CHAPTER – I

INTRODUCTION

Indian Writing in English has gained immense popularity and recognition in the last two decades of the twentieth-century. From Raja Rao to Salman Rushdie, the fictional writers have concentrated on changing social patterns, transformations of values and on the individual’s predicament in a society in transition. One can perceive the uniqueness of Indian Writing in English from the words of K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar in his work *The Indian Writing in English*:

What makes Indo-Anglican literature an Indian literature and not just a ramshackle outhouse of English literature is the quality of its ‘Indianness’ in the choice of its subjects, in the texture of thought and play of sentiment, in the organization of material and in the creative use of language (234).

The literary outputs of this period have projected their own native reality to restore the identity and roots that have been lost. The post-Colonial Indian English fiction has witnessed at least three generations of Indian novelists in English. The first generation consists of mainly the prominent figures like Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao. The second generation comprises of writers like Kushwant Singh, Shashi Desphande, Bhabani Battacharya, Manohar Malgonkar, Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal and many other writers who developed the fictional writing. The third generation of writers like Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Arundhati Roy produced exemplary literary products that took the fame of Indo-English Literature to the international level.
In post-Colonial literary setup cultural nationalism has become the recurrent focus. In treatment and tone, the native reality and Indian sensibility have played an important role. The literary outputs of this age took the outcry of East-West encounter as its prominent factor to analyze. R. K. Narayan is regarded as the father-figure in the post-Colonial Indian English fiction. Indian writers depicted the Indian social, political and domestic scenes effectively in their literary work. The credit of writing the first novel goes to Bakim Chandra Chatterjie’s Raj Mohan’s wife, published in 1864. It deals with themes of cultural identity, discomforts of colonized societies and the dilemmas of developing a national identity after colonial rule.

Bahtchacharya’s Music for Mohini Rajan and R. P. Jhabvala’s The Nature Passion took the East-West encounter as their theme. The socio-political problems of India are pictured in Bhattachacharya’s So Many Hunger and Nayantara Sahgal’s Storm in Chandigarh. The recreation of events and situations are rightly reflected in the novels written during this period. Khuswant Singh’s Train to Pakistan, Rajan’s The Dark Dancer, Chaman Naha’s Azadi offer a sense of nostalgia that sustains the happenings during the partition in India.

The themes of Indo-English fiction are socio-domestic problems, self identity and East West encounter. The most prominent technique of narration in the Indo-English fiction is the stream of consciousness narrative. Mulk Raj Anand introduced this technique in the Indo-English fiction. Raja Rao adopted the autobiographical form of narration. The phenomenon of Mulk Raj Anand owes directly to the depression of the thirties and to India’s quest for national identity. The portrayal of middle-class life in R. K. Narayan’s novels is realistic and authentic. The ‘Big Three’ were followed by distinguished writers like Manohar Malgonkar,
Khushwant Singh, Bhabani Bhattacharya and Balachandra Rajan. The Indian novel in English of that period chose themes as revolution, partition, economic problems, industrialization, famine, Gandhian influences or their lack, confrontation with other cultures and the problems of expatriates.

In the galaxy of Indian novelists in English, Indian women writers too shine luminously like their male counterparts by their significant contribution to the enrichment of Indian English novels. Fiction by women writers constitutes a major segment of the contemporary Indian Writing in English. Women writers like R.P. Jhabvala, Nayantara Sahgal, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy, Shobha de, Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri, Rama Mehta, Manju Kapur and Geeta Mehta indicate new consciousness, particularly the pathetic plight of the Indian women. Though Western art form has been applied to the Indian mode of storytelling in the Indo-English fiction, the content of it seems to be Indian, revealing the Indian sensibility and the Indian social-political situations.

The comprehensive vision and philosophical insight of the Indian novelists make them equal with the writers of international repute. The male writers concentrated on the individual’s predicament, socio-economic-political changes and an over simplification of the feminine and the women writers have concerned themselves with the subtleties of oppression, issues of power in a particular set up and the unjust marginalization of women.

The prominent feminist novelists in the race are Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Namita Gokhale, Shobha De, R. P. Jhabvala, Kamala Markandaya and Arundhati Roy. They occupy a prestigious position in Indo-
English fiction. Their writings reflect a variety of shades, colors and visions. The assertion of identity in their writings deserves a better treatment at the hands of their male counter-part. They have protested against the cruelty on women by portraying their responses and reactions. The spirit of revolt against mechanical life, mismatched marriages and wayward ways of their life partners has formed the central concern in their writings. The protagonists of their novels are women of a typical Indian society. The plot of their stories is woven around the women who negotiate the oppression of a particular society. Indian women novelists have turned towards the women’s world with great introspective intensity and authenticity. They have launched a voyage within to explore the private consciousness of their women characters.

In the novels of Anita Desai and Nayantara Sahgal, women are no more goddesses; they are human beings and move from bondage to freedom, from indecision to self-assertion, and from weakness to strength. Shobha De projects women as a creative force that controls the dynamics of the society. Kamala Markandaya’s women have an upper hand over their male counter parts. She pictures the world of women, where the man is influenced, purchased, commanded, exploited and taken around like a pet.

Kamala Markandaya, the earliest of the top-ranking women novelists, reached to fame with her very first novel, *Nectar in a Sieve*. She has ten novels to her credit. Her novels reflect the East-West encounter in different contexts and project the resultant identity crisis. In novel after novel, she explores life of an Indian in the context of the impact of modernity on the traditional Indian society and the eventual cultural upheaval. She protests against oppression of
women and domination of men. Women in her novels are beyond doubt victims of social and economic pressures and disparities. She has portrayed women from varied age groups and social backgrounds in her novels. She has also shown how the changes in economic and social order adversely affect women more than men. However, her women emerge out of the darkness, bravely throwing off their legacy of humiliation, dependence and resignation seeking equality with their male counterparts.

Shashi Deshpande is another significant writer whose novels are concerned with the women’s quest, an exploration into the female psyche, an understanding of the mysteries of life and the protagonist’s place in it. A common pattern of the feminine aspirations can be discerned in all her novels. They deal with Indian women in disharmony with their sexual, cultural and social roles. She tries to assert herself not only as a woman, wife or mother, but also as an individual. In all her novels, she exhibits a sharp psychological insight into the subtleties of the human mind and society. Her writing is clearly a part of Indian literature and emerges from her rootedness in middle class Indian society. She uses simple language to describe simple life, especially of the Indian women.

