity it had not stayed grand and simple, in the nut.⁴⁴

She has come to India for self-realization, the age-old Indian concept of the ideal of life. Anna is more Indian than any other Indian character in the novel. During her stay at Himapur, Anna comes to Henry's office everyday to collect mail and borrow books from his personal library. She is moved by Henry's predicament as she always sympathized with grieving souls. Gradually, their relationship develops and she falls in love with him. And then she stumbles on vague evidences of two unnatural deaths on a far-away hillside which points to Henry being a murderer and imagining them to be associated with a secret crime, she makes plans for her departure. On returning to England, she marries Nicholas and is shown living as a grand old lady whose grand-daughter, Gayatri and her husband, Jason, adore her.

Gayatri and Jason provide the symbolic link between not only the past and the present time in the novel but also the idealistic intermingling of cultures and the integral vision of the novelist. Though the main events in the novel concern the passage of year, it moves into both the past and the future. Anna's grandchild Gayatri and her husband, Jason continue the efforts of distinguishing right from wrong.

In Himapur Anna comes in contact with the small European community such as — the District Magistrate, Henry Brewster, who

rules over this world in miniature, feels the mountains moving closer every evening and the missionary Marlowe Croft and his wife Lucilie Croft. Madhav Rao, a photographer-cum-chemist is probably the only Indian who has his nationalist aspirations on the one hand and his camera on the other. The title of the novel links the Crofts and the Brewsters to Anna, Sir Nitin and Madhav Rao in a common intention. They are all birds of passage in Himapur, and must return to the plains before the monsoon breaks, as the British must leave India some day. The plans that they are constantly making for departure show that all of them are essentially aliens and bring out the ephemeral nature of their mutual association.

In this novel, Sahgal deals with how love can mean different things to different people. Anna realizes that what she shared with Henry was special. But she takes a long time to arrive at this understanding. Initially she deceives herself into believing that she could never love a murderer. Therefore, she emphatically tells Nicholas that she could never have married a murderer or even loved him. Later on, after reading Henry's letter in which he tries to explain his marriage to Stella and its subsequent failure. Stella is the daughter of a colonel. As soon as she realizes that Henry does not share her beliefs, she shuts herself off from him, unable to see the sensitive, loving man that he is. Henry writes to Anna about how Stella's politics dominated her life:

If she had left me because she was her father's daughter, I would have accepted it and let her go

without a fight. It would have been an honorable reason for parting. But her political commitment got muddled with other reasons.⁴⁵

In spite of Henry's devotional affection for Stella which makes him give up his dreams of a new political life in England, she develops an affair with Robert Pryor, the Home Secretary. Even when they tell Henry that they are fond of each other, Henry is not ready to leave her:

I said to Pryor, since Stella wouldn't talk, "Is she pregnant? Is that the trouble? Because if she is, I'll adopt the child." They looked at each other as if I were dangerously unbalanced, and this the final travesty in my dementedness.⁴⁶

Stella pushes Henry to the depths of desperation and makes her journey downhill only to marry Robert. By this time, Anna comes in contact with Henry.

There is also another story of Marlowe Croft and his wife Lulu. Marlowe comes in the life of Lulu in a dramatic way. Lulu had fallen in love with an American preacher, Croft. Once Lulu attended his last sermon in a country church. She tells her father about Croft's moving sermon that had put her in a trance. Mr. Firth, Lulu's father, gets Croft two months' jail term for daring to meddle with his local administration. Lulu marries Croft soon after his release from jail. After sometime, she realizes that Marlowe Croft did not need her. He

had his church and his mission only. Gradually, the life she had made with him is now over. She thinks that Marlowe's charm had slowly worn off. For all her shrill foolishness, Lulu has been a good wife. But when Marlowe baptizes a sweeper's child and thinks of adopting it, Lulu finds it unbearable. "With her good wifeliness gone, and her loyalty to his loyalties at breaking point...the life she had made with him was over."⁴⁷ Then, she plans to depart. But before she could depart, she meets with an accident.

In the novel, Sahgal portrays most of her characters who are making plan for departure for different reasons as the title of the novel suggests. Here most of Sahgal's characters are constantly making the plans for departure because most of them are essentially aliens and bring out the ephemeral nature of their mutual association. The time-scale of the novel reflects the centrality of the Himapur experience, which is spread over twelve chapters. The thirteenth chapter describes Anna's return to England and her marriage, the Great War and Henry's death. In the concluding chapter, we see Anna as wife, mother and Member of Parliament. The novel ends with a moving picture of her in extreme old age with Gayatri by her side. Looking back over her much splendoured life in which Himapur represents the irresistible lure of what might have been:

The good, satisfying memories folded peacefully away.... The ones that kept one alive and stirring belonged to lost opportunity...for there was no release from the embrace of things that had never

happened. Imagine the horror of getting everything we want, and what lumps and clods we'd be but for our yearnings. Oddly enough we are the legacy of our aches, of plans that never came to pass.⁴⁸

The novelist leaves the novel open-ended, without giving reference of Anna's death, stretching the reader's imagination outwards, extending the meaning of the novel beyond itself.

The time in which the novel is set coincides with Tilak's trial, the rumblings of the Indian freedom struggle and the out-break of the First World War with its carnage and self-inflicted destruction. The novel is an artistic metaphor of the historical movement and moments between 1885 and 1914. The novel is replete with copious references to such well-known nationalist leaders as B. G. Tilak, Motilal Nehru, Ranade, Bankim Chandra Chatterji, Bhagat Singh, Khudiram Bose and M. K. Gandhi. The public and the private issues are subtly integrated and resolved in this novel. Apart from weaving into the plot a number of plans for departure, Sahgal synchronizes a number of bigger events and gives her novel a kaleidoscopic perspective.

Sahgal's recent novel *Mistaken Identity* registers an important stage in her growth as a novelist and branches out in a new direction. Possibly, the writer is attempting to understand a country and its cultural-political life, the happenings and events, by adopting the technique of biography. The novel is a significant milestone in Sahgal's long career as a novelist. It is a graphic document of the

twilight years of the Raj in India and may well serve as a reference point to many events and actions of the freedom movement. Sahgal had watched history in slow motion. The novel provides a glimpse into Sahgal's hawk eye for details and sound grasp of the world history. It is located in 1929 and, as such, places itself in a historical setting where the politics of the period is important. The epicentre of the novel is the prison cell where men from different parts of the country, different religions and political beliefs are put together.

Mistaken Identity is again a political novel imbued with socio-political events in India during the British Raj. It was the time when the country was gradually awakening to nationalism and witnessing unrest, strikes and mass arrests. Here, the novelist combines the life stories of individuals with the history of the nation. The world of politics and personal relationship runs parallel in her novels. In *Mistaken Identity*, we get rapid glimpses of the stirrings of the 20s and 30s, the time of strikes, suspicion and Hindu-Muslim unrest. Gandhiji's Dandi March, Civil Disobedience movement, execution of Bhagat Singh and the anger it erupts throughout the country has been vividly portrayed by her. Besides referring to Gandhi and Kamal Pasha, the historical scene is made more immediately relevant by citing the Lahore Conspiracy case involving Bhagat Singh and others who had avenged the death of Lala Lajpat Rai. The novelist refers:

The Lahore Conspiracy Case is closed — with three hangings.... Bhagat Singh and his two close colleagues were executed in Lahore jail

yesterday, March, 23 and surreptitiously cremated on the banks of the Sutlej river — Gandhi is out of jail but he could not get the execution stayed.⁴⁹

Gandhiji's salt march to the sea at Dandi is vividly described in the novel as:

A civil disobedience campaign is in full swing. Our newspaper says immense crowds cheered him on and thousands joined the march. People are manufacturing salt in pans all over the country.⁵⁰

Mistaken Identity is written from the point of view of Bhushan Singh, the protagonist, the son of the Raja of Vijaygarh, is on his way home from college in America in 1929 when he is arrested on a mistaken charge of sedition. He has to spend almost three years in jail, where his companions are idealistic followers of Mahatma Gandhi and militant trade union leaders, both trying to win freedom in their own ways; the hero's interaction with them is at times quite comic. As the months of awaiting trial stretch into years, Bhushan entertains his communist cell-mates with tales of his colourful past — of his veiled mother; of his very modern Parsee girlfriend; of the American flapper who taught him the Turkey Trot; of his forbidden boyhood affair which ignited two blood-spilling Hindu-Muslim riots and led to his banishment abroad.

The narrator of the novel is Bhushan Singh, the love-lorn son of the Raja of Vijaygarh. After a long months of Sojourn abroad, he is arrested and thrown into jail on charges of treason against the Empire, is in fact a case of mistaken identity. The narrative shuttles back and forth in time-space as the colourful past of Bhushan hangs tantalizingly in air and the political events of the day appear as a running commentary. As Bhushan becomes friendly with other political prisoners, he tells stories from his colourful past. Essentially his imagination is captivated by a Muslim girl, Razia, whom he had courted briefly in his youth. He tells them of his boyhood affair with a lovely Muslim girl that sparked off communal riots and subsequently led to his banishment abroad. He also tells them of his life in America, a life full of freedom and of his rejecting the offer of a movie-star role there. But he longs for his love and tries to return home and search for her. During his travel, he is arrested by the police in Bombay and jailed on the charge of sedition. Finding himself in the company of common criminals and self-confessed communists, Bhushan desperately tries to get released but in vain.

In the novel, Bhushan's personal life becomes intricately connected with the political. His reminiscences of his trips abroad connect his present with his past and through it, he tries to find meaning in his present as well as the uncertain future. The novel which for all practical purposes is Bhushan's story, of his mistaken identity and of his several love affairs. First of all, Bhushan tells the story of his love affair with Razia, the Muslim girl of sixteen years old. Trapped in her religious and cultural confines, she is attracted by

the fleeting moments of freedom the strange boy-man Bhushan offers her. He falls in love with Razia, whose face tells a history:

I thought of her face. It took me years to decipher its spells and understand why it haunted me. It defied unwritten laws. The Tartar cheekbones of the face should have had slanting eyes above them, but hers were long ovals, the lidded eyes of temple sculpture. Their width took me unawares when they pounced upon her tonga. It was the manifest racial impurity, a mix belonging to a vision of future, of communal union that made it unforgettable, and retreat impossible for me.⁵¹

Razia's face is an image of his creation, a representation of his desire. But Razia has not special feelings for Bhushan. As Sahgal confirms in one of her interviews:

She was not in love with Bhushan Singh. This is clear from the beginning. You read that she is anxious to get back to her class. She enjoys herself, but she is not besotted. He is besotted.⁵²

The relationship between Razia and Bhushan sparks off Hindu-Muslim riots at Vijaygarh and her father requests Bhushan's father to get him transferred out of Vijaygarh. When their affair is disclosed, it

ignites communal violence. There is a lot of blood-shed and his father sends him to America, where Mr. Goldbager's daughter Willie-May has plans for him to become an actor. He had tried to grope towards some definition of womanhood in Razia whose counterpoint is Willie-May:

The women of this country had the mathematical proportions of buildings, a dome-and-minaret beauty that made the beauty of other races look unplanned and haphazard. Their anatomies knew where to grow and stop growing.... The milk Willie May poured into her body by the glassful seemed to flow directly into her curves. Her skin glowed with chicken-gravy, creamed corn and blueberry muffins. Every line of her had succulent meat juices and fruit juices locked into it.⁵³

Willie-May is a frustrate to Razia and to the special significance of Bhushan's love for her which identifies him with the burden of belonging. Obsessed with his childhood love, unable to make any plans for his life except to find her again, Bhushan returns to India to become an exile nearer home in Bombay. He becomes the friend and lover of Sylla, a vibrant and modern Parsee girl, but even her energy and devotion are not enough to heal his wound. Sylla is a modern girl, who smokes and wears stylish Western out-fits. They develop healthy, ideal and perfect love relationship. Bhushan is a man with no

ambition, no occupation. He tells Sylla, “You are my nest from storm, plague, pestilence, not to mention the Hindu-Muslim love-madness that rages in my middle ear,”⁵⁴ and so he needs her. But Sylla needs him or she can come to him whenever she wants him. Bhushan needs her love and company to come out of the Hindu-Muslim love-madness. Bhushan accepts that his religion is Hindu-Muslim and his mother-tongue poetry. He makes his answer more specified by adding that his mother-tongue is Hindi and his father-tongue is Urdu. His mother is a traditional Hindu woman; she can read only the Hindi script. His father has no knowledge of Hindi, he writes Urdu. Bhushan develops a composite culture-religion which is not accepted by common people, whether British or Indian.

