CONCLUSION

The novels of Nayantara Sahgal with Gandhian ideology and female subject mark a turning point in Indian Literature and establish her as one of the contemporary writers of great competence in India. It has been observed that through the publication of her nine novels, two autobiographies and a number of historical, political and journalistic writings she has highlighted contemporary political realities of India of which she was inseparable part. Born in prominent political family in India, she has used her political set up as background for her writings and portrayal of characters in them. Her characters, drawn from the vortex of Indian politics inextricably interwoven in her works, have become archetypal. Her works primarily center on and around female characters and serve as instruments for their emancipation. Sahgal has tried to portray the sensibility of women and their search for liberation and self-realization. Her theme of the quest for freedom through the delineation of male and female characters has found prominence in her works. Biting criticism of the male dominant society of India lies at the core of her fictional works.

The study also evinces that almost in all of Nayantara Sahgal’s novels, the characters belong to the affluent upper class of Indian society, for instance, Dev, Sonali, Ravi, Bimmbi and Ram in Rich Like Us; Saroj, Gauri, Nikhil, Inder, Jit and Mara in Storm in Chandigarh; Devi, Rishad, Usman Ali and Nadira in A Situation in New Delhi; Kailas, Mira, Rashmi, Nita in This Time of Morning; Sanad, Girish, Harish, Kusum, Maya and Narrator in A Time to be Happy; and lastly, Simrit, Som, Ruddy Vetter and Lalli in The Day of Shadow. Hence, it may be said that she does not attempt to write about caste-ridden middle class or the poor Indian village people just for the sake of conforming to the accepted image of India.
Women writers constitute an important segment of the contemporary Indian writing in English. Therefore, it is quite natural that they should focus on women’s issues. Nayantara Sahgal’s novels, too, explore the psyche of Indian women along with their sufferings, domination, subjugation and oppression. Due to their marginalized positions in society, most of her women characters are seen fighting against the established order sheerly because of their increased dependency on their male counterparts. As a feminist, Nayantara Sahgal shows in her novels shows full sympathy for her women characters and has very well forwarded their traumatized life to the audiences. In *Rich Like Us*, an abandoned wife leads a miserable life and finally dies. Saroj’s condition in *Storm in Chandigarh* is seen to be worse. She has to tolerate the suspicion of her husband daily and finally happens to leave his house forever. In *The Day in Shadow*, Simrit is not only divorced but also suppressed by heavy tax burden; in *This Time of Morning*, Rashmi leaves her husband Dalip due to his misbehavior; and, Madhu in *A Situation in New Delhi* is raped and compelled to commit suicide.

The portrayal of women’s condition has been dealt with in depth by Sahgal. The positive side of her portrayal of women characters is that they are seen as independent individuals within the framework of society. This is because of Sahgal’s strong belief that women’s potentialities have not been exploited to the fullest. She attempts to analyze the psyche of her female characters and study them with sympathy and understanding.

As a feminist, Nayantara Sahgal has taken political, social, educational and cultural problems of women’s post-independent India. Mainly her three novels- *Rich Like Us, Storm in Chandigarh* and *This Time of Morning*, represent her political consciousness as prevailing in
the country during that period. The novel *Rich Like Us*, describes the emergency period of 1975 when power was misused on the pretext of twenty-point programs of Mrs. Gandhi and four-point programs of Sanjay Gandhi. In *Storm in Chandigarh*, Sahgal has explored the problems of tyranny, demotion, injustice detachment of Haryana from Punjab in 1966 which gave rise to a lot of problems between the two states. The Centre’s interference in state issues added fuel to the fire. The novel also puts forth growing violence in every field of life from politics to factories. Similarly, chaos in External Affairs Ministry is the theme of Sahgal’s third political novel, *This Time of Morning* which describes the problems arising out of clash between junior and senior officers, quarrel for government posts, hunger for identity and the rampant corruption. To Nayantara Sahgal, the post-independence people of India are not seen as alert, sacrificing, and efficient enough to handle the growing problems in sharp contrast to the selfish attitudes of pre-independent people’s sacrificing spirits—forms an important theme in Sahgal’s novels. Description of social and political reality forms the core of Sahgal’s fictional works.

