CHAPTER V

Her Narrative Art

The narrative art of Nayantara Sahgal appropriately befits with the theme of resistance in her works. In her novels, there can be marked the layer after layer of memory and desire to resist. In their narrative technique, many a nineteenth century writer has made use of epigraphs and so have the twentieth century writers. These epigraphs, like the appendix in the human body, are not useless and superficial indices; they even do not symbolize the imaginary or fanciful ideas or thoughts; but rather they show the outside and remind us of the historical trend of time in its perennial flow, circularity and simultaneity.

Nayantara Sahgal’s popular novel, Lesser Breeds (2003) is full of several such epigraphs. She has made an ample use of these epigraphs in order to focus the discourse of resistance and create a space for the protagonists to protest. For example, as Jasbir Jain puts it, “The title from Kipling’s poem ‘Recessional’ recalls in association his other poem, ‘The Whiteman’s Burden’ as well as the civilizational discourses including J S Mill’s ‘On Liberty and Macaulay’s 1835 Minute. A Second opening epigraph is from Gandhi’s favourite hymn, Vaishnava Jan to tene Kahiye Jo peer parayi Jaane re. (The Vaishnava person is he who knows and feels the pain of others) The juxtaposition of the two is a confrontation between two opposing ways of life, two opposing civilizations and ideologies.”¹

The discourse of resistance is a new phenomenon. It has a widespread space to trace, interprets and explains the subterranean connections between man and man and nation and nation. It creates a link between individual and society, between past and present and between the imaginary ideas and ideals of freedom and harmony, strife

¹ Jasbir Jain, Theorising Resistance, op.cit, P. 30.
and struggle and between conflicts and clashes to social, economic and cultural aspects.

Resistance as a theory is in itself a moral as well as an intellectual pursuit. It is inextricably connected with the natural evolution of ideas and essence of art. It can also be called a stance constantly connected with and challenged by socio-cultural strata and structures linked with authority and hegemony. This very often results in resistance culminating in prohibition, censorship, exile, persecution or even to the limit of silence. Jasbir Jain, in this context rightly observes, “Vesting its faith in its own courage of conviction and a sense of integrity, intellectual dissent, sets itself the task of awakening the conscience of a community”.  

Indian writers in English, especially Nayantara Sahgal have raised in their works, some pertinent questions with a view to addressing some social and human maladies which makes the novelist an eye-witness and a question poser, with the help of the medium of language and discloses and discovers the unjust and inhuman trends, tastes and tendencies of his times.

In her novel, *The Mistaken Identity* Nayantara Sahgal presents resistance in an altogether different races, space and geography. The identity of Bhushan, a prince, is taken to be the other; the someone else. He is put into a prison cells with nine other persons of different religions, races, ideologies, clan, caste, cult and community representing the entire range of the Indian sociocultural scene. This prison cells expands itself through various degrees such as the ongoing squabbles, debates and discussions and dialogues and discourses and occasional interaction with the external world. History is presented symbolically left for the reader to explore the required meaning and theme of resistance.

The hymn of Gandhi has another point of view. It reminds us of the history and geography of India’s struggle for freedom. The use of maps also fulfills the purpose of connecting between the interiority of the human psyche and the exteriority of the physical world of the novel. Use of epigrams, quotations and maps makes resisting statements about the clashes and conflicts in life and society so as to make us

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2 Jasbir Jain, *Theorising Resistance, op.cit*, P. 30
take interest in socio political problems. In this context, Jasbir Jain has rightly remarked, “Fairly early in the novel (Lesser Breeds) we have a reference to an elongated map in Bhai’s study, indicating the spaces showing natural wealth and the European possession of these areas. Mineral and natural resources such as tin, timber, copper, lead, oil and rubber were the targets of western control (P79-80). Then follows a whole chapter reflecting upon maps and spaces, visibility and invisibility and discussion about China, Phillipines, Japan and India and reflections on the strategic moves of the British during the Second World War (P169-198). Later, in Mr Jenner’s library in the states, there is once again a Map of the World where “Early medieval Europe floated in unmanned areas surrounded by blank lettered people by Monsters”.

