CHAPTER – IV

WRITING TECHNIQUES IN THE NOVELS OF NAYANTARA SAHGAL

Nayantara Sahgal attempts to weave a narrative with the fibers of the human life and those of history. Sahgal’s novels not only deal with the dilemmas and the problems of different people at different junctures of history but also sum up the saga of the freedom struggle of India. She also portrays the changes it has brought about in the traditional, religious and social set up of India in an artistic way. To be more precise, as Dr. A. V. Krishna Rao rightly puts, “History and politics are inextricably interwoven in the novels of Nayantara Sahgal.” (Rao, Historical 42)

Sahgal believes that the fate of three patriarchal institutions namely, the family, the society and the state are interrelated as the cooperation between the family and the larger society is essential, else both would fall apart. So she always portrays the drama of personal human relationships against the background of a larger socio-political situation in the country. In her first novel, *A Time to be Happy* is a fictional configuration of a momentous personal decision and a historic moment in the national consciousness. *This Time of Morning* is considered a surreal semi-Historic novel, where the novelist seems to have borrowed the technique of collage from the realm of painting. The politically tumultuous New Delhi with the representative of the upper middle class and their relationships can be witnessed. *The Day in Shadow* deals with the two themes interwoven into subtle and intricate patterns of multi-Colored tapestry. In *A Situation in New Delhi*, the two worlds merged as all the characters are directly involved in political problems. *Rich Like Us*, portrays India in its emergency period there is a great appraisal among the critics regarding the success of the novelist in harmonizing the two worlds – the personal and the impersonal into an ‘organic
whole’. It stands effective as the aesthetic creativity of the novelist finds a suitable point to merge the two different themes efficiently.

In her first novel, *A Time to be Happy*, she adopts the first person narrative method. The narrator, who proclaims that he is relating the story of Sanad, is an elderly social worker steeped in the Gandhian way of life. Though he is a mere observer-narrator, he manages to narrate the story as all the central characters confide in him their innermost thoughts.

In *This Time of Morning*, *Storm in Chandigarh* and *The Day in Shadow* Sahgal follows the third person omniscient point of view. But each of these novels has one particular character who goes in and out of situations functioning as the narrator’s point of view. In *This Time of Morning* it is Rakesh, in *Storm in Chandigarh* it is Vishal Dubey and in *The Day in Shadow* it is Raj Garg who act as the filtering consciousness for the omniscient author’s narration and reflection. In *The Day in Shadow*, the novelist brings out emotional struggles and the thought process of the central characters like Raj, Simrit, Ram Krishnan and Sumer Singh by using a modified version of the stream of consciousness technique. In *A Situation in New Delhi* the novelist adopts the omniscient narrative method.

But in *Rich Like Us* both omniscient narrative method and first person narrative method are used in simultaneous chapters. Sonali, a young I.A.S officer, is the first person observer-participant-narrator, who describes the degenerating socio-political milieu of India during the nineteen seventies in the name of Emergency. This narrative is interwoven with the story of Rose and her husband Ram which is narrated from the omniscient point of view. This split narrative which pictures two different
realms of the story, beautifully comes together in the last chapter where Rose dies and Sonali manages to pull herself together in a heroic way.

A. V. Krishna Rao rightly observes that Sahgal adopts a shifting point of view in *Rich Like Us* so as to “invest the story with a dimension of history; and her knowledge of European and Indian history helps her in elucidating and illustrating the current events in the light of historical wisdom.” (Rao, *Historical* 35) Nayantara Sahgal describes not only what happens in the outside world but also what happens on the landscape of the minds of different characters. This kind of probing necessitates the telling of the story from the point of view of at least few important characters. Thus one can find the multidimensional view point in some of her novels. She has an extraordinary skill in shifting the point of view in a subtle way. In an interview, answering to the question, ‘what is the nucleus in your novel?’ Mrs. Sahgal replies: “Usually a character. Sometimes a situation.” (Sahgal, *Interview*)

In *This Time of Morning*, *The Day in Shadow*, *A Situation in New Delhi* and *Rich Like Us* the novelist intends to describe the change that independence has brought into the country after certain intervals. She chooses the capital of the nation, New Delhi, as the setting quite appropriately. She presents the microcosm as well as the nerve centre of modern India in New Delhi. As Simrit in *The Day in Shadow* observes, Delhi has become “a touchstone for whatever happened in India” and it “could become the heart of a crisis.” (Shadow 12) For Nayantara Sahgal, the setting is not “merely the matrix in which the characters are fixed; it is the soil in which they grow, the atmosphere they breathe, the medium which sustains, envelops, nourishes and controls them, and determines their manner of being.” (Shadow 98)
Veiled portraits of the popular figures of history can be seen in the fiction of Sahgal as ‘usually a character’ ‘or ‘sometimes a situation’ become the nucleus of her novels. When the novelist tries to make them fictitious characters by infusing a few individual details into them, a kind of a character in between the original personality and the fictitious personality is created. In the words of another critic K.C. Bhatnagar,

Since the characters in the novel are modeled on real life personalities they are not intensely realized in themselves and tend to become a bit patterned and abstract. Yet Nayantara has invested them with her own fierce honesty and brought them alive and kicking. (Bhatnagar, *Realism* 125)

Nayantara Sahgal is proficient in the art of using symbols. The club in *A Time to Be Happy* is symbol of relationship, between the Indian and the British worlds. In *This Time of Morning*, the Peace Institute constructed in the memory of Gandhiji ironically becomes a symbol of the negligence and exploitation of peace and the other Gandhian principles. Chandigarh itself becomes a symbol of the conflict between tradition and modernity in *Storm in Chandigarh*. The novelist skillfully contrasts the puniness of the inhabitants of Chandigarh and the grandness of its architecture. In *The Day in Shadow* the divorce settlement is an illusion of the cruelty of the patriarchal system. Shivaraj in *A Situation in New Delhi* is a symbol of the set of human values which the people are eager to forget by thinking that he is already dead.

Irony and satire are the two powerful arrows in the quiver of Sahgal. She uses her strong irony to expose the anglicized Indians and hypocritical Britishers in *A Time to Be Happy*. The descriptions of the embarrassment of Vir Das in the club and confusion of Raghubir at the hands of hooligans reach to the proportions of burlesque.
In *This Time of Morning* irony and satire become more effective and powerful. The descriptions of the muddle in the ministry of External Affairs and the manipulations that go beyond the scenes remind one of the political scenarios of the Lilliputians in the Gulliver’s Travels. With a few sarcastic touches the novelist makes Mrs. Narang a perfect caricature. She also uses parody and doggerel in *This Time of Morning*. Saleem, a character in the novel, calls Ministry of external Affairs as ‘Minister of Eternal affairs’. Sahgal makes the readers to understand the riddle of political events in Delhi through her satirical language.

She exposes the political leaders in *This Time of Morning, Storm in Chandigarh, The Day in Shadow and Rich Like Us* as satirically and ironically as George Orwell has done in his *Animal Farm* and William Golding has done in his *Lord of the Flies*. In its use of humor and irony, *A Situation in New Delhi* is closer to *This Time of Morning* than to *Storm in Chandigarh* and *The Day in Shadow*. Rishad’s satirical comments on Pinky’s engagement and the ironic description of the Minister of Minerals and Metals are strikingly effective. In *Rich Like Us* Sahgal’s satire becomes so bitter that often her remarks fall as, “In many ways we are barbarians. All the evidence says so”, (*Rich* 29) and “we’re a callous people, Sonali, or we’d have remedied many things now” (*Rich* 30)

Sahgal often uses the flash back technique not only to juxtapose the past and the present but also to telescope the political zeitgeist of a few decades into few years. As Nayantara Sahgal has tremendous belief in the Indian tradition according to which the aim of the literary work is the welfare of the universe, she never writes without a purpose. In her novels the message is articulately conveyed, instead of being dramatized. The message or the philosophy is well dissolved into the texture of the
story. The characters are politicians and high ranking civil servants, wealthy businessmen with international connections, writers and newspapermen. A few of them may have been poor and others made poor during partition, but they move now in the world of the rich. Nayantara Sahgal’s sense of place is strong. Delhi and Chandigarh are carefully and concretely described. But her real setting is not so much a particular city as it is the houses, flats, hotels and offices of the upper class characters that move through the novels.

*This Time of Morning, Storm in Chandigarh, The Day in Shadow and A Situation in New Delhi* follow a loose chronological sequence. *This Time of Morning* is set against the time of Independence and shortly after, with flashbacks to the years leading up to it. *Storm in Chandigarh* reflects the problem of partition and ends up with politicians concerned not over the creation or survival of the nation, but rather with prohibition of violence. In *The Day in Shadow* the country has moved into oil exploration and is about to change its established position of non-alignment to an alliance favoring the Soviet Union. The book ends with the suggestion that a leftist revolution is coming, an idea which is picked up at the beginning of *A Situation in New Delhi*. By now the old leader is dead, those who make revolution by the book seem to be in power, and young groups of terrorists are at work.

Analyzing the writing techniques adopted by Nayantara Sahgal exposes the readers to new forms and different varieties. Nayantara Sahgal’s first novel, *A Time to be Happy* is a fictional performance of the growth and maturation of a young, westernized and wealthy individual against the backdrop in India’s struggle for independence on the one hand and the British Indian officers and their wives as well as their Indian admirers, on the other. It is set on a different level, a submerged saga
of Indian national movement with its inevitable and indelible impression on the minds of countless comfortable upper-middle class Indians. Spanning a period of about sixteen years, from around 1932-1948, the novel is an imaginative recapitulation of things past. This ambivalence Nayantara Sahgal achieves through the point of view of an intermittently omniscient observer, a middle-aged bachelor who narrates the story with forward and backward jumps in time.