Nayantara Sahgal is an exemplary writer of the contemporary Indian society. Her engagement with the human conditions of modern civilization is socially and politically realistic. In all her writings, we find an honest and authentic description of the uneasiness and pang of doubt about moral conduct where emotions are sharpened and brightened by her personal experiences having direct affinity with authorities. For these, Sahgal selects investigations and judgments from her nearest associates—politicians, official in power, the business and diplomatic magnets. By using these characters in the framework of imaginary legends, Sahgal clearly reveals the
sinister happenings taking place in the corridors of power, in the guest rooms of diplomats, and in the anterooms of parliaments. As a consequence, her novels display the internal social and political drama staged behind the curtain all the time through the imaginative drama she has seen on the stage of her fictional writings.

For Nayantara Sahgal, political and social freedom is associated with individual freedom which is concerned basically with human beings. All her novels deal with the theme of freedom in both public and private life. Her women characters like Nita, Saroj and Simrit are unhappy because they feel thwarted in the absence of individual freedom. For Sahgal, ‘Freedom’ does not mean simply political or social freedom. She envisions freedom as a way of life, of doing things one believes to be right, even if they are against the accepted social values. It is because of such observations that critics have called Sahgal a “non-conformist”. A searching study of her works will however show that she is not against society or social laws, but only against those social ailments that kept Indian women subordinated to their male counterparts for centuries. She wants her women to regain their identity as individuals and show great respect for a person as he or she naturally is. She advocates truth, honestly, and integrity of ethical and moral conduct and her calm acceptance of glaring realities inspire her to admit failings and weaknesses of human beings, especially in the social institutions of marriage. Concluding in her article-“A Search for Answers”- Sahgal affirms: “I think it is worth remembering that freedom means creativity, adventure, experimentation, even risk. I do not believe that these are possible without voluntary choices for action and cooperation”. Since freedom is a naturally cherished possession of human beings, it must be safeguarded by action, not by false morality and inaction.
By virtue of belonging to the zenith of the social and political pyramid, she viewed all around her things and beings through the lens of her personal experience. She mainly discusses political freedom, man-woman relationship, the conflict between East and West and last but not the least Hindu religion. These themes are conspicuous in every novel by her. She is a political novelist but central events described her are inevitably interlinked with her personal relations. In short, her works are completely rooted in social and political realism of India.

Apropos of the context, her *The Day in Shadow* represents the social problems of divorce for an Indian woman, exposing the cruel, husband-centered Indian society where in a woman’s existence has hardly been given due respect. Problems in the field of education and educational institutions are also evident in the novel. In *A Situation in New Delhi*, the crises of degenerating political system, selfish politicians showing stern denial of modification, feeling of understanding and propagation of truth holds the center stage. In *A Time to be Happy*, Sahgal has represented the problem of conflicting cultural ideals. On one hand, there is the anglicized society led by Britishers and, on the other, there is the traditional Indian atmosphere tinged with Gandhian principles. Hence, feeling of rootlessness and alienation is brought forth through people like Sanad, who becomes a victim of it. The novel ends with the welcome victory of Indian tradition and culture. Sufferings and loneliness forms an important theme in this novel.

Along with the representation of variegated problems, Nayantara Sahgal has also described Indian sensibility in Indian English through her novels. Her characters are extremely authentic and real. The action of her four novels *Rich Like Us, This Time of Morning, The Day in Shadow* and *A Situation in New Delhi* are set in Delhi and the plots in them are well-constructed.
Nayantara Sahgal never supports the wordless submission of woman to man. Her novels, in this regard, are an attempt to stir the sleeping mentality of woman. Saroj is an example in *Storm in Chandigarh*. She tries to assure her husband from the beginning of the novel that pre-marriage sexual-intercourse was not intentional rather it was the outcome of natural stimulus. But when the husband continues to be impassible, she dares leave his house forever. Boldness is also reflected through Simrit in *The Day in Shadow* who asks her money-minded husband to lead a virtuous life, but when he becomes uncompromising she takes divorce whereas Nadira in *A Situation in New Delhi* raises a voice of protest excluded from her husband’s intellectual circle. Women in Sahgal’s works are extremely courageous. When they become aware of their predicament they associate their feeling with reason and logic and become ready to reconstruct their personality even if it has to be done at the cost of revolt. Interestingly enough, both male and female characters introduced by Nayantara Sahgal, in almost all her novels badly fail in their conjugal life despite having their own virile strength. Women like Rose, Mona, Simrit, Saroj, Rashmi, Nadira and Uma are unable to lead a normal, happy life, because they have resolved to wipe out injustice from society. On the hand, male characters like Ravi Kachru, Vishal Dubey, Neil Barense, Raj, Usman Ali and Michael Calvert also do not succeed in their life because they intend to promote healthy feeling in selfish society and dare take initiative steps.