The novel, Lesser Breeds, also deals with various spans of time and periods of history, from 1932 to 1968 at the current level and moving from 1757 (the time of the Battle of Plassey) to 1988. This period of time covers the concepts of power, subjugation, resistance, revolt, intrigue and love. It relates to the theme of growing capitalistic powers and exploitation, it also deals with the wonderland of fairy tales and also Mahatma Gandhi’s voice and vision of fighting against imperial and feudal powers with the help of peaceful resistance and non-violence based on the truth. Fairy tales are far from the world of reality. They are full of the complex combination of terror, horror and wonder and enchantment. (as can been seen in Salman’s Rushdie latest novel, The Enchantress of Florence (2009). In the novel, Lesser Breeds, there is a character, Leda, who is busy with the work of collecting fairy tales of all kinds and also the narratives with the theme of fairy tale ending of the tale. Gandhi’s firm belief in truth, peaceful resistance and non-violence looks like a fairy tale, most of the time appearing to be fanciful. Like the epigrams, the symbols of houses in the novel are significantly suggestive as they open out artistically in different directions and different ways such as spots of refuge, gifts, inventing houses and the houses that show resistance or connect amiably and amicably. In the words of a critic, “Leda is gifted a house as is Nirullah- houses which have been loved in and symbolize relationships”.

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3 Jasbir Jain, Theorising Resistance : Narratives in History and Politics, (Jaipur : Rawat Publication, 2012), P. 1
Besides the skill of the art of characterization, Nayantara Sahgal has achieved admirable command over the English language. The problem of language is no problem for her as she belongs to a highly intellectual and cultural family. She received high applaud from her readers regarding her use of the English language which is easily understood by the readers. The beauty of her language and style lies in the realistic dialogues, realistic situation and realistic description of the inner-self of the characters and their inclination towards resistance in every walk of life. A thorough study of her novels shows that her language and style have chastity and lucidity, economy and preciseness, crispness and raciness which leave a lasting impression upon the readers. His fictional narrative becomes very effective and impressive because of her language and style. She is keenly interested in presenting the picture of the contemporary Indian society, especially the socio-political scenario, women's resistance to oppression and exploitation perpetrated upon them and their aspirations for leading a free life full of self respect.

Mrs. Sahgal very carefully uses the language in her fictional works. She is a conscious writer. In her novels there is freshness, lucidity and precision. In her view a writer must write keeping in view, the wider interest of the people, because every writer has some moral obligations towards the society he or she belongs to one should not write for one's publicity.

One very distinctive feature of the fictional art of the novels of Nayantara Sahgal is her middle-classness. She writes about the problems and predicaments of the middle class people living in small towns and metropolitan cities.

The Gandhian views and values have formed the basis of Nayantara Sahgal's approach to problems both political and personal. AV Krishna Rao rightly remarks, "She (Nayantara Sahgal) has inherited and cherished a certain set of values and attitudes toward life which can be best described as a complex of political liberation, social sophistication, economic moderation and cultural catholicity in continual interaction with the Gandhian idealism."4

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Nayantara Sahgal deals with the dialect of the high life living in cosmopolitan cities. It is a life full of sophistication and refinement. There is a chosen society of upper class people of power, pelf and position depicted in her novels. The smart and dynamic life-styles of this society and its fast changing trends and traditions provide her with the themes and thoughts of her novels. Nayantara Sahgal is one of the distinguished women Indian novelists in English who writes on political leaders, business corporates, foreign advisers, upper class people, highly qualified people like ambassadors, ministers, vice-chancellors, professors, writers and journalists. She considers her novels to be political and feminist in content as she says, "Each of the novels more or less reflect the political era we were passing through."  

Nayantara Sahgal writes in the stream of national consciousness. The earlier popular women Indian novelists like Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande who hailed new consciousness, particularly the poor, pitiable plight of the Indian women began writing their novels in the 1950s. During this period, Nayantara Sahgal emerged as one of the pioneering figures in the firmament of Indian English novel. She is a prominent, powerful and prolific writer. She has written nine novels, two biographies, two political commentaries and a large number of articles and contributions to various newspapers, journals and magazines. She has been active on the literary vista both as a creative writer and a political columnist.  

There is no chronological order in the writings of Nayantara Sahgal. Her novels seem to follow rather a loose chronological sequence. Her novel, This Time of Morning is set against the time of Independence. Storm in Chandigarh reflects and reveals the problems of partition and ends with the Indian politicians concerned with the constructive creation or survival of the nation, but rather with prohibition. In The Day in Shadow, the country has moved into oil exploration and is about to change its established position of non-alignment to an alliance favouring the Soviet Union. The novel ends with the suggestion that a leftist revolution is coming, an idea which is picked up at the beginning of A Situation in New Delhi. By now the old leader is deed, those who make revolution by words seem to be in power and young group of

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terrorists is at work. The student’s movement to counteract these destructive forces has begun. There remain several issues unresolved.