Anita Desai breaks a new ground in the world of Indian English fiction by shifting the emphasis from the external to the internal world. She adds a new dimension to the achievement of the Indian women writers in English fiction by probing into the inner lives of her women characters. She creates a world of her own which she fills up with extraordinarily sensitive beings. She is recognized as the pioneer of psychological novel in modern Indian English Literature. The most remarkable feature of her art is the portrayal of characters. She penetrates
psychologically deep into the inner working of women and externalizes their passive reaction. She delves deep into the psyche of her women characters where she finds them struggling to strike a balance between self and society. In many cases, the endeavor leads to a sense of loneliness and alienation while in several others there is a strong desire to overpower this as well. She deals with the mind and the soul of a character, its inner workings and hidden thoughts rather than the outer appearances. She heralded a new era of psychological exploration of inner mind in her novels.

R.P. Jhabvala has also left an indelible imprint in the history of women novelists in English. She is variously described as inside outsider and outside insider. She was born of Polish parents in Germany and got her education in England but married an Indian and lived in India more than twenty-four years. She wrote eight novels and published collections of short stories. Her work highlights that India is her preoccupation. Most of her writings deal with the various shades of Indianness, apart from many other things. She repeatedly turns to the theme of the interaction between two cultures namely European and Indian. Her fictional world is pervaded by domestic atmosphere and deals with familial themes. She concentrates on the milieu familiar to her — the middle and upper middle class Indian society in Delhi. Her keen observation and awareness of life in Indian society combined with her critical penetration results in the authentic portrayal of the day-to-day life of individuals in different predicaments. She is especially aware of the position of women in Indian family and her novels portray the change that is caused in their attitude in the changing cultural context.
Shobha De is a modern novelist who is famous for portraying the sexual mania of the commercial world. She may rightly be described as a very realistic writer portraying the world of glamour in the Indian upper middle class milieu without any inhibition. She is the author of twelve books. As a writer, she is gifted with extraordinary ability to discuss every sensitive aspects of human life. She has tried her best to expose the moral and spiritual breakdown of modern society in which helpless and forsaken women long for pleasure and want to fly in the sky of freedom. Most of the women characters depicted by Shobha De are economically independent and socially uninhibited who are conscious of their self-respect because they are competent professionals working shoulder to shoulder with their male counterparts. Her characters are working women. Her female characters are guided by the desire to earn quick money and to get a place in the higher strata of society. They compromise with some unsuitable demands of society.

Bharati Mukherjee, now settled abroad, is yet another significant woman novelist. Even though it is nearing three decades since she left India for the American continent, familial ties continue to bind her to the country of her birth. Her varied experiences in life find ample place in her writings, both fictions as well as non-fiction. In fact, Bharati Mukherjee had to come to terms with her own identity in an alien land, as she was caught between two conflicting cultures. She can be described as a writer who has lived through several phases of life, first as a colonial, then as a national subject in India, then as an exile as post-Colonial Indian in Canada and finally as an immigrant, later as a citizen, in the United States. She narrates her stories from a wide variety of perspectives, concentrating upon the concept of self within a large society. The women in Mukherjee’s novels are docile creatures who believe in wrestling with their own problems rather than trying to
dominate their male counterparts. Her writings contain her ideas on the split between desire and reason, dependent security and autonomy and also between social and psychic identity.

Arundhati Roy as a writer of the nineties is a representative of the current Indian Writing in English. She seems to be a harsh critic of the traditional way of Indian life especially the one that Indian women have been leading. She is modernistic in her approach to life as well as to art. She emerged on the international fictional scene by her first novel, *The God of Small Things*, which brought her a Booker Prize Award. In spite of the fact that the novelist has shown the brutal truth of society, she has not forgotten the norms of great art in terms of images and symbols, ironies and overtones and other aesthetic aspects of literature. Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* is the truthful portrayal of the plight of women in society and their strenuous struggle to be recognized as a human being in the male-dominated conservative world.

The novel, *The God of Small Things* deals with the pathetic plight of a woman, Ammu, divorced by her husband and neglected by family. She portrays a detail picture of Ammu’s transformation from childhood to adolescence, to the experience of marriage, to be a sympathetic and affectionate mother and to be a rebel wife who challenges the age long hypocritical moral stand of a patriarchal family. Her novels are drastic, revolutionary and taboo breaking. Those interested in politics can also claim that it is a satire on politics. Perhaps the most striking aspect of the novel is the treatment of dalits in the novel. It deals with the universal theme of social consciousness in terms of exposure of the tyranny and injustice to the untouchable, the insult and tribulations to the deserted and the class
discrimination prevalent in the society. This brief survey of Indian women novelists in English clearly shows that women have made their permanent mark in the field of English fictions. The women novelists constitute a major group of the Indian writers in English.

Women writers are now bestowed with an increasing popularity and prestige. The work of women writers has given a distinct dimension to the image of woman in the family and society. Among the women writers, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, R. P. Jhabvala and Nayantara Sahgal are foremost in the field. Women come to occupy the central position in the fictional world of the Indian novelists. As Jasbir Jain observes in his book *Nayantara Sahgal* “In almost every novel, Nayantara Sahgal has a central woman character who gradually moves towards an awareness of her emotional needs.” (Jain, *Nayantara* 134)

Women writers in English present the dilemma which modern women are facing in recent times. The novelists have exploited their skill in projecting convincingly the agonized mind of the persecuted women. Their portrayal of women characters in the novels invariably bears authenticity to their feminist approach, outlook and perspective. Their keen observation of the life of the Indian women and their interest in the study of their inner mind are evidenced by their vivid and panoramic portrayal of their plight. The women novelists focus on the existential predicament of the subdued women in a male dominated society which is governed by rigid traditions and restrictions. These writers probe deep into the inner mind of the repressed women by virtue of their feminine sensibility and psychological insight. They bring to light their issues which are the outcome of their psychological and emotional imbalances.
Among the women writers mentioned above, 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 and protection of marriage as an institution is understandable. She has shown an admirable understanding of the problems and the predicaments of the women. In fact her marital status has perhaps enabled her to participate in events and also to establish an emotional relationship which may not have been possible otherwise. Similarly, Nayantara Sahgal writing about contemporary India reflects the changing social conditions through her characters and their aspirations and conflicts. Most of her major women characters are married. It is within marriage that they seek self-expression and fulfillment as individuals. Personal relationships reflect both the changing social conditions and the conflicts of the individual mind. In the portrayal of these relationships Nayantara Sahgal does not display any contempt or superiority. Her use of irony is also gentle and kind she reveals a great deal of understanding and tolerance of opposing views.