After his release from the jail, Bhushan comes to Vijaygarh, he plans to go to Bombay to meet her and marry her and live a carefree modern life. On the other hand, Sylla thinks that they cannot marry because Bhushan has not faith in any god. She decides to marry Nauzer, a Parsee young rising star, the advocate. Thus, Bhushan’s identity as a true lover is mistaken by Sylla also. Here, the novel reaches the climax and Bhushan comes from romance to reality. He decided not to come in the way of Sylla again. He decides to stop moving from Vijaygarh to Bombay, from Hindu-Muslim love madness to carefree modern life. At Vijaygarh, he meets Yusuf, his cell-mate in jail and the communist social reformer. Yusuf proposes Bhushan to write songs, inspiring revolution in Vijaygarh, but Bhushan, can write poems only about Razia, in the Hindu-Muslim

harmony line. Finally, he finds fulfilment in his marriage to comrade Yusuf's daughter.

In *Mistaken Identity*, the action flows back and forth in the stream of consciousness method. Bhushan's personal life becomes intricately connected with the politics. The story of the contemporary political life is narrated through the experiences of the protagonist Bhushan Singh and his cell-mates in the prison. Sahgal states:

My just published novel, *Mistaken Identity*, is partly about religious fanaticism. I talk and write a good deal about Hinduism, but I am, of course, half-Muslim by culture, part Christian by education, and beholden to far-flung countries for the literature that forms part of my consciousness. My opportunities have given me a foot in two worlds, so I feel as comfortable in the skin of an English character as an Indian one.⁵⁵

The novel thus connected with the pressures, the cultural design, and the social, political and historical forces of India, past, present and future. Full of mystery and gentle humour, *Mistaken Identity* is a story of love and obsession that brilliantly summons up the turmoil of India in the twilight years of empire. In the novel, Sahgal frames her narrative against a turbulent period of Indian history. The novel draws the currents and cross-currents engulfing the country and other parts of the world in the first three decades of this century. The title of the

novel itself suggests its mock-heroic representations of the historical reality. The central idea in the novel seems to be absurdity of a dogmatic attitude to the question of identity itself. The novel is provided with a historical perspective in which is to project the ideal of Hindu-Muslim unity.

Sahgal has the unique distinction of being the only political novelist on the Indian English literary scene. Thus, Sahgal's novels not only constitute an impressive segment of the Indian English novel but also sum up the saga of India's struggle for freedom and the changes it has brought about in the traditional social set-up in India. Her work has a strong realistic base and reflects not only her personal values but also the changing values of a society exposed for the first time to both freedom and power. Her social and cultural milieu has always been Indian.

Sahgal's major contribution to the art of fiction in Indian English writing is the genesis of the political novel in its present form. Her main contribution has been her deep involvement and concern with politics. She has developed the scope of the political novel, widening its area of content and adding a new dimension to it. In her novels, politics is not the concern only of politicians, but is as all pervasive influence, affecting life at all levels. Socio-political consciousness is also seen profusely in women characters portrayed by Nayantara Sahgal. In fact, women are immensely affected by a political event like Emergency. By emphasizing socio-political consciousness in her fictional discourse, Nayantara Sahgal indirectly focuses on marginalization of women in India.

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CHAPTER – IV

SAHGAL’S WOMEN: A FEMINIST APPROACH

The first generation of important women writers began publishing their works in the 1950s. Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Kamala Markandaya, Santha Rama Rau, Nayantara Sahgal were all active on the literary scene. During this period, Nayantara Sahgal emerged as one of the most significant voices in the realm of Indian English fiction. Fiction by women writers constitutes a major segment of the contemporary Indian writing in English. Many of the Indian women novelists focus on women’s issues, they have a women’s perspective on the world. Women novelists writing in English attempt to project woman as the central figure and seem to succeed in presenting the predicament of women most effectively. Their instinctive perception of and insight into women’s reactions and responses, problems and perplexities, the complex working of their inner selves, their emotional involvements and disturbances help them in portraying a life-size picture of the contemporary woman with all her longings and aspirations, hopes and frustrations. The emotional world of women is explored and analyzed with admirable insight and sympathetic perception by the women novelists.

With insight and understanding, women writers in English present the dilemma which modern women are facing in recent times. Women who are conscious of their emotional needs and strive for self-

fulfilment rejecting the existing traditions and social set-up and long for a more liberal and unconventional way of life find their place in the novels of Nayantara Sahgal. Her novels portray women trampled and oppressed because of their dependence upon men and the harrowing experience they have to face in their struggle to come out of the bondage and stand on their own feet. The hardship and suffering involved in fighting against an established order, the shattering experience of divorce and the resultant alienation between parents and children form the thematic concern of Sahgal's novels.

Almost in all the eight novels, Sahgal has gone deep into the female psyche. In novel after novel, she explores the nature and scope of the trauma of women folk. Suffering and loneliness have mellowed Sahgal and she has been able to transform these into understanding and compassion. She believes that the potentialities in women are not exploited to the full. Sahgal's female characters are individuals who can remain independent within the framework of society into which they were born. She is able to go deep into the psyche of her female characters and study them with sympathy and understanding. Sahgal has portrayed women's sufferings without sentimentality and with such vividness that she may well be described as "the anatomist of the feminine psyche."¹

Husband-wife alienation resulting from lack of communication, East-West encounter, extra-marital relationship, existentialist problems and temperamental incompatibility form the major themes in Sahgal's novels. In most of her novels, Sahgal portrays women who herald a new morality — a morality not confined to physical chastity.

It demands accommodation of individual longings for self-fulfilment and seeks consideration not for just the deed but for the heart and feeling. As Shyam Asnani observes, “Her concept of free woman transcends the limits of economic or social freedom and becomes a mental or emotional attitude.”² The concept of freedom constitutes to be the central concern of the novelist in her novels. Her protagonists so deeply and loyally rooted in Indian culture are portrayed to be struggling for freedom and trying to assert their individuality in their own way.

Sahgal tries to portray the sensibility of woman: how a woman looks out at herself and her problems. She feels that woman should try to understand and realize herself as a human being and not just as an appendage to some male life. In her novels women represent different kinds of virtues. They do not suffer but maintain their position. Sahgal represents new morality, according to which woman is not to be taken as a mere toy, an object of lust and momentary pleasure, but man’s equal and honoured partner. All the novels of Sahgal talk about women who are oppressed by marriage, by political circumstances, by accidents of history. Most of her female characters have extra-marital relationship with one or more than one person. Her women are victims of a conventional society which does not permit women to assert their rights pertaining to their individual freedom and considers the very issue of identity-crisis as preposterous apropos women.

All the novels of Sahgal from *A Time to be Happy* to *Mistaken Identity* show her deep concern with the parlous state of women in the parochial society. Though Sahgal has carved a niche for herself

chiefly as a political novelist, her feminist concern is quite obvious and her fighter spirit quite vocal in her fiction. Sahgal's concern for women, however, is that of a humanist more than it is of a feminist. Woman suffers not only by man's act of physical violence, but she is often emotionally hurt and crippled through his arrogance, cynicism and indifference. Loneliness, suffering and frustration in marriage sometimes cause disintegration and make women rebellious. It is not physical loneliness that Sahgal talks of, but deeper emotional and spiritual voids created by egoism. In her essay "Women: Persons or Possessions", Sahgal condemns such attitudes which value women as property and discourage individuality in them:

When I heard someone remark "we never allow our daughter to go out" or "I can't do that, my husband would not like it", it sounded a very peculiar, alien jargon. As if, I thought, women were property, not persons.³

In a traditional society when a girl reaches in her maturity, her movements are restricted, whereas at the same age there are no restrictions for her brothers. The girls are always advised to confine indoors on the other hand boys are encouraged to develop outdoor activities. A spirit of competition, exploration and challenge is inculcated among boys, and they are taught to assert their supremacy over the world in general. Girls, on the contrary, are discouraged from showing aggressive modes of behaviour and, instead, feminine virtues

of grace, modesty and self-effacement are frequently demanded from them.

Sahgal shows women suffering in marriage-life and then deciding to come out of the suffocating bondage by preferring for divorce. She depicts her women deciding to prefer for divorce rather than live a stifling life of injustice and agony. Her women like Saroj, Simrit, Rashmi and Anna all leave their husbands or break the marriage which does not allow them to be free and to live life in their own way. She represents that through divorce they will be free from the suffering and agony of an unhappy or unjust relationship it does not solve the problems and women have to continue to struggle and suffer on various levels — economic, emotional and psychological.

Women who feel frustrated either because of marital disharmony or loneliness in life is shown to indulge in social or religious activities. For example, Maya in Sahgal's *A Time to be Happy* is a woman who tries to submerge her unhappiness and dissatisfaction in social work and religion. Sahgal is deeply concerned with the failure of marital relationships and the loneliness of living; hence, most of her women remarry. Most of her couples seem to be happy and contented, but they often experience loneliness and complain of silences in marriage, as Maya appears incapable of emotion, but this lack of communication is the result of her emotional isolation in marriage. What she wants is just some kind of response, recognition of her existence: "Not a good one or an approving one, necessarily, just a response of any kind. Even when we live or die is not important unless it is important to someone."⁴ Maya's

childlessness is a symbol, not a cause of her unhappiness. Maya is a silent victim at the altar of marriage.

Sahgal's women characters suffer because they refuse to submerge their individuality and cling to their personal identity at all costs. In *A Time to be Happy*, Maya and Ammaji suffer because they refuse to lose their identity. Ammaji is a representative of the older generation whereas Maya belongs to the transition period. Sahgal shows her acute awareness of the dependent status of women in society. She is aware of the confining role of marriage as an institution for women. *A Time to be Happy* explores women's search for individuality both within marriage as equal partners and without it as individual. For Maya, marriage was doomed from the beginning, chiefly on account of the antithetical personalities of her husband and herself: "she had the cool purity of the eucalyptus, as compared with his extravagant gulmohur. She was the mirror-smooth lake to his rushing waterfall."⁵ Logically speaking their marriage should have fared well since unlike poles attract each other. But that was not to be. In short, it was a sterile marriage, leaving them dry. The narrator's description of her as a slab of marble as 'marble in difference' is significant. What she considers the most important thing in life, is the emotional response which she is unable to receive from her husband. However, she receives it from the narrator. Maya is represented in contrast to the traditional ideal women. The narrator's mother supports her husband in all his views and enterprises. Like any true Hindu woman, she believes that "his concern was with God and hers with God in him."⁶ Lakshmi, Govind Narayan's wife, also represents

herself as a Hindu woman. In her smoothly run household one seldom heard the voices of the servants and the crying of the baby. She always needed her husband and never does anything without him. Savitri, Kusum's mother, like a true Hindu woman, regularly observed fasts and offered prayers at five every morning for the well-being of her family. The concentration on the traditional woman by Sahgal therefore serves to reveal the second vital function of Maya in the novel.