The locale is, for most of the time, Sharanpur, a small town whose line of fortune is the textile industry, mostly owned by the British and a couple of rich Indian business houses, namely, those of the narrator and Sir Harilal Mathur. The concept of the unity of place is not strictly observed by Nayantara Sahgal. She allows her characters to move in and move out of this small town in Uttar Pradesh (in the Northern India), depending on the need of the situation. So there is a shifting between Lucknow and Sharanpur. Whatever be the place, Sahgal captures its full and convincing picture.

Calcutta, which by a chain of events exert a chasten influence on the protagonist, is represented as a city of unconventional life, moral wickedness, intolerable foulness, unashamed snobbery and commercial cruelty. In contrast Sharanpur is wholesome in that it quietly adapts itself to the sudden change in the forties. Lucknow symbolizes a corrupt and unrelated cultural value structure. The reader is continuously and constantly exposed to a shocking experience of life as lived in Lucknow, Sharanpur and Calcutta or even Delhi. The novelist projects that ultimately it is Sharanpur that stands for the values and attitudes. Thus about Sharanpur:
The ‘Englishness’ had been a matter for pride and prestige. It had meant so much in the old days. It might have been appropriate in Bombay or Calcutta where city life had drawn the English and the Indians together in a curious mixture of modernity, but here in the U.P., the heart of India, where men still greet one another with ‘Ram, Ram’, where the carved images of many-armed gods and goddesses, reign over the countryside on festival days, where ‘Divali’ is still a blaze of earthen lamps, the ‘Englishness’ had only seemed fantastic.

(Time 1-2)

This image of strangeness and ridiculousness of the supreme position of English culture on the cultural situation in India is persistently portrayed by Nayantara Sahgal throughout the novel with commendable concentration and modest descriptions. The problem of Sanad, the central consciousness in the novel, is one of identity and self-discovery. And “this nearly English young man brought up to be a success,” (9) stands at the beginning of the novel, “puzzled and uncertain about his future.” (9) It is a long way before he gets out of the complicated path of human relations and social conditions and sets out on a voyage of self-discovery.

Nayantara Sahgal’s narrative technique takes us back and forth not only in regard to the sequence of events but also concerning the cobweb of human relations. Thus, for example, the narrator’s own story is mixed with what he himself avows to be “really Sanad’s story.”(6) The narrative sways but does clarify and refine the confused heap of historical details of this involvement with the Gandhian movement for the freedom of India.
The moment and the man and the milieu that Nayantara Sahgal presents in this novel prepare the reader for Sanad’s final decision, so full of significance and it bridges symbolically the apparently unbridgeable gulf between the cultures of the East and the West, at the end of the novel. Kai Nicholson argues that it is “a sociological study of urban characters in contemporary India.” (A presentation 23-24)

Nayantara Sahgal skilfully weaves into the texture of the novel a whole network of relationships some of whom may of course be merely on the fringe. Nevertheless some of the most effective and evocative scenes are those that are related to the Anglo-Indian social exclusiveness based on their racial pride insouciance. The Sharanpur Club is the hub of their activities and Indians have not been admitted until India’s attainment of independence:

I realized as I wandered from room to room and finally made my way toward the pool that I had entered a world altogether new to me, one that so far had existed only beyond the neat hedge that divided the Club from the rest of Sharanpur. It was a world built on imagination, sustained by the power that only imagination can provide… It had reigned supreme these many years, an island of make-believe in Sharanpur. (Time 205)

Nayantara Sahgal attempts to project a nation’s consciousness through the fragmentary consciousness of an individual. The participation of the observer-narrator in the novel is alternating or most indirect. Despite its shifting point of view, the novel sensitively registers: the upper middle class consciousness as typified in Sanad’s relatives, the ruling class consciousness as represented by the Anglo-Indians, the toadyism of the anglicized Indians and studied placidity of the observer and above all,
the epoch-making national movement under the leadership of Gandhi, “the miraculous rescuer.”(67) The characters like Prabha, Savitri, Lakshmi and Kusum symbolize the traditional tranquility and inner certitudes of the Indian culture.

And a fictional configuration of a momentous personal decision and a historic moment in our national consciousness is what a sensitive reader realizes in this novel. Nayantara Sahgal presents an ethically justifiable synthesis of the cultural points and counter-points at the advent of India’s independence. Nayantara Sahgal’s very considerable linguistic competence and stylish devices are quite impressively present in this novel; both of which heighten the sensibility of the reader. She is particularly effective when she uses metaphor and simile, examples for which are abounding in her work. To illustrate from her picturesque description of how the children of Govind Narayan and Madan Sahai have been brought up:

There was about them the same gypsy abandon that characterized their garden. Compared with the carefully clipped hedges and beautiful flower-beds of Govind Narayan’s garden with its exquisite, expensive blooms imported from Europe, the Sahais was a tangle of colour that had sprung up in obedience to no particular design. The spear-like grass thrust up too tall in spots while in other places it was scaggy and parse. There was a faded, grassless patch below the big painted wing where the children’s bare feet had scraped the earth countless times.

(Happy 165)

Her descriptions of Dussera celebrations or Christmas festival season are equally felicitously phrased:
Christmas Day in the shops was one thing, with its carefully contrived atmosphere of snowflakes and sleigh-bells, and quite another in the actual Lucknow winter, with its crisp, dry sparkling air and warm sunshine, and the gardens luxuriant with flowers. In the parks laid out by the flower-loving Moghul emperors, beds of sweet peas on their reed-thin talks shed a spicy-sweet aroma. Flame-coloured cannas flapped large satiny petals, and orange-and-black-striped tiger lilies stood like rows and soldiers, lifting fierce little faces to the shining day. Barkat trees dripped ancient roots from their branches into the deep old soil. (Happy 27-28).

Another special characteristic of her style seems to be the use of compound words or hyphenated expressions as, for instance, in the following:

“… the golden-skinned, honey-sweet melons”(214)

“… the silver-barked eucalyptus and over-ripe roses” (241) or

“the jade-green parrots” (245).

“Sun-beaten centuries” (175).

She can paint a word pictured in a single sentence as for instance when she describes the coming of rains:

The rains came gently at first, but gathering violence and tempo as their slanting fury struck the thirsty fields. (Happy 175)

She does not hesitate to use a foreign phrase if she thinks it must be used. Thus the French phrases of ‘joie de vivre’ (160) and ‘Savoir-faire’ (153) and a
number of words of Indian origin, derived mainly from Sanskrit, Urdu or Persian and Hindi.

The novelist frequently uses irony and sarcasm with telling effect in the dialogues as well as descriptions. For example, one may turn at random over any page but the one devoted to the description of Sir Harilal Mathur’s daughter’s wedding and his ‘polygamous practice’ (155-158) is very interesting. Keeping in mind the fitness of character, she uses the vernacular idioms in translation as when Kusum thanks Sanad, “A thousand thanks” Kusum said in Hindi. (138)  Literal translation is used occasionally as in Morari Lal’s complaint, in courteous Urdu “Sahib is like the moon of Id. We have not had the privilege of his presence for some time.” (131) Nayantara Sahgal excels herself in using effective similes which instantly evoke an image. For example, “Sanad felt as comfortably anonymous as a piece of furniture.” (115). Or, “Overhead the fans sliced the air as ineffectually as knives cutting cream”. (114). Sardonic humor is not uncommon either: “Tennis and Government House – an infallible combination for acceptability.” (101)

Another unusual device that Nayantara Sahgal employs in this novel is a short parable in order to derive home a message in a terse allusive style. For example:

Harish was like the man who took a circuitous route home to avoid meeting an unpleasant acquaintance, only to find the unwelcome creature not merely awaiting him but in full possession of his house. A dismal home coming indeed. (248).

Nayantara Sahgal is gifted with a mature, and refined and lyrical style that is obvious throughout her second novel, This Time of Morning. She is at ease, with her medium and has confidence and insight as a writer. The elegance of her prose is
commensurate to bear the weight of her thoughts. Through her characters she gives her own point of view of how a novel should be and what sort of language should be used:

Stories are about things that happen, about real people and they have to be written in a real language. A language is like a person, Rakesh. If you love it you must let it grow, not cramp and squeeze it in artificial moulds. (Morning 45)

Without feeling apologetic about the use of English as a medium she is conscious of the writer’s responsibility. “It is not a question of which language you use,” she says in an interview, “but how you use it.” (Sahgal, Interviews) The function of a literature, as she expresses somewhere else, is to expresses a civilization and culture, to be relevant to his culture and writer’s imagination; not necessarily the language he uses has to belong to it. The imagination has to be able to create the men and women and situations of the Indian environment and the Indian reality. If a writer can do this, make people feel with him, stimulate thinking, and even inspire action because of what he writes, and then he is fulfilling his function, no matter which language he uses.

Major character as Kalyan Sinha, Rashmi, Nita, and Rakesh emerge strongly as individuals with conflicting emotional demand of their own nature. Those that are not sharply delineated are not intended to be so because of their limited role in the story. The novel weaves on to its end with an unusual depth and understanding of Indian politics and human nature. Written with ease and sophistication, it can be claimed as one of the best political novels in the area of Indo-English writing.
The novel shows Nayantara Sahgal’s recurring themes like self identity and need for nonviolence. *This Time of Morning* opens with Rakesh returning to Delhi after serving abroad in the Foreign Service. Although he is already acquainted with the major figures on the political scene, he is something of an outsider after six year’s absence, and the reader comes to understand the complexities of political life as Rakesh himself does.