Nayantara Sahgal is a prominent Indian English author. Sahgal has written novels, memoirs, and other nonfictional works with a wide range of interconnected political, social, and cultural issues. She was born on 10 May 1927 in Allahabad. Her family was in the forefront of the Indian freedom movement and later in the governance of free India. Her father, Ranjit Sitaram Pandit, besides being a leading lawyer and freedom fighter, was a Sanskrit scholar who had translated several Sanskrit classics into English, including A twelfth-century history of Kashmir and Rajatarangini (River of Kings). Her mother was Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, sister of Nehru, the first Prime Minister of independent India. Vijaya Lakshmi had a distinguished career, serving as the world’s first female cabinet minister and later, as
the Indian ambassador to the Soviet Union, the United States, and England. She also became the first woman President of the United Nations General Assembly.

Sahgal, the second of three sisters, did not have a normal upbringing since her parents were in and out of prison for long spells during the struggle for independence. She was influenced by her uncle, Jawaharlal Nehru. The political consciousness, which dominates her literary creations, is real and inseparable from herself and her surroundings. In the preface to *Prison and Chocolate Cake*, Nayantara Sahgal writes: “We grew up at a time when India was the stage for a great political drama and we shall always remain a little dazzled by the performances we have seen” (*Prison* 89).

In the same book, she says:

Our growing up was India’s growing up into political maturity — a different kind of political maturity from any the world had seen before, based on an ideology inspired by self-sacrifice, compassion and peace (*Prison* 109).

Born in a family of freedom fighters, which had politics in its very blood, Nayantara Sahgal is indeed qualified to write political novels of high quality. She says:

I grew up during the national moment. My parents went to jail repeatedly during our fight for freedom. My father died as a result of his last imprisonment released too late to be cured of the serious illness he had contacted in jail. My uncle became our first Prime Minister. I was born and brought up within the atmosphere and hopes and ideals of the Congress Party. Its leaders were familiar to me. Our
home was their meeting place and many decisions momentous to India were taken in it. I became a novelist and a political journalist, and all my writings, fiction and non-fiction, has been about contemporary India (Sahgal 104).

A.V. Krishna Rao also states in his book titled *Historical Consciousness in the Novels of Nayantara Sahgal*:

Inherited and cherished a certain set of values and attitudes toward life which can be best described as a complex of political liberalism, social sophistication, economic moderation and cultural catholicity continual interaction with Gandhian idealism (98).

Born in the Nehru family and brought up in a household in which female children did not feel the pressures of being female, Sahgal had a life full of liberation. This made her question suppression the women in her narratives. Ironically but not surprisingly, her nationalist fealty is, in turn, complicated by her western style upbringing and education. Her location within an international arena rather than a local literary area paved way to multiple thematic antinomies in her novels.

For Nayantara Sahgal, national identity is a source of selfhood. Her clearly defined nationalist ideology is her legacy from the cosmopolitan dynasty of the Nehru family and from Gandhian principles. The gradual erosion of the values supported by Jawaharlal Nehru and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi is refraining in her novels. Two crucial events, the partition of India in 1947 and the state of emergency declared in 1975, left a deep impression on the Indian psyche and is figured prominently in Nayantara Sahgal’s writings. Sahgal reminisces about her childhood in *This Time of Fulfillment*:
I was conscious of being continually stretched in mind and spirit of being encouraged to be venturesome, of doing the daring rather than the timid thing, of taking risks rather than playing safe, and I was keenly aware of the joy of being myself, like every other person — a unique human being (15).

The cherished independence and courage fostered at home grew with her education at Woodstock, Mussoorie. After her schooling at Woodstock, a school managed by American missionaries at Mussoorie, Nayantara Sahgal went to America for her studies. She did her B.A. in history from Wellesley College, Massachusetts, in 1947. She experienced a great shock when her father died in 1944. She realized the loss of her father only after her coming back to India in 1947. Then Nayantara Sahgal got married with an ambitious young man Gautam Sahgal in 1949. The couple had three children Nonika, Ranjit, and Gita. The marriage did not turn out to be a meeting of minds. She underscores her apprehensions in her second autobiographical volume *From Fear Set Free* (1962). In “Turning Point”, published in *Point of View*, Nayantara Sahgal reflects that she was “uneasy and restless adjusting to the demands of a personality and an environment whose goals and texture were different from anything I had known or been comfortable with.” (65)

The unhappy marriage ended in a divorce in 1967 which left her walk into the world fearlessly. Thus, the major theme in her works is disharmony and dissolution of marriage. The second turning point was her decision to live with a brilliant bureaucrat, E. N. Mangat Rai which she described in her own words, “not an affair but a revolution, a self discovery that life had to be lived more fully in order to be meaningful” (Sahgal, *Passion* 15). Later in 1979, she married...
Mangat Rai, after many years of living together. She analyses her second marriage:

Neither of us was at all interested in getting married. But in 1979, the Janata government appointed me ambassador to Italy and that forced me to marry. Fundamentally, there is not much difference between living together and being married. If you are loyal to each other, it does not matter. If there is loyalty and trust, one does not need marriage (Sahgal, Passion 167).

Nayantara Sahgal’s pangs of marriage and estrangement get reflected in her characters like Simrit in The Day in Shadow and Saroj in Storm in Chandigarh. Simrit’s divorce carried the same magnitude of pain that the marriage had created. She felt,

It was painful how the connection continued, like a detached heartbeat. The tissue of marriage could be dissolved by human acts, but its anatomy went on and on. And skeletons could endure for a million years. Just living together, daily routine produced that uncanny durability. It made the question of whether one had loved or not, been the transgressed again trivial by comparison (Shadow 64).