The women in *This Time of Morning* are more varied in their search for freedom and equality. Uma and Leela, in their reckless search for freedom, use men as tools, but succeed only in harming themselves. Celia, Barbara and Nita, in their ultimate dependence on Kalyan betray the failure of their search for identity. In the character of Nita, Sahgal explores the place of a woman in Indian society before marriage. Nita is the young, beautiful daughter of Dr. Narang, who is a queer blend of Eastern and Western culture. Western life-style is a part of Narang's culture but when it comes to his daughter, he would act in the most traditional manner, imposing severe restrictions on the movement of his ambitious daughter. The Narangs never allow their daughter to parties; as Mrs. Narang puts it, "We don't allow Nita to go out alone. Her father would not hear of it."⁷ The Narang's concern for the safety and protection of their daughter exemplifies their conformity to traditional values. Nita's parents would not allow their daughter to smoke, to have drinks or attend club dances till she is married. Nita's parents want to settle down their daughter in marriage and wash their hands of her. They do not give any importance to the

wishes of their daughter and force her to marry the man of their choice whom she neither loves nor admires. Although she is twenty-three, she does not want to marry at all because the “creatures her parents have in mind for her are either so awful or midgets or men who never open their mouth.”⁸ Nita feels utterly unhappy and a sense of uneasiness overpowers her when she learns about her parent’s decision to marry her off to a stranger. Finally, she agrees to her parents’ choice of Vijay as groom. Though she is aware that Vijay views her as a possession not as an individual, and this kind of marriage has no prospects of fulfilment.

Nita desires to live her own life and discover the needs of her body, rejecting the values and ideas of the previous generation thrust upon her. She offers herself to the irresistible Kalyan, the man of her choice. She finds a strange comfort in his company and visits him frequently on the pretext of decorating his drawing room. Once she refuses to go home and frankly expresses her love for Kalyan:

“But don’t make me go.” He rose from his chair,
“Nita....” She got up, too, and came like a sleep
walker into his arms, clinging to him. “Don’t
make me go, please don’t make me go.” He took
her by the hand and then to his room.⁹

When Kalyan asks her the reason for her frequent visits, she answers:

I've thought about that so often.... Every time I came I wondered why. I used to think about it getting into the taxi and every minute the taxi took to come here, and all the while I was here. I didn't know why I came. I only knew I would die if I didn't.... Because I wanted to and it's the only thing I've ever really wanted to do.¹⁰

Nita's pre-marital relationship with Kalyan is the result of an attempt to fulfil her inner desire for love and communication. When the time comes to decide about her marriage, her parents decide her future. Through the character of Nita, Sahgal shows the conventional narrow-minded Indian society, where life-partners are chosen by the parents.

Uma Mitra is another victim of a social system which curtails individual freedom. Young and beautiful Uma is married to Arjun Mitra, a man much older than her. Uma feels extremely bored with her futile marriage and continually seeks to escape into the fakery of sexual freedom. Arjun Mitra feels ashamed and frustrated but silently shields and suffers his wife. He forgets that in Uma "marriage had released a torrent of hungry sensuousness that brought to starling focus her exotic feline beauty."¹¹ Uma longs for his love and company, but Arjun "Condemned himself to an isolation where she could never reach or touch him again."¹² His indifferent behaviour makes her so frustrate emotionally and sexually that she starts to drink and move alone with men, deviating from the social norms. Uma lacks in her marriage to Arjun Mitra is self-expression and she discovers

this in her relationship with Neil. For the first time Uma talked about the feeling of freedom. On several occasions during official parties, Uma disappears with any man who flirts with her a little to satisfy her physical thirsts. Once Arjun finds, “Neil’s tie on a chair, his shirt sleeves, the faint smear of lipstick on his mouth.... For here he was forced to be the witness to her unspeakable behaviour.”¹³ The scene speaks of the frustration and dissatisfaction in Uma’s life. Sahgal herself says that through Uma’s character she wants to say that a “woman is not allowed to be a woman in orthodox thinking. She has to be ‘good’ and good means virtuous in the sense of chaste. Uma was a woman with appetites that her husband couldn’t satisfy, so she indulged them elsewhere. Men do it, and there’s no comment.”¹⁴

Marriage often makes the aware and sensitive women very unhappy and discontented. Rashmi’s divorce and her extra-marital relationship with Neil are not to be mistaken for a “tasteless parody of a transplanted modernity”¹⁵, but an inner urge for communication and emotional involvement of the self. Marriage makes Rashmi “a moth trapped in cement.”¹⁶ Rashmi returns home when she feels frustrated in her marriage life. She is in a state of dilemma, being unable to come to any decision whether to discuss her problems with her parents or to seek a divorce. She becomes guilt-ridden, and wonders if she had played her role as a wife worthily. The only thought that occurs to her at this juncture is that of love, if it meant a desire for one person, has left her, never to return. Despite being hurt by her marriage, Rashmi is aware that the routine continues, for life must continue. At this critical time, comfort comes to her not from her parents but from Neil. It is in

his company that she finally summons the courage to shake off the pretence of conventionality that all is well with her, by announcing her separation from her husband. Now she feels herself released from the tension and completely free from her bondage to Dalip, her husband. She becomes emotionally involved with Neil who makes her feel alive after a long period of senselessness or numbness. Rashmi's decision to separate from her husband becomes a mortal blow to all that her mother Mira held sacred bond:

What reason under heaven could sever the marriage bond? Women stayed married, had since time immemorial stayed married, under every conceivable circumstance, to brutal insensitive husbands, to lunatics and lepers.... Fulfilment had lain in service and sacrifice. If there was suffering, too, it was part of life.¹⁷

Rashmi is not contented with the superficial acquaintance of Neil. She wants to know all the details about him, about his divorced wife Martha and about his children. She desires mutual involvement and not the demanding relationship that exists in India between man and woman. Rashmi desires to explore Neil's life — the past, the present — its joy and despair but her desire is not comprehended by Neil. She grows into an awareness of what she desires during her interlude with Neil. She recalls the invisible, warm and strong childhood contact with Rakesh who had once nurtured and sustained

her. When Rakesh meets her after a long interval, he finds that marriage had altered this once happy and lively girl. Rashmi desires to recover and renew it for without it she realizes that there would be only emptiness and fear. She concedes that:

Time given and taken, and patient effort could lead to the discovery of a human being, to an allegiance that might fill and nourish her being. It might lead to love, for love, if it came, would come last, as any flawless achievement came at the end of long hard labour.¹⁸

Therefore, she tries to convince Rakesh of the need for at least making a beginning. She has started moving in the direction of becoming an integrated woman. The novel depicts India's independence from the British Raj as a collective political phenomenon as well as the initiating point for the individual struggle for freedom and Rashmi was one among the many.

The female characters in *Storm in Chandigarh* wriggle out of the strait-jacket of virtuous stereotype, and emerge as individuals. This is brought out clearly in the portrayal of far from ideal marriages of three young couples — Vishal-Leela, Inder-Saroj and Jit-Mara. Sahgal is deeply concerned with unhappy marriages and the loneliness of living. The novel is a study of certain similarities and contrasts of various characters. It portrays the young hearts broken up by compulsions of matrimony and call of newfound love. The theme of

the novel is violence, not necessarily an obvious physical violence, but an invisible and the more subtle form of violence. Saroj's pre-marital relationship becomes the cause of failure of their marriage. Saroj who has been brought up in the liberal atmosphere of freedom, expects equality in marriage. She is greatly surprised by her husband's violent reactions to a pre-marital affair she had had in her college days. Inder is obsessed and could not forgive this act of Saroj and constantly exploits her sense of innocence. Saroj longs for friendship, tenderness and frankness from Inder, but since her jealous, unreasonable husband never bothers to understand her needs, she decides to walk out of her rotten, conventional confinement, with all the children to live a life of her own. It is ironical that Inder considers it to be a serious moral lapse while he himself carries an extra-marital affair with Mara. Saroj became a victim of the male tyranny. Saroj's quest for communication and sharing naturally leads her towards Vishal, whom she finds more understanding and considerate. She frankly tells Vishal:

Half the time one is afraid — you know — saying wrong thing or of being misunderstood — just for being oneself and being punished for it. So one spends such a lot of time, acting, or at least hiding, and that's very tiring.”¹⁹

Inder, a sadist, never approves of his wife's overtures and turns violent towards her. Saroj is constantly rebuked, abused and tortured by Inder because of her pre-marital sexual indulgence. She longs for love and

understanding but every time it has to be begged and given as a charity, she withdraws into silence.

During her college days, Saroj behaved friendly with one of the college friends. Once she also enjoyed sex with him for satisfying her curiosity. But later when Inder comes to know about it, he treats her brutally and considers her a sinner. He would punish her quite often and torture her physically and mentally:

When Inder could not sleep, he resurrected the other man, the one who had known Saroj before he had, making her marriage a mockery and betrayal. He had stalked the man down the dark alleys of his imagination, his thought about him churning, now sticking, now moving sluggishly, now flowing on unimpeded like the filth in the city's sewers. 'If I catch him I shall kill him.'²⁰

Ironically, Inder is torturing his wife for having pre-marital relationship once only, while he had no explanation to offer for his own extra-marital relationship with another man's wife. In Indian society, it is a crime for a girl or a woman to have a sexual intercourse with any man; on the other hand, it is considered no crime at all for a man to have sexual relations with other girls before or after his marriage. This means that in India we have different norms for the man and different norms for the woman. It exposes the open practice of double standards in our society.

Saroj learns the value of freedom from Vishal Dubey during their lonely walks: “life, Dubey told her, was bigger than any system. Life could remould or break the system that lacked righteousness and reason. It was life’s precious obligation to rebel, and humanity’s right to be free, to choose from the best light it could see, not necessarily the long-accepted light.”²¹ Inder shows a lot of indifference towards her and has no time for emotional involvement. Their relationship ceases to be a union of communication. Even his affair with Mara comes to an end. Mara’s self-assertion and individuality disgusts him. Saroj accepts her role as wife and affectionate mother and does not want to seek anything outside marriage. But she has reached at a stage in her relationship with Inder that even ordinary conversation becomes difficult. Going out for a walk with Vishal, Saroj feels much relieved and freshened from the suffocation of the four walls of her house. When Inder forbids her to meet Vishal, she refuses to listen to him. At this stage, she rebels, and understands the truth of failure of her marriage. Saroj’s departure is a move towards personal freedom and a rejection of the role Inder has wanted to thrust on her, Vishal tells: “It has taken a million years of evolution for a person and his cherished individuality to matter and no terror must be allowed to destroy that,”²² and finally Saroj overcomes her initial hesitations and comes out of her husband’s home. At last, Vishal takes the final decision for her. She remembers Vishal’s words to her, “Vishal was right. There was only one way to live, without pretence. It would be the ultimate healing balm to the lonely spaces of the spirit, beyond which there

would be no darkness.”²³ Vishal helps her and sets her free from the burden of guilt.

In the novel, another couple is Jit and Mara who also suffer from a similar dilemma. They are a childless couple who suffer from emotional void in their life. Mara suffers from an acute sense of emptiness in life. Her marriage with sweet-tempered and considerate Jit has its share of estrangements and misgivings, but their differences dissolve in the compromising disposition of her husband. As pointed out by A. V. Krishna Rao, Mara’s problem is not physical but psychological. The search for communication makes Mara come towards Inder. The privacy of her thoughts is ruptured with the arrival of Inder who has developed a peculiar intimacy with her. Mara is not content with the gentleness of her husband but desires all that the world can offer her — the softness of Jit and the hardness of Inder. She desires not gentleness but aggressiveness and passionate involvement in relationship. In her relationship with Inder, Mara stimulates his mind and involves him in ways no woman ever has. But she does not surrender her individuality and offers a challenge to Inder’s domination. Mara is capable of responding to Inder’s needs which highlights her inability to respond to Jit’s much simpler needs. Mara’s lack of interest makes Jit feel that all his affection and care are wasted on her:

Back to the caves, she had said, and that was what would suit her best. You gave a woman the perfection of which you were capable; the finest

flower of your most evolved instincts, and it was a waste.... She didn't want to be cherished and affection made no impression on her.²⁴

It does not mean that Mara lusted after brute force nor does it suggest that she is forced into submission by Inder. Soon she is disillusioned when she finds him a hypocrite, and breaks all relations with him.