As a political novelist Nayantara Sahgal has been in a class by herself in Indian English Literature. This label is of paramount importance from the viewpoint of a journal’s uncomplimentary and unfavorable judgment declaring her to be unsuccessful on the basis of her
failure to link the political and legendary content in her fiction. For a committed political novelist like Sahgal, vibrant with aesthetic sensitivity, it would hardly be possible to deal with contradictory aspects. Her non-specific approach due to standard classifications aimed at capturing the characteristics of a novel within its own structure and excluding what was extraneous.

All these are reflected in her works. The protagonist of *Storm in Chandigarh*, Inder states: “You can’t get away from politics in this country. Every individual is affected by political policies and situations and, quite often, an individual is affected by politician himself”. Because of this belief, Nayantara never views her characters in isolation, and since she finds this influence good or bad, to be everywhere in society, passivity becomes another great concern of her. She hates inaction and wants the people to react against injustice and wrong doing. As an Indian citizen, she is aware of her responsibilities and tries to arouse the intelligentsia against inaction and passivity through many of her writing. *Storm in Chandigarh* is the manifestation of the cherished ideals of the author. Calling the novel as “a search for values”, Nayantara has projected the value of the aforesaid simple but essential virtues of life. In fact, this novel is a realistic search for these values and successful depiction of their importance in everyday life. Thus, the novel *Storm in Chandigarh* interlinks political and personal themes and makes it a successful and prophetic novel.

Characters in *Storm in Chandigarh* like Saroj, Mara, Dubey and even the timid Jit are seen as mature and regenerated characters at the end. This is because of the transformations that takes place in their lives. As it happens Saroj marries Dubey and Mara and Jit leadin future a
new life of fulfillment. Such radiance and brilliance in their lives is due to lack of such essential values they stick to and fail to that gives meaning to these characters. Moreover, Nayantara herself believes that such a transformation is possible through love and trustfulness. The plot of *Storm in Chandigarh* revolves around Inder, the husband, who keeps hankering after another woman constantly and rebukes and harasses his wife Saroj because of her sexual indulgence with her college mate in the past. Inder is maddened with jealousy and behaves in a primitive manner by torturing her for physical liaison with her college mate. Moreover, he suspects that “there must have been many others like him in her life”. In the process, he ignores her several inherent virtues and considers her used, soiled, and unfit for marriage simply because of her that one past act. One night, out of anger he almost strangles her for her infidelity. Saroj thinks that she has committed no crime but Inder accepts no explanation, nor does the society that an unmarried girl’s sexual intercourse with a man’s only a venial sin. Ironically, Inder finds nothing wrong in his liaison with Mara while Saroj has been branded a sinner by him. The husband has a social sanction to torture his wife on mere suspicion of her having sexual relations with another man. The wife, on the other hand, can do nothing to her husband, if he behaves in a similar manner. She succumbs to her husband’s sham fidelity. Here, Sahgal feels that Saroj’s pre-marital act of sex has nothing to do with the pollution of flesh, promiscuity or immorality. The humanist in Nayantara Sahgal champions for the new human values to blast its way through the jungle of superstition, pretense and seeming façade of politeness. On the political front, the sudden death of the old Home Minister symbolizes the end Gandhian Era, presenting a crisis in the country. Further, the political situations in the novel relates to Punjab, Haryana and their joint capital
Chandigarh. The doubts of Harpal Singh have been proved true by history in short span of fifteen years. He had reminisced in his new office: “Yesterday The Punjab Assembly had passed an unofficial resolution declaring that Chandigarh and the Bhakra Dam belonged to Punjab, and now Gyan Singh had thrown the bombshell into their midst that there would be religious instruction in the schools. What would be the next step, an army and a flag for the Punjab?” Such observant details given by Nayantara Sahgal present her political acumen and foresight and establish the authenticity of her vision. She is fully aware of the changing political and social scenario around her and its far reaching consequences. As a creative writer, she has made a conscious effort to highlight these themes and their importance in everyday life. Storm in Chandigarh is indeed a manifestation of the ideals of the author and her search for abiding values.