Sahgal's narrative art shows the device of using recurring themes in her novels. When we critically analyze her novels, they reveal recurring themes. Her novel, *This Time of Morning* begins with Rakesh coming back to Delhi after serving in a foreign country in the foreign Service. Although he is fully familiar with the prominent figures in the political scene, he is something of an outsider after the absence of six years, and we come to know the complexities and intricacies of political life as Rakesh himself does. Kalyan, the dogged determined and self serving member of the UN delegation, has attained a position of power and aspires for more. Rashmi has gone back to her parents home to decide whether to divorce her husband. In the end of the novel, Kalyan’s political career has had a set back due to his over-bearing self-confidence and lack of understanding of the democratic nature of government. In the opinion of a critic, "In *A Time to be Happy*, the point of view shifts uneasily between our impersonal observer, a narrator agent, and an omniscient author, and the result is not a successful novel but merely an interesting social document." The view can be equally applied to her novel, *This Time of Morning*. In the first chapter of the novel, the narrator moves from Rakesh to Rashmi to Kailash, back to Rashmi and to Arjun. This device might have worked as an introductory technique. Sahgal's specialty is the inherent intelligence to create convincing characters efficiently. She presents a broader picture, rich with many interesting and important figures to delight the reader, but these characters do not combine to form a powerful whole.

It will be a sort of oversimplification to say that Rakesh and Rashmi are carried over to in the novel, *Storm in Chandigarh* with labels of names, but certainly there are plausible resemblances between them and Vishal too is an outsider, having been sent to Chandigarh as Delhi's liaison officer to negotiate between the Chief Ministers of Punjab and Haryana. Saroj is only vaguely aware of her dissatisfaction with her husband Inder.

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Although these two main characters hold a pivotal place in the entire narrative of *Storm in Chandigarh*, the novelist has again created many memorable secondary figures such as Gyan Singh. Like Kalyan, Gyan Singh is born poor whose strong sense of self, his disregard for finger points of morality and his energy and drive have made him a powerful man. One of the central ideas in the novel from the beginning is the question whether a tradition of reflection and moderation can provide adequate leadership in a time which seems to call for enthusiastic, energetic and decisive tenders. We notice in the character of Gyan Singh and Kalyan the attractions as well as the dangers of such people. Each of these colourful and dynamic persons is paired off against another character who represents quieter intelligence and sensivity. It is interesting to note that although aggressive businessman like Inder receives little sympathy in the end, neither of the political figures is completely discredited.

The novel is full of ill-matched or mismatched couples. Saroj, in her marriage, is one of the thinkers, who endures and is acted upon, unlike her husband, who thinks and acts. Nayantara Sahgal has given us another apparently mismatched couple to consider. Both Jit and Mara is a childless couple. They suffer from emotional void in their life. Her marriage with sweet tempered considerate and caring Jit has its share of estrangements and misgivings, but Mara's problem is not physical but psychological. The search for communication makes Mara come closer to Inder. In her relationship with Inder, Mara stimulates his mind and elevates his spirits in ways no woman ever has. Mara is quite capable of responding to Inder's needs which shows his inability to respond to Jit's much simpler needs. Mara's indifference and lack of interest make Jit feel that all his affection and care go waste. Jit is like Saroj in his passive acceptance, even of Mara's affair with Inder. Saroj comes to know that mere tolerance is not a good feature. She has to reach out to create with Vishal the relationship which Inder has refused. But for Jit, it is patience and enduring love which restore his marriage. The novels, *This Time of Morning* and *Storm in Chandigarh* have remarkable similarities in characters as well as themes. There is more probity in the art of characterization, however, and the socio-political background is more compactly integrated into the plot of the novel. There are people much more given to intellectualizing, trying to define what it means to be an Indian or a Hindu or a Brahmin.
The novel, *The Day in Shadow* relates to the feminist perspective. It deals with the struggle of a young beautiful and daring Indian woman trampled under the burden of a brutal divorce settlement and the sorrow and unhappiness she experiences in the hands of cruel and unjust male dominated society of our country. However, it can be seen that she has created a powerful pivotal image in the divorce decision which Som has desired for his wife Simrit. He has given her six lacks worth of shares in trust for their son. While she cannot use them, she must pay the tax on them. So that anything she earns through her writing will be wiped out. She herself accepted the terms but so have the low courts of law. The point is clear here that heartless individuals and callous societies both must learn the lesson of compassion and justice.