By that time, Jit also realizes that there is something lacking in their relationship and makes an attempt to come closer to her. Jit helped Mara out of the emotional jungle by talking to her of an unhappy experience of his own. The realization makes them be reconciled and remain true to each other. One of the major symbols that emerges out of the personal predicament of the victims is that of the 'Cave' which stands for all hypocrisy, pretence and non-communicability.

The temperamental incompatibility caused disharmony in the marriage of various characters of the novel. The conflict arises mainly from absence of communication resulting in the estrangement of individuals. Vishal Dubey's marriage is also a vanishing search for communication. Vishal who wants to build a relationship on truth finds it a difficult task. In his relationship with Leela, he felt a great deal of unhappiness. Despite her extra-marital affair with Hari, Leela insisted on keeping the facade of a stable marriage with Vishal. She had always lived a life of pretence and hypocrisy. He realized the torture of living together intimately yet remained strangers to each

other. Talking about Mr. Dubey and his wife Leela, Nayantara Sahgal writes:

She had selected what she wanted of him: the distinguished escort at parties, the successful civil servant with a promising future, the husband who could be relied upon to take pains with whatever problems she took to him. And she had ignored the rest. She had given herself selectively too, what she had considered it prudent and convenient to give, and left him empty of the reality of herself. Even her vitality had needed an audience. She scintillated in company. Time and again he heard her talk animatedly of what had happened a day or a week earlier, of an article she had read, an idea she had had, at a party. Alone with him she had little to share. Had their failure been their fault, or was there something at the very core of human dreams and longings that was fatal to fulfilment through marriage?²⁵

After bearing the tortures of remorse with which his relationship with Leela abruptly ended due to her death. Then Vishal strays accidentally into the region of Gauri's natural, luxuriously feminine generosity.

Dubey's relationship with Gauri is based on sex and the urgency of a momentary need. She makes no emotional demands on

him. His affair with her began in the disturbed year after Leela's death. Gauri feels secure in her marriage. She feels satisfied with her successful industrialist husband Nikhil Ray. She has no pretensions about her virtuosity; she calls herself a "social butterfly with positively no interest in life beyond my own comforts and pleasures."²⁶

Sahgal is deeply concerned with unhappy marriages and the loneliness of living. The novel portrays certain similarities and contrasts of various characters. Women characters in this novel do not like to remain confined within the four walls of their houses. They prefer to go to picnic and parties to relieve the burden of boredom and monotony. Through the portrayal of Leela, Gauri, Saroj and Mara, the author holds a mirror to the society that subjects its women to worst type of inhuman exploitation.

The Day in Shadow primarily deals with the struggle of a young, beautiful and daring Indian woman trapped under the burden of a brutal divorce settlement and the agony and unhappiness she experiences in the hands of cruel and unjust male-dominated society of India. It centres on the traumatic post-divorce experience of a middle-aged woman, Simrit. Simrit's marriage to Som, an industrialist, turns out to be disaster. The novel is basically concerned with the emotional effects of Simrit. The central preoccupation of the novel is the suffering caused to woman in the prison-house of loveless marriage and her suffering when she makes a break way. When the story opens, Simrit and Som are divorced and she is trying to adjust to the aftermath of a divorce.

Sahgal deals how lack of proper companionship, communication and equality between man and woman cause wreck to marital relationship resulting in divorce. Simrit suffered from marital incompatibility. She respects certain values of life more than material prosperity. Their intimacy never extended to areas of the mind. She feels suffocated in the world of Som. It is the clash of ideals that leads to their separation. Simrit longs for self-expression and freedom to live as an individual within the bonds of marriage. She feels uprooted and abandoned in the male-dominated world as she finds that nobody tries to see divorce from her point of view, as a person seeking freedom and fulfilment.

The novelist seems to be deeply concerned with the need of freedom for women. It is Simrit's longing for freedom and individuality that urges her to take divorce from her husband. Simrit does not want to be known as her husband's wife but as her own self. When someone asked her about the profession of her husband, she thinks:

Wasn't it odd, when you were standing there yourself, fully a person, not to be asked what you did? There was such an enormous separating gulf between herself and these women, most women — most people. May be the question would be different in the twenty-first century. Simrit herself had never accepted a world where men did things and women waited for them.²⁷

Simrit is an educated woman who yearns for a free communication of ideas with her husband but feels isolated and ignored like a piece of furniture, used only for physical comfort whenever needed by Som. She wants love, warmth, affection, freedom and understanding but Som never bothers about her feelings. When Som compels her with his sexual urgency, she feels herself separate, excluded and rebellious. She feels that sex is a part of life and not a separate entity. Sex is no more just sex:

And once past its immediacy, sex had its visions too — of tenderness, of humour, of more than physical act. Sex could be an argument or a problem shared. The same spring fed all its facets — the day's work in office, children at home, bed at night, Simrit felt on the verge of a fatal realization. She was no longer able to follow the goals Som had set for himself, and the inability seemed to be spreading through her veins, affecting the very womb of her desire, drying up the fount within her.²⁸

Som and his friend would talk endlessly “to each other in Punjabi in her presence, ignoring her. But Som would squeeze and stroke her arm, rest his hand warmly, heavily on her thigh, keep her physically in the room, mentally out.”²⁹ Both the friends did not look at her during

their discussion, thus giving immense mental torture to Simrit who always wanted to be a part of them. For an educated and sensitive woman like Simrit, her husband's indifference is extremely inhuman, particularly when she whole-heartedly desires deeper relationship. She ultimately decides to put an end to her unhappy marriage. She is fed up with this life and takes divorce from her husband.

Simrit leaves all the wealth to Som but takes the children with her at the time of divorce. However, Som does not let her go very easily. He transfers shares worth six lakh rupees to her and these are to be inherited mainly by their son Brij when he becomes matured. Until then Simrit has to pay heavy taxes on the corpus while she is not entitled to the income it may generate. Her several arguments to relieve her of the tax burden go unheeded not only by Som but even by the society. Simrit has not been practical in demanding the custody of the children. But she seems to have her special reasons to keep them with her. She wanted to be a writer and her creative urge was always unconsciously satisfied by them. But irrespective of her feelings for them, the children themselves do not like staying with her. She finds her present situation as a divorcee not easy:

It was painful how the connection continued, like a detached heartbeat. The tissue of a marriage could be dissolved by human acts, but its anatomy went on and on. And skeletons could endure for a million years. Just living together, daily routine produced that uncanny durability. It made the

question of whether one had loved or not, been loved or not, been the transgressor or transgressed against, trivial by comparison.³⁰

In the novel, Sahgal reveals the psychological, financial and other existential problems which a woman has to face as part of her punishment for leaving her husband. After divorce, the woman often experiences a sense of inability to control her life while a man feels free from all social, moral and financial responsibilities. Through *Simrit*, Sahgal expounds various aspects of divorce and its implications for a lonely woman. Sahgal confesses in an article:

In this book I tried to figure out something that has happened to me — the shattering experience of divorce. I wanted to show how even in a free country like ours, where women are equal citizens, a woman can be criminally exploited without its creating a ripple. Again, I am not speaking of any recognizable form of exploitation against which most people will naturally raise a cry. If a man beats his wife, for instance, hardly anyone will condone the fact. But if at divorce he inflicts a financial settlement on her that enslaves her with taxes and makes it impossible for her to make a decent living, no one will take any notice

because this is a kind of beating where blood and bruises don't show.³¹

Through Simrit's divorce, Sahgal thus makes a strong plea for a change and revitalization of the Indian society.

It is her courage which frees Simrit from the bonds of marriage as well as the divorce settlement. Her friendship with Raj provides her the anchor and helps her to come out of the shock and stupor and establish a life of her own. As A. V. Krishna Rao comments while discussing Sahgal's *The Day in Shadow*, "Mrs. Sahgal's fictional probe into the cancerous proliferation of social hypocrisy and political pretence in modern India is incisive like that of a surgeon's knife but is tempered with compassion and love. Its analysis and interpretation of the human predicament is informed of newer and truer insights into the human psyche."³²

The novel affirms faith in life and its immense potentialities through the character of Simrit. Sahgal projects immense possibilities of life for both personal as well as political crises. The novel is a fine example of the female literary tradition in Indian English literature. The Western wave of stream-of-consciousness technique affected the writings of the novelist and she also plunged deep into the inner world of her characters. It has the theme of survival of a sensitive individual in a ruthlessly materialistic society.

Sahgal's next novel, *A Situation in New Delhi* is a novel depicting the aftermath 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. His intimate followers: Devi, who is also his younger sister, Usman and Michael try to live with Shivraj's ideology. It is mainly a political novel — a novel about different ideologies and the last part of the novel centres mainly around Rishad and Priya's relationship. In the novel, the brother Shivraj is already dead when the novel opens and his relationship with his sister Devi is reported by Devi's and Michael Calvert's series of reflections. Yet whatever we get to know about Devi and Shivraj makes it obvious that their relationship was bordering on incest, they behave like lovers in the flash back scenes where we see them together.

Devi's marriage to Ishwar had been a passing interlude of happiness. However, this was a short-lived episode in her life and Ishwar dies, leaving behind his wife and a son. After Ishwar's death, Devi's only thoughts are of Shivraj. She feels no need for desire to remarry:

While Shivraj had lived she had thought of the years ahead as being many and varied, a glowing mature time to come, when things not necessarily visible or tangible would bear fruit. She and Shivraj would grow old together — as she and Ishwar had never been allowed to. They would read books there had been no time for, listen for

hours to music, make a garden, enjoy Rishad in his manhood and then Rishad's children.³³

Michael had observed Devi closely in relation to her brother. Michael remembered Devi as a youthful girl who had many admirers but chose only her brother as a companion. He could remember her enjoying boat rides and horse rides with her brother. Her relation to her brother was too powerful. Michael had noticed that 'physical contact' between the brother and sister "was so constant, hand touching, his head bent to hers."³⁴ Michael had been jealous of Shivraj. Michael could understand duty to a husband, or wife or child, but what duty was this? They behaved like lovers, or rather as husband and wife would behave towards each other. She remembers the beautiful moments she shared with Shivraj. The following passage presents the picture of Devi-Shivraj, less as brother and sister and more as lovers:

Even their times together were few and far between by then, a great personal loss to her. Michael had not understood when he quarreled so fiercely with her that Shivraj was both rest and excitement, new and familiar, longing and fulfilment.... Once he became the country's she had had to wait for him. Unlike earlier, when she'd be able to argue with him into an outing, when they had got into the car because the day sparkled and she at the wheel had swung it out

toward the river, toward freedom and salvation. They had carried lunch and spent the afternoon in their boat and had known as if a clock had struck, the exact second when the apricot light would drain upward.... She and Shivraj, motor switched off, would lie in the boat under her white woollen shawl. Borne along by the deep flowing current, they talked in murmurs or not at all, the sky of contentment above them.... Devi's tears had made wet diagonal paths down her cheeks, and she had been glad, glad that today she had given him the sky and the world beneath it.³⁵

No one can ignore its implications after reading the above passage.