Kalyan, the strong willed, self-serving member of U.N. delegation, has acquired a position of power and looks for more. Rashmi has returned to her parents’ home to decide whether to divorce her husband or not. By the end of the novel, Kalyan’s political career has a set-back due to his over-bearing self-confidence and lack of understanding of the democratic nature of government. After a brief affair with a Danish architect, Rashmi announces her intention to get a divorce, and leaves for Lucknow. She indicates to Rakesh that she is finally ready to recognize the love that he has already felt growing between them.

In addition to these main characters, there are several others, frequently women whom we follow briefly: Nita, the seventeen year old girl who refuses all offers of marriage, finally becomes engaged to a young man who she neither loves nor admires, and then enters an affair with Kalyan; Leela, the student in Boston who is influenced by Kalyan’s self-serving philosophy of life, becomes pregnant and commits suicide; Uma, the physically attractive and physically demanding wife whose affairs have cut her off completely from her husband’s love and forgiveness. While each of these episodes is interesting and adds to the total narrative, the flashbacks and multiple focus technique become tedious.
This is especially so when, by way of background to the freedom movement which is so much part of these lives, Sahgal spends several passages telling the story of Gandhi’s train journey in South Africa. Although she has attempted to integrate it into the narrative by having a character read it in the notes for a book he may write, in fact the reader senses that the author’s intention here is historical rather than novelistic. The point of view shifts easily between an impersonal observer, a narrator agent, and an omniscient author in *A Time to be Happy* and *This Time of Morning*. In the first chapter alone the narrative moves from Rakesh to Rashmi to Kailas, back to Rashmi, and to Arjun. One of Sahgal’s strength is her ability to create convincing characters efficiently and effectively. She paints a broad picture, rich with many interesting figures for the reader to enjoy, but these miniatures do combine to form a powerful whole. With very little ending, many of these episodes are quite satisfying as short stories. In the end Rakesh and Rashmi remain in the reader’s mind as a memorable character.

*This Time of Morning* is a novel of social and political concerns. In this novel the political issues are more vividly and clearly outlined and the events are integrated and corelated in a better manner. The concern with post-Independent India goes deeper than the surface issues to concern itself with the meaning of freedom and integrity in human life. Freedom is interpreted variously – for men like Hari Mohan and Somnath it is power, for others it may mean having the freedom to work and to have their own circle like Nita, and yet for some others it is the opportunity to create a new society through service as Kailas thinks or it is progress according to Kalyan Sinha. For Rashmi freedom is communication and understanding. Whatever the meaning may be, unknowingly people surrender their real selves to convention or to domination.
The novel retains the irony of the earlier novel and the satire in this novel has become more effective and forceful, and the figures it presents are also more sharply-etched. Nayantara Sahgal wants her readers to see the incongruities of this imitating world, the muddle in the Ministry of External Affairs, the behavior of a number of prominent figures, and in the manipulating which constantly goes on behind the scenes. These are all targets of her satire.

Indians mistakenly feel that political freedom has solved all problems and that there is nothing more left to do but to enjoy it. There is an atmosphere of irresponsibility and greed. The members of the Indian delegation to Moscow behave in an unrefined and uncouth manner. Her description of the behavior of the Indian delegates is so close to the truth that to see it confronting the Indians in the novel is a humiliating experience. Saleem and Rakesh try to analyze the reason for this kind of behavior and wonder, ‘what is wrong with Indians – is it only a lack of consumer goods or something more fundamental – a lack in us as human beings’ (Morning 54).

Saira too is infected by this greed though she tries hard to resist it. When she sees the affluence surrounding her friend, Sally— the Rani of Mirpur, she is enamored by her world of wealth and glamour and expresses it to persuade him to bypass all rules and regulations she says, ‘there are all kinds of rules and all kinds of ways of getting round them’ (Morning 102). She is not at all willing to allow life to pass her by and has every intention of pushing her way through.

In fact there are many others who are equally discontented or more so. Dhiraj Singh, I.C.S., like many others, feels that he is ‘earmarked for better things’ than to be an Ambassador to Burma. The strangeness lies in the fact that the man has done nothing to deserve even this, his record being far from clean. As Chief Secretary in
U.P. he had been involved in some financial entanglement, and later in Delhi in an affair with the wife of the Turkish First Secretary. In neither case had the moral aspects of the issue troubled him, for he did not consider morality relevant to either. Both cases had been practical propositions that had come his way and he was glad he had availed himself of what they had to offer (*Morning* 98).

His whole life is a series of advantageous arrangements right from the army bread which finds place on their break-fast table through a circuitous route, the whisky in their parties to the money in their bank. In this world of advantageous arrangements, a posting to Burma is like a major disaster and a personal humiliation. His wife Ena tells him, ‘If Dutt has Rome; I don’t see why you can’t have Paris’. His son Vishnu and daughter Binny, suitable products of their disinterestedness and materialistic environment, are shaken out of their apathy to express their annoyance about it. Ironically enough Kalyan notices Jeevan’s paper ‘The Wayfarer’ because of Dhiraj’s case. Jeevan had chosen to write about the whole episode in his paper ending it with doggerel:

If all the world were western

And all its people white,

The I.C.S. would have such fun

And every post is right.

The satire is also focused on the sense of smugness and complacency which comes so easily to Indians. Jeevan who is picked up for his strong sense of reality and his biting, unsparing satire soon succumbs to the new sense of security. He puts on weight and acquires a sleek, satisfied look. Nita looking at him suddenly notices this
change in him. Jeevan, the restless, dissatisfied gypsy, had become almost placid. Saleem and Rakesh, Foreign Service officers, are critical of the way the ministry runs. They refer to it as the ministry not of external but of eternal affairs for, “Things drift. Decisions pend. The psychological moment comes and passes unnoticed. The riddle of who is appointed where and why becomes more and more unfathomable.” (Morning 120)

They are bewildered by the confusion around them which is not confusion of methods alone but also of aims. Though Sir Arjun Mitra and Rakesh are both in the Ministry of External Affairs, their attitudes towards their job and its execution are different. For Rakesh

…the muddled yearning of his schooldays found an outlet in his career, and in the early years after independence the service was not merely a career. It was, he told his father, the restoration of national opportunity. (Morning 51)

This novel presents the new India in search of an identity. It is about a country’s first encounter with freedom and the resultant problems. Nayantara Sahgal not only satirizes the politicians, the leaders and the bureaucrats but also the lopsided educational system with its stress on memory and the overcrowded classes and the emptiness of the imitative modernity. Nayantara Sahgal underlines the point that the modernity in itself is neither desirable nor undesirable. What matters is the effect it has on a person and the way a person reacts to it. Uma Mitra and Rashmi make different uses of modern values. For Uma it results in a meaningless entanglement whereas for Rashmi it becomes a liberating force.
The novel seeks to capture the atmosphere of a political happening and its aftermath. Though the framework is broad-based, the thematic unity is there and the novel emerges definitely as a political one concerning itself with both the corruption and the idealism of the political world. On the one hand it provides an insight into the working of politics, on the other it seeks to explore the effects and outcomes of these policies as they work out in individual human lives. Predominantly Nayantara is a novelist of the liberal viewpoint, but also adds a historical perspective to it.

*Storm in Chandigarh*, her third novel written with restraint and perception, analyses the unfathomable layers of human behavior and depicts man’s desire to gain control over others. In the portrayal of this problem, Sahgal demonstrates the qualities of a good creative writer, such as grace, delicacy, poise and objectivity. As the metaphor of the title suggests, the political turmoil over Chandigarh provides the scaffolding to erect the story structure. It pictures the seething uneasiness of the people on the political plane, their personal tensions and the uneasy marriages of three young couples: Vishal- Leela, Inder-Saroj and Jit-Mara. This emerging metaphor of a locale is the pivot of the moral design of the novel, not merely as a centre of action, but also as a symbol of the conflicting temperaments of a group. Vishal, though primarily belonging to the political mission and personal sympathies, he is vitally and unwittingly entangled in the private lives of the estranged couples. This inextricable interplay of the themes on two planes –political and personal or emotional, is a sure sign of Nayantara Sahgal’s technical competence.

Vishal Dubey, gifted with intelligence and capacity to “counsel patience” (*Storm 4*) aptly acts as the “filtering consciousness” (5) for the omniscient author’s narration as well as reflection. This point is significant in the sense that almost every
novel of Sahgal is invariably plentiful with long passages of “reflection or discussion on the socio-politico-philosophical traditions that go to form the Indian ethos.”(15) Vishal seems to combine Kailas’s idealism with Kalyan’s power to act. In general from Jane Austen on, women novelists have difficulty in portraying their male characters. Nayantara Sahgal, surprisingly, is more successful with her male characters than with her female ones. Vishal deals with the two political forces – Gyan Singh and Harpal Singh, and also the men he encountered on the personal plane - Inder, Mehra and Jit. These characters are vividly portrayed in the novel. Inder and Jit are foil to each other. In the design of the plot-structure the young couples offer a study in contrast. One is a callous, grumpy, inhuman domineering boor given to frequent misgivings, estrangements and silence born of jealousy-cum-anger, and the other lives by reason. Similarly Saroj and her world offer a contrast to that of Gauri. Gauri is painted as a “social butterfly” (48) with a world of “exquisite calculation” (48) where everything is “lovely and languid and opulent.” (48) Whereas Saroj, despite her indulgence, is in every sense, a virtuous woman, a woman of sensitivity and quality, a “mother to whom her children were a perpetual education and wonder” (92) a loving, devoted wife desiring the truest relationship with her husband.