Apart from this political theme, marriage is another theme in Storm in Chandigarh. As a major indicator to social relationship, the couple is well matched leading to a happy married life. But things happen differently if the marriage is ill-matched. Proper understanding between husband-wife is an essential element that makes a marriage successful. Sometimes there is no mutual understanding between husband and wife and it leads to consequences making a marriage failure and ending up in loneliness or alienation. The basis for a happy and harmonious marriage is the feeling of equality of share and true partnership. But in the patriarchal division of values, equality is not possible because all the superior and positive qualities are attributed to men and the qualities associated with women are considered to be inferior. Male-partner undervalues his female-partner and behaves accordingly. This leads to
communication gap which is ruinous for the institution of marriage. Amicable dialogue between husband and wife is essential for harmonious marital relationship.

The emphasis on marriage as a socially expedient element has been well delineated in Sahgal’s works. Due to lack of communication and mutual understanding, a large number of Sahgal’s characters suffer from the private torments of broken marriage. The spouse live together under the same roof, still they experience emptiness, loneliness and alienation. It is not physical loneliness that Sahgal talks of, but deeper emotional and spiritual voids created by an unseemly egoism espoused by the spouses. Her characters have an empty-shell marriage. Through the legally married the spouses live together and their marriage exists in name only. Though Sahgal’s couples seem happy and contented outwardly, they often experience inner loneliness and pinching silence. For example, Saroj in *Storm in Chandigrah* laments: “it’s not being alone in mind-I enjoy that. It is the loneliness. I am alone even if Inder is here”. Not only Saroj, but her husband Inder equally feels lonely and craves for companionship outside marriage. He finds Mara friendlier and shares his intimate thoughts with her. Saroj’s quest for desired communication naturally leads her towards Vishal whom she finds more responding and considerate. Another couple in the novel is that of Jit and Mara without any feeling of intimacy except sleeping in bed. Their marriage ceremonized and arranged according to Hindu tradition, ends up in crises and unhappiness.

In Sahgal’s autobiographical *The Day in Shadow* follows suit. Simrit, the protagonist in the novel, suffers from emotional estrangement and physical support. Communication as a link between Simrit and her
husband Som is missing. It ultimately leads the breakdown of their seventeen-year-old wedlock. Som is a wealthy businessman who never tries to understand the reasons as to why his sensitive and intelligent wife’s feels unhappy. She expects him to respond intellectually and talk about books, events, ideas, people and so on. Failing to get proper attention from him, Simrit becomes victim of loneliness and suffers quietly. For an educated and sensitive woman like Simrit, her husband’s indifference is extremely inhuman, particularly when she wholeheartedly desires deeper relationship with him. Like Saroj of Storm in Chandigarh, Simrit too, does not feel the presence of Som, even though physically he is with her.

The same note of alienation can be had in another novel, *This Time of Morning*. In this novel Nayantara Sahgal holds the husband responsible for the loose behavior of his wife. Arjun Mitra, a top bureaucrat with western background, marries a young, beautiful, nineteen year old girl Uma. He remains absorbed in his officialdom and forgets that Uma longs for his love and company. But Arjun’s response being cold to her physical and sensual needs, he expects of her to take interest in the library and neighborhood or share his life of books and ideas. However, this does not happen. Uma indulges in extra marital affairs. Since Arjun is very sensitive to the rumors spreading about her, he starts behaving like a stranger to her. Uma is virtually dead for him though he continues providing her with food, shelter and the protection of his name. As a consequence, feeling neglected, Uma further indulges in sex with other men and does not care for the social norms, imposed by the society and the sacred institution of marriage on her. On many occasions during official parties, Uma disappears with the man of her liking for satisfying
her physical urge. Sahgal herself says that through Uma’s character she wishes to express that a woman is not allowed to be a woman in an orthodox setting. She has to be good, virtuous, and chaste. Uma is a woman whose sexual appetite her husband does not satisfy, so she indulges in promiscuous sexual relationships.