Devi's friendship with Usman Ali is prompted primarily by the fact that he was a close friend of her brother and was so much like him. Devi is a typical, domestic Indian woman, who always needs a support to lean on. When Shivraj dies, she needs Usman's body and soul, who makes love to her as she lies on her bed, mourning for her husband Ishwar. She symbolizes the continuation of the search for freedom on both the personal and the public levels. The search for fulfilment takes her to Michael and Usman. Whereas the politician in her does find its goal in the mass movement to be led by Usman, the woman in her seems doomed to perpetual seeking. Even in her love affairs, she is neither honest nor mature, nor unselfish. Ishwar's bed is still warm when Usman occupies it. When Michael asks her about her

lovers, she gives an ambiguous answer. She is simple and primitive as is evident in her sisterly duty and attachment to her brother. She is not a woman of ideas; she is not for making new beginnings but for continuing the existing state of affairs. However, she gradually moves towards an awareness of her emotional needs. Basking in the glory of her illustrious brother, Devi finds her relationship with Michael fulfilling; but lacking the courage to resist conventions, she refuses to marry him. It is only years later that she tells Michael that she regretted her decision and at that time she was obeying something deeper, which was stronger than loving him, namely her duty to her brother.

Devi patiently lives in the past, getting identified with the predominant personality of Shivraj and this accounts for much of the failures of Devi-Michael relationship. She remains too much engrossed with her past that makes the present awful and the future almost impossible. Her physical relation with Michael, while Shivraj was alive, was very dissatisfying for Michael because he felt he was never alone with this woman, she had always put a man, her race, her family between them. However when he returns to India after Shivraj's death, he realizes that "nothing stood between them anymore."³⁶ Shivraj had been an obsessive influence on her. Her inability to get beyond the limited frontiers of past and present and look forward to future leaves her immobile and static in the end. While after the death of her son Rishad, Michael and Usman intend to get back to their work, she loses the ability to visualize and anticipate. The character of Devi perhaps stands as the weakest heroine portrayed

by Sahgal. There is no convincing emotional catharsis to rise to the heights of pure tragedy in *Devi*. A performing puppet, she remains without individuality or sensibility, a caricature of a career politician of the modern era, a sad end indeed for Shivraj's sister.

Sahgal has portrayed her male characters mostly as narrow-minded, ruthless, careless husbands who make their sensitive wives experience acute sense of loneliness, emptiness and boredom in life. However, some of her male characters equally suffer in a wrong marriage, due to loneliness or lack of communication. They may not suffer the same kind of agony because man is not dependent in the same way as his wife is on him, but a wrong marriage gives him a lot of torture too. In *A Situation in New Delhi*, a similar disagreement can be seen in the married life of Usman and Nadira. Usman, a Vice-Chancellor, is over-burdened with the troubles of unrest and violence in the University campus. He is being pushed into taking back three rusticated students for a rape case, being disturbed in every policy-making matter by the young politicians and being physically assaulted by so-called students. Usman desires to share his deepest and innermost thoughts with Nadira, but she remains stubborn, uncompromising, and refuses to come out of the fortress around her. Nadira is found constantly blaming him for accepting such a post on 'her' ward. She never calls Devi by her name. Devi is always 'she', the 'other woman' in her view. She thinks that Usman should have known that such posts were not meant for Muslims in free India. Freedom has disillusioned her and has turned her into a staunch anti-Hindu. When Nadira proposes to leave the country for any other

country if not Pakistan, his reaction is very strong and spontaneous. Nadira, who is much younger to Usman, has accepted marriage in terms of physical union only and feels unconcerned with his emotional burden. However, their splitting relationship is saved from further break-up by the 'will to understand' and there is a hope of fuller and deeper relationship.

Sahgal's *Rich Like Us* is the latest in the feminist fiction. The novel dramatizes Indian woman's privations and suffering without being a downright documentary and the novel proposes rationalization of sexual relations offering kinds of man-woman relationship. In the novel, Sahgal deals with the question that not only love, even marriage has no power to bind man to the woman. Marriage for man means getting all comforts at every level while for woman it means a life of total dedicated service to a master. Ram Swarup inflicts great emotional violence on both the women he marries. He sees every relationship in life in terms of his own advantage and delight. Despite his two marriages, he is infatuated with Marcella, and falls deeply in love with her.

In *Rich Like Us*, Sahgal introduces three major female characters — Mona, Rose and Sonali. Each one of them is different in her outlook and background. Yet, due to a series of events, they are brought together. Amazingly, there is a bond of understanding and empathy between Mona and Rose, the co-wives and between Rose and Sonali. Ram enjoys life fully with both the wives, with Mona looking after the household affairs and the child, and Rose providing sensual pleasure and a company in business, though both the women feel

wronged, lonely and insecure. Both of them are wronged by a man for whom age is no barrier for love affairs. Love is merely fun or the most passion for Ram Swarup. Ram starts flirting with Rose in England at the same time when he gets the news of the birth of a son from his first wife Mona. Neither the duty towards wife nor the thoughts of the newly born child can stop Ram from showering his time and love on Rose till he finally wins her heart and returns to India with his second wife. Life for both the women means insecurity and agony, while for Ram it is a profitable arrangement on all the fronts. His friend Zafar states, “You have the path to heaven all paved for you...with a cocktail party upstairs and a prayer meeting downstairs.”³⁷ But he is not content even with these two. He turns to Marcella for an ardent love affair without any feeling of guilt and without caring for the feeling of his wives. Once he meets Marcella, he as lightly discards Rose as he had earlier discarded Mona. More than anything else, it is their identical suffering which ultimately binds Mona and Rose together. Later when the plan of living with Marcella does not materialize, he very easily asks Rose to come back and stay with him, without even offering an apology for his behaviour. Rose is emotionally dependant on him, so he can easily exploit her. In fact, he always takes his wives for granted and just goes ahead with whatever he feels like doing. Later when Mona is dying of cancer, Ram does not have time even to listen about it. Sahgal strongly condemns the attitudes which reduce women to an object. As Neena Arora observes in her study of Sahgal and Doris Lessing:

Man considers it as normal male behavior to satisfy his desires at both the emotional and the physical level outside marriage while at the slightest hint of any deviation on her part which may not involve sex, man turns violent and hostile towards his wife and starts persecuting her.³⁸

Mona, Ram's first wife comes from a typical conservative traditional Punjabi family. She takes refuge in, and draws strength from prayers, 'bhajans' and 'kirtans'. She leads quite a cloistered life. In fact, Rose in those early years at Lahore had never seen her, even though they lived in the same house. Mona has unshakeable faith in astrology. Her marriage with Ram had been arranged with the help of astrologers and horoscopes yet; all this had not prevented Ram from taking another wife. Even then, Mona continued to be ruled by the predictions of astrologers. Perhaps it is this obsessive faith that keeps her going. When she focuses all her attentions on her son, Dev, all her dreams and hopes for her son's future are once again ruled by the planets. His bad performances in school, his misspent youth never seemed to affect her faith in the predictions that he would have a very bright future. In fact, her faith in astrology had betrayed her in both the cases of her husband and her son. Mona is a giver, a loser and a victim. She is never treated as an equal by Ram and scarcely as a human being, but she puts up with his abuse without a whimper. She is loyal, devoted and yet stubborn. She is religious, irrational, and

superstitious, but not wicked or malicious. When Rose saves her life, she forgets the past and becomes her friend. She is a typical Indian mother who spoils her child by not deconditioning him of the evils of his inheritance.

Rose is the most prominent woman character in the novel. She is the life of the story. She believes in the ideal of love. When Ram first meets Rose, she is a twenty-year-old lower class, cockney English girl, with very little formal education to her credit. She is a frank, clear-headed, compassionate and attractive. She is a British, working class girl who falls in love with Ram. Rose had broken an almost settled engagement with Freddie in order to marry Ram. She had married for love, though she had enough knowledge of Ram's first marriage and the existence of a son. She had abandoned all — her home, her country, her parents only for her love. There was something romantic about her attitude to Ram:

She had entered an emotional labyrinth and she was drawn magnetically on, with Ram doing no more than holding her hand for the entire two weeks before he asked her, a victim of casual unthinking sorcery, to marry him. And it was a sign of the distance she had travelled.³⁹

Surviving the shocks of the first weeks of adjustment, she learns to live in humiliation and neglect. While watching the child Dev play and

grow, Rose found to her anguish that she had not performed the service for which women are intended. She realizes:

Without a child of her own Rose would never be mistress of the house, not even her half of it. She would pass through this family, this frightening unshakeable permanence, leaving not the shadowiest imprint of her own on it. She was less than mist, there wouldn't be a trace left of her dreams or her nightmares, no one to regret her going, not a tear to make her passage, while Mona's son grew and Mona's war trickled down to become a Hindu-Muslim riot in the kitchen where the Muslim cook for English food and the Hindu cook for Indian food became embattled belligerents over wood and coal, oil, rice, tea, sugar and chains of command.⁴⁰

Here the novelist shows that such female feelings are perhaps common for women in all cultures, it may be Indian culture or British culture. The cold war between Rose and Mona reconciled only after Rose saved Mona from her suspected attempt at self-immolation while performing 'puja'. Her father-in-law Lalaji thanked her with a blessing "May God bless and protect you all your days, for you are a good woman."⁴¹ Rose shook her head, bewildered, wanted to say:

‘That’s just what I’m not. You can’t think how I’ve hated her. What frightful deaths I’ve wished on her, how I’ve wanted to pack up and leave this wretched situation because of her. If there’s a fire, you jump in and rescue a person if you can, that’s all. What’s it to do with goodness and badness?’ But she sat there, her ordinary duty transformed into Duty, herself into a live exhibit of Dharma, the austere morality he lived by.⁴²

Rose sees her marriage to Ram as a lifelong commitment. This firm love and commitment helps Rose to maintain her sanity on many occasions during her forty-three years of marriage. Rose manages to maintain her independence from the beginning of their relationship. Though she reluctantly accepts Ram’s requirement to spare some of his time to Mona, occasionally even a few hours or a night, Rose cannot accept his shutting her out of his life during the affair with Marcella.

Love becomes a trap for Rose and despite her suffering within marriage; she just cannot bear the idea of divorce, after getting used to living with Ram all these years. This also explains why women accept the order of life created for them by men without any protest. The situation in which Mona and Rose find themselves is in fact a creation of Ram but it means endless agony for both, where ironically they start hating each-other for no fault of either. More than anything else, it is their identical suffering which ultimately binds Mona and Rose

together. Mona accepts Rose only when she is assured that there is no danger for her place as the mother of the only heir, as Rose remains barren. Ultimately, Mona on her deathbed looks constantly at Rose for comfort, for peace, for assurance about her son and daughter-in-law rather than the husband who is also at her bedside. The uneasiness of Rose is due to the fact that Ram who has never made a will has placed Rose in a precarious situation where her legal right may be denied. She tries to convince herself that it must have been fate that has made her life take various turns. In all her vicissitudes, it is Sonali who remains a friend and who fights for her right to property. And finally, she is murdered. But people are made to believe that she invited the death on herself. Through the character of Rose, Sahgal shows that love knows no barriers or boundaries. It is noteworthy that Sahgal's Indian women seek divorce on the ground of incompatibility but her English Rose shows an exemplary patience and adherence.

