CHAPTER – VII

CONCLUSION

The present research work shows the study between Nayantara Sahgal and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, regarding the depiction of predicament of women in their writings. They placed themselves distinctively in the literary canon across the globe. These novelists have juxtaposed something new that was unique especially in portrayal of Indian women in India and also in a foreign country. Their writings expose the sad plight of women who are unable to assert their individual freedom in society, where the opposite sex dominates and controls them. The predicament of women shown by them is a close observation and analysis of their personal lives and experiences they had.

Nayantara Sahgal has been critiqued and evaluated as a feminist, political writer, a writer of social documentaries and an advocate of Gandhian ideologies. Her childhood fell within the colonial period where she was able to give authentic details of that time. Her enthusiasm can be found even today, hence her creative persona continues to be perceived in this twenty first century. The man-woman relationship is dealt in her novels and they are women centred. She was under yoked in the name of tradition, culture and social perception. Feminine virtue is designed according to the patriarchy. Women are exposed to various situations where we can see different kinds of oppression. The three novels chosen for the study do not show them as career women but they are educated, belong to elite society. Their subjugation is not a financial crisis but due to difference in their attitudes. They also show men how they push women to such situations who never try to have any emotional attachment nor give any emotional support.

The women are torn between the family bonds and the patriarchal attitudes. They fight against patriarchy but fortunately, they finally find one such man as sounding board to encourage and support them. Though they walk out of their marriages, yet they depend on a man who was ready to extend his support emotionally and psychologically thus giving them confidence to come out of the shackles. Sahgal’s writings are with feminist concern where emphasis is on the existence of women. Her women are targeted on account of the conventional Indian society, who are in the struggle to identify themselves.
Sahgal’s fiction has characters like political leaders, business tycoons, foreign advisors, upper class people, journalists and highly qualified persons like Ambassadors, Ministers, Vice-Chancellors and Professors. These characters where seen mingling with the other characters too, portraying their dynamics in various relationships like their marital issues, temperaments, income, disabilities, clashes or oppressiveness that lead to the position of women.

Though her stories revolve around the elite and their social circles, their conversations and the conflicts, which arise due to their ego clashes, yet one can agree with situations that form the main plot of her novels. She presents the predicament of the individual is due to one’s over ambitious nature, like the one we see in *The day in Shadow*, or due to man’s ego and the strong male dominance like in *Storm in Chandigarh*. But lack of communication remains to be the common thread running through all her three novels. Sahgal’s novels make us understand her point of view and also one can easily comprehend the situation one is put through by exploring the psychological situations and unfolding the inner conflicts of characters during those situations. As one reads her novels, can easily understand the mind of the character. As Indian politics forms the background of her novels, she maintains it with continuity, either as a plot or subplot in her themes. Her characters show a demarcation between the active and the passive, rich and the powerful and just and unjust. She desperately urged that there is feel for women to be recognized as equal partners to men so that they can live in harmony and with mutual respect.

Chitra Banerjee is an Indian American who focuses on the women in India and in America. All her genres focus on similar themes like struggles of women to adapt to new ways of life when cultural traditions are in conflict with new cultural expectations and the complexities of love between the family members, lovers, spouses. Her story confront the immigrant experience specially Indians settled in the US.

The novelists have created illustrative situations and characters in different contexts like. Simrit in *The day in Shadow* Sarojini *Storm in Chandigarh* Sudha and Anju in *Sister of my Heart, The Vine of Desire*. These women have regained their self in spite of numerous barriers. The protagonists are educated, career oriented, modern, married
and are aware of the changing times and situations. The novels give a glimpse of the post-
Independent India where women are concerned. Both the writers strongly depicted the
themes of colonial and postcolonial India. Sahgal and Chitra established their women
who have broken the patriarchal constraints and refines their identity in sync with the
reformed social scenario of the modern times. The writers conceptualised the oppressed
women with awareness, a deeper sense of involvement, with a sense of subtle outrage.
There is a transformation from defying and eulogizing the women’s suffering to the post
independent women who cannot take it anymore but are ready to forego the family and
stand independently on their feet. The novelists redefined and reinterpreted the themes of
love and marriage, demands of motherhood, women’s bonding, bringing a new dimension
to their identity.

