Nayantara Sahgal is a well-known writer of Indian English fiction. The literary circle also knows her as a political commentator, who writes searching and in-depth articles on political situations of the country in the leading periodicals. She has also contributed articles on the subject of the emancipation of women, frankly discussing issues such as divorce, motherhood, and adultery.

Born in one of the foremost political families of India and having spent the most impressionable years under the tutelage of great leaders like Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Nayantara's literary background developed with her political interest. Returning from America after completing her education, she tried her hand at creative writing. Her personal reminiscences, collected in the two books, *Prison and Chocolate Cake* and *From Fear Set Free* (1962) become an instant hit in the literary circles of England and America. She made her debut in the field of fiction with *A Time to Be Happy* and took the Indian English literary scene by storm. It was published in 1963, followed by *This Time of Morning* in 1965, *Storm in Chandigarh* in 1969, *The Day in Shadow* in 1973, and *A Situation in New Delhi* in 1977.
She has created a new genre as she remarks herself in an interview with Ms. Neeta Jha:

"The political situation is the background of my books. I notice that nobody else in India, at least writing in English, has used the technique of having a political situation—a specific political situation as the backdrop of every single novel. There have been novels of political situations, isolated, ones, but I have developed this as a genre, as a whole style of political novel which uses political background but tells a story of human life against that."1

The Indian political situation, from 1947 to the present day, is an integral part of her novels. Her development as a writer has been influenced by the political events of her childhood, among which Gandhi's influence is a vital one: "the idea of non-violence is reflected in every single novel that I have written—all five of them."2 She is also interested in writers like Marx and Lenin, Orwell's political pieces and considers Schumacher's book 'Small is beautiful' very good reading for liberal ideas.

A dedicated and committed novelist, M tyantara Sahgal says about herself: "I am not comparing myself with Malrauz, but the comparison would be more suitable with a European or an African writer who has a political commitment.
and who is willing to live with the hardships or punishments that this commitment brings with it. She writes to deliver a message through her novels, which have both political and social overtones. An indomitable champion of honesty and sincerity in both fields, Mrs. Sahgal demands serious perusal of her works.

Having been nourished on the ideals of both East and West, it is natural for her to deal with the East-West encounter as a substantial background for her novels. Period-wise, her novels cover the post-independence era, when the British have finally left India but the Anglo-Indians still carry on the traditions of their erstwhile rulers. The British trained Indian officers, lawyers, doctors and engineers represent the Western approach, and the Indian foreign service personnel, the politicians of the post-independence period and the new government servants, represent the Eastern tradition. The Westernised Indian is caught in between a culture shock when he seeks his identity. It leads to a crisis and after a period of intense living through adverse situations that leads to self-analysis, these characters get back their balance. On the other hand the Eastern values are constantly watched and weighed against the dynamic Western thoughts and are sometimes found insufficient to provide all the answers. An adjustment has
to be made, based on practical reasoning and self-assessment. A psychological approach based on realistic episodes is the method that Mr. Sahgal adopts when he depicts this East-West encounter in her novels, of which, her first one, *A Time To Be Happy* is a significant example.

In *A Time To Be Happy* Sanad Shivaal, western-educated Indian youth returns to India and acutely feels the sense of non-belongingness that overflows his heart at the sight of his native land. His values have changed and westernization has become an integral part of his character. He says: "I have studied English, history and literature. I have read the English poets. It's all the more real to me than the life I live every day. Don't you see, it has been burned into us, we are branded with it. My body is in India but my brain does not belong here. I might as well be an Englishman except for the colour of my skin." There are others like him, more or less, feeling the same brunt: Govind Narayan, Harish, Jirish, Hari Lal Sethur and Sir Nonu Chatterjee. For them, westernization has become a philosophy, a principle of life symbolised by their love for 'Chotapog', cocktail parties and ball dances. Included in this category are also the British characters like Grange who makes fun of Banaji, Weatherby and more are impatient and insipid at the Indians.
On the other hand Sohan Bhai, a man of Gandhian Philosophy, and Bihari who believes in the equality of all faiths, are the pillars of Eastern culture. Kusum Shiv Pal represents the traditional Eastern approach of service through sacrifice. In the conflict between the East and the West, the former wins. Shiv Pal changes his attitude and learns to respect 'people' not labels. Others, like Lalita Chatterjee are able to read the writing on the wall and accordingly adjust themselves to new conditions.