As per the line of argument, the present study reveals that through her writings, Nayantara Sahgal distinguishes herself from other women novelists like Anita Desai and Kamla Markandaya. She has, however, similarity with them in one respect, and that is that she shares with them a common concern about the predicament of women. She also describes their social orientation in her novels. Her themes are based on her personal experiences but the problems discussed in them are universal.

Nayantara Sahgal depicts sexuality with control and modesty. Sex being the basis of marital relations, plays a vital role in married life. However, open description of sex is not acceptable in the Indian society. Nayantara Sahgal is aware of the fact that sex scenes, particularly in India, should be described with restraint and in this respect she is a conformist. But she is not a conformist in her attitudes to male hegemony in man-woman relationship. She openly comes out in support of her female protagonists who choose to rebel against patriarchal traditions of chastity and satva. Her characters do not suffer from pangs of self-alienation if they walk out of a stifling relationship. She refuses to stigmatize them and presents them as confident freedom-loving individuals.

It may be said that Nayantara Sahgal is non-conventional in her attitude towards marriage and social relations. Therefore, the traditional and conventional family concepts are missing in her novels. She never
tries to portray her women as renegades, socially-spurned for defying the traditional norms of Indian womanhood. Her women indulge in extra-marital relations, but without being ostracized or bearing guilt. Nayantara Sahgal believes that if a man can indulge in extra-marital relations, then why not a woman? She has every right to do what a man does.

It can be said that the autobiographical basis of Sahgal’s fiction lacks objectivity. She handles a particular situation with a particular point of view and presents it honestly. Value judgments are not made through direct authorial comments but through monologues. She does not let the subjectivity of the material interfere with her objectivity. Her personal relationships reflect both the changing social condition and the conflicts of the individual mind. In depicting these relationships, she does not display any contempt, bias, or superiority. Her attitude towards opposing values is of tolerance and understanding. She often interlinks the public and private selves of her characters. Her art of characterization is a mature one; juxtaposition and symbolism are two devices which she has used very effectively for developing her characters.

An interesting aspect of Nayantara Sahgal’s novels is that they can be seen as depicting realistic personalities which means her fictional figures have a close resemblance with the real characters of contemporary world. She has the tendency to project her fictional world in realistic manner. Most of her characters have many characteristics in common with the historical personalities. Her major characters are based on some prominent public figures of their time. Therefore, her novels have an unusual kind of interest particularly for Indian readers. There is a striking resemblance between the dynamic, ambitious, rather unconventional and diligent Kalyan Sinha and Krisna Menon- India’s first High Commissioner in London. In Storm in
Chandigarh, Gyan Singh reflects the character of Pratap Singh Kairon, the Chief Minister of Punjab in the 1960’s. The characters of both Shivraj in *A Situation in New Delhi* and the Prime Minister in *This Time of Morning* are based on Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of free India and the maternal uncle of Nayantara Sahgal herself. Raj Garg and Vishal Dubey, who are able to understand the problems of Saroj (*Storm in Chandigarh*) and Simrit (*The Day in Shadow*) resemble E.N. Mangat Rai, an I.C.S. officer, who had provided Nayantara Sahgal with emotional support in real life and whom Nayantara Sahgal married later on, after her divorce with Gautam Sahgal. Sumer Singh in *The Day in Shadow* powerfully resembles Dinesh Singh, the former Raja of Kala Kankar in U.P. who, for a short time, became a very powerful minister in the cabinet of Indira Gandhi. But there is some doubt about the character of Devil in *A Situation in New Delhi*. Whether Nayantara Sahgal has delineated the character of Devi on the basis of the character of her own mother or not shrouded in mystery

Finally, it can be concluded that Nayantara Sahgal presents the political reality of post-colonial India in her novels. Being politically and socially conscious, she portrays everything through her observation all around. Objectively, she watches all the vices that vitiated Indian politics, but she never lashes out at the prevalent corruption, nepotism and opportunism. Whenever she wishes to expose the nefarious politics, she makes use of mild humor, satire and irony. She is always tolerant while describing human vices. Along with the description of political scenario, her novels are a means for conveying her ideology, philosophy and last but not the least- her attitude towards social realism.

---------------------