Their work is an attempt made to analyze the predicament that women face in
their lives, the various reasons for their suffering and how these women lead their lives in
the end. For this study, the select novels have shown the situations that cause them to
expose to a predicament that make them vulnerable. Family plays a crucial role in
imposing individual freedom and subordination as it subjects women due to the
upholding values of patriarchy. The novels reveal the relationship between bonding and
bondage i.e, between a woman’s relationship with others without injuring her freedom
and independence as an individual.

The patriarchal norms have confined this freedom with the imposition of code of
conduct, morals and values. These restrictions were strongly resented by the younger
generations in their spousal choices. The impact of the western education asserts the
youngerster to make them chose their life partners. But when these choices prove to be
wrong, they feel isolated, lose their communication with others, feel lonely and are left in
lurch. This predicament of an individual, who is emotionally and physically alone, forms
the core of writing, by many fiction writers. The estrangement they suffer, is the
consequences .of the desired relationships and failure in providing the companionship.
So, family as a unit cannot be discarded because it guards an individual hence one would
find support and growth irrespective of its barriers it brings.
In general, the novels written by some of the novelists might have portrayed their female protagonists as desolate, oppressed, sometimes hypocritical and even sensitive, which was predominantly depicting their mindset and suffering under the male domination. Some novelists might have dealt with the women centric problem. Most of them ended up in showing their enduring qualities like patience, devotion or acceptance, which usually glorified the typical virtues of Indian Women. For example, Kamala Markandaya’s women reconcile with the norms of society, Anita Desai’s Women submission to fate unlike some of them face devastating mental upheavals or moral deteriorations as also seen in Shoba De’s. Unlike these novels, the select study shows the transformation from meek to confident individuals. Though they might not have shown their empowerment in an elaborate manner, one would agree that the study revealed the fragment that would make them as empowered individuals.

Malladi Subbamma says: “India is philosophically in the 16th Century, socially in 19th century and technologically in the 20th century. That means our ideas are nearly 400 years old.” – (Women: Tradition and Culture 35). This is an apt statement, which treats women who are still perceived with Pativrata image exploiting them in the name of the tradition and culture. Here we also find a similar statement by Promila Kapur who observes:

“Husbands like their wives to take up jobs but dislike them to change at all as far as their attitude towards their rides and stances at home is concerned and dislike their traditional responsibilities being neglected (Love, Marriage, Sex and the Indian Women. 94)

Men are always jealous and expect the wife to be a servant. This led to the concept of ‘Modern Woman’ with a ‘new morality’ based on reason and justice, which are of recent origin, striving to grow into any recognizable shape. Many women writers like Kamala Markandeya, Ruth Prawar Jhabwala along with Nayantara Sahgal strived for ‘self – identity’ of woman. If women are weak and suffer in the hands of men facing the violent and vicious circumstances they react neuratically to the existentialist, problems which also have seen light in the writing of women writers like Anita Desai, Kamala Markandeya and others. The women writers with their imaginative awareness of various
situations either at work or at the domestic front had a profound ability to understand the feminine sensibility and psychology.

Both the writers of the select study, Nayantara Sahgal and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, as post-colonial writers have brought the nuances of the complexities faced by women in their countries where the protagonists were living. Even after seventy years of independence, the state of women remains the same. Women are portrayed by the media either as dependents or are shown for glamour quotient. These writers want to bring a social change, where women would be treated with dignity and respect. Women’s conviction towards her family is so strong that she hardly thinks of leaving them behind. She endures for the sake of her children, compromising due to many social obligations and for the stigma that comes with it. Sahgal portrayed this predicament of women as a last resort, where Saroj and Simrit at last decided to move out of their marriages. Though Chitra Banerjee is a diasporic writer, she too depicted the problems of identity, cross-cultural crisis as some of her themes. She also showed women walking out of their marriages, where Sudha and Anju leave their homes, evolve as strong women who could live without a man’s support unlike Simrit and Saroj of *The Day in Shadow* and *Strom in Chandigarh* respectively. Their writings give a strong support to the vulnerable women who suffer silently and relegate to destiny. Chitra Banerjee’s protagonists have moved a step further by taking a cue of sticking to different decisions in their lives and they decide to lead independent lives out of their own choices. They proved, that women can lead their own lives if they are educated and believe in themselves. What Sahgal has left, makes Chitra’s writings take a step forward.