The novel presents the political situation as the background to the personal crisis of Sanao Shivpal, who belongs to a rich, Westernised family and is not concerned with the changing current of the political situation. But chance makes him take a keen interest in the National movement before long. His first posting after joining a British firm has one to be in Saharanpur and the date is a momentous one, August 9, 1942, the day on which the Quit India movement starts. A clerk, Raghbir, in Sanao's office wears a Gandhi cap which is a serious offence and the British officer takes exception to it. It is through Raghbir that Sanao comes to know of the great struggle for the country's freedom. Sanao marries Kusum whose brother is killed by a British bullet in the August movement in 1942. Kusum can never forget this even though
she believes in non-violent non-cooperation, and consequently Sanad's mind also receives a jolt.

The narrator himself participates in the satyagraha Movement and goes to jail. The social workers like Sohan Bhai and Kunti Behen appear in the novel, together with the narrator, to give it a political colour. Sanad Shivpal himself changes, thus acknowledging the influence of the political situation over the personal side of his life. His dual alienation, first as a Western-educated Indian in relation to his native country, and secondly as the representative of the rich, upper strata of society, finds its ultimate sublimation in his accepting Hindi as his language and the charkha as the symbol of his political awakening.

_A Time to Be Happy_ lacks the structural mastery needed to present a canvas of such a vast proportion, intended by the novelist. Characters and situations are not restrained to the limited number, desirable to impart an effect of controlled beauty. The beginning and the end do not possess a satisfactory link, the beginning depicts Sanad declaring that he would resign from his job, the end finds him drawing up a new contract with his British firm.

The narrative technique is confusing to the reader,
because he has to mind the point of view of both the impersonal narrator and the omniscient author. Meenakshi Mukherjee's discerning assessment of the novel is significant:

In *A Time to Be Happy*, the point of view shifts uneasily between an impersonal observer, a narrator agent, and an omniscient author, and the result is not a successful novel, but merely an interesting social document depicting the educated upper class people who lived in the period covering the non-cooperation movement August disturbances in 1942, the Bengal famine and the great year 1947.

The narrator is a quiet, dignified, middle aged friend of Sanad Shivpali, the central character in the novel. The narrator assumes the omniscient character when he reveals that he is the close confident of the other characters and is thus able to reveal the working of their minds. On the other hand he also participates in the plot by being emotionally involved and bringing in a kind of sub-plot, unnecessary to the main structural design. He also takes on the role of an observer by watching and commenting on the events and characters; in between he digresses here and there, addresses his 'dear readers', discusses the technical difficulties. "In any case it is difficult to avoid the subject of one-self altogether in any account written in the first person" (P.72).
in spite of his assertions that he is an onlooker, not an agent who activates the course of the situations, the narrator jumps into the fray when he accosts maya. both of them change the course of their lives to follow separate paths to the same goal of self-sacrifice and social upliftment. but this tragedy ending in a stoic acceptance of testifying, rings hollow, because it has no relation to the real tragedy of Shivpal's personal alienation, which is the basic foundation of the plot.

In *A Time to Be Happy* the message is clear that one has to respect the best of both the cultures. Values should broaden the outlook, not narrow it down, and he is the happiest who seeks the truth in blending the oriental and the occidental approach. *Sonad* Shivpal, makes it clear through his actions when he takes up spinning and by learning his mother tongue with respect. His character justifies the title, as he is the representative of the India that has emerged after two hundred years of dominion as an independent country, vibrant with enthusiasm and full of new ideas. It is indeed, a time to be happy, to be optimistic and build up the nation.

In a more involved and complicated manner, the same approach to theme and characters is in evidence in her next novel *This Time of Morning*. The venue in this novel is
Delhi, the epicentre of politics, the south block holding the main interest. The main stream of politics depicts different life styles of different persons involved in it: politicians, scheming for the betterment of their positions; high officials taking corruption as a principle of life; foreign advisers having a good time; ambitious civil servants and their frustrated better-halves; Indian Foreign Service personnel disgruntled with their postings; sincere young men and women of the new generation bewildered by the difference between the appearance and reality; young girls and boys sandwiched between tradition and modernity and the weary, disillusioned politicians of the pre-independence age. It is a panorama of political and social field, against which the culture-conflict between the East and the West is depicted in the character of Sir Arjun Mitra who is unable to settle down in India at first.