Likewise her women in the novels achieve emancipation from very unfaithful, unreasonable and domineering husbands. So Rashmi in This Time of Morning, Saroj in Storm in Chandigarh, Simrit in The Day in Shadow, Sonali in Rich Like Us emerge as liberated women.

The literary world of the novelist in a broad sense can be termed personalized fiction. History, politics, autobiography and personalities intermingle in the novels of
Sahgal and establish her eminence as a political novelist with rare prophetic foresight and sensitivity. Nayantara Sahgal is one of the prominent writers of India, who recreates the Indian social and political scene just before and after the independence in her writings. She is constantly concerned with men and women engaged in contemporary political life. She aptly describes, interprets and analyses the forces which determine the setting in her writings. If one considers the themes alone, her novels can be called political novels, but they are more than mere records of political events, they depict her concern for society.

Nayantara Sahgal’s work is different from the work of most of her contemporaries in the field of the Indo-English fiction. For instance she does treat the East-West theme but it is not a confrontation between two sets of values or a value judgment on any one of them. Her locale, like her social and cultural milieu, has always been Indian. The Westernized middle or upper class Indians are criticized not for their Western attitudes but for their blind adherence to them and for their alienation from their own background. The fault lies not in the values themselves but in their transplantation which has been defective. Similarly it is not possible to categorize her values as a simple confrontation between tradition and modernity for there is much in tradition that she values and a great deal in modernity which she admires.

The novelist’s concern does not reveal itself through political satire or futuristic anti-utopias as is the case with some of Western writers; instead it is concerned with the reality of the contemporary situation. She has attempted consistently and comprehensively to analyze the political happenings and trends, revealing all the crevices of political life and exploring all its depths. Intrigues and
maneuverings are as much part of it as sacrifice and dedication. Through her concern with politics, Nayantara Sahgal also projects a wider vision of the values and the novel becomes a concern for the quality of life. All her novels reflect political scenes and her concern with humanistic values. Her concern with politics and humanistic values are inter-related and equated in all her literary writings.

Nayantara Sahgal considers her novels to be political in content and intentions. And in her view, each of the novels more or less reflects the political era that was passing through. The use of the political genre is one of the main aspects of her novels. The other aspects are the exploration of the religious theme and the problems of women in contemporary society. But these are in fact not separate aspects but inter-related ones. Men behave as they do because of the environmental influences and because of the widely accepted social goals. Her novels deal with the themes of political conditions, religious heritage and individual’s attitudes which are inter-related in her novels.

She views freedom in all its meanings and manifestations. The women of her novels are cramped in every sphere by conventions regarding behavior and expectations. Women, in or outside marriage, find themselves severely limited in the expression and attainment of their true selves. In the treatment of this theme Nayantara Sahgal has both her limitations and her strength. Her reactions and psychological understandings are largely autobiographical and she does not stray very far from the social class of her origins. But this very limitation has become strength, for it is the main source of her realistic handling of various themes in her novels. Nayantara Sahgal is able to view the limitations of the upper-class objectivity as she belongs to that category.
Another aspect is that her women are not sexual or frigid women. They think and behave naturally in their acceptance or rejection of physical relationships. In her treatment of sexual relationship, Nayantara Sahgal is different from most of her contemporaries on the Indo-English literary scene, who are largely governed by the moral conventions of society. Unconventional attitudes or unconventional behavior in sex are not considered respectable, but Nayantara Sahgal treats sexual relationships honestly and points out that adulterous relationship need not always be immoral. Chastity for her is not a concept of the flesh; it is one of the spirits. About her women characters she writes:

I try to create the virtuous woman—the modern Sita. My women are strivers and aspirers, toward freedom, toward goodness, toward a compassionate world. Their virtue is a quality of heart and mind and spirit, a kind of untouched innocence and integrity. I think there is this quality in the Indian woman (“Of Divorce and Hindu Women,” The Hindustan Times).

Her women are not virtuous in the conventional sense but in a more real sense for they have shed all hypocrisies and pretences with their own self. Simrit and Saroj find themselves unable to be sexually involved in relationship which has lost all other meaning and their emotional withdrawal effects a distancing which helps them retain their self-respect. Devi in A Situation in New Delhi is not so honest with herself. Her real emotional and physical needs are at variance with what she wants to be. Devi’s life is an unfulfilled one in many ways though she shares with the others a need to strive toward a compassionate world. For Sahgal’s women characters, sex is not an appetite, it is a fulfillment.
It has often been pointed out that Nayantara Sahgal’s social milieu is rather limited. The thrust of this kind of criticism has been that she is concerned with the lives of the affluent elite. Though her concern is with the middle classes, that concern has many variations. The affluent elite are often a target of her satire. In her autobiographical books a genuine sympathy for the poorer sections and a great deal of affection for the various family retainers are portrayed. Kalyan Sinha and Gyan Singh have both known poverty and their characters have been in part influenced by their experience of it. Jeevan has reached his present middle class position through struggle and initiative. Rakesh and Vishal belong to the lower rungs of the middle class and suffer because of the inhibiting attitudes of this class. Skinny is also middle class.