Hence, it is considered that writers like Nayantara are still an inspiration to the women writers of the twenty first century. Though women are seeking empowerment, it may be well appreciated if they seek equality at the domestic front where men must help them share the domestic chores and take up the responsibility of raising up the children which is seen abroad but unlike in India. Women’s liberation and empowerment have found place in the society after many movements and struggles. Yet these have not found a complete solution for equality and in subjugation of their rights. Empowerment of women found a scope for their rights in the fields of education, employment etc. But at
home, they still remain overburdened and exploited as wives and mothers and appears as if it was a curse to fight for their rights.

The Indian society still remains conservative in this aspect as women are not shown any empathy and it appears as if it is her sole responsibility to look after the family’s physical duties, irrespective of her social responsibilities. In the bargain, the women movements for liberation and empowerment have failed to understand that before they start fighting for these, they should have made men equally responsible in sharing or handling the domestic affairs on par with them. Then men would easily appreciate and empathise women for their additional contribution at home and this might have reduced the abuse of women.

This improves the atmosphere at home making it conducive to eradicate gender discrimination when a girl child is to be raised equally along with the male child. While the patriarchal society imposes strong rules on the part of woman, and shows considerable lenience towards such aberrations in men. The family, the home play an important role in inculcating values, teaching to respect women and teach them to treat as equals. So parents are their role models. If the man of the house treats his wife as an equal, helps her and empathises with her, it will quite naturally be perceived by the children too. As one believes that home is their first school and parents are their first teachers, if there is an equality in their upbringing it would bring harmony in the family. It would be imbedded in their minds. The issues like domestic violence, gender discrimination, female infanticide etc can be uprooted in our society. The select novels of Nayantara Sahgal and Chitra Banerjee stand as reflection of these liberated ideas. Their portrayal of women in various predicaments show how women suffered and endured. They also presented their women as vulnerable meek, docile and helpless but they found out their ways to free themselves. The solutions they portrayed were quite compatible with the society and time they lived. Chitra’s protagonists have marched few steps ahead of Sahgal’s as they took a strong stand by walking out of their marriages and led independent lives without a male support.

Both the writers dealt with various styles and techniques in their works, which enriched their work, narration and characterization. Sahgal’s diction, vocabulary, narration to portray the character’s mood and mental state could be easily visualised by
the reader enabling them to penetrate into their psyche. Whereas Chitra’s narration has a good trait to comprehend the story. Both used flash back technique, effective use of symbolism and language that laid a clean canvas for the interpretation of the readers. Both could blend easily with each other in depicting the stories in a realistic manner, with a practical approach. They had a deep concern about the pathetic condition of women. Though they laid stress on preserving the values in the family and society, at the same time they found them to be one-sided which favoured men by all means. If Sahgal concentrates on psychological insight, Chitra stresses on the strength of women inspite of a crisis within their families, which nips off the feminine sensibility of women. They both, as postcolonial writers, tried to show, that inspite of our political freedom, our women have a long way to go, to achieve psychological and social freedom and as well needs liberation in its true sense i.e, not by word but by the spirit. The autobiographical elements also find space in their works, which bring us close to comprehend their emotions and experiences and makes us empathise.

The novels under study have given scope for analysis from this perspective for which some of the personalities like Jwala Gutta and Kangana Ranaut who were successful in their careers have also been taken for study. Their opinions on selecting their spouses, on being educated, being entrepreneurs, and how they are able to mingle during social gatherings are some of the qualities. The excerpts from Jwala Gutta’s Interview to NTV (Telugu) on women empowerment and on freedom of speech.