In the light of the fact that these major characters feel, think, act and dramatize their emotions as individuals. From the plot construction point of view, Storm in Chandigarh shows a marked improvement on its predecessors. With Vishal as central knot, Nayantara Sahgal succeeds eminently in moving towards a better integrated plot. As an outsider and a passive spectator in the beginning, Vishal is caught unaware in the storm on both the planes because of his sense of involvement. It is through his free and clever movement on both the planes he tackles the movement of crisis. Both the strings of the plot, in fact, three – one on political and two on the personal plane
(those of Inder – Saroj and Jit – Mara) are inextricably inter-woven. The novel projects the rage and abatement of the storm very effectively on both the planes, with identical points of structures, analogous patterns and apt juxtapositions.

The novelist dramatizes the world of elite, their family life, their wives in particular and the feeling of frustration among the young couples. Her narration adequately proves that she can handle the delicate situations with skill and imagination. It is an over-simplification to say that Rakesh and Rashmi are carried over into Storm in Chandigarh with new names, but certainly there are strong resemblances between them and Vishal and Saroj. Both men, Rakesh (Storm) and Vishal (Shadow) are intelligent and sensitive, political and social observers. Vishal is an outsider, having been sent to Chandigarh as Delhi’s liaison officer to mediate between the Chief Ministers of Punjab and Haryana. Saroj is vaguely aware of her dissatisfaction with her husband Inder and she seems to blame herself for the problems. As Rashmi grows to face her divorce and to trust her emotions again, Saroj grows in admitting the failure of her marriage and in gaining confidence to accept the possibility of a trusting relationship with Vishal. Vishal’s wife, now dead, has shown him how well-intentioned people can cause each other suffering. The readers are well exposed to the character of Vishal than that of Rakesh. Rakesh has made mistakes, suffered, and learned. Saroj is also more fully described. The readers know something of her past, they follow the development of her marriage, and see the complexity of her relationship with Inder. There is a warmth and reality to Saroj and Vishal which was lacking in the earlier novel.

Although two main characters occupy a more central place in the total narrative of Storm in Chandigarh, Sahgal has again created many more memorable
secondary figures. One of the most interesting characters is Gyan Singh. Like Kalyan he is born poor. Like Kalyan Gayan Singh’s strong sense of self, his disregard for finer points of morality and his energy and drive have made him a powerful man. One of the central ideas in the novel from the beginning is the question of whether a tradition and moderation can provide adequate leadership in a time which seems to call for energetic and decisive leaders. In Gyan Singh and Kalyan the novelist portrays the attractions as well as the dangers of such people. Each of these colorful and dynamic men is paired off against a character who represents quieter intelligence and sensitivity (Harpal Singh and Kailas), for whom the author exposes her basic sympathy. It is interesting that although aggressive businessmen like Inder receive little sympathy in the end, neither of the dominating political figures is completely disregarded.

Nayantara sketches out another mismatched couple in the novel. Mara, again a character who is something of an outsider having been raised abroad, is the forceful aggressive figure. Although she has and seems to want no children of her own, she runs a school with great success. Her husband Jit is like Saroj in his passive acceptance, even of Mara’s affair with Inder. Saroj learns that endurance is not a virtue. She has to reach out to create with Vishal the relationship which Inder has refused. But for Jit, it is patience and enduring love which restore his marriage. While there is no resolution to the social and political question of what traits are necessary in leadership, there is a very clear statement that in personal relations people must be willing to gamble on honesty and trust.

In Storm in Chandigarh, Chandigarh, the city built by Le Corbusier, which has stark architecture, becomes a symbol of an alien order. One of the characters in
the novel comments:

The whole conception was too big, too true to be a setting for petty people. I don’t like a lot of the buildings here but there’s something fearless about the whole idea. Only the people haven’t measured up. The architects couldn’t find the right breed of human beings to inhabit their perfect blueprints. (Storm 55)

When Gauri, an important character in the novel, points out that “the fact is we aren’t ready for Chandigarh,” (49) it becomes obvious that Chandigarh is the “fictional metaphor for the superimposition of an exotic value system on our slow moving traditional society.” (10) Nayantara Sahgal manages to get better hold over the art of characterization in Storm in Chandigarh. Here the characters interact with each other and with the situations in which they are placed. They no longer have the passivity of the earlier novels. The feelings and the emotions of the main characters are not simply narrated, but they also dramatized. Gyan Singh and Harpal Singh, the representatives of two different kinds of political ideologies become lifelike as the novelist meticulously traces out their background and carefully describes the making of their temperaments.

When compared to This Time of Morning, Storm in Chandigarh has striking similarities in characters and themes. There is more depth in characterization and the social and political background is more integrated into the story. The characters in Storm in Chandigarh give importance to intellectual analysis. They self-consciously try to define what it means to be Indian, or Hindu, or Brahmin. This doesn’t make for gripping excitement, but it is interesting, and the reader is carried along by the warmth in the characters and their relationships.
The Day in Shadow, her fourth novel, marks a definite linear development in form, technique and language points of view. Plot construction and character delineation too show a incredible arrangement as in Storm in Chandigarh. The narrative device and the chain of events are contrived in such a way that they leave no room for the dramatic situation to reach the climatic point. Even Raj and Som are not brought face to face or to conflict in dramatic terms. Raj enters Simrit’s world when Som has already made an exit.

The use of ‘flashback’ technique, however, is appropriate. The stream of consciousness technique coupled with the functional use of ‘reverie’ helps the author a great deal in emphasizing the events that appear intense and significant to her. She is a good story-teller. Readability is one of the qualities in Nayantara Sahgal. Her novels keep the reader absorbed. The depiction of the society in which she lives and activates herself is important in terms of contemporary life in India. The novelist weaves an amazing technique to expose the political and social issues, the qualities and strength of Hindu culture, the necessity for a new, dynamic, pragmatic political philosophy and goals. The situation where the Indian women is put to the plight of suffering with her children and tax payments, even after divorcing the problematic partner, seem to be simmering in the novelist’s crucible of imagination. They cannot easily be thrown out but neither are they fused with the main current of the novel. They seem to be intruding into the fabric of the story with a disintegrating force that adversely affects the total unity.

Nayantara Sahgal gives an evidence of writing extremely well, while depicting the complex psychic tensions of an alienated husband and wife, with the use of suggestive and original image. She also recreates imaginatively the world of senses in
her descriptions. For example, Simrit, after divorce and before encountering Raj, identifies herself as a part of frieze and a common bit of wood. Power used excessively “resembles roasting meat, enticing the appetite for the miles around.” (Shadow 48) Further there are vivid descriptions of the drowsy peace of a Delhi in a winter afternoon as

...the lovingly comfortable feel of a cup of hot tea nursed in one’s hands when one has unexpectedly attained peace of mind, the crisp red and white succulence of a water-melon; the host inclines his smooth brilliantine head. (121)

A wry humor and artistic detachment mark her descriptions of the social and political life of New Delhi that forms the fictional milieu of The Day in Shadow. As regards the character portrayal, Som and his son Brij hold our attention most. Simrit, to whom the “things happen,” and who “is not an individual... (but) a culture , a tradition, a patient enduring passivity,” (42) is convincingly portrayed as a victim of circumstance. The subtle nuances of her character have been drawn effectively. Despite arrogance, meanness, assertion of his male supremacy and “spiraling mania” (48) for wealth, Som captivates our attention. In contrast Raj, an idealistic parliamentarian and who seeks to integrate Hinduism with social progress, appears only as a “pale paragon of virtue.” (69) The way he enters the life of Simrit sounds a little too contrived.

Nayantara Sahgal however succeeds in assigning to each one of her characters with sufficient eloquence and clarity to conduct a highly edifying dialogue. The forceful and evocative language puts life into her dialogues. Not only do they sound natural and crisp, they also convey effectively the intensity or the lightness of a
situation. The novelist seems to have taken adequate care to trim speech to character, Som, the villain of the piece. He speaks a diction that evocatively suggests the brutal nature he is meant to personify. The total feel of Som’s personality seems to be that of assertive, old-style Englishman, a hard-drinking, searing, bullying, ruthless, self-centered and dominant business magnate. Further, his dealings with his son, Brij, help us in establishing his identity and character. The novel demonstrated a firm grip over the language and the novelist’s ability for narrate episodes realistically.

Sahgal has created a powerful central image in the divorce settlement which Som has devised for his wife Simrit. He has given her six lakhs worth of shares in trust for their son. While she cannot use them, she must pay the tax on them, so that anything she earns through her writing will be wiped out. She herself accepted the terms like Saroj who is conditioned to accept and endure. The point is already made that both the heartless individuals and the society must learn compassion and justice. At the same time those who are gentle men and women and society, must learnt to stand up for their own integrity or face destruction. The conflicts symbolized in the divorce agreement are paralleled economically and politically in the oil treaty. Sumer Singh endangers independence, when he allows leftist powers to gain control. Sumer Singh is very like Kalyan and Gyan Singh in manipulating people and events to achieve his own ends. Raj, like Rakesh and Vishal, is an intelligent and thoughtful outsider, committed to preserving both gentleness and justice. As a Christian he attempts to reconcile Hinduism’s traditional attitude of seeing virtue in renunciation with his own religion’s attempt to create actively a society which is good. Simrit, is for Raj the perfect Hindu accepting her fate without a struggle. As an independent Member of Parliament Raj fights for justice on both public and personal levels – the revolution must be prevented and the divorce settlement must be changed. In the end
none of these problems has been solved. In fact Sumer Singh has just been named Foreign Minister. But we are left with Raj and Simrit, in love and about to be married, enjoying the prospect of the life and the fight ahead of them.