T. K. Thomas considers the world of Nayantara Sahgal’s novels to be a special one of power and privilege and feels that Sahgal’s work reflects her knowledge and guarantees a measure of authenticity. Though it is true that her knowledge of the upper class is the offshoot of her own background, it has to be conceded that the values she projects are not of the upper or the affluent classes; they are middle class values. She is not enamored by the class of her origin and her world is not as limited as it may appear at first sight. There is a valid reason for her concern with the middle class, for this is the class which is not completely bogged down by the economic needs, it happens to be educated and is capable of producing ideas and leaders, and it is also capable of responding to the right values. If her world is limited, then within this limited world there is variety and also depth. More than these there is objectivity in spite of the autobiographical base. There is no attempt to justify a situation or an action and no resort to melodrama or any other kind of emotional extravagance. It goes to her credit that once a character is created, it grows and develops along the course of its inner claims.
It is true that in most of her novels there is a character that projects the author’s viewpoint but this does not dominate all other viewpoints. Sanad’s case is sympathetically studied (A Time to be Happy) and Kalyan Sinha emerges in many ways to be an admirable character (This Time of Morning). Inder’s conflicts and frustrations areas much alive as Saroj’s unhappiness (Storm in Chandigarh). Nayantara Sahgal relates a particular period to a particular point of view and presents it honestly. A work of fiction by its very nature is different from a work of science. What a writer has to guard against is the temptation to present a single point of view thus distorting both reality and the moral vision. Objectivity does not imply the suppression of a value-judgment. Wayne Booth in The Rhetoric of Fiction elaborates on the undesirability and impossibility of pure objectivity and writes:

Even among characters of equal moral, intellectual, or aesthetic worth, all authors inevitably take sides. A given work will be ‘about’ a character or set of characters. It cannot possibly give equal emphasis to all, regardless of what its author believes about the desirability of fairness (Booth, Rhetoric 185).

The subjectivity of the material does not interface with the objectivity of the creative artist. Nayantara Sahgal is aware that though one may start with oneself on a known person, or situation, but as soon as one starts writing, one takes off from the model, and so the character and situation become quite invented as they develop a life of their own theme and characters. Nayantara Sahgal represents a unique blending of social perspectives and political concerns. Her novels catch the bewilderment of the individual psyche confronted with the overbearing social-cultural environment. Sahgal vividly captures the female protagonist’s journey to selfhood and how they
face the challenges and do they negotiate with various personal, social, religious, and political issues.

Nayantara Sahgal has produced so far nine novels and has two autobiographies to her credit and she has also published a number of articles and two other books with historical perspective.

Nayantara Sahgal’s novels include:

1. *A Time to be Happy* (1957)
2. *This Time of Morning* (1965)
5. *A Situation in New Delhi* (1977)

Her non-fiction mainly includes her two autobiographical books:

2. *From Fear Set Free* (1962)

Nayantara Sahgal has also produced a history book *Freedom Movement in India* (1970), and a political treatise *Indira Gandhi: Her Road to Power* (1978). Also numerous newspaper and magazine articles add to her writings.
Rich Like Us won the Sinclair Fiction Prize and the Sahitya Akademi Award. Her earlier book Plans for Departure won the Commonwealth Writers Prize. She served as an advisor to Sahitya Akademi’s Board for English from 1972 to 1975. She was a member of Varghese Committee for Autonomy to Radio & TV in 1977-78. In 1978, she was a member of the Indian delegation to U. N. General Assembly. She has also held the post of Vice-President of People’s Union for Civil Liberties. She received the Sinclair Prize for fiction in 1985, Sahitya Akademi Award (Britain) in 1986, and Commonwealth Writers Award (Eurasia) in 1987.

She was also a Fellow of the Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars, Washington from 1981 to 1982. In 1990, she was elected as a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. In 1997, she was awarded an Honorary Doctorate for Literature by the University of Leeds. In 2002, Nayantara Sahgal was awarded the Alumni Achievement Award from Wellesley College. The Library of Congress currently holds twenty-four of her works. Nayantara Sahgal continues to write and maintains contact with Woodstock from her home in Dehra Dun. In 2004, she spoke at the Woodstock’s 75th annual Commencement, where she inspired yet another generation of students to make a difference in the world. Gita Sahgal, the writer and journalist on issues of feminism, fundamentalism and racism, dissector of prize-winning documentary films and human rights activist, is her daughter.

The achievement of Nayantara Sahgal as a writer is quite impressive one. Set for the most part in pre-and post-Colonial India, Sahgal’s novels adopt what Gayathri Spivak has called a “reportorial realist” (Spivak, How to, 21) style that associates her work with other Indo-Anglican writers such as R.K. Narayan, Kamala Markandaya,
R. P. Jhabvala, Mulk Raj Anand, and Raja Rao. She has made her mark among other significant writers in the realm of Indo-Anglican fiction.

All eight of her novels integrate aspects of Indian political and social history into their plots and settings and in particular, the representations of colonialism, the struggle for independence, the partition, the breakup of Punjab, the death of Nehru, the evolution of the Indian political science in the postcolonial context, and India’s State of emergency. These larger socio-political events are generally refracted through the lives of individual characters caught up in domestic and personal conflicts that parallel, intersect, and interrupt power struggles in the public sphere. Novels bring out Nayantara Sahgal as a writer with feminist concerns seeking independent existence of women. She sees women as victims of conventional Indian society engaged in their quest for identity.

All the works of Sahgal are characterized by a sense of history. Her first novel, *A Time to Be Happy* (1958), is set in the transitional era of the Indian quest for freedom. Politics is integral to her narratives as she states in *The Schizophrenic Imagination*: “Politics for me was an environment in which every issue was a political issue and personal and political fates were inextricably bound” (78). This situation gave her the opportunity to investigate the momentous era of the dawn of freedom and its aftermath in a country emerging from two hundred years of British occupation. The nationalist intelligentsia could not remain unaffected by Gandhian ideology. Some people vacillated between loyalty to the British and allegiance to their mother country.

The character Sanad swings between these opposite pulls. His redemption comes after he meets Kusum, through whom he reconnects with his past and cultural
roots. The narrative structure of the novel is exemplary in this respect. Narrated from the first person perspective, it is set in the years 1932-48, in the lead up to India’s Independence. And the novel’s story line revolves around two kinds of characters as, those brought up in the traditionally conservative mould who are suspicious of all the changes and the others who must make some kind of immediate adjustment to a pattern of living that is slowly evolving as the established values give place to the new. Maya and Sanad represent these two personality types, respectively. As the nation moves toward a rejection of British rule in favor of Indian autonomy, these characters struggle to make sense of the impact of colonial and nationalist culture in their day-to-day lives.

The novel narrates the story of the Indian National Movement and its impact on the growing young minds of the upper middle class Indians. It also mirrors the smug attitude of the British and Indian Officers and their wives, and focuses attention on the Indo-British relations as well. The locale of the novel is Saharanpur, a small town in northern India having textile industry, mostly owned by the British and couple of rich Indian businessmen. The story sometimes shifts to places such as Lucknow, Delhi and Calcutta, but it is Saharanpur which upholds the typical values, attitudes, traditions and culture of Northern India. It also brings out the superficial imposition of English culture on the Indian people.

