Abstract

The First Chapter as an introduction discusses the feminist perspectives and feminist movement in India and European countries. It also defines the word ‘feminist consciousness’ through the words of Juliet Mitchell. The introduction describes the feminist movement that Feminism has flourished in India as well as European countries and in the present scenario the status of women in European countries has reached a satisfactory level. Some main issues like Sati, Child Marriage, Purdah and restriction on female education taken up by them are discussed.

The Second Chapter discusses gender discrimination in which the problems faced by women in patriarchal society are analyzed. Sahgal’s views on gender discrimination are highlighted through her women characters. She wishes to combine marriage and individuality. She has her own visions of marriage and to her it is a pleasant and human relationship based on unbinding understanding and faith. “Women are persons not possessions” is repeatedly voiced in Sahgal’s novels.

The Third Chapter titled as, Female Quest for Identity focuses the need of women for getting emotional fulfillment. In her novels, her women are not necessarily rebels, but they are strong individuals not ready to sacrifice their values and ideals. They have strong views regarding their separate identity. But they are not opposed to the concept of marriage as radical feminists. This chapter seeks to evaluate and examine how Nayantara Sahgal undertakes the quest for identity of woman through the portrayal of different female characters and dramatization of real life situations. The problem of search for identity assumes significance because the
writer herself has been subjected to these problems in her own life.

The Fourth Chapter highlighting the familial conflicts deals with the peculiar problems faced by women characters in their conjugal relationship in the novels of Nayantara Sahgal. In tradition bound Hindu society, barriers are erected by the parents and the girl has no choice in the matter of choosing her life mate. The woman psyche is sacrificed on the altar of marriage. In the name of Pathiviratha Bhakthi, women are made to be puppets in the hands of their husbands. They are subjected to all kinds of the humiliation and harassment for the nonpayment of dowry.

The Fifth Chapter describes the emergence of new woman. Nayantara Sahgal’s new woman struggles for survival. Feminist consciousness of Nayantara Sahgal is depicted with the need for freedom for women to become aware of themselves as Individuals. Nayantara Sahgal does not portray her women characters as ordinary women but mainly as modern women, they are married women, wives, daughters and mothers. In these roles, they wish to experience freedom and to become aware of themselves as individual beings and to be accepted as equal to men. It is necessary for them to have some meaning for their lives and the man-woman relationship should be a fulfilling one.

The Sixth Chapter forms the conclusion which sums up how the feminist consciousness of Nayantara Sahgal is shown through the illustrations from her novels. There are many traces of her personal life and experiences that are related to her feminist ideology. Having taken a detailed account of Sahgal’s novels from her different feminist approach, we may safely reach the conclusion that Sahgal who is not a militant feminist, feels strongly against female exploitation and male sarcasm.