Another female character in the novel is Sonali Ranade, a thirty-eight years old I. C. S. officer. She is a woman conscious of her capacities, proud and idealistic. Having topped the rank in the Indian Civil Service, Sonali is the pride of her family. Rose had enlisted Sonali, her friend's daughter, to help her in ascertaining her legal rights before her death. In Sonali, we find a woman whose life is closely affected by the various twists and turns as the Indian body politics takes. We see Sonali falling in love with Ravi Kachru soon after independence. Ravi and Sonali know each other since their infant days. When they were in Oxford, their relationship culminated in physical intimacy too. Their life at Oxford is marked by intellectual

companionship although it is not devoid of emotion and passion. As she says:

We were both happier at Oxford than we had ever been before. The un-haveables, intangibles, had us in their thrall. Does the world exist because we believe it does, or would it anyway? Do ideas have a capital I and are they immutable and unchanging? Not quite how many angels can dance on the head of a pin, since neither of us was theologically inclined, but other projections as fascinating. We inhabited all the centuries with their insoluble intangibles laid out for an inspection, as pristinely pure and glittering fresh as if generations had not handled them already and wouldn't in future.⁴³

Then there came a time for parting of ways. The inner quality of 'burning bright' and the impossible standards set by her alienate him.

Sonali values individual freedom above everything else. She is the only woman who is free to live life in her own way. But she has to pay a heavy price to maintain her freedom. To question, to rebel and to demand explanations — this has always been her nature. Her survival instinct is strong and instead of giving in, she gives up. Her resignation is not her acceptance of defeat; it is rather her defiance against oppressive forces, her refusal to cringe before forces acting

against her identity. It is her unique manner of asserting her individuality. Her decision to resign from the Civil Service is precisely her refusal to compromise with dictatorship. Sonali says:

When the constitution becomes null and void by the act of a dictator, and the armour of a modern state confronts you, Satyagraha is the only way to keep your self-respect.⁴⁴

Sonali's efforts to help Rose by checking Devikin from forging his father's signature prove useless. As a last resort, Sonali appeals to Ravi to stop Devikin using the money of his father, who is lying paralyzed, by forging his signature. She succeeds in awakening the better self in him. Sonali's fight for justice, symbolized in her support for Rose's rightful place as a wife and concern for the beggar makes her an ideal character.

The details of women's exploitation in the Indian society keep unfolding at several levels besides the experience of female protagonists. A number of male voices vehemently expose the violence done to the women who mattered so much to them, making the novel a far more intense and legitimate feminist text. For example, the slightly more remote past of India is projected through her grandfather's manuscript that Sonali finds in her dead father's box. The manuscript vividly portrays the cruelties, especially of 'sati' that Indian women of those generations, including Sonali's great-grand mother, had to undergo and the strong reaction they provoked in the

hearts of sensitive men like Sonali's grandfather. The long manuscript seems to join the past with the present:

But underneath there will be the subterranean layers of ourselves we cannot escape. I can look back now and reconstruct as though I had actually been there, the scene as it must have happened. A procession of them took her from the house, past familiar scenery, knowing where they were taking her. They helped her to climb the funeral pyre, bedded her down solicitously on the stacked wood where so lately her husband's corpse had lain, and then stepped back to a great safe distance as the flames leapt up, to watch her dance with death.⁴⁵

Sonali's own reaction to the long account reflects the continuity of cruelty and rebellion in India's history:

Illumination seems to come to me in the dark. When I switched off my bedside lamp I saw a world revealed, but strangely enough it was not the evil in it I saw. On a narrow parapet enclosing a funeral pyre I saw a boy of nineteen balancing dangerously, unconscious of the danger to himself, as he fought savagely to kill his mother's

murderers. Not all of us are passive before cruelty and depravity. He had not been. Nor the boy in Connaught Place who had struggled desperately all the way to the police van. Nor even Rose's beggar, undaunted by his armlessness, slipping and slithering from his tormentor's grasp while those with arms and legs walked mutely into captivity. And I fell asleep to dream of heroisms whose company I was scarcely fit to keep.⁴⁶

The narrative is full of reminders of injustices and violence done to women in our society.

As a narrator, Sonali is far from being a passive observer. During the Emergency, her strong opinions on democracy cost her job. The entire political drama during Emergency is seen through Sonali's eyes. Exactly one month and one day after the declaration of emergency, Sonali is removed from her office as Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Industry. The story of Ram and Rose acts as a connecting link between various happenings and personalities intensely involved with emergency. Sahgal sharply delineates the political, social and psychological turmoil India faced at the important juncture of emergency. Though Sahgal is Indira Gandhi's cousin, she has enough courage to write a fearless, bold and knowledgeable account of the ills of emergency.

The women in this novel are certainly more aware of the injustice done to them by men, but habit makes them a willing

prisoner in this world of exploitation and injustice. Though Sonali and Rose are typical Sahgal women, however they are independent, assertive, self-respecting and compassionate. As Sahgal quotes, “My women are strivers and aspirers toward freedom, toward goodness, toward a compassionate world.”⁴⁷

In *Plans for Departure*, Sahgal deals not only with the institution of marriage and what it means to the chief women characters but also with how love can mean different things to different people. *Plans for Departure* is the story of Anna Hansen, a Danish girl, who postpones her marriage to an English diplomat, Nicholas, because of her desire for self-realization. Anna wants to understand life and asserts her right to be her authentic self. For this aim, she sets out on a travel for one year visiting Copenhagen, London, Madras, Calcutta and finally Himapur, a fictive village in the Himalayan ranges. In Himapur, she gets the job of a Secretary-cum-companion to Sir Nitin Basu, a renowned botanist working on the psychology of plants who has come to Himapur during the summer to carry on his work. During her stay in Himapur, she comes into contact with Henry Brewster, the District Magistrate and feels attracted towards his personality. Gradually, she falls in love with him and is thrown into confusion as she and Nicholas have decided to get married. Anna comes to Henry’s office everyday to collect mail and borrow books from his personal library. Their relationship develops and even she begins to reconsider her future. But at this point, she stumbles on vague evidences of two unnatural deaths on a far-away hillside and imagining them to be associated with a secret crime; she

makes plans for her departure. On returning to England, she marries Nicholas and is shown living as a grand old lady whose granddaughter, Gayatri and her husband Jason, worship her.

The thirst for identity is not a problem facing the Indian women only. Anna who is free from the shackles that women in a parochial society face, yet she comes to India when she wants to ‘break out’ and be herself. She is despaired to think of her epitaph as:

Here lies Anna, beloved wife, who died without having made much effort to live, and nobody noticed the difference, since being a beloved wife was supposed to be reward enough.⁴⁸

Her zeal for emancipation forces her to leave the warm embraces not only of home but also of a country. She had rather face enmities in a foreign land than be a slave in her own surroundings, to her own people.

In the novel, the case of the District Magistrate, Henry Brewster is pathetic. He has been posted to Himapur where there are more pine and deodar woods than human habitation because Henry has an annoying tendency to keep making case for the fox. But his wife, Stella has opposite political commitments which got muddled with other reasons. Politics becomes instrumental in breaking the marriage of Henry and Stella because what lies between them is a whole empire and their relation is like being “on opposite sides in the American Civil War.”⁴⁹ In spite of Henry’s devoted love for her, she develops

an affair with Robert Pryor, the Home Secretary. Robert and Stella become lovers. Henry tries to reason with his wife asking her to give their marriage another try but it is in vain. Henry is not ready to leave her:

I said to Pryor, since Stella wouldn't talk, "Is she pregnant? Is that the trouble? Because if she is, I'll adopt the child." They looked at each other as if I were dangerously unbalanced, and this the final travesty in my dementedness.⁵⁰

Robert has arranged for a divorce from his wife and Stella leaves Henry and makes her plans for departure to start a new life with Robert. By the time, Anna comes in contact with Henry and gradually falls in love with him. Thus, the marriage-life of Henry and Stella fails due to lack of understanding and true emotion.

The marriage of Marlowe Croft and his wife Lulu too fails for its lack of the compost of common cause. Marlowe comes in the life of Lulu in rather a dramatic way. Lulu had fallen in love with an American preacher, Croft. Once she attended his last sermon in a country church. She tells her father about Croft's moving sermon that had put her in a trance. Mr. Firth, Lulu's father, gets Croft two months' jail term for daring to meddle with his local administration. Lulu marries Croft soon after his release from jail. After some time she realizes that Marlowe Croft did not need her. He had his church and his mission only. Lulu marries him as if she has been under a

magnetic spell. She is later disillusioned with Marlowe and, therefore, with her marriage. Gradually, the life she had made with him is now over. She thinks that Marlowe's charm had slowly worn off. For all her shrill foolishness, Lulu has been a good wife. But when Marlowe baptizes a sweeper's child and thinks of adopting it, Lulu finds it unbearable. "With her good wifeliness gone, and her loyalty to his loyalties at breaking point...the life she had made with him was over."⁵¹ A marriage between two such entirely opposed people cannot last and thus Lulu experiences a grim and fearsome predicament when she plans her departure from Himapur. But before she could depart, she meets with an accident.

The reason that is primarily responsible for the breaking of two marriages is the lack of communication between husband and wife. Here, extra-marital relationship plays an important part in the life of different characters. In the novel, the husbands and the wives are discontent with one-another. Such marriages have no chance of succeeding. In the novel, Sahgal deals not only with the institution of marriage and what it means to the chief women characters but also with how love can mean different things to different people. Sahgal has succeeded in her portrayal of these women characters.

Sahgal's concept of emancipation reaches its culmination duly and justly in her novel *Mistaken Identity*. In the novel, we meet a woman who is out and out a rebel. The Ranee of Vijaygarh defies all moulds and definitions. She is a class apart. She breaks all boundaries and makes her own rules. She married at the age of five, brought to her husband's home at thirteen, had to wait for nine long years to be

blessed with a son. She belongs to an age when women were expected to stay behind veil. She remains completely detached and isolated in her family mansion. She faces a very subtle and inhuman form of exploitation. She is uneducated, rather illiterate, has an apathetic husband, has nothing to look forward to, and yet she dares to shun her husband from her life, when she discovers the man has no respect for her kind. There is no one to support her in her crusade against female exploitation and yet she dares to challenge the authority of her husband in his own home. The woman behind the veil breaks all ties with her husband, when he marries for the third time. In fact, her free spirit, her strong will, submitted to the demands of neither her husband nor the world. As Jasbir Jain remarks:

She has always been a rebel. Her character has been one of restless questioning. She is a stronger person than her husband and refuses to accept his continued pursuit of pleasure and new ranees⁵².

Her life lacks continuity and warmth, she feels isolated. She knows nothing about women's liberation, she becomes a strong practitioner of the same because whatever measures she takes to insulate her self-respect from tyrannical forces, she does so without the support of anyone else. When in the end she breaks free from all preventions and marries comrade Yusuf, it is without any infesting sense of guilt that she does so. Her marriage to Yusuf is not an effort to seek refuge from the evils that the Raja has subjected to her. Such refuge, she does not

ask for. She does not need support even from her son Bhushan. She walks her own proud way even when there is no comrade Yusuf in her life. Here, Sahgal shows a steady evolution in the course of her writing career. Ranee marks the culmination of the onward march of Sahgal's new woman towards freedom.

In the novel, the major women characters are seen through the eyes of the male narrator in no way stunts the development of the personalities throughout the narrative. For instance, Bhushan Singh's mother, a product of the conservative and tradition-bound times that she lived in, comes alive as the son, languishing in person, reminisces about her. The dream of Bhushan and his mother is not only that of a lost love found but of a secular India, in which an idealistic Sikh man and a rebellious Muslim woman can unite without fear, in which Ranee can openly declare her love for a Communist worker. It is a dream of India in which a mother is liberated from the realm of myth and the strictures of traditional roles and can unite with her son in change. Here, one must consider the circumstances and the situations that have given rise to these detailed accounts of the mother. Since the protagonist is a man, the world, including the female characters, are seen from his point of view.

Through Bhushan's narrative, the novelist examines how each of the three women relates to their social background. We cannot help noticing that they all appear to hold on to a romantic vision of love. When opportunity comes their way, none of them settles for anything less than the best that their world has to offer. Sahgal appears to be treading in new and perhaps intense areas of experience, confronting

with fresh insights and lyrical contents of human life. The novelist, with minute precision and utmost care, depicts the troubled and complex psychological mental make-up of Bhushan and in doing so; she fuses the history of politically charged up India artistically. She moves backwards and forwards in time, to create the life-story of Bhushan Singh. The life of Bhushan Singh seems to have a triangular configuration.