This Time of the Morning (1965), Nayantara Sahgal’s second novel, explores the political and cultural dynamics of the post-Independence era through the lives of India’s politicians, diplomats, administrators and their families. It is a riveting work of fiction that captures the realities of a country in transition. This novel is set in the early post-Independence years, when a new republic eagerly looks forward to a future
full of hope. Rakesh, a Foreign Service officer who had grown up at a time when young men were ardent nationalists, returns to Delhi after a six years absence to find many changes. He meets the new advisor on Foreign Affairs, the controversial Kalyan Sinha, and is once again drawn to the magnetic personality of the politician whose ruthless manipulations are, in a way, a precursor of the moral corruption in the years to come.

Rummer Godden comments on *This Time of Morning* as, “I am amazed at her grasp of the political scene, the interweaving and cross-currents of motives and persons and their truth. This is Delhi true as its own dust” (2). Set for the most part in Delhi, the novel’s two central male characters, Kalyan and Kailas, are a study in contrasting political philosophies: Kalyan represents the egotistical politician with an instrumentalist attitude who dismisses ethical concerns over methods of attaining government goals; whereas Kailas opts for a non-violent, compassionate, slower approach to nation building. Much of the rest of the narrative focuses on the breakdown of communication within marriage in the lives of characters such as Rashmi, Arjun and Uma, Saleem and Saira. Women find it difficult to escape from patriarchal expectations for their roles as daughters, wives, and mothers.

The novel focuses on the Indian search for identity as the nation emerged from British domination. The critical question of governance engaged the attention of the new class of rulers and leaders. The novel tells of the involvement of Indian freedom movement and the aftermath of independence. During the course of the novel, Kalyan finally gains personal salvation, although he losses political power. It is through the love of Nita that he discovers himself and finds a home in her love. Rakesh is the central consciousness of the story. When the novel opens Rakesh is going through the
state of uncertainty and anxiety. To begin with Rakesh is uncommunicative. According to him, it is only an atmosphere of freedom that the state of dialogue is possible. Later, Rakesh finds solution to his personal as well as political problems through discussions. He says, “Discussion always serves a purpose” (Morning 101). Thus the novel, besides being a record of socio-political scene of Delhi, shows Nayantara Sahgal’s basic concern with human values. Freedom in all spheres, according to her, is the prerequisite of all human progress.

*Storm in Chandigarh*, Nayantara Sahgal’s third novel, describes the political turbulence in Punjab after 1947. The novel centers on the theme of forced linguistic bifurcation of the Punjab twenty years after its first post-Independence communalistic partition. It shows the clash between Gyan Singh, the militant Chief Minister of Punjab and Harpal Singh, the Chief Minister of Haryana. Vishal Dubey is the young intellectual and an Indian Administrative officer who has been assigned the task of bringing out an accord between the two warring faction and to restore peace and harmony among the people of Chandigarh. As Vishal travels to Chandigarh to begin his assignment, he experiences the flashback of the partition. The narrative establishes analogies between the self-serving motivations behind the sectarian violence of partition, the political conflict between Punjabi and Hindi speaking communities in the two states, and the imposition of one individual’s will on another, especially as this concerns male dominance in the domestic sphere. The Union Minister’s statement: “Violence lays very close to the surface in the Punjab” (*Storm* 1), is rather significant and reflects the situation that existed.

The fight between Gyan Singh and Harpal Singh is a fight of ideologies. It is a clash between the cult of violence and ideal of non-violence. Nayantara Sahgal brings
out the evils of hypocrisy, pretence and snobbery existing at the human level and on the domestic front. Violence emerges in the shape of male dominance in the marital relationship of Saroj and Inder. Vishal Dubey shows the way to Saroj to opt for a life without pretence. He is an advocate and affirms the endless possibilities in human life both at political as well as inter-personal level. Female characters such as Saroj and Mara are portrayed as challenging hegemonic expectations of women’s behavior. Sahgal’s primary and serious concern is the confrontation of human spirit in a changing cultural milieu. Deeper into the socio-political scene, one can see her characters struggling to find their roots. The novel centers on the political crisis following the reorganization of states in India and the subsequent divisive tendencies it bred.

The Day in Shadow (1971), generally seen as a sequel to Storm in Chandigarh, picks up on the themes of marital discord and nation building as its portrayal. Indians continue to grapple with the political and economic challenges of independence. The story line centers on the character of Simrit who is seeking a divorce from her husband Som. Som’s role in negotiating an armaments deal becomes the catalyst for Simrit’s ending her relationship with him. Simrit’s relationship with Raj, a liberal thinker and influential Member of Parliament, serves as a contrast to her marriage. Raj encourages Simrit to challenge the oppressive terms of her divorce settlement and to question the self-serving and short sighted philosophy that seems to be emerging in the social, economic and political scene at the time. It picks up the lives of the people of Delhi, who are engaged in politics, business and intellectual pursuits. These people include bureaucrats, freelance journalists and liberal thinkers. The opening of the novel finds Simrit surrounded by artificial and snobbish life led by the elite of Delhi. One becomes aware of the corruption and hypocrisy pervading the social and political
scene, which forms the backdrop of the novel. Nayantara Sahgal successfully brings out the inner and outer contradictions and distortions of the Indian life. One strongly senses the apparent disorders and chaos at all levels. She believes in freedom at all levels and the doctrine of peaceful existence.

The premise for the plot of *A Situation in New Delhi* (1977), Nayantara Sahgal’s fifth novel, is very much embedded in the political and social climate at the time of Jawaharlal Nehru’s death. The novel opens with Michel Calvert, an Anglo-Indian living in England, returning to India after Shivraj’s death in order to write his biography. Michel’s former lover, Devi, Shivraj’s sister, is serving as an education minister in the new Prime Minister’s cabinet. Her sense of loss after her brother’s death parallels the government’s lack of direction in the face of growing impatience with the pace of social change in the nation. The legacy of Shivraj’s orderly and systematic approach to change is contrasted with Devi’s son Rishad’s involvement with a terrorist group on the campus of Delhi University.