Nayantara, in her novels, makes use of the stream of consciousness technique. The western wave of the stream of consciousness technique left a great impact on the writings of Nayantara Sahgal and she also dived deep into the inner world of her characters. She 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 novelist is immensely inspired by the political movement of the society. Though the main theme of her novels is politics, yet the problem of divorce and disintegration of the marriage in a typical Indian background is also adequately and appreciably dealt with.

Nayantara Sahgal's novel, *A Situation in New Delhi* follows the technique of the stream of consciousness. She tells the story as a multi-faceted and multi-focused narrative and familiar character types are recognized. For example, we see through Michael, the English writer of biographies who comes back to Delhi after a long period of ten years to write the biography of Shivraj, the beloved national leader who has recently breathed his last. We then turn to Devi, the sister of Shivraj, now holding the port folio of Education Minister. Next there is Usman, the Vice Chancellor of the University, an old friend of Devi and a strong man dedicated to the ways and values of thoughtful moderation who Shivraj embodied and pronounced. The background problems in this novel are those of education and the rebelling and revolutionary forces which have gained ground and raising their heads following Shivraj's death.
Although Nayantara Sahgal's multiple and multifaceted narrative technique is unchanged, there are obviously some new elements here. The picture of the society presented in the novel, A Situation in New Delhi is one which fails to protect women even on the University Campus in the capital city of the country as here Madhu, a student of Delhi University, is raped in the Registrar's office. The students who raped Madhu obviously regarded Madhu only as an object of lust to be used at their disposal and have no regard for her feelings, will and self-respect. A society which produces such heartless 'mechanical' men cannot punish them and does not deserve to have women born in it.

It is noticed that each novel of Nayantara Sahgal revolves around a pair of male and female persons. For example, Rakesh and Rashmi, Vishal and Saroj, Raj and Simrit are such couples. As politicians or government servants, the male partners are singularly similar in qualities and capacities. They are intelligent, energetic, zealous, articulate, and compassionate. They are committed to presuming and pursuing the values of justice and moderation. While it is in each case the man who is the dominating character, it is interesting to note that women characters are increasingly more fully developed and characterized. Rashmi is the least developed while Simrit, as wife, mother, writer, lover, is the most complex one. Simrit and Raj had never discussed marriage. He encourages her to be daring and assertive and independent, yet in the last effort he over-rides her not very convincing protestations that she needs more time, to declare emphatically that they will be married at the earliest. Obviously, this novel is different from the earlier ones. It is considerably shorter and simpler and more crisp and concentrated in its total effect. It deals with violence to a larger extent than any other and it includes a description of sex which is a new element in Nayantara Sahgal's writings. There are intellectual concepts have which can be traced through all her work; a faith in rationality and moderation as well as some sense of resistance in political and personal levels, an awareness that these are endangered values which must be resisted and fought for.

Like the modern English or American novelists such as James Joyce's novel, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (1916), Nayantara Sahgal has adopted the Interior Monologue method. This method is used more freely and successfully in her
novels. The reader is taken into confidence regarding the views and ways, thoughts and reactions of various characters and their internal conflicts. For example, in the novel, *Storm in Chandigarh*, we not only come to know about Harpal's background but also about his reactions to various situations and circumstances, his unhappiness about certain developments and surroundings and his feeling of frustration and sense of inadequacy. The reactions of one character are juxtaposed against another's and this again is both a technique of narration and characterization.

The continuation of the same narrative technique can be marked on the surface level in the novel, *The Day in Shadow*, but a clear cut difference can be seen in the use of these narrative techniques. Simrit does not reveal anything to Raj about her secret relationship with Som but it becomes possible to understand it through Som's relationship with Lalli and his British employer. Som's relationship with his children is made clear through his indifference to them. They simply do not count as individuals or as human beings. Only his son, Brij counts for he satisfies his male ego and his pride of possession. Som does not communicate with him but simply exercises his power by hanging a hope in front of him.