Sir Arjun, after coming back from abroad, is the victim of non-belongingness:

"For a long time after his return, he felt very uncomfortable in the country of his birth. He was deeply attached to his family but... he spoke his language haltingly, the streets he knew best were those he had spent motoring with friends on the continent. He was familiar with London's pubs and restaurants, newspapers, bookshops and

Others are the opportunists, the greedy ones, to whom Westernization means amassing Western goods, taking advantage of the liberal atmosphere and generally blackening the country's image in the pursuit of self-satisfactions like the U.K. delegates: "who took their full allowances, forty dollars a day and lived in some back alley during the session. They came back loaded with toasters and the electric irons and the like... why do we behave as we do? repeated Rakesh - 'what's wrong with us?' (P.54), or like Semir Gupta whose abominable behaviour puts all Indians to shame and all cultural delegations as groups of uncultured boors.

On a character like Kalyan, this culture-conflict reacts in a violent manner. He revels in his coarse Indian habits and throws them as a challenge to the sophisticated Western society. The East wins hands down, for the West in the person of Celia and others is at first scandalized, then spell bound and ultimately surrenders completely to the enigma, that is East in the person of Kalyan.

This love-hate relationship between the East and the
West continues in the battle between traditionalism and modernity. Jha self believes that Eastern traditionalism is modern because it has dynamism and flexibility whereas, the Western culture, even though it bears the garb of modernism, is rigid in its approach to other cultures. She herself with a background of Western education and approach, declares:

"I think it is hard to place these ideas as Western or Eastern or in any way bound by nationality. I think many societies are facing these problems and I don't think it is either particularly Western or Eastern to behave in a particular way. There are certain conditions that one demands arise in life and courage, that one behave in a particular way."

The basic principles of life such as these are responsible for the existential problems of the central and other characters. It is as if they are involved in a game of 'Blindmen's bluff', in which they move round and round blindly without being able to pinpoint the correct perspective. Kailash Vrinda belongs to "a singularly fortunate generation, for whose ideals and actions had been happily wedded and the goal achieved"(P.14). Or so he believes. For to a man like him, cautious and balanced by nature, the volatile personality of Kalyan is a threat
because the perfect diplomacy" was an exercise in restraint
to listen and to remain calm"(P.16). But the administration
thought otherwise and told him clearly: "Men of Kalyan's
type do not always function in the routine, ponderous,
bureaucratic manner. That is their value. They have the
ability to shed all non-essentials and go directly to the
heart of the matter and get things done. It is an
irritating quality at times, but a useful one"(P.17).

Kailash is stunned that he should be equated with the
bureaucracy, he who is the product of the tempestuous
struggle in the legendary days. He takes the final decision
to reign for there are some predicaments that have to be
faced with courage and dealt with honesty.

As Kailash relegates his hold to the backdrop, Kalyan
Sinha, the politician of the new generation steps in with
enormous vitality and dynamism. "He did not know his
birthplace, his parents, his real name or age. He had grown
up without the ordinary marks of identity. And from this
terrifying anonymity had emerged the most forceful
individual..."(P. 74). He had become a human machine,
whose only goal is action. To him the achievement is
important, not the means to get it. He is a man "who lived
in revolt—against courtesy, against convention, against the
very possibility of happiness"(P.30), according to Kakesh.
To Celia, "he never pretended to be what he wasn't... He spoke his mind without frills and sometimes what he said was unpleasant, but it was the truth as he saw it"(P.62).

The permanent scar of non-belongingness that has been branded on his soul by the inhumaneness of the human beings at the time of 1914 famine, has killed all emotion in him. He tells Celia:

"I have survived all sorts of famine—famine of food and one of the feeling. Do you think human beings need these things to live? Half of humanity live without them... He stopped a minute before pronouncing it as though it were a word of abuse, without love"(P.66).

This is the picture that everybody has about Kalyan Sinha. But the real Kalyan is somebody else, a person who nurses a kid through pneumonia, who plays with Soni, who gives Jivan a new lease of life by patronising his paper for its forthrightness, who tightens his arms about Nita and admits wonderingly "no one has come to me freely or given of themselves gladly to me. Except you"(P.220).

If his ruthlessnes brings his downfall, it also brings him back to humanity. His ministerial position is important to him, only in relation to his vocation, the vocation of freeing India from the dangers of individualism of the personality-cult that is started by a man "who had
believed that liberating the untouchables from the job of cleaning a latrine was more important than liberating a people from foreign rule" (P. 213). But his mind has been successful in living down his problems of existence in the process.