The narrative underlines the way the revolutionaries subordinate concerns around gender oppression to those of class when they protest against the university’s expulsion of three students in the name of social equity, despite the fact that the same students are responsible for the rape of another student, Madhu. The novel’s conclusion affirms a more self-conscious and nuanced approach to the philosophy of nonviolence as the solution to the nation’s public and private conflicts. The Vice-Chancellor of the university, Usman Ali, decides to resign and take up the leadership of a grass rooting social movement.

The novel is more specifically concerned with power politics. As the title suggests, New Delhi being the center of political power in India, the novelist has
captured the unrest situation in New Delhi. It is the story, a saga of free India, set in the mid 1960s. The narrative concerns the new rulers and their style of functioning. The characters are modeled on well-known political figures. The late Shivraj, based on Jawaharlal Nehru, is shown in the novel to have been a charismatic figure that is fondly remembered by Devi, his sister. She bemoans the loss of the politicians of Shivraj’s generation who were committed to his ideals. The present political generation in the novel, however, has lost sight of that idealism. Devi finds no sense of direction among her cabinet colleagues.

Her friend Usman, an educationist advocates enlightened humanistic values in education but finds himself at odds with members of the new ruling class, who subvert his every attempt at educational reform. Rishad, Devi’s radical nineteen-year-old son, a communist who advocates militant violence and is impatient with slow social changes, represents the young generation. For such a generation neither Mohandas Gandhi nor Jawaharlal Nehru is an example. Usman believes that concentration of political power is unfavorable to liberal education. For Sahgal, only characters such as Usman can carry forward the legacy of Jawaharlal Nehru. Sahgal received much critical acclaim for *A Situation in New Delhi*, which makes telling use of the troop of violence running through the history of India.

*Rich Like Us* (1985) is set during India’s state of emergency period. But the narrative also includes flashbacks to the quit India movement, pre- and post-World War II the early years of Indian independence. As the state of emergency is declared, Sonali, a young woman working for the Indian civil service resigns her post when she becomes aware of corruption within Indira Gandhi’s government and the erosion of social justice in India as a whole. Her friendship with Rose, a cockney expatriate
English woman who came to live in India as the second wife of Ram during the mid 1930s, is representative of the possibility of transcultural solidarity among women that is approached from various perspectives throughout the novel. The narrative explores how Rose, her co-wife Mona, their daughter-in-law Nishi, and Sonali are all hemmed in by different forms of patriarchal power that they are best able to resist by forming alliances with other women.

The novel’s central plot line hinges on the antagonistic relationship between Ram and his son Dev. Dev, forgers cheque in his father’s name to finance the underhanded business deals with the backing of corrupt politicians and civil servants. Often seen as Sahgal’s most pessimistic work, the novel represents a disillusioned view of liberal notions of individual freedom. The women’s protests against corruption are silenced and ignored at the level of both the family and the state. Rose’s eventual murder at the hands of her stepson can be read as the consolidation of an authoritarian, patriarchal, and Hindu-centric strand of Indian political culture that has gained prominence since the state of emergency. In Rich Like Us, Sahgal investigates the notion of tradition and modernity within the matrix of social and personal relationship. Since its publication in 1985, the novel has been overwhelmingly praised by critics as an insightful political fiction. The novelist was honored the coveted Sahitya Akademi award (India) and Sinclair prize (Britain) for this novel.

Nayantara Sahgal has chosen to set her last two novels during the time of the British Raj. Mistaken Identity (1988) begins with its narrator, Bhushan Singh returning to India in 1929 after a long trip to abroad. On a train journey to visit his home, he is mistakenly arrested for conspiracy against the British colonial administration and thrown in jail to await his trial. The narrative explores obvious
parallels between women’s lives under patriarchy and the colonization of India by Britain. Bhushan’s extended incarceration gives him time to reflect on his identity as an Indian and his mother’s difficult experience of living in ‘purdah’.

The year mentioned is 1929, when India is torn by strikes, and British Raj is close to panic. Bhushan Singh the purposeless son of a minor Raja is charged with treason and thrown into jail. As the months awaiting trial stretch into years, the political Bhushan entertains his Communist cellmates with tales of his world: of his veiled mother; of his very modern Parsee girlfriend; of the American flapper who taught him the Turkey Trot; of his forbidden boyhood affair which ignited the Hindu–Muslim riots and led to his banishment aboard.

*Plans For Departure* (1985) opens in 1914 and focuses on the experiences of Anna Hansen, a young Danish women travelling in India for a year prior to her planned marriage to Nicholas, an English diplomat. She arrives at the fictional hill station of Himapur to work as an assistant to an Indian researcher, Sir Nitin Basu. Tall, fair unconventional Anna Hansen, the Danish women is a feminist. The narrative focuses on the discordant marriages of two couples living at the hill station. Set apart from the British community by her Danish background and feminist attitudes, Anna becomes intrigued with understanding the rift that has caused the district magistrate’s wife to leave him just prior to Anna’s arrival. The theme of marital breakdown becomes an analogy for the dysfunctional colonial relation between Britain and India. Anna discovers that Stella has abandoned Henry for a man more firmly committed to the legitimacy of British rule in India.

These eight novels, along with Nayantara Sahgal’s autobiographical, journalistic, critical and historical work, locate her as one of the major Indo-Anglican
writers of the twentieth-century. The atmosphere of Nayantara Sahgal’s childhood, along with the Western education she had, seems to have given Nayantara Sahgal, not only depth and range, but also a kaleidoscopic view of things. She courageously expresses what she considers to be good in the most candid way.