The technique of Symbolism and juxtaposition can be seen in the novels, *A Situation in New Delhi* and *Rich Like Us*. Undoubtedly, the pivotal unified force is Shivraj but there can be marked a constant juxtaposition, between the past and the present, between tradition and modernity and between resistance and revolution, each presenting the value system of its own. Politically, there can be a several different stands as there is Shivraj's idealism and his full faith in human beings, the cabinet's pseudo-radicalism, Devi's helpless inactivity and Rishad's violent movement. At another level can be seen Pinky who has no views or values of his own and lives life in a superficial manner. The story moves forward through a series of clashes and confrontations as there can be marked one between the vice-chancellor and the students; there is one between Devi and her colleagues where the crisis is never reached. The clashes and confrontations were faced by various characters to understand their own selves in a much better way. They come to an end in Rishad's death and Madhu's suicide.
In the novel, *Rich Like Us*, the method is somewhat different. In this novel, Nayantara Sahgal makes use of some editorials and letters written to the editors of the newspapers as a form of historical evidences. One of them is an editorial of the *Calcutta Gazette* dated 7 December 1829 which expresses supreme pleasure and celebrates the Act of Abolition of the cruel right of *sati* passed by Lord William Bentinck. The English administrator was applauded for his reform which has ended "a system demoralizing in its effect on the living, a revolting system of suicide and murder." Sonali discovers yet another instance of Sutli which dates back to 29 December 1929 as recorded in the Bombay Courier. By quoting these documents, the novelist juxtaposes the dead past with the living present bringing both into sharp focus of contrast.

A novelist, like a poet, is a maker; he is an artist; he makes plots and patterns of his work with the help of some aesthetic devices such as images and symbols. Nayantara Sahgal, in her novels has made adequate and admirable use of symbols but in her earlier novels the use of symbols is rather limited but as her irony moves away, the use of symbols accordingly increases. In her novel, *A Time to be Happy*, it is the word 'club' which is a symbol of the coming together of the two different worlds – the Indian and the British. In another novel, *This Time of Morning*, Rashmi buys an idol of Lord Ganesh to announce her interest in life. Similarly, in *Storm in Chandigarh*, the threat is to the finer things of life which is symbolised by the destruction of the painting in Inder's office. In *The Day in Shadow*, it is not without purpose that Som and Vetter are engaged in the production of armament and that Sumer Singh's office in Parliament House has a window without a view. In another novel, *A Situation in New Delhi*, Shivraj himself is a symbol of human and moral values. In *Rich Like Us*, Sonali Ranade in the symbol of human values, integrity and honesty, who refuses to sanction a proposition foreign collaboration project which has the support of people in power. As a result of this she is punished with demotion, falls ill and after her recovery, she watches the things of malpractice going on as usual helplessly and hopelessly.

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Irony and humour are also used effectively and impressively in the description of cabinet members. The gap between the profession and the practice of the ministers and their lack of ideas are targets of ironic satire while some of their actions are funny and humorous. Ram Murti is also very humorous. He does not accept her invitation for a cup of coffee, he doesn't even look at her but he looks at the coffee pot. So is the case with Devi's driver, Ajaib Singh. He is the other extreme. He has no inhibition and he is outspoken to the point of being rude and rough at times. He shows his respect not by silence but by addressing her as 'Sir', thereby giving to her a status outside the ordinary duties of a woman. The application he writes her requesting her help for his son's admission in both practical and humorous – practical in approach and humorous in language.

On the whole, it can be said that Nayantara Sahgal gives much importance to the framework of the structure of the novels. Throughout her work there is continuity. She takes up each individual section of her design, filling it out, relating to the others, continually interweaving past and present until the pattern of the novel is complete. The novels are unified, first, by their background of recent Indian politics. To whatever extent this is historically accurate, the theme of political struggle is clearly one of her most important concerns. Secondly, we are aware of her division of the world into the aggressors and the non-aggressors, the active and the thoughtful, those whose main interest is riches and power and those who care for justice and moderation. Finally, growing out of both of these concerns is her awareness of the need for woman to become equal partners in the struggle to protect those values which allow human beings to live together in mutual respect and equal understanding.

A related issue in a work of fiction set in a specific historical period and place in the accuracy of the setting, background and narrative technique. These who are familiar with a novel's background can study it from the point of view of its authenticity. There may be many readers in Delhi or Chandigarh who enjoy trying to match Nayantara Sahgal's characters with real people. Such readers can also agree or disagree with her interpretations of political events. All of us know that her training was truth of politician and her family background which has given her an opportunity
to learn about politics from a very personal perspective, we tend to assume that the known what she is talking about.