"He felt a sadness but no despair at the thought, for strangely, his wanderings had come to an end, his emptiness had filled and his whole being had responded in peace and tranquility even as he stood in the shadow of defeat" (P. 221).

If Kailash leaves the arena of political circus because of his disillusionment and disgust with the game of politics as played by men like Kalyan, the latter has to face his conscience in the role of Nakesh, who calmly questions him with his silence. Nakesh, in spite of being Mrs. Sahgal's political mouthpiece, has an individuality, a freshness that enlivens his character.

By virtue of his birth in an important political period, the seed of nationalism is sown in his heart automatically. This makes his choice of career an involuntary process, the Foreign Service, "the restoration of national opportunity. He was acutely conscious that those who represented India abroad would be the first to project the image of a new nation. Like the other young recruits, Nakesh had a fierce personal loyalty to his
chief, the Prime Minister, the man who had embodied the struggle and sacrifice of two generations" (P. 51). Akesh believes that "Hinduism was boundless enough to encompass the loftiest of metaphysics, rigid enough to despise the untouchables. It was goodness, piety, and the living light of faith..." (P. 40). This is the fundamental principle of life that Akesh follows at every step of his life and service career. But, at the India centre, he meets Kalyan Sinha, the man who has faith in such idealism, Kalyan’s ruthlessness, non-attachment and destructive honesty in relation to Leela’s suicide stun Akesh because he himself cannot forgive Kalyan for misdirecting a credulous Leela towards the dangerous goal of permissiveness: “Kalyan is the least conventional person I know,” he could hear her saying and “I am going to New York with a friend” (P. 77).

It is again fate that finds them together at the official level after years and in one of the discussion groups at Kalyan’s house, Akesh discovers what is lacking in Kalyan and in that process, reassimilates his own values. Kalyan wants the burial of the individuality of others, the blind adoration of the people and the unquestioned loyalty of his followers. But Akesh believes “what was needed was not the burial of the self but its rebirth and
celebration, for surely the only hope for people anywhere was that they should recognize and foster each other's humanity as individuals" (p. 13). But this time their relationship is not broken, for Rakesh realizes that if anybody can understand and discuss these values with objectivity, it is Kalyan only.

Against this political upheaval, the lives of several people bear the strain of living. Men and women like Arjun Mitra and Uma, Neil and Martha, Dhiraj Singh and Uma, Salem and Saira; young people like Celia, Barbara, Leela, Rashmi, Nita and Rakesh; all have their personal dramas to unfold. The incompatibility in married partners due to several reasons is emphasized as the existential predicament for people like Neil, Rashmi and Uma.

Uma's sensuality is an armour to hide her wounded spirit and a weapon also to hurt back all men through the only way she knows. She has tried to destroy Arjun by destroying herself. It is indeed painful for prim and proper Arjun Mitra to have an alcoholic nymphomaniac for a wife, but she also realizes that it gives her no respite from her private hell. It is when she talks to Neil about her paintings, that she finds the relief, the release of communication on equal grounds, of neutral interests, as a human being to another human being. Uma
is a victim of circumstances, of her inherent love for individual freedom "I had that feeling of freedom and it ran away with me" (P. 165). Her inability to face the reality dehumanised her.

Still, they may have a chance of mending their marriage for their maladjustment is based on tangible grounds. But for Rashmi, there is no going back because she feels "How like prolonged starvation wrong marriage could be, robbing lustre, defeating courage and will. Away from it, she was beginning to understand that a part of life, though destroyed, could be rebuilt and then go on, incredibly as before, at least in bare outline" (P. 13). Rashmi's dilemma is not of adjustment but of survival, "marriage has made her a moth trapped in cement" (P. 35). She has come back, to her father's house in search of peace and courage to take the final step that will destroy her facade of social prestige, but give her back the personal freedom for which her heart aches so much. Neil tells her: "... coming alive hurts after being numb for so long" (P. 142). She comes alive so much that even Neil is surprised at her transformation. It is a new Rashmi who "walked back to the car, she was cleansed and calm, in the morning, full of courage, she told her mother that her marriage has ended" (P. 146).

Rashmi is criticised by her own mother for personifying
the tasteless parody of a transplanted modernity while the other wives like Marta, Ena and Saira are witness victims of the pseudo-modernity around them. Marta, Neil's wife, is not able to carry on with the particular demands on their lives that Neil's job made. Ena's whole world is concentrated in the matter of her husband's postings. She can forgive the idiosyncrasies of her son and daughter and Shraj's dishonesty, drinking and debauchery but she cannot bear "Bitt's wife lording it in some while she is sent to Rangoon" (P. 110). With Saira, it is a plain case of jealousy and discontentment arising out of comparison. It ruins her perfect marriage and both, she and her husband are confused over the real issues that widen the gulf between them.