A.V. Krishna Rao feels that, *The Day in Shadow* is a technically refined piece of fiction as:

the aesthetic ambivalence that Mrs. Sahgal achieves in dramatizing the personal and political crisis and their inter-relatedness lends an unprecedented metaphoric significance to it. (Rao, *Historical* 31)

Marcia P. Liu explains that “the conflicts symbolized in the divorce agreement are paralleled economically and politically in the oil treaty.” (Liu, *Continuity* 49)

Among the secondary characters, one of the most interesting is Brij, Smirit and Som’s sixteen year old son. Simrit wants to instill in him her own values of rationality and gentleness, yet she is helpless when he begins to dominate his sisters in traditional male arrogance, when he thrashes a boy at school for saying something stupid, when he adopts his father worship of fast cars and opulent officers. The boy’s is confusion, the conflict between his love for his mother and his admiration for his father obvious. While he may eventually come to see the shallowness of his father’s values, his total acceptance of them at this point is yet an illustrations of Sahgal’s thesis that passive good cannot oppose active evil.

There is vitality and warmth, certainly, and humor too. At a dinner, Simrit tries to get beyond social character to have a real conversation with a businessman from Leeds. She asks him if he thinks friendship lasts longer than sex, and the man is so bewildered he can only reply over and over, “You are a bloody marvel, Mrs.Raman. Take it from me you are.” (Shadow 96) while this scene is amusing, the
readers are always aware that it is meant to illustrate the theme of the incompatibility between the world of business and world of sensitive articulate. For all that the characters are appealing and themes are interesting, they still remain intellectually rather than emotionally satisfying. Novels too should not mean but be. While *The Day in Shadow* is more unified than its predecessors, the meaning still seems to dominate.

In *A Situation in New Delhi*, Sahgal follows the patterns she has established in her previous books. She tells the story as a multi-focused narrative and the reader is able to recognize familiar character types. The readers are first introduced to Michael, the English writer of biographies who returns to Delhi after ten years to write the life of Shivraj, the beloved national leader who has recently died. They then turn to Devi, Shivraj’s sister, now Education Minister of India. Next, Usman, Vice-Chancellor of the university, an old friend of Devi and a man dedicated to the values of thoughtful moderation which Shivraj embodied. The background problems in this novel are education and the revolutionary forces which have gained ground following Shivraj’s death. To show the problems of the younger generation’s point of view, the story is also told through four young people: Rishad, Devi’s nineteen year old son, who has organized committed acts of violence, and who knows he must be prepared to kill for his beliefs; Madhu, the girl raped by three students in the university campus; Priya, who helps Rishad when he chooses her father’s house for one of his group’s random acts of destruction, but whose basic joy in life is love; and briefly Pinky, the pampered daughter in her final year at the university who drops out to marry a dull but rich young man. Although Sahgal’s multiple narrative technique is unchanged, there are clearly some new elements here.
Each of the novels revolves around a couple – Rakesh and Rashmi, Vishal and Saroj, Raj and Simrit. As politicians or government servants, the men are strikingly similar – intelligent, articulate, compassionate, committed to preserve the values of justice and moderation. While it is in each case the man who is the dominant character, it is interesting that the women are increasingly more fully characterized in this novel. Rashmi is the least developed whereas, Simrit, as wife, mother, writer, lover is the most complex. In A Situation in New Delhi, Devi shares the centre stage with no one. She has strong ties with three men. There is Michael, whom she loved but refused to marry ten years ago because of her wish to stay with Shivraj. There is Usman, briefly her lover but far more her friend and companion. It is interesting to note that again each man is something of an outsider. Michael is a foreigner, who ironically feels himself an alien in his own country, and Usman is a Muslim who claims India as his country despite his wife’s fears. And finally there is Shivraj.

The novel begins with Michael reading the announcement of Shivraj,s death, and ends with Michael thinking if Shivraj’s values are not dead, he isn’t either. Shivraj has been a decisive influence in each of these figures’ lives, for Devi certainly the most important. She knows she would not be Minister has she not been his sister. But for all that these men are important to her. Devi is clearly a woman who can stand alone. Ten years ago, loving Michael, she sent him off so she could continue to share Shivraj’s work. Now, even in the midst of her grief for Rishad, she suggests and arranges for Michael’s departure to finish his book. The writer has an ambivalent attitude towards the character of Devi because of which there is a split in her character; Michael becomes a mere observer whereas Usman remains an interpreter of the socio-political strands in New Delhi.
Clearly this novel is different from the earlier ones. It is considerably shorter and more concentrated in its effect. It deals with violence to a greater extent than and any other, and it includes a description of sex which is a new element in Nayantara Sahgal’s writing. There are intellectual concepts here which can be traced though all her works -- a faith in rationality and moderation, in political as well as personal levels. In A Situation in New Delhi the characters seem to have come before the concepts rather than the other way around.

Nayantara Sahgal has very strong feelings about the wastage of young lives, especially women’s lives. Madhu is raped and hardly anyone cares. Her family is humiliated and can only think of marrying her off to rid themselves of the disgrace. The nurse in the hospital is annoyed when she screams and disturbs the other patients. Her fellow university students are outraged and stage a demonstration when her attackers are expelled. Everything goes squandered and the readers are hardly surprised when Madhu sets herself on fire. Pinky like Madhu, her only future is in marriage and she herself has consented to her family’s choice. But marriage for Pinky means only saris and jewellery. She spends an entire morning getting rid of the hair on her arms and legs, plucking eyebrows, and bleaching the hair on her lip. The picture of her sitting timing herself with her elbows stuck in lemon halves would be funny if it weren’t so sad. As she drifts into marriage, so too she will drift into motherhood, for she knows nothing about of contraceptives.

Being protective in sex seems to be a problem for Sahgal’s women, Saroj’s third pregnancy is an accident – “she has never been able to use anything effectively” (Storm 52) and Devi also says that contraceptives used to make her feel something was struck in her throat. “I never could manage anything mechanical.” (Situation 41)
Devi is very concerned about the young people, and tries to help, but she can do nothing. Like Simrit with Brij, she can’t even make contact with her own son. She finds about his revolutionary activities only through his death. While understatement is one of Sahgal’s characteristics, these very moving people and events would seem to call for something stronger than the neutral word “situation”.

Throughout Sahgal’s work there is continuity. The novels are unified first by their background of recent Indian politics. To whatever extent this is historically accurate, the theme of political struggle is clearly one of Sahgal’s major interests. Secondly she makes her readers aware of her division of the world into the aggressors and the non-aggressors, the active and the thoughtful. She draws a clear line between those whose main interest is to be rich or powerful and those who care for justice and moderation. Finally, growing out of both of these concerns is her awareness of the need for women to become equal partners. She is confident enough that in the struggle to achieve emancipation, women have to protect those values which allow human being to live together in mutual respect. Even Sahgal’s strongest women have been formed almost entirely by men, and it is largely men they continue to relate to. Her readers carry a hope that as in life process of self-exploration goes on, so too Sahgal’s women will continue to describe the process of growth, which has been so convincingly described.

Rich Like Us is a very perceptive study of contemporary India. Through this novel Sahgal properly enters the fictional domain of post-modernism. From the more or less straight narratives of the past, Sahgal uses the fictional mode that might be termed mimetic. Sahgal uses symbolism and allegory extensively in this novel. She also points out that the narrative technique in this novel is polyphonic, alternating
between a limited third person narration and Sonali’s first person narrative. Out of the twenty-one chapters, rose and sonali each have eight, Nishi and Kishori Lal two each and a opening chapter. In addition to this multi-layered quality of narration, there is a frequent motion back and forth in time through the thoughts and memories of the characters, as well as through the writings of Sonali’s grandfather. Sahgal has sensitive comments to make about the complex caste system and religion – “I cannot believe in Hinduism, whatever Hinduism might be. (Rich 51).

The readers listen to many voices and people: Rose, the cockney memsahib, Sonali, an ICS officer; Mona, very orthodoxy reared; Ravi, with his misplaced Marxist ideology, Ram, a successful businessman and of Kishori Lal. Kishori Lal’s flourishing business prospects and skill in trade are narrated through his reminiscences. In the course of the narrative, Sahgal provides a very poignant sketch of the family, social and public relationships. The novelist evokes a very impressive picture of an oppressed and corrupt administration. She exposes the corrupt, hypocritical bureaucracy which created terror in the innocent people and snatched away their freedom of expression. The innocent people were imprisoned and the guilty went unpunished though their crimes were detected because they knew people at the top.