As R.K. Narayan's focus is on Malgudi with its wealth of characters and knowledge of history, Nayantara Sahgal gives us the equally small if far more powerful world of wealth and power. We even start to expect convincingly and clearly caricatured characters in one novel to appear in the others, surely all these people ought to know each other. The characters are politicians and high-ranking civil servants, wealthy businessmen with international corporate connections, writers and journalists. A few of them may have been born poor and others made poor during the partitions, but they move now in the world of the rich. Mrs. Sahgal's sense of place and location is strong and real. Delhi and Chandigarh are carefully and concretely connected and described. But in our view her real setting is not so much a particular city as it is the houses, flats, hotels and offices of the upper-class characters who move through the novels.

Mrs. Sahgal's novels seem to follow a loose chronological order. Her novel *This Time of Morning* is set against the time of independence. Her another novel *Storm in Chandigarh* reflects and reveals the problems of partition and ends with the concern of the politicians not over the creation or the survival of the nation, but rather with prohibition. In the novel, *The Day in Shadow* the country has moved into oil exploration and it is about to change its established position of non-alignment to an alien favouring the Soviet Union. The novel ends with the suggestion that a leftist revolution is coming. It is an idea which is picked up at the beginning of her novel, *A Situation in New Delhi*. By now the old leader is dead, those who make revolution by words seem to be in power and a young group of terrorists is at work. The students' movement to counteract these forces has begun. There are many issues which remain unresolved. In the novel, *Rich Like Us*, hopes, ambitious and failures of the people at the hands of the politicians in power are described from the point of view of the narrative technique, it is perhaps the most accomplished of Mrs. Sahgal's novels so far. In a major novel of the ocean, the omniscient author method of narration is employed, but in some chapters we find that Sonali, the protagonist, is speaking, recalling the past and speaking on the present. This fine combination of the two
methods enables the authors to cover a wide canvas and frequently provides the render with a dual perspective on situation and character. An elegant and graceful style has always been one of Sahgal’s major assets.

In Nayantara Sahgal’s novels we do not meet her characters passingly or casually, they exist in relation to a background. In her first novel, *A Time to Be Happy*, it is the narrator who fills in the background information of most of the characters because he has either known them for many years or they confide in him. Sanad brings to him his indecision like Govind Narayan and Laxmi. Others help him to place things in perspective like Prabha and Sobanbai. In her succeeding novels other methods are followed and the narrator is replaced by the omniscient author who has greater freedom than a narrator. And then recollections, reminiscences and flashbacks follow revealing the psychological background and the influences on the character. This helps us to see their thought processes. This is one of the most effective narrative techniques of characterisation which the novelist uses, because she uses it successfully. It is here that her objectivity as a creator is put to test. She does not allow her own view point to dominate the view points of her characters. In the novel *A Time to Be Happy* the narrator while he helps in the portrayal of the characters also limits the presentation of this portraiture to some extent. For example, the characters of Maya and Kusum are also seen from his view point. Most of the characters in this novel are surface characters. They do not acquire any depth, their actions are narrated, not really acted. They are real enough, only they act according to a set conventional pattern and they fail to emerge as individuals.

In the novel *This Time of Morning*, her characters emerge more powerfully as individuals. Mira conforms to a traditional role. There is Kalyan who emerges as a towering personality and Rashmi and Nita struggle towards an understanding of their own. The novelist herself concerns only with political changes and ideas. With each succeeding novel Mrs. Sahgal gets a better hold over the art of characterisation.

In *Storm in Chandigarh*, the number of characters is further reduced and the political concern is localised to a large extent. The characters in this novel interact with each other and with the situations in which they are placed. They no longer have the passivity of the earlier characters. Saroj feels her things and dramatises her
emotions as individual. There is directness about their feelings. Neither comment nor narration comes in her way. We see Harpal not only as a reader but as a man with his success and failures, his idealism and frustration. Similarly, Gyan Singh's attachment to his family focuses attention on him as a person not simply as a politician. The men and women in this novel face conflicting emotional demands of their own natures. These characters are able to analyse themselves. Here in this novel, there is increasing dependence on dialogue as a means of character portrayal. This does not happen to some extent in the novel *The Day in Shadow*: Som and Raj do not interact with each other as Inder and Vishal do in *Storm in Chandigarh*. Really, Raj does not even meet Som. Inspite of the storm parallels between the political and the personal themes, it is neither Simrit nor Raj who dominates the novel but it is Som who overshadows everyone else. The narrative method and the sequence of the events do not allow any dramatic situation to emerge because Raj enters Simrit's life; a Som is already out of it.