In the novel, Bhushan's story, his dream, inextricably links Hindu, Muslim and Sikh cultures in the past, the present and the future; linear time, and narrative chronology become less important than the immanence of the secular dream filtered and transformed by memory. When Bhushan recalls meeting Razia, for example, she is imaged as symbolic of a past unity of India, as embodying a revolutionary transgression of religious stricture in the present, and as a signal of hope for a secular India.

Razia, the Muslim girl Bhushan is obsessed with, is sixteen years old. Trapped in her religious and cultural confines, she is attracted by the fleeting moments of freedom Bhushan offers her. Bhushan develops sexual relationship with Razia, which satisfies him to the core of his soul. Bhushan recalls that in Razia's face he read his dream of revolution. Razia's face is an image of his creation, a representation of his desire. What attracts him to Razia is her liveliness. Bhushan craves for freedom from the childhood. His mother, who is deprived of freedom, choice and fulfilment, brings him up in such a way that at least he can enjoy what she lacks from the childhood. Bhushan also tries in all possible ways to escape from the

rigorous discipline imposed on him by his father. In fact, his passionate longing for Razia can be treated as the manifestation of his longing for freedom. When their affair is disclosed, it ignites communal violence. There is a lot of bloodshed and his father sends him to America, where Mr. Goldbager's daughter Willie-May has plans for him to become an actor. When he had been sent away to United States to tide over the experience, he had tried to grope towards some definition of womanhood in Razia whose counterpoint is Willie-May. Willie-May is a foil to Razia and to the special significance of Bhushan's love for her which identifies him with the burden of belonging. By deftly using Bhushan's sex life with Willie-May, Sahgal takes us back to the twenties.

The another girl comes in Bhushan's life is a Parsee girl, Sylla who smokes and wears Western clothes. She is a modern girl, full of enthusiasm. Naturally, they develop healthy, satisfying and perfect love relationship. Bhushan is a man with no ambition, no occupation. He says to Sylla, "You are my nest from storm, plague, pestilence, not to mention the Hindu-Muslim love-madness that rages in my middle ear"⁵³, and that is why he needs her. But Sylla needs him for she can come to him whenever she wants and Bhushan comes to the realization that "what women want more than success and ambition, seems to be a round-the-clock-lover."⁵⁴ Even in Bombay, the Hindu-Muslim love madness keeps on raging in Bhushan's mind, and he keeps on visiting the red-light areas in Bombay, in the hope of meeting his Razia to cool his madness. His visit to the immoral body market disgusts Sylla. Bhushan needs her love and company to come

out of the Hindu-Muslim love-madness. Sylla who was educated in England and Switzerland and she was brought up by her grandmother who had herself been educated in France. This lady had single-handedly raised Sylla to be a free-spirited and independent woman. As a result of her upbringing, Sylla is a straightforward woman. Even Sylla's appearance, her very English ways, set her apart from the common Indian woman. Sylla tries to rescue Bhushan out of the Hindu-Muslim love-madness. But she could not heal up the wound or cure Bhushan.

In this novel, Sylla is the real mistress and Bhushan waited at home for her visits. He believes that lovers should enjoy what they can of each other. They did not want anything, no flirting with the idea of marriage. During Bhushan's three years in jail, while Sylla had kindly provided him with a good lawyer, she had also had the time and the perspective to see why she could not commit herself forever to Bhushan. After his release from the jail, Bhushan comes to Vijaygarh, he plans to go to Bombay to meet Sylla and marry her and live a carefree modern life, this was "one dream that was still within reach."⁵⁵ On the other hand, Sylla plans to marry Nauzer, the Parsee young rising star, the advocate, perhaps because Nauzer could give her what her grandmother had hoped for her. Bhushan's identity as a true lover is mistaken by Sylla. She fails to pay heed to Bhushan's appeals to have mercy on him; she fails to accept the love-relationship, complementing each other. He decides not to come in the way of Sylla again. He refuses to keep on moving like a shuttle from Vijaygarh to Bombay, from Hindu-Muslim love-madness to carefree modern life.

Bhushan returns back to Vijaygarh where he meets Yusuf, his cell-mate in the jail and the communist social reformer. To Bhushan, his mother and Yusuf seem love-mad, unable to notice their notoriety. Before this union of lovers, Bhushan met the young daughter of Yusuf, and married her. The marriages of Bhushan's mother to the Communist Muslim Comrade Yusuf and of Bhushan to Yusuf's daughter are too tidy, in fact a foreclosure on the rich potential the work explores. He finally finds fulfilment in his marriage to comrade Yusuf's daughter.

Nayantara Sahgal is one of the important women novelists who depicts post-colonial attitudes and vouches for a new feminine morality and a new humanism in her novels. As a woman novelist, Sahgal recognises that her primary obligation is that of advocating the emancipation of women. Sahgal in her novels vividly describes how woman is exploited even during the modern times by both the individuals and the society. Sahgal also traces out a slow and gradual deviation from the stereotype of the virtuous woman to redefine virtue. Sahgal condemns self-immolation and suffering, and points out that the virtue of the modern woman is "courage which is a willingness to risk the unknown and to face the consequences."⁵⁶ Her novels from *A Time to be Happy* to *Mistaken Identity* show her deep concern with the parlous state of women in the parochial society. Her women from Maya to the mother figure Ranee rise against the stultifying culture which retards women's progress and rebel against all attempts to elide women's pivotal role in the family and society. Her women are victims of a conventional society which does not

permit women to hold their own and considers the very issue of identity-crisis as preposterous apropos women.

Sahgal's novels deal with men and women in eternal search for freedom-freedom to express themselves, freedom to be their own selves. Sahgal feels strongly about female exploitation and male sarcasm towards the issue of women's identity crises. She demands social justice for women, her focus being on freedom. As woman has been suppressed since time immemorial, she is in need of sympathy, support, encouragement and inspiration for the full blossoming of her character and in the novels of Sahgal, the woman protagonist receives them from a man.

In her fictional depiction of women attempting to free themselves from repressive relationships, Sahgal is more direct in her feminist sympathies than the other writers. She makes a systematic and sustained effort to demolish deeply ingrained attitudes regarding women, before indicating ways in which a new image can be formulated. With an admirable steadfastness, she upholds her commitment to man-woman relationships based on mutual trust and honest communication between two equal individuals. Man-woman relationship is the unit of individual and social life and hence it has been the central theme of the novelists all over the world. The characters of Sahgal reflect the changing facets of man-woman relationship in India. The women characters of Sahgal are no longer the subdued sex "a figure of humility, neck bent, eyes downcast."⁵⁷ In their conjugal relationship and their relationship outside marriage, the heroines of Sahgal are solitary individuals striving for self-assertion.

Sahgal is deeply concerned with the failure of marital relationships, the loneliness of living and private terrors. Husband-wife alienation, marital disharmony and temperamental incompatibility form the theme of her novels. In her novels, woman suffers not only by man's act of physical violence, but she is often emotionally hurt and crippled through his arrogance, cynicism and indifference. Loneliness, suffering and frustration in marriage sometimes cause disintegration and make women rebellious. Due to lack of communication and mutual understanding, Sahgal's characters suffer from the private torment of broken marriages. Her women characters suffer because they refuse to submerge their individuality and cling to their personal identity at all costs. Women in the novels of Sahgal are liberal and unconventional. A. V. Krishna Rao states,

Sahgal's women seek to establish a new order with changed standards where women can be their true selves, where there is no need for hypocrisy and where character is judged by the purity of heart.⁵⁸

Almost all the novels of Sahgal portray women who herald a new morality — a morality not confined to physical chastity. It demands accommodation of individual longings for self-fulfilment and seeks consideration not for just the deed but the heart and feeling too. Sahgal's 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.”⁵⁹ Young women in Sahgal’s fictional world are the helpless victims of the taboo-ridden, conventional society. Instead of asserting themselves or fighting against the odds, some of them easily accept the role traditionally offered to them, while some others opt for death as the ultimate solution to the man-made problems.

Sahgal’s world consists of two types of women characters. The first group consists of women who are happy in the confines of Hindu orthodoxy, and the other of those with a strong sense of individuality and an analytical mind but shuttling between traditional and modern values. Her women are not career women treating men as their rivals in a highly competitive society. Rather they wish to relate themselves to the people around them; they would like to be treated as equals.

In her novels, Sahgal reveals how before marriage women are brought up strictly according to the traditional codes. The moment a girl reaches adolescence, she is reminded of her femininity. The double standards and dichotomous attitude which continue to operate throughout a woman’s life start right in her parents’ home. She is prevented from developing her individuality. The traditional feminine virtues and graces are instilled in her so that she could be an attractive commodity in the marriage market. She gets hardly any encouragement to develop her independent individual self. She is always put aside at the time of taking any decision even about her career. In short, Nayantara Sahgal’s women are of the view that they should move with the time and they should not compromise with the issue of their individual freedom in our male-dominated society. The

feminist in Sahgal always insists on women's equality at par with men.

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CHAPTER – V

CONCLUSION

The first generation of important women writers began publishing their work in the 1950s. During this period, Nayantara Sahgal emerged as one of the most significant voices in the realm of Indian English fiction. Sahgal has been active on the literary scene as both a creative writer and a political columnist for more than four decades. She has the unique distinction of being the only political novelist on the Indian English literary scene. Her work has a strong realistic base and reflects not only her personal values but also the changing values of a society exposed for the first time to both freedom and power. Sahgal is one of the distinguished Indo-English writers who writes in the stream of national consciousness. She has the honour of being the first Indian woman novelist writing in English dealing with political themes.

Sahgal has first-hand knowledge of politics and political figures in India, for she spent most of her childhood in Anand Bhawan, the ancestral home of the Nehrus in Allahabad. It is beyond doubt that politics is in her blood. The important political events form the background for each of her novels. Her writing is famous for focusing on the latest political ups and downs with a tinge of Western liberalism. Her novels truthfully mirror the contemporary Indian political theme. Sahgal's novels portray the various social and cultural changes that take place in India and the individual's response to them.

Her novels deal with India's social, political and cultural history into their narrative framework and subject them to a close critical examination. Sahgal's forte is the political novel and she has given us several astute descriptions of the partition era. She has offered her interpretations of history at the same time that she has trained her eye upon sociological details. Sahgal started writing before the feminist movement was launched in the sixties, yet she independently takes up issues concerning women which were to become major issues in the feminist movement.

Women in India have been subject to discrimination, sexual exploitation, malnutrition and social taboos since the early 19th century. The change in the status of women in India is a slow, steady and continuing process. It began a century and half ago when Raja Rammohan Roy and his successors and followers focused attention on the social evils. The social status of women in any community is largely dependent on the culture and tradition of the community. In ancient times, Aryans were the main inhabitant of India. These people were mainly Brahmins and they used to give the status of goddess to the women. At that time, the status of women in the households was like 'Lakshmi'. Medieval India was supposed to be the dark age for women. Medieval India saw many foreign conquests, which resulted in the decline in the status of women. The decline in the position of women dates back to the period of Manu-Smriti. It is strange that ages after Manu made his code, some people in modern India try to defend this primitive barbaric attitude towards women. In Manu's code,

women are many times equated with slaves who also constituted property.

Then the pre-independence period marked the beginning of awareness of the suffering of women due to oppressive social customs. During this period, a favourable climate was created to improve the status of women through legal reforms. The constitution of India and the legal codes bestowed upon women the privilege of equal rights with men, the same facilities of education, the same opportunities of profession and employment.