Sonali, a state employee analysis the situation very carefully and examines the working of the corrupt machinery with an inward eye as she is very closely associated with the government. She is a sort of stubborn character, critical of those in power. The canvas of the novel is very wide and touches upon all the important historical movements of the British Raj, freedom struggle, partition, the Second World War, abolition of Privy Purse, the Emergency, the unpopular sterilization camps, the talk of
the people’s car and the dowry system. There is a swipe at the reforms undertaken without popular support. Towards the end of the novel one observes a complete decline in ethical standards of the government. The English memsahib is murdered by a rowdy youth encouraged by Dev, Rose’s step-son. Dev who indulges in forging his father’s cheque goes unpunished and ultimately becomes a cabinet minister through unclean means. In him, one views the ascendancy of the unscrupulous, greedy sycophants, occupying important government positions. It proves to be the dark period and the downfall of the scrupulous officers like Sonali. Nevertheless it is the English women Marcella who encourages her to be enthusiastic about her bright career. However, the novel ends on an optimistic note reminding the youth of their responsibility to live an alert life with a hope for a promising future.

Nayantara Sahgal’s ability lies in fictionalizing contemporary events in a remarkable manner. The story’s success is in its catching the ambience of the past and the present through its character. The opening characters of Nayantara Sahgal’s novels are notable from the technical point of view. They are not devoted to the conventional novelistic business of introducing the characters, or setting events in motion. Instead, with deftly economical touches, the author creates a context into which persons and previous events are subsequently fitted as into a mosaic. In the chapters that follow she takes up in turn each individual section of her design, filling it out, relating it to the others, continually interweaving past and present until the pattern is complete.

The drawing-room in Rich Like Us is impersonally and tastelessly opulent, with roses standing “stiff and upright on display in a blinding array of surgically cut, bulk-bought crystals, to judge be the profusion of vases, ash-trays and bowls all over
the hollow pretentiousness of the New Delhi jet-set, with its corrupt values and extravagant life-style is exposed in the sharp opening sentences which establish the context: “The richer the host, the later dinner was served. Dining late was a status symbol, like Scotch whisky, five times the price of Indian...” (9). Dinner is eventually served, too much and too late, after three other people have trailed in severally, and bitter antagonisms have surfaced between Dev and his foster-mother. From chapter two onwards the scenario is enlarged, as the rot spreads in widening circles from Dev’s house to the social milieu, to the political situation, and back into the past. Finally, in the murder of Rose and the elevation of Dev to the rank of Cabinet Minister, it engulfs the present. The ability of using different writing techniques comes to light in this junctures. Thus Sahgal, having created a context, expands it for her larger thematic ends.

Her women, such as Saroj in *Storm in Chandigarh*, play out their struggle for freedom, against a background of violent upheaval in some North Indian city, real or imagined. In *Rich Like Us* Sonali, “Miss Burning Right,” (28) asserts her principles in opposition to unbridled power during the Emergency. The backdrop to her struggle is extensive and painstaking detail, recreating the life of the period. The action covers only a few months and never moves out of New Delhi, yet the recollections of the characters take the readers to Bihar and pre-partitioned Lahore. The time-frame is stretched in the same way to the turn of the century.

Dennis Walder concludes that although the Emergency frames the action in *Rich Like Us*,

The narrative imagines it as a moment within an immense and varied history… the circling, digressive structure, within which stories are
enfolded within stories, suggests indigenous narrative traditions; although Sahgal’s skillful deployment of free indirect speech and stream of consciousness techniques may derive from modernist Western traditions too – exemplifying on the formal level the cultural ‘sharing’ she wishes to promote. (Rich 105)

This Time of Morning (1965), Storm in Chandigarh (1969) and The Day in Shadow (1971) are all narrated in the third person through the consciousness of a number of characters: seventeen in this Time of Morning, seven in Storm in Chandigarh and five in The Day in Shadow. Not only are we given access to their thoughts and feelings, but flashbacks to the past through their memories from a substantial part of the narrative of each novel. It is interesting to note how the novelist gradually weans her attention away from the labyrinths of sociology to focus on political and personal concerns, mutually related in a casual bond and how she succeeds ultimately in letting the twain meet and are the two aspects of the same reality.

Nayantara Sahgal’s fairness in her presentation of different issues is her remarkable artistic achievement. She never loads the dice consciously against any combatant value or institution. The political scenario in her novels has been presented in eminently human rather than in ideological colors. The long drawn-out fight for freedom, the high hopes at the attainment of Independence, the mushrooming of opportunists and ideologies soon thereafter, the rise of fissiparous forces tearing at the national fabric, the rise of pseudo-radicalism, apathy, unconcern and rank self-seeking, pushing the nation to point of extremity; the tortuous course taken by the country in recent years comes alive in essentially human terms.
What is most noteworthy about Sahgal’s authorial strategy is her scrupulous objectivity. By permitting the readers a peep into her characters’ twisted process of thinking, she gives her creations autonomy independence. Sahgal ensures that the reality of her characters is not subjected to an external, super imposed viewpoint. Though the narrator, himself a character in the novel, does the filling in job regarding other characters in the novel, it is based on either his long association with most major characters. This keeps intact their inner vitality. In *This Time of Morning* and *Storm in Chandigarh*, too, there are Rakesh and Vishal respectively who approximate the role performed by the narrator with matching finesse. Sahgal painstakingly portrays the environmental influences which shape her characters such as Kalyan, Kailas, Hari, Mohan, Neeta, Rashmi and others. *Storm in Chandigarh* relies on a shuffling of perspective, enabling the reader to share the differing points of view of characters such as Harpal Singh and Gyan Singh, Vishal and Inder. The rest in both *This Time of Morning* and *Storm in Chandigarh* is the same – the successful creation of a set of characters moving in an actual three-dimensional context.

*The Day in Shadow* is characterized by greater sophistication in so far as it relies more of the readers’ capability to infer from what is presented by her in bold detail. Simrit’s relationship with Raj and Som comes out by implication through the presentation of Som’s relationship with Lalli, his business-partner, and his British employer. Som’s actions in themselves are a commentary on his values. *A Situation in New Delhi* takes the presentation further highly suggestive and meaningful juxtapositions of persons and situations: Shivraj’s humanistic idealism, the cabinet intellectuals’ a human pseudo-radicalism, Devi’s bewildering helplessness, and Rishad’s honest violence.
Another noticeable feature of the novelist’s suggestive presentation of ideological posture is her use of common-place symbols. These symbols, far from standing out intrusively, merge imperceptibility in the message they are charged with. The Sharanpur club, with its mixed clientele in *A Time to be Happy* symbolizes the changed reality in pseudo-Independence India. The mutilation of the wall paintings in Inder’s office in *Storm in Chandigarh* signals the vulnerabilities of the finer values of life in the face of brutal violence. The window in Sumer Singh’s office in *The Day in Shadow*, devoid of an outside view tells its own tale.

Nayantara Sahgal makes her fictional universe throb with beings of flesh-and-blood rather than abstracted ideologies. She suggests the general through the particular. The narrator, Sohanlal, Sanad (*Time*), Kailas Vrind, Prakash Shukla, Abdul Rahman, the President (*Morning*), Vishal Dubey, Trivedi, Harpal Singh (*Storm*), Raj (*Shadow*), Usman, Devi, Rishad (*Situation*) and Sonali (*Rich*) – all present their constructive political ideology in an essentially human idiom. Sahgal goes further in her commitment to the humanization of political rhetoric. She presents her characters as blends of virtues and vices. She succeeds most in those characters where she penetrated deeply into their psychology to discover the instincts which propel them to action, whether it be worthy of approbation or not. In Kalyan Sinha in *This Time of Morning*, is a character viewed in entirety. The novelist notes his concern for the exploited, the weak and the helpless. In *Storm in Chandigarh*, Harpal is presented in the wholeness of his personality with his successes and failures, idealism and frustrations. Gyan Singh is both down-to-earth, charmer and a demagogue. Rishad in *Situation in New Delhi* gets a similarly thorough treatment with both a human terrorist and the human reformer rolled in one.
Nayantara Sahgal’s achievement consists in attempting a portrayal of politicians in personal relationships instead of giving the usual run-of-the-mill stuff of the political aspirations of non-political entities or the shenanigans of those in power. Her politicians exist in both the public and the private realms. They feel on their pulse, at times, the tragic implications of such duality. The implications of such situations are presented through the narrator in *A Time to be Happy*.

Another aspect of Nayantara Sahgal’s delineation of her characters, unencumbered with the dictates of ideology, is her even-handed portrayal of people subscribing to different creeds. This is all the more remarkable, if one considers the fact that her primary occupation is with the theme of the antiquatedness of Hinduism vis-a-vis other faiths which, she feels, and more in tune with the requirements of the present critical times. Sahgal doesn’t let her impression of Hinduism cloud her perception of life and people as an artist. Liberalism and obscurantism are not exclusive to any one religion in her novels. McLvor in *A Time to be Happy* and Raj in *A Day in Shadow* are liberal Christians. Saleem and Saira in *This Time of Morning*, Usman in *A Situation in New Delhi* are humanist Muslims.

On the other hand the Granges in *A Time to be Happy* and Nadira in *Situation in New Delhi* represent the pull of fundamentalism. However, the fairness or the ability to catch the grey areas rather than being conditioned by the few streaks of black or white in one’s personality is sadly lacking in other characters like Hari Mohan (*Morning*), Gyan Singh (*Storm*) and Sumer Singh (*Shadow*). Nevertheless they are not reduced to one-dimensional card-board figures because their outward actions are inextricably intertwined with their internal mechanics. It is the internal psychology, of Kunti Behn, Harilal Mathur, Sohan Lal (all from *Time to be Happy*),
Kalyan Sinha, Hari Mohan (both from *This Time of Morning*), Sumer Singh (*The Day in Shadow*), that makes these characters credible and thus carry the ideological weight the novelist puts on them.