The character in the novel *A Situation in Delhi* represents political stances and most of them do not emerge as strong characters. Devi's emotional behaviour is in line with her political behaviour because in both her emotional and political relationships. She is vague and hesitant to take a definite approach. But this vagueness does not cohere with her sensivity and awareness of the situation. She is unable to come to terms with herself and Rishad's death accentuates the uncertainty leaving her a passive victim. She lacks the strength and ability to react sharply to a situation. Similarly, Rishad lives at two levels- one the level of silent obedience and existence in his house, the other the level of the active and aggressive Naxalite Movement.

In Sahgal's fiction, character portrayal takes place in a number of ways. In her first novel, the narrator helps in this task and within this general framework, there are running ups and reminiscences which help portray characters. No pretence is involved in this. Other characters bring their problems and views to the narrator and he acquires a multiple point of view.

There is a great deal of directness and simplicity in this novel. A number of characters say clearly what they want to be and how they react to the situations. In her next two novels Mrs. Sahgal discards the method of first person narration. She
continues to have a near-narrator figure in the characters of Rakesh and Vishal. Mrs. Sahgal believes that environmental influences are important influences on characters. That is why; she provides details of the early lives of her characters. This is both a technique of narration and character portrayal. While narrating the early influences through flashbacks, reminiscences or direct narration, she feels free to comment directly on characters.

In the novel *The Storm in Chandigarh*, though Vishal is the central point and all the characters are related to him, yet he is in no way in limited or handicapped by this role. In this novel a great deal of attention is paid to the psychological details. The method of interior monologue is used more freely and successfully. The reader is taken into confidence regarding the thoughts and reactions of the various characters and their inner conflicts. For example, we came to know about Harpal's background but also about his reactions to various situations such as his unhappiness about certain developments and his feeling of frustration. The reactions of one character are juxtaposed against another's and this again is both a method of narration and characterization.

On the surface, there is a continuation of the same methods in the novel *The Day in Shadow* but there is a clear cut difference in the use of these techniques. Simirit does not say anything to Raj regarding her relationship with Som but it becomes possible to understand it through the relationship of Som with Lalli and her British employer. Som's relationship with his children is made clear through his indifference to them. They simply do not count as individuals or as human beings. Only his son Brij counts because he satisfies his male ego and his pride of possession or a possessive instinct.

Juxtaposition and symbolism mark the narrative technique in the novel *A Situation in New Delhi*. The central cohesive character of course Shivraj but there is also a constant juxtaposition between the past and the present and between tradition and revolution each projecting a value system of its own. It is in the novel that the technique of a true multiple point of view is achieved. Politically, there are so many different stands such as there is Shivraj's idealism and faith in human beings, the cabinet's pseudo radicalism, Devi's helpless inactivity and Rishad's violent movement.
At another level, there is Pinky who has no views or values and lives her life in a superficial manner. The story of the novel moves forward through a series of confrontations such as there is one between the vice-chancellor and the students; there is one between Devi and her colleagues where the crisis is never reached. These clashes and conflicts lead the various characters to understand themselves better. They terminate in Rishad's death and mother's suicide.

In Sahgal's earlier novels the use of symbols is limited but as her irony recedes, the use of symbols increases. For example, in the novel *A Time to Be Happy*, it is the club which is a symbol of the coming together of the Indian and the British worlds. In the novel *This Time of Morning*, Rashmi buys an idol of Ganesh to announce her interest in life. Similarly, in *Storm in Chandigarh* the threat is to the final things of life which is symbolised by the destruction of the painting in this office. In *A Situation in New Delhi*, Shivraj himself is a symbol of human values. In the novel *Rich Like Us*, Sonali Ranade is the symbol of human values and honesty, who refuses to sanction a foreign collaboration project which has the support of people in power. As a result of this, she is punished with demotion and she falls ill and after recovery she watches the things going helplessly and hopelessly.