There is a close link between Nayantara Sahgal’s life and the stuff of her novels. It is borne out not only by her pre-Occupation with politics but also by her constant examination of marital problems of men and women. Especially some of her women characters such as Kusum and Saroj seem to reflect her own problems, and Saroj in *Storm in Chandigarh* seems to be such an accurate projection of her that this novel, along with *A Time to be Happy*, has come to be regarded as her emotional autobiography. She herself acknowledges this when she says that there were “pieces of me going into the men and women I created when I really began to write.” (Sahgal, *Passion* 15)

Nayantara Sahgal’s birth and upbringing also seem to have influenced her choice of themes. Most of her novels deal with political expediency employed in solving the Chandigarh problem, the misunderstandings and quarrels among ministers and professional elections and the role of money in them. She considers her novels to be political in content. Her fictional world is occupied by political leaders, business tycoons, foreign advisers, upper class people, journalists and highly qualified persons like ambassadors, ministers, Vice-Chancellors and professors. The political themes are often combined with the theme of man-woman relationship their marital problems, their temperamental incompatibility, and the problems arising out of their ego or submissiveness, and finally the status of woman in society.
Sahgal’s novels cannot be characterized as novels of manners; nor they be called political novels, in spite of the fact that very often the action unfolds itself against the background of important political upheavals of the times. To a Devi, an Usman, an Inder, a Vishal Dubey and a Saroj who engages the reader’s attention. Though the nuances of arranging parties, of receiving guests or of making a polite conversation does count in this world, the readers are soon made to look beyond them into the conflicts raging at the bottom. It is these conflicts which constitute the central stuff of Nayantara Sahgal’s novels. The conflicts spring mainly from an absence of communication, and the resultant estrangement, between individuals, husband and wife, mother and son, between the Vice-Chancellor and his students, between the politician and the bureaucrat, even between the host and the guest, between social classes, creeds and groups.

Nayantara Sahgal frequently employs a multiple point of view; taking the reader straight into the minds of those characters and making him watch leisurely what is happening there. The emphasis is on the landscape of the mind, not so much on what happens outside. The result is, the readers are always in the company of brooding, contemplating, longing or regretting for characters who seldom go beyond thinking, praising, blaming, reminiscing, understanding or misunderstanding. No sooner the readers are introduced to a character than it slips into its own inner depths.

The reader feels engaged by the characters; it is because he is struck by the commitment that Nayantara Sahgal displays about the problems of these characters. Sahgal makes the readers feel they are in touch with a sensitive probing mind impatient with the lady image of the domesticated Indian women and other characters with their attitudes. Deviating from the portrayal of the self-enclosed women who are
often conceived within a certain accepted moral scheme, Nayantara Sahgal draws, in
her characteristically unorthodox way, the picture of a woman who restlessly tries to
tread out of her confinement which seems to limit her horizons. It is in these pictures
that Nayantara Sahgal’s novels have their origin and their strength.

This strength seems to derive from the strongly held convictions of the
novelist about the emancipation of woman and about man-woman relationship.
Nayantara seems to feel that in the process of emancipation, the Indian women have
to overcome not only hardened social opinions but also their own fears, inhibitions
and their temptation to conform. As Nayantara Sahgal sees it, their conformist
attitudes are only too readily strengthened by men who want to cling to their
pampered status. The men want an endless perpetuation of the subjugation of woman
to a limited conventional role. Nayantara Sahgal’s interest in presenting such images
is not just the result of a feminist angle, rather it is the result of her awareness that this
passiveness or submissiveness rocks the very basis of the man-woman relationship.

Nayantara Sahgal lives in Dehra Dun, a city in the foothills of the Himalayas.
Her second husband, Mangat Rai, died in 2003. The previous year, Wellesley her
alma mater, gave her the Alumnae Achievement Award. The citation reads:

Through your novels, essays and articles you reveal the complex socio-
political fabric of India and educate the world about the many
challenges faced by postcolonial societies as they struggle to forge a
new identity. Bravely confronting authority in defense of the world’s
largest democracy, you challenge India’s political leaders to uphold
civil and human rights and to prove themselves worthy of the public
confidence with which they are entrusted. Your critical and courageous
examination of gender, class and race reaches far beyond India and resonates throughout the world. As an ardent and eloquent writer whose bravery and passion have inspired all of us as we seek freedom through just democratic government, Wellesley honors you. (Passion 132)

The above study 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 relationship 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.

Through the emancipation of women, socio-political consciousness, political and cultural traditions and beliefs, the novelist tries to bring a societal development at a larger scale. As the sociological approach deals with all the above mentioned aspects as its branch, 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. It attempts a critical analysis of socio-political consciousness in the novels, derived from socio-religious, political and cultural traditions and beliefs, down the ages. While analyzing the social concerns of her novels, 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
and how it is instrumental in bringing about rewarding changes, in the individual and society at large.

The study discusses the sociological ideas with a bearing upon man-woman equation, marriage, misconceptions and women emancipation. As sociological criticism is to analyze the literature in the cultural, economic and political context in which it is written or received, the changes in the society of her period are vividly pictured. The main sociological change in the period was feminism, which struggled hard for women emancipation in the society. Special care is taken to picture the feministic attitude as portrayed in the novels of Nayantara Sahgal. Sociological criticism is to explore the relationship 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, 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, sexual, social conflicts. It rationalizes her primary obligation of advocating the emancipation of women. This section portrays how she has gone deep into the female psyche in her novels and demonstrates how they find their way out of it with bright colors. The chapter states how her writing is also famous for keeping in touch with the latest political ups and downs with a tinge of Western liberalism. It justifies how her novels truthfully
mirror the contemporary Indian political theme. And also how all her major characters of the novel are drawn towards the vortex of politics.

The **third chapter** is a study examining the novelist's Gandhian concern for creating better citizens to the society. This segment also deals with Nayantara Sahgal's particular synthesis of tradition and modernity with her special notion on Hinduism and Gandhian philosophy. This conception of Nayantara Sahgal’s consideration of Gandhian philosophy falls under the novelist’s concern for the society.

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 Nayantara Sahgal’s six novels:

Nayantara Sahgal pictures the social perspectives of her society in the above mentioned novels taken for study. She brings in her feministic perspectives interwoven in it and also the political sub plots run parallel.

A study on social criticism comments on an element of society that the writer is feeling ineffective or corrupt. Topics such as bureaucracy, voyeurism and big government often take center stage in social criticism studies. Social criticism is effective not only in explaining societal problem to others as stated by the author but also in helping to trace out the author’s own beliefs and refine his feelings about the society in which he lives.

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