ABSTRACT

The post-Colonial literature has registered a remarkable growth, especially in the area of fiction, with its multi-faceted aspects. The Indo-English fiction chooses its themes such as social and domestic problems, revolution, partition, economic problems, industrialization, famine, Gandhian influences or their lack, confrontation with other cultures and problems of expatriates.

Nayantara Sahgal is one of the distinguished Indo-English writers who writes in the stream of national consciousness. The first generation of important women writers began publishing their work in the 1950s. Writers like Kamala Markandaya, R.P. Jhabvala, Santha Rama Rau were all active on the literary scene. During this period, Nayantara Sahgal emerged as one of the most significant voices in the realm of Indian English Fiction.

Among the women writers, Nayantara Sahgal’s novels read like commentaries on the political and social turmoil that India has been facing since independence. Her concern for the women who are caught in the dilemma of liberty and individuality or stability and protection of marriage as an institution is understandable.

The novelists of this period try to bring a societal development at a larger scale, through the themes like emancipation of women, socio-political consciousness, political and cultural traditions and beliefs. As the sociological approach deals with all the above mentioned aspects as its branches, the novels of Nayantara Sahgal paves way to deal her work under the light of sociological theory.

The objective of this study is to apply sociological approach to the select novels of Nayantara Sahgal and to attempt a critical analysis of socio-political consciousness in her novels. The social concerns in her novels are analyzed. Light has
been thrown on the new self-concept of Indian women emerging from the novels of Nayantara Sahgal. Discussion has been carried out to point out how self-identity and self-concept will empower women to achieve self-actualization. She also proves that self-actualization is instrumental in bringing about rewarding changes, in the individual and society at large.

Sociological ideas with a focus upon man-woman equation, marriage, misconceptions, women emancipation has been discussed in the thesis. Sociological criticism is to analyze a literary work the cultural, economic and political context in which it is written or received. The changes in the society during her period are vividly pictured. The main sociological change in the period was feminism, which struggled hard for women emancipation in the society.

Sociological criticism is to explore the relationships between the artist and society. The same has been attempted to bring out the society that Nayantara Sahgal has depicted in her novels.

The first chapter of the study introduces the post-Colonial fiction, the eminent writers of post-Colonialism, the recurring themes in post-Colonial fiction and states how Nayantara Sahgal emerges out as an outstanding novelist of the period. The novelist’s personal life and her works have been briefed.

The second chapter discusses the social and political aspects of her novels. It untangles the individual exploited in the cultural and social conflicts. It rationalizes her primary obligation is that of advocating the emancipation of women. Sahgal’s literary achievement lies in her ability to transmute the social, historical and political forces of her time into the organic structure of the novel.
The **third chapter** is a study examining the novelist's Gandhian concern for creating better citizens to the society. This segment also deals with Sahgal’s particular synthesis of tradition and modernity with her special notion on Hinduism and Gandhian philosophy. This conception of Sahgal’s consideration of Gandhian philosophy falls under the novelist’s concern for the society. Gandhian values have formed the basis of Nayantara Sahgal’s approach to both political and personal problems.

The **fourth chapter** analyses the writing techniques adopted by the novelist in her works. Sahgal’s narratives can be viewed as wondrous interplay of factual and fictional elements resulting in an aesthetically complex discourse. Her every narrative discourse is unique.

The **fifth chapter** sums up the discussions carried out by the Researcher to state that the novels of Nayantara Sahgal taken for study are interwoven with socio-political concerns. It also stresses the fact that Sahgal emerges as an outstanding political novelist of her period. The chapter hints Sahgal’s concern for Gandhian thoughts, values of Hinduism, her views on and tradition and modernity and her feminist attitude pave way to research her work under sociological perspective.

The research is confined to Sahgal’s six novels:


In the novels taken for study, Sahgal is picturing the social perspectives of her society. She also brings in her feminist perspectives interwoven with political subplots running parallel. Sahgal’s novels thus not only constitute an impressive segment
of Indian English novel but also sum up the saga of India’s struggle for freedom and the changes it has brought about in the traditional social setup in India. Sahgal is unique in her artistic sensibility as well as in the particular manner of projecting the national consciousness. She also reflects the consciousness of change, and the strange and sudden ways in which it has come to shape the character of individuals.

A nearer analysis of the novels of Nayantara Sahgal reveals that a quest for identity, cultural conflicts, the impact of industrialization in India and the consequent social and economic changes, the problem of the expatriates and immigrants and the personal relationships especially between man and wife, are some of the common themes that are dealt with by Nayantara Sahgal. These themes are closely associated with the sociological perspectives.

A study on social criticism comments on the different aspects of society which the writer feels to be ineffective or corrupt. Topics such as bureaucracy, voyeurism and big government often take center stage in the studies based on sociological criticism. Social criticism is effective not only in explaining societal problem to the readers as stated by the author but also in helping to trace out the author’s own beliefs and refine her feelings about the society in which she lives.

Nayantara Sahgal too, takes up the responsibility of underlining the socio-political problems and also provides reasonable solutions through these novels. These six novels selected for this study serve this purpose completely.