But this is only one aspect of the narrative of *Rich Like Us*. The two worlds of public event and private experience impinge constantly upon each other in the narrative, since Sonali, the protagonist acts and suffers in both and this gives the novel a firm and fine structural unity. The irony in the title is simple. The phrase 'Rich Like Us' is used in the very first chapter by Neuman who has business dealing with Ram. It voices the American belief or the American dream that if the Indians followed the American ways, they would be 'Rich Like Us'. But in the end, Sonali, who decides to devote herself to a study of the 17 Century India, realises that her own country is rich in a far different way. It is rich in its cultural heritage. She can at the same time prepare for the future. From the point of view of the narrative techniques, it is perhaps Mrs. Sahgal's most accomplished work of fiction. Her gift for the telling phrase is clear in the description of the emergency as "A collective will to cowardice" and her imagery is only of a feminine sensibility. The dialogue is realistic and the novelist is equally at home with the cockney speech.
Irony and humour are used effectively in the description of the cabinet members. The gap between the professions and the practice of the ministers and their lack of ideas are targets of ironic satire while some of their actions are humorous. Ram Murti is also very humorous. He does not accept her invitation for a cup of coffee, he does not even look at her, he looks at the coffee pot. So is the case with Devi's driver, Ajaib Singh. He is the other extreme. He has no inhibitions and he is out spoken to the point of being rude at times. He shows his respect to her not by silence but by addressing her as 'Sir', thus begin her a status outside the ordinary duties of a woman. The application he writes to her requesting her help for his son's admission is both practical and humorous – practical in approach and humorous in language.

In her first novel *A Time to Be Happy* (1963) Mrs. Sahgal has made a fairly good use of Hindi words. This was done with a view to giving the natural locale and capturing the humour of a typical Indian situation. This use of Hindi words she discards in her later novels wherein she uses prose which is accurate and effective in describing why she wants to keep her the emotional tone at the required pitch. In *A Time to Be Happy* the style is extravagant at times when she describes the marriage of Harish. Here the style has an oriental touch of rich men, but this is exceptional. In her later novels she moves to a more urbanised and less unconventional world. She leaves out the use of irony and even humour goes into the background. Instead of this, there is a delicate and effective use of symbols and a more accurate style.

In the novel *The Day in Shadow*, the style is even more accurate and effective. At times, the accuracy hurts us. The use of similes reinforces the impact and shows the ugliness or the tenderness of the moment. Simrit is like a statue. Her withdrawal from life has moved her closer to known human beings. She wants a world where texture is kindly. She wants her children to value the beauty and freedom of nature, to be sensitive to the life around them and not to be surrounded by shadows of life. In the novel *A Situation in New Delhi*, once again the language is used precisely and expressively. The novel is about a situation arising out of a leader's death.

It becomes the issue which forces the situation to crystalise into a crisis. Similarly, her concern with resistance for individuality and freedom of women has
been a consistent one as has been her reliance on known violence and personal involvement as part of the solution to the political muddle. It is not always easy to recognise the moment of crisis in her novels because the moment is rarely dramatised. In the novel *A Time to Be Happy*, the moment is the incident of Raghveer's injury which not only brings Kusum and Sonal together but also leads to Sanad's self questioning. In the novel *This Time of Morning*, it takes place at two levels – the first when Rashmi decides to break off her relationship with Neil and the second when Kalyan Sinha is confronted by his own failures. In *Storm in Chandigarh* the process is also taking place at two levels – at the political level when Harpal is persuaded to take a stand against the strikers and his passive helplessness is turned into a positive stance. It is at personal level when Saroj decides to defy Inder and announces her desire to go on meeting Vishal. But in Mrs. Sahgal's next novel *The Day in Shadow*, the crisis is already over when the story begins. Simrit and Som are already divorced and Simrit is trying to adjust to the after effect of the divorce. What happens in the novel is a kind of resistance building up both to the political situation which culminates in Raj's decision to continue life as if the terms of consent did not exist. This trend is reversed in the novel *A Situation in New Delhi*, where the story builds up towards a sense of crisis which takes place in the shape of a timid confrontation between Devi and her cabinet members and in the rejection of Usman Ali's plan for educational reform. This does not always happen. In all her novels, the response of the characters to the events is seen by reflection, resistance and self-awareness.

Throughout Mrs. Sahgal's novels, there is continuity. The novels are unified first by their background of recent Indian politics. To whatever extent, this is historically correct or accurate, the theme of political struggle is clearly one of her major concerns. Secondly, we are aware of her division of the world into the resistance and the non-resistance, the aggressors and the non-aggressors, the active and the passive, those who made interest is money and power and those who care for justice and moderation. Finally, growing out of both of these concerns, is her awareness of the need for women showing the theory of resistance, rebel and revolt in order to become the equal partners in the struggle of life and to protect these basic values which allow human beings to live together in mutual respect, love and understanding.