In modern India, the position of women has changed considerably. Her position in modern Indian society is equal to that of men, socially, economically, educationally, politically and legally. The status of women in modern India is a sort of a paradox. If on one hand, she is at the peak of ladder of success, on the other hand she is mutely suffering the violence. In modern times, Indian women are given liberties and rights such as freedom of expression and equality. But still today, we are fighting for crisis such as dowry, female foeticide, child marriage, sex selective abortions, health, domestic violence, neglect in education, sexual exploitation, molestation, rape and even murder.

Fortunately, things are changing although at a slow pace. More and more women are engaged in improving their lot through education and employment. A lot many of them are able to reach positions of eminence as doctors, engineers, architects, film-producers, film-directors, managers, officials, teachers, lawyers and political leaders. But to bring a radical change in society, due cooperation from males is

always necessary. It is only after the emergence of women writers that we have been able to have a deep insight into the psyche of the Indian female.

In Sahgal's fictional depiction of women attempting to free themselves from repressive relationships, she is more direct in her feminist sympathies. She makes a systematic and sustained effort to demolish deeply-ingrained attitudes regarding women, before indicating ways in which a new image can be formulated. A great deal has been said about Sahgal's feminist stance in her fiction. In the novels of Sahgal, there is a very sensitive depiction of the way women suffer due to the sexist bias in the patriarchal society which gives a subordinate position to women and always treats them as second-rate citizens. Though Sahgal has been hailed chiefly as a political novelist, her feminist concern is quite obvious and her fighter spirit quite vocal in her fiction. The fictional world of Sahgal from *A Time to be Happy* to *Mistaken Identity* shows her deep concern with the parlous state of women in the parochial society.

Sahgal has published nine novels and two autobiographies, besides a history book *Freedom Movement in India*, and a political treatise *Indira Gandhi: Her Road to Power*. She has been well known for her views on the Emergency in India and fight for Civil Liberties. Sahgal's first book *Prison and Chocolate Cake*, an autobiography, was published when she was only twenty-seven years old. The second autobiography, *From Fear Set Free*, was written during a critical phase in her marriage. Both the autobiographies become important because they provide the basis for a better understanding of the

novelist and her novels. The first book describes the powerful associations and experiences of Sahgal's childhood and provides invaluable insight into the shaping influences of her life. The political consciousness, which dominates her literary creations, is real and inseparable from herself and surroundings. Her social and cultural milieu has always been Indian. Her major contribution to the art of fiction in Indian English writing is the genesis of the political novel in its present form. Her main contribution has been her deep involvement and concern with politics. She has developed the scope of the political novel, widening its area of content and adding a new dimension to it. Politics, in her novels, is not the concern only of politicians, but is as all pervasive influence, affecting life at all levels.

In her novels, on the one hand, she exposes the power-hungry politicians and their madness for power, and on the other hand, she highlights the ardent freedom fighters and their sacrifices for their motherland. In all her works, there is a juxtaposition of two worlds: the personal world of man-woman relationship and the impersonal world of politics. Husband-wife alienation resulting from lack of communication, East-West encounter, extra-marital relationship, existentialist problems and temperamental incompatibility form the major themes in Sahgal's novels.

Besides politics, her fiction also focuses attention on Indian woman's search for sexual freedom and self-realization. Almost in all her novels, Sahgal has gone deep into the female psyche. In novel after novel, she explores the nature and scope of the trauma of womenfolk. She is able to go deep into the psyche of her female

characters and study them with sympathy and understanding. As a woman novelist, Sahgal recognises that her primary obligation is that of advocating the emancipation of women. Sahgal in her novels vividly describes how woman is exploited even during the modern times by both the individuals and the society. Sahgal is deeply concerned with the failure of marital relationships, the loneliness of living and private terrors.

Sahgal's women characters suffer because they refuse to submerge their individuality and cling to their personal identity at all costs. Sahgal shows women suffering in marriage-life and then deciding to come out of the suffocating bondage by preferring for divorce. She depicts her women deciding to prefer for divorce rather than live a stifling life of injustice and agony. Her women like Saroj, Simrit, Rashmi and Anna all leave their husbands or break the marriage which does not allow them to be free and to live life in their own way. In novel after novel, Sahgal gives expression to humanistic values, according to which a woman is not to be taken as sex object and glamour girl but as an individual in her own right. Sahgal depicts her women struggling to retain her selfhood and to breathe freely in the suffocating environs of loveless marriages. Having personally experienced the trauma of a failed marriage, Sahgal exhibits of the dilemma of women trapped between traditional assumptions regarding womanhood and the stirrings of individuality very sharply and skillfully. Sahgal highlights a clearly feminist function in her scathing exposure of the hollowness of man-woman relationships based on socially predetermined patterns of gender inequality. Sahgal delineates

marriage without emotional involvement, love without respect and sex without passion as the causes for unfulfilling marriages in her novels. Sahgal is hostile to the rigid marriage bond which is likely to weaken the love of the partners for each other. True marriage is a relation based on mutual trust and recognition between two separate single human beings. If the partners of a marriage do not enjoy mutual love, trust and understanding, there is no point in their staying together as husband and wife. Sahgal has stressed the need of achieving living relationship between a man and a woman through love and human interaction.

Sahgal emphasises the need for sex education and self-respect for a change in the social customs and attitudes. Women are also individuals and marriage is a partnership, not an institution. But the whole social set-up is geared towards the domination of men over women — in marriage, in sexual relationships, in childbirth and even in adultery; it is the woman who is victimised. This is fully illustrated in Sahgal's novels. The day women are accepted as equal partners, a new age would begin. Their emancipation bases itself on the ordinary assumption that a woman's body is after all her own and she has her own thinking on issues related to her.

In the novels of Sahgal, women are no more goddesses; they are human beings and move from bondage to freedom, from indecision to self-assertion, from weakness to strength. Sahgal's women struggle to change the existing world order and usher in a new order, where there is no place for pretence, hypocrisy and dual morality. Her novels portray women trampled and oppressed because of their dependence

upon men and the harrowing experience they have to face in their struggle to come out of the bondage and stand on their own feet. In her novels, woman suffers not only by man's act of physical violence, but she is often emotionally hurt and crippled through his arrogance, cynicism and indifference. Loneliness, suffering and frustration in marriage sometimes cause disintegration and make women rebellious. Due to lack of communication and mutual understanding, Sahgal's characters suffer from the private torment of broken marriages. Young women in Sahgal's novels are the helpless victims of the taboo-ridden, conventional society. Instead of asserting themselves or fighting against the odds, some of them easily accept the role traditionally offered to them, while some others opt for death as the ultimate solution to the man-made problems.

Sahgal is deeply concerned with the failure of marital relationships and the loneliness of living; hence, most of her women remarry. Most of her couples seem to be happy and contented, but they often experience loneliness and complain of silences in marriage, as Maya in *A Time to be Happy* appears incapable of emotion, but this lack of communication is the result of her emotional isolation in marriage. What she wants is just some kind of response, recognition of her existence. For Maya marriage was doomed from the beginning, chiefly because of the antithetical personalities of her husband and herself. In short, it was a sterile marriage, leaving them dry. The novel explores women's search for individuality both within marriage as equal partners and without it as individuals. Women who feel frustrated either because of marital disharmony or loneliness in life are

shown to indulge in social or religious activities. For example, Maya is a woman who tries to submerge her unhappiness and dissatisfaction in social work and religion.

The women characters in *This Time of Morning* are more varied in their search for freedom and equality. Uma and Leela, in their reckless search for freedom, use men as tools, but succeed only in harming themselves. Celia, Barbara and Nita, in their ultimate dependence on Kalyan betray the failure of their search for identity. In the character of Nita, Sahgal explores the place of a woman in Indian society before marriage. Nita's pre-marital relationship with Kalyan is the result of an attempt to fulfil her inner desire for love and communication. When the time comes to decide about her marriage, her parents decide her future. Through the character of Nita, Sahgal shows the conventional narrow-minded Indian society, where life-partners are chosen by the parents.

The female characters in *Storm in Chandigarh* wriggle out of the strait-jacket of virtuous stereotype, and emerge as individuals. This is brought out clearly in the portrayal of far from ideal marriages of three young couples — Vishal-Leela, Inder-Saroj and Jit-Mara. Sahgal is deeply concerned with unhappy marriages and the loneliness of living. The temperamental incompatibility caused disharmony in the marriage of various characters of the novel. The conflict arises mainly from absence of communication resulting in the estrangement of individuals. Through the portrayal of Leela, Saroj, Gauri and Mara, the novelist holds a mirror to the society that subjects its women to worst type of inhuman exploitation.

The Day in Shadow primarily deals with the struggle of a young, beautiful and daring Indian woman trapped under the burden of a brutal divorce settlement and the agony and unhappiness she experiences in the hands of cruel and unjust male-dominated society of India. It centres on the traumatic post-divorce experience of a middle-aged woman, Simrit. Sahgal deals how lack of proper companionship, communication and equality between man and woman cause wreck to marital relationship resulting in divorce. The novelist seems to be deeply concerned with the need of freedom for women.

Sahgal's next novel, *A Situation in New Delhi* is mainly a political novel. Here, the novelist has portrayed her male characters mostly as narrow-minded, ruthless, careless husbands who make their sensitive wives experience acute sense of loneliness, emptiness and boredom in life. However, some of her male characters equally suffer in a wrong marriage, due to loneliness or lack of communication. They may not suffer the same kind of agony because man is not dependent in the same way as his wife is on him, but a wrong marriage gives him a lot of torture too. In the novel, a similar disagreement can be seen in the married life of Usman and Nadira.

Sahgal's *Rich Like Us* is the latest in the feminist fiction. In the novel, Sahgal deals with the question that not only love, even marriage has no power to bind man to the woman. Marriage for man means getting all comforts at every level while for woman it means a life of total dedicated service to a master. The details of women's exploitation in the Indian society keep unfolding at several levels

besides the experience of female protagonists. The women in this novel are certainly more aware of the injustice done to them by man, but habit makes them a willing prisoner in this world of exploitation and injustice. In the novel, Sonali and Rose are typical Sahgal women however; they are independent, assertive, self-respecting and compassionate.

In *Plans for Departure*, Sahgal deals not only with the institution of marriage and what it means to the chief women characters but also with how love can mean different things to different people. The reason that is primarily responsible for the breaking of two marriages is the lack of communication between husband and wife. Here, extra-marital relationship plays an important part in the life of different characters. In the novel, the husbands and the wives are discontent with one-another. Such marriages have no chance of succeeding.

Sahgal's concept of emancipation reaches its culmination duly and justly in her novel *Mistaken Identity*. In the novel, the major women characters are seen through the eyes of the male narrator in no way stunts the development of the personalities throughout the narrative. Through Bhushan's narrative, the novelist examines how each of the three women relates to their social background. We cannot help noticing that they all appear to hold on to a romantic vision of love. When opportunity comes their way, none of them settles for anything less than the best that their world has to offer. Sahgal appears to be treading in new and perhaps intense areas of experience, confronting with fresh insights and lyrical contents of human life.

Sahgal depicts post-colonial attitudes and vouches for a new feminine morality and a new humanism in her novels. Her women from Maya to the mother figure Raneer rise against the stultifying culture which retards women's progress and rebel against all attempts to elide women's pivotal role in the family and society. Her women are victims of a conventional society which does not permit women to hold their own and considers the very issue of identity-crisis as preposterous apropos women. Sahgal feels strongly about female exploitation and male sarcasm towards the issue of women's identity crises. She demands social justice for women, her focus being on freedom. Sahgal represents new morality, according to which woman is not to be taken as a mere toy, an object of lust and momentary pleasure, but man's equal and honoured partner. Her women characters undoubtedly reveal her feminist ideology.

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