“Women tend to doubt themselves whether I am doing a correct thing or not. If I do this, does it make everyone happy? Because women do not think of themselves. It is just because of the compromises that were made by the patriarchal society for them. They never think if they do something, will that give any happiness to them. Their perspective makes them think of others and what others feel about her. Women have evolved themselves. From ages, women were trained and prepared from home that they have to compromise with their life. They cannot form their own opinion. They are only groomed to take care of their families, procreate, look after children, husband but when it comes to their personal lives they do not really bother.”
Interview of Kangana Ranaut: *The New Face of India - Women in the world* hosted Shobhani Mahmood Reporter of BBC News with Kangana Ranaut “In India a girl child is seen as a liability and can never expect anything other than a decent husband but as a rebellions child I had a mind of my own”. She was very confident of herself though she was not supported by her father who had more dreams and aspirations for his male child only. She left her home. She wanted to be believed more than what she believed in.

As a child, she refused to go to school and her father could not afford to bear the expenses of her hobbies. So she left home and took a chance to live her life on her own terms…. Today the literacy rate is going high, women are coming out of their shells but it takes a lot of time for them to be on par with the empowered women from the developed countries.

Q. Sex is a misogynic against women’s an issue where all the patriarchal societies have to face. How can we stop these gender crimes? (Here reference was made to her sister who was thrown acid at her)

Ans: (The reply she gave) I do not see a women as a weaker section. But feminine quality is an emotion, that is the quality of compassion and love. People with these qualities are ‘feminine’. With this, weaker emotions like compassion and love are being attached and suppressed. These qualities can be seen in a man or children, it is not only a woman can have these qualities but even many children can posses. But they are seen as weaker sexes. That is, these feminine qualities that are being attacked. It is not just a women’s problem but also the problem of the world. Cinema as a medium can teach to millions, can implant a good thought that brings significant changes. When a woman is molested she doesn’t dare to report because she was imbedded with the seed that she was responsible for all crime or molestation that takes place.

Q. In Bollywood are women going to be taken seriously?

Ans: Women should not seek others approval. You should be confident in what you do. Because others perspective keeps changing. Because initially she was dismissed when she came to the industry but later she proved her mettle, it was her experience.
It’s a privilege to conclude on the lines of Guru Ravindranath Tagore’s poem *Where the Mind is without Fear* which only says about, one being brave to face any situation irrespective of its effects believing in themselves and to develop a never give up attitude.

So women will not get their due but one should get up and get it, themselves.

Nayantara Sahgal along with Kamala, Markandeya, Ruth Pawar Jhabwala, Anita Desai and Chitra Banerjee have shown how women have evolved over a period of time as strong women with more enduring qualities, without accepting defeat. They adopted the changes and adapted according to the situation emerging as new women.

**Scope of research for further study**

To conclude, the effort of the scholar is to project the predicament faced by women in the select novels of the authors and to deeply study their characters. The novelists taken for study are Nayanatara Sahgal and Chitra Banerjee have perceived the emotions and situations that women come across and have shown the courage and ability to overcome their predicaments. My study has shown women facing such ordeal from the post independent era to the present day. Sahgal has shown the struggles faced by women in their married lives and how they evolved from such predicament and lead their own lives. On the other hand, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni as a contemporary writer portrays women’s evolvement from a submissive, docile character to a strong woman who finally decides to live life on her own terms. Both the writers have shown the women protagonists in their estranged relationships, with an impact of discord on the family, post colonialism and approach to life are some of the aspects taken for study. The psychoanalysis deals with the internal personality assessments of a person during different predicaments because we are comparing the qualities or the traits of the characters chosen for select study portrayed by both the authors. The scholar studied the psychoanalysis as a tool for the novelist. Further comparative studies can also be made on these two writers with the other contemporary women writers of their time. The female psyche can be studied and the challenges faced by the modern women can be dealt with. My Thesis infers that these are the areas the future research can go bringing out new dimensions to their study.
1. Emergence of New Woman
2. Autobiographical Element
3. Women empowerment
4. Freedom of Expression
5. Stop Gender discrimination
6. Impact of family discord on the mind of children