Interested as she is in the human drama, Nayantara Sahgal places more emphasis on the political situation and politicians in her novel. A transitional phase in the political situation makes it shape and reshape itself continuously. Internal politics is divided into issues—the language problem, India's progress in industrialization and technology, and elections of course. Foreign policy included a "tight rope walk, over a yawning abyss with not even the insurance of a safety net beneath. India's prestige was far out of proportion to her power, her arms,
her wealth. She could wield no pressure but logic in debate" (p.15). The figures of politicians are contrasted to each other to impart realism, Hari Mohan and Shukla are modelled on real life personages as the discerning reader may presume. Somnath and Sailash, the practical politician and the political-philosopher stand at cross roads, wondering who will be left behind. The personality of the Prime Minister is modelled on a well-known political giant, who initiated Mrs. Sahgal into the field of political knowledge.

Nayantara Sahgal belongs to the Northern part and in her novels she describes Delhi, Punjab, Haryana and other Northern states in graphic detail as Markandaya and Rau do the Southern part. In *This Time of Morning*, Delhi, Allahabad and Patna are the places that play an important part in the political as well as personal relationships. Delhi is the paradise city for the active politicians, for the foreign service men and for the elite of the society who set the trend and maintain the fashion. Mrs. Sahgal does not paint the other side of Delhi, the seedy, grimy part where the underprivileged live, as Anita Desai describes Calcutta. For her characters in this novel, Delhi is the city with the friendly, tree-lined roads, the oasis, that presents the Lok Sabha symbolising people's
faith, the city of posh colonies and diplomatic buildings where foreign architects come to design 'peace institutes'.

Allahabad is the city for nostalgia, Kailash and Rakesh remember the bygone days of politics when Gandhian leadership was unquestioned. Hari Mohan remembers the hypnotic influence of Kailash over his ownself at their first meeting. Patna is the city that saw Kalyan starting on his agonized journey of a bitterly lonely life. The famine in Patna had thrown him into a spiritual quicksand and Kalyan feels it throughout his life in his very veins.

An ambiguously titled novel, Storm in Chandigarh depicts a turbulent break up of a family poised against the great political upheaval caused by the division of the Punjab and Haryana. The political storm and the family storm is linked by Vishal Subey, the observer, sent from New Delhi to Chandigarh. An author-narrated novel, Storm in Chandigarh shifts its venue from Delhi to Chandigarh and presents the political situation on the eve of the great strike by the Punjab as the division of hydro-energy takes shape.

Sahgal, delves deeply into the political background of the past and the present to depict a realistic and compact scene for her novel. The Union Home Minister tells Vishal Subey: “Violence lies very close to the surface
in the Punjab... it may have something to do with their ownership of land. They have a long, unbroken tradition of it unlike other parts of India. As Vishal reluctantly goes on his job, he finds the truth of this statement before long, because the main issue of the dispute is being decided exactly on this strong arm basis, as the Punjab Chief Minister, Gyan Singh believes in the simple law of 'might is right'. Between him and Harpal Singh, the Chief Minister of Haryana, there is a personality clash and Vishal remarks unhappily: "It's a clash of personalities, but that's what politics has degenerated to. There are no issues left, only squabbles" (P. 19).

The partition of India is depicted as a background to bring out the paradoxical characteristics of the two political leaders, Gyan Singh and Harpal Singh. That the partition was an instrument to divide the people permanently and brutally to let India remain weaker than before and that it was used by the British as the parting blow, was clear when the last viceroy gave false assurances to people for their lives and property. India plunged into the bloodbath that tore her apart for ever. It is this partition that repeats itself in the newer one of the Punjab and Haryana, heading for, perhaps the same repercussions.
The human drama is unfolded against this backdrop of political one in this novel. The maladjustment in marriage, forms a major part of the novel and it springs from suspicion in the first case and monotony in the second. Inder cannot accept the fact that Saroj had premarital sex relation with a man, and even after they have two lovely children, he tortures her mentally and physically whenever he is upset with her. Mara finds that after eight years of childless married-life, she does not have any reason to continue it except for the fact that Jit loves her. It is inevitable therefore that Inder and Mara should try to find some consolation in each other’s company. When Vishal, by the sheerest of the chances, comes upon the tragic factor of Saroj’s life, his sympathy knows no bounds. When he witnesses the extent to which Inder can go and the impossible situation in which the pregnant Saroj will be placed, if she remains in his house, Vishal takes the responsibility to send her to Delhi to have her child at her cousin Gauri’s house. The future, of course, is uncertain.