The way a novelist draws the curtain suggests the tenuous agreement between the artist and the ideology. Except for Sahgal’s political lyric in *Rich Like Us*, the endings of her novel are dictated by the inner alchemy of the characters rather than by the ideological directions of the novelist. Sanad’s coming round to self-realization under the influence of his wife, Veena (*Time*), Kailas’s taking to activist politics to stem the rot (*Morning*); Vishal’s cool-headed appraisal of the deteriorating situation in Chandigarh and his resolve to face it boldly (*Storm*); Raj’s concern for the vanishing ‘tribe of India-lovers’ (*Shadow*); Usman’s coming to the streets to lead a popular movement against the government (*Situation*); Sonali’s resolve not to be cowed down but work for the future of her country (*Rich*) – the endings are psychologically motivated rather than ideologically conditioned. Rather than being superimposed on mannequin, the final responses grow imperceptibly from the innermost being of the characters. Consequently ideological panaceas, if any, appear to be inevitable products of an intensely human and dynamic situation.

Nayantara Sahgal shows signs of gradual maturity as a political novelist expertly interlocking her humanitarian and political concerns into an amalgam where each realm adds to the other and solutions to the problems in one are often to be found in the other. Political conditions, social attitudes and religious heritage define, to a larger extent, the parameters of opportunity available to individuals for self realization. Nayantara Sahgal catches the cause-and-effect sequence of these constituents of the environment.
The novelist’s method of presentation needs a close study that reveals her uniqueness. In the world of Nayantara Sahgal’s novels the readers do not meet her characters fleetingly or casually; they exist in relation to a background. In her first novel, *A Time to be Happy*, it is the narrator who fills in the background information of most of the characters, for he has either known them for many years or they confide in him.

In her succeeding novels other methods are followed and the narrator is replaced by the omniscient author who has greater freedom than a narrator. And the recollections, reminiscences and flashbacks follow revealing the psychological backgrounds and the influences on the characters. This helps the readers to see the thought-process of the characters. This is one of the most effective methods of characterization which Nayantara Sahgal uses, for she uses it successfully. It is here that her objective as a creator is put to test. She does not allow her own viewpoint to dominate the viewpoints of her characters. And by allowing the reader to see their thought-process she imparts to them a coherence of their own, allowing the past to merge in the present.

The narrator in *A Time to be Happy* portrays the characters in a stupendous way. Other characters and viewpoints fail to come into their own. Maya’s and Kusum’s characters are also seen from this viewpoint. Most of the characters in this first novel are surface characters. They do not acquire any depth; their actions are narrated not really acted. They are real enough, only they act according to a conventional pattern and fail to emerge as individuals. Other characters also acquire a representative role like Govind Narayan and Rohan Masi. It is the British characters
like McIvor and Weatherby who have a degree of freshness. And to some extent there is Sanad who is bewildered and uncertain in the process of acquiring individuality.

In *This Time of Morning* her characters emerge more strongly as individuals. Some, like the Rani of Mirpu and Mrs. Narang are given the complete freedom, others have a limited background role like Saira and Saleem where they represent attitudes and viewpoints. There are others who conform to a traditional role like Mira and Kalyan Sinha, who struggle hard to understand their own selves. But as Nayantra concerns herself mainly with political changes and ideas, the characters who are chosen to project these, acquire representative roles.

With each succeeding novel, Nayantara Sahgal gets a better hold over the art of characterization. In *Storm in Chandigarh* the number of characters is further reduced and political concern localized to a large extent. Here the characters interact with each other and with the situations in which they are placed. They no longer have the passivity of the earlier characters. Saroj and Mara feel and think alike and dramatize their emotions as individuals, there is directness about their feelings. Neither comment nor narration comes in between. Even the politicians and the administrators are not presented as piecemeal but in their totality. Harpal is portrayed not only as a leader but as a man with his success and failures, his idealism and frustrations.

Similarly Gyan Singh’s attachment to his family focuses attention on him as a person not merely as a politician. In this novel the men and women do not merely represent ideas or attitudes but men and women in their own rights. They face conflicting emotional demands of their own natures: Mara who is in love with two men, Inder who has two different sets of values and Saroj who is caught between the
conflicting demands of her own nature and the traditional role of women. Jit who has surrendered the initiative in his relationship to Mara and Vishal who finds in Saroj a corresponding sensitivity after his own unhappy marriage are also finely portrayed. These characters are able to analyse their own selves.

In this novel there is also an increasing dependence on dialogue as a means of character portrayal. This does not happen to the same extent in *The Day in Shadow*. Som and Raj do not interact as Inder and Vishal do in *Storm in Chandigarh*. In fact Raj does not even meet Som. Both Sumer Singh and Ram Krishnan remain on the fringes of the novel. And in spite of the strong parallels between the political and the personal themes it is neither Simrit nor Raj who dominates the novel; it is Som who overshadows everyone else. The narrative method and the sequence of events do not allow any dramatic situation to emerge.

The characters in *A Situation in Delhi* represent political stances and most of them do not emerge as strong characters. Devi’s emotional behavior is in line with her political behavior for in both her emotional and political relationships she is vague and hesitant to take a definite approach. But this vagueness does not cohere with her sensitivity and awareness of the situation. She is unable to come to terms with herself and Rishad’s death accentuates this uncertainty leaving her a passive victim. She lacks the strength and the ability to react sharply to situation. Similarly Rishad lives at two levels – one the level of silent obedience and existence in his house, the other the active and aggressive level of the Naxalite movement. He is uncertain and bewildered yet he does not reveal this. His mother who is aware that she is unable to understand him thinks of him as ‘cool and sure, quiet and courteous.’ (18)
The characters in this novel, except Skinny, relate to the ideas instead of it being the other way round. And Devi’s friends the Puris are there only to illustrate the contrast between the affluent and the poor. Pinky’s attitude to life is to be contrasted with that of Skinny and Madhu. While Skinny is keen to identify herself with causes, Pinky is not even aware of them. She is engrossed in preparing for the marriage to Aravind which she looks upon as an escape from the restrictions of her parental home- as a road to personal freedom. Not so Madhu who reacts sharply to the idea of marriage and commits suicide in protest. Skinny and Madhu are finely drawn and they are characters who grow in response to a situation. Amongst the other characters Michael’s second wife Nell is alive and real as is Usman who is able to face his indecisions and weaknesses, his failures and limitations and thus grow out of them. His optimism is not facile or unrealistic. In a true sense it is not even optimism but purely a matter of faith.

Character portrayal takes place in a number of ways in Sahgal’s novels. In her first novel the narrator helps in this task and within this general framework there are summing ups and reminiscences which help portray characters. No pretence is involved in this. Other characters bring their problems views to the narrator and he acquires a multiple point of view. There is a great deal of directness in this novel. A number of characters say clearly what they want to be and how they react to situations.

In her next two novels though Nayantara Sahgal discards the method of first person narration in favor of the omniscient author, she continues to have a near narrator figure in the characters of Rakesh and Vishal. Rakesh in *This Time of Morning* provides a point of focus to the story in this role. He is the central character
to whom all others relate: Leela, Nita, Kalyan Sinha, Rashmi and many others. But his own character becomes severely limited in this role. Sahgal obviously believes that environmental influences are important influences on character and she provides details of the early lives of her characters. This is both a technique of narration and character portrayal. While narrating the early influences through flashbacks, reminiscences or direct narration she feels free to comment directly on characters.

In *Storm in Chandigarh* though Vishal is the central point and all the characters are related to him, yet he is in no way limited or handicapped by this role. In this novel a great deal of attention is bestowed on psychological detail and consistency. The method of interior monologue which she uses sparingly in *This Time of Morning* is used more freely and successfully here. The reader is taken into confidence regarding the thoughts and reactions of the various characters and their inner conflicts. The novelist not only shares Harpal’s background but also about certain developments and his feelings of inadequacy and frustration. The reactions of one character are juxtaposed against another’s and this again is both a method of characterization and narration.

On the surface there is a continuation of the methods in *The Day in Shadow* but there is a subtle difference in the use of the techniques. There are the summing-ups and reminiscences, exchange of confidences, comment and direct portrayal of events plus an insight into the working of the minds. Simrit does not say anything to Raj regarding her relationship with Som but it becomes possible to understand it through Som’s relationship with Lalli and his British employer. Som’s relationship with his children is made obvious through his indifference to them. They simply do not count as individuals or as human beings. Only his son Brij counts for, he satisfies
his male ego and his pride of possession. Even this relationship is not a satisfying or an equal one. Som does not communicate with him but merely exercises his power by dangling a hope in front of him.

Even Brij who is young and full of admiration for his father feels uneasy by the definite distance between him and Pa, the little journey to be made each time to acceptance. This also characterizes Som’s relationship with Simrit this indifference and sense of power and desire to dominate and get what he wants. The flamboyance of his character is Som’s real self. He has no deeper awareness of his own self. It is suggested that he is worse than Lalli for he is not even attached to his ‘lota’. While Lalli kills his wife in the heat of anger, Som does it slowly and dispassionately. Som’s character is seen mainly through his actions and not through confidences or comments. His actions are themselves a commentary on his values. Simrit does not discuss her emotional attitudes at any length with Raj. Simrit’s case is stated not through dramatic developments but plainly and badly, satisfying both the demands of art and character.

Juxtaposition and symbolism mark the narrative method in A Situation in New Delhi. More than ever before Nayantara Sahgal adopts the technique of using symbolism. The central cohesive force is of course the character of Shivraj but there is also a constant juxtaposition between the past and the present, and between tradition and revolution and each projecting a value system of its own. It is in this novel that a true multiple point of view is achieved. Politically there are so many different stands: there is Shivraj’s idealism and faith in human beings, the cabinet’s pseudo-radicalism, Devi’s helpless inactivity and Rashid’s violent moment. At another level there is Pinky who has no views or values and lives life in a superficial
manner. Her attitude is contrasted with that of Skinny on one hand and of Madhu on the other. The story moves forward through a series of confrontations: there is one between the vice-chancellor and the students of which only the aftermath is described. Then there is one between Devi and her colleagues where the crisis is never reached. But these meetings or confrontations or clashes lead the various characters to understand their selves own better. They culminate in Rishad’s death and Madhu’s suicide.

In all this there is an increased use of symbols, in her earlier novels the use of symbols is limited but as her use of irony recedes. Nayantara Sahgal’s use of symbols increases In Time to be Happy it is the club which is a symbol of the coming together of the Indian and the British worlds; In This Time of Morning Rashmi buys an image of Ganesh to announce her revival of interest in life. Similarly in Storm in Chandigarh the threat to the finer things of life symbolized by the destruction of the painting in Inder’s office just as his single-minded egoism is represented by his bare office. In The Day in Shadow it is not without purpose that Som and Vetter are engaged in the production of armaments (Shadow 84) and that Sumer Singh’s office in parliament house has a window without a view (154). Som’s lack of real friends symbolizes his complete isolation. In A Situation in New Delhi Shivraj himself is a symbol of human values and when Madhu steps on a picture in the university office she discovers it is Shivraj’s, the man who has ceased to be an active force and whose picture had been merely hung on the wall ignored alike by the students and the leaders. Madhu’s trampling on the fallen picture is a symbol of the end the end of the road for her. There are other symbols like the table which comes between Usman and Nadira and when Usman steps from behind his office table it becomes for him a step towards liberation. The oppressiveness of the weather is an all-engulfing symbol
representing the oppressive closeness of the political situation almost to everyone. For Rashid the rain’s refusal to come pouring down is a ‘constant reminder of this in-between state, neither life nor death,’ in which many people lived. (Situation 60) The weather oppresses Michael and Devi, the rain when it comes is like a breath of new life.

There are other symbols like the air conditioner which doesn’t work and Devi feels that ‘all the sovereign forces that bring change and mellowness in the course of time have been cut off like that air conditioner.’(16) Usman’s manuscript for educational reform and Michael’s manuscript of his book on Shivraj together symbolize the need for a new society which, in essence, should be a continuation of the old. Usman’s manuscript holds the plot together and the real crisis of the novel does not occur in any emotional situation but in a political one, in the rejection of Usman’s manuscript by the cabinet. It is then that Usman decides to resign and to try and provide effective leadership to the young. It is then that Nadira and Usaman move forward to a better understanding and Michael acquires a clearer understanding of what Shivraj had worked for. The manuscript is a blueprint for change and its official rejection opens the way for voluntary participation in the effort.

In some ways – in the predominance of the political theme, in its use of humor and irony – A Situation in New Delhi is closer to This Time of Morning than Storm in Chandigarh or The Day in Shadow. Rashid views Pinky’s engagement and prospective marriage with a mixture of pity and disgust for she hadn’t been allowed ‘to put her nose’ out of the house without her mother’s permission. And now she was being handed over to a person who also hadn’t ‘put his nose out of the house—his mental nose any way’ (Shadow 49). While Rashid reacts strongly to this, Devi accepts
it as a pattern of life around them and dismisses it lightly for their ‘noses seem perfectly matched.’

There is both irony and humor in this approach to an arranged marriage. While Rashid thinks of it as a rape, Pinky’s grandfather sees it as a money relationship. Pinky is betrothed not to a man but to ‘three banks and brewery.’ (38) Pinky’s whole existence is meaningless and empty. She reminds one of Dhiraj Singh’s children. Pinky finds everything either taxing or boring and half her life is spent in beauty care. Marriage at least promised a change from the ‘boring’ routine of daily life and together ‘out from under your parents.’ (148)

Irony and humor are used effectively in the writer’s description of the Cabinet members. The gap between the professions and the practice of the ministers and their lack of ideas are targets of ironic satire while the pompousness of the Minister of Minerals and metals is humorous. Again Ram Murti’s attitude of studied respect towards Devi is enjoyable. He doesn’t accept invitation for a cup of coffee, he doesn’t even look at her, he looks at the coffee pot (18). Ajaib Singh, Devi’s driver, is the other extreme. He has no inhibitions and is outspoken to the point of being rude at times. He shows his respect not by silence but by addressing her as ‘Sir’ thus conceding to her status outside the ordinary duties of a woman. The application he writes to her requesting her help for his son’s admission is practical and humorous; practical in its approach and humorous because of its language.

In her autobiographical work and her first novel Nayantara Sahgal had made a fairly generous use of Hindi words, a use not impelled by any feeling of inadequacy in English as a language, but by a desire to provide authenticity of locale and in order to capture the humor of a typical Indian situation. This use she discards in her later
works wherein she uses prose which is accurate and effective in describing what she wants and allows her to keep the emotional tone at the required pitch. In *A Time to be Happy* the style is extravagant and flamboyant at times especially when she describes Harish’s marriage, here it can be said that the style has an oriental richness. But this is not the rule, only an exception.

In her later novels she moves to a more urbanized and a less unconventional world. She discards the use of irony and even humor recedes into the background. Instead there is a delicate and effective use of symbols, and a more accurate style emerges. The inner joy in Saroj’s case is being stubbed out by Inder. She feels that her whole being ‘stopped and shrank in supplication to the man, her husband’ (*Shadow* 95). Dubey refers to the lack of communication as living in caves (*Storm* 131). He also feels that when people were not honest with themselves or with others it was a ‘grotesque twilight’ which people called living (214). Mara compares Inder’s inflexible nature with the iron bands on a broken box which stay in place ‘rigid and intact, incongruously protecting nothing.’ (52)

*The Day in shadow* the style is even more accurate and effective. At times the accuracy hurts; the smiles reinforce the impact and lay bare the ugliness or the tenderness of the moment. Simrit is like “a statue- a lifeless benumbed being, embedded in the past” (*Shadow* 139), and Som’s terms for the divorce, are ‘a sort of Hiroshima’ (138). Simrit in her withdrawal from life has moved closer to ‘untouched unspoilt non-human things’ (p. 34). Her emotional experience leaves her broken and spent as if she had come out of wreckage. Simrit wants a world whose ‘texture’ is kindly. She wants her children to value the beauty and freedom of nature, to be sensitive to the life around them not be surrounded by shadows and veils, ‘Cut off
from the look, the smell, the feel of things around one, one could become stricken and behaved’ (92).

In *A Situation in New Delhi*, once again language is used precisely and expressively. The novel is about a situation arising out of a ‘leader’s death plus-one-minute.’ (Situation 54) Pinky and her gang, appear to Rashid, to be morons; Veena and Vijay represent a kind of ‘adult illiteracy’, people who do not read or write and are not intellectually involved in anything. These phrases and words linger in mind and express much more than the literal level of the meaning.

Amongst all these changes and signs of development and growth Nayantara Sahgal’s concern for some themes has been a consistent one. For instance, the need for educational reform has been there in her autobiographical works. Her concern in *A Time to be Happy* and *This Time of Morning* until in *A Situation in New Delhi* becomes an issue which forces to crystallize into a crisis. Similarly her concern with the individuality and freedom of women has been a consistent one as has been her reliance on nonviolence and personal involvement as part of the solution to the political muddle. It is not always easy to recognize the moment of crisis in her novels for the moment is rarely dramatized. In *A Time to be Happy* the moment is perhaps the incident of Raghubir’s injury which not only brings Kusum and Sanad together but leads to Sanad’s self-questioning.

In *This Time of Morning* it takes place at two levels- the first when Rashmi decides to break off her relationship with Neil and the second when Kalyan Sinha is confronted by his own failures. In *Storm in Chandigarh* also the process is a simultaneous one taking place at two levels – at the political level Harpal is persuaded to take a stand against the strikers and his passive helplessness is turned into a
positive stance; at the personal level when Saroj decides to defy Inder and announces her desire to go on meeting Vishal. But in her next novel *The Day in Shadow* the crisis is already over when the story opens. Simrit and Som are already divorced and Simrit is trying to adjust to the aftermath of the divorce. What happens in the novel is a kind of resistance building up both at the political and the personal situation, which culminates in Raj’s decision to resist the political decisions and Simrit’s decision to continue life as if the consent terms simply did not exist.

This trend is reversed in *A Situation in New Delhi* where the story builds up towards a sense of crisis which takes place in the shape of a timid confrontation between Devi and her cabinet colleagues and in the rejection of Usman Ali’s plan for educational reform. At another level the crisis also takes place in the theatre where violence and nonviolence are intense opposition and Rishad’s desire to prevent violence results in his own violent death. This is a moment where the confrontation is dramatized but this does not often happen in her novels where the pace of events is neither hurried nor forced. Instead in all her novels the response of the characters to the events in their lives is characterized by reflection and self-awareness and their present is brought into focus by knowledge of their past.

Adhering to Gandhian values, Nayantara Sahgal emphasis in all of her novels the need for the personal integrity. This involves the rejection of greed, violence and corruption. Her narratives consistently draw parallels between the public events of the outside worlds and the private events of the characters lives so that the personal and the political are deliberately interwoven.