Vishal’s behaviour is based on the shock he receives from his own married life. Leela can neither take him as a husband, nor as a good friend because her background is completely different from hers. When she has an affair, she hides her pregnancy and dies while having an abortion.
The colossal waste of life in such hypocritical actions stuns Vishal with impotent rage and grief. He decides therefore, that Saroj's life must not be another sacrifice to the cause of hypocrisy flaunted by the society.

Mara tells Inder: "It's gone, the thing we were trying to build. You have torn it down, I should have known you would" (P. 219). She is on her way to total disintegration for Inder knows only one kind of relationship and is able to give only one type of love. She realizes not only her own marriage, but also the terms of intimacy between herself and Inder in future, should she ever think of marrying him. Strangely enough, here is one wife who can say to her husband what "she had never been able to say before, 'I need your help" (P. 235).

Marriage is not a game of love; it is much more than that. It is not even a union of spirit and body according to the defined scales of living. It is mainly reaching for and reaching to each other, "the friend with whom one can be naked in spirit and to whom one could give the whole of oneself. The whole self was not heroic. Most of it was ordinary. It was soiled in part, maimed in part. It had lived and all the signs and scars of living were upon it. But it was all one had to give" (P. 69). Leela and Inder refuse to touch the unheroic part of it, the nakedness
of the spirit is unacceptable to them. Mara flounders in recognising Inder and neglecting Jit whereas Vishal and Jit find the true values because they have known and understood the scars of living.

A marriage gone wrong is so many things gone wrong, specially the innocent, trustful world of the little children like Buny and Muff. Motherhood and children have an important place in this novel of Mrs. Sahgal. The Rashmi of This Time of Morning has grown into the Saroj of store in Chandigarh, who cannot think of divorce because of her children. Saroj loves Inder as the father of her children, a bond that can be broken only when she realizes that his cruelty hurts the children along with her. Mrs. Sahgal points out very clearly that children are individuals in their own rights and a marriage does provide a charter of rights to all concerned.

The tempestuous storm that upsets the political as well as the personal worlds, provide Mrs. Sahgal with wonderful chances of character delineation. She maintains the strain of contrasting characters, Gyan Singh and Harpal Singh, Inder and Jit, Saroj and Mara to bring out the paradoxical traits of character. These characters are linked together by the neutral personality of Vishal Dubey, who has many of the characteristics of Rakesh in This Time.
of morning. A vibrant, dynamic, brutal personality of the practical politician like Oyan Singh brings back the identical portraiture of Kalyan Sinha and Harpal Singh reflects the same and sincere approach of Kailash from the same novel. The Union Home Minister brings in the qualities of the Sandhian follower and demands the aculation offered to the Prime Minister in this time of morning.

It is, however the minor characters in this novel who arrest the attention of the reader-Geuri, who enters only twice, lives a balanced, practical life, understands Vishal perfectly well and does not allow her friendship to be tainted by overplaying the physical relationship. Prasad, the Chief Secretary, Trivedi, the officer, John Bedows, the missionary, Dhen Singh, the bus-driver, Hansa Ram the hotelier, Kachru, the cabinet secretary, all of them come alive, full of realism and life-blood. The descriptive power of Mrs. Sahgal is at full flight when she paints these characters in even one or two lines:

"what happened to my father and mother? ... your father killed a man in a fight and then was killed by his relatives... your mother came to the end she deserved. She was a whore" (p.114).

and when Singh's brutality in these few lines prepares Oyan Singh to become what he is to them.
Mrs. Sahgal believes: "Men killed each other but apparently they could not stamp out their own decency" (p. 53) and so the art of persuasion has to be developed. She also believes that "As far as the civilized instincts are concerned, human beings haven't come very far. The crude basic instincts still rule us, hunger, sex, power. They are what decide our actions and always will" (p. 49). Human beings must possess the courage to face the brutalities of life and fearlessness is a process of development, a goal of life that can be attained with constant renewal of communication, as Vishal finds it, through mutual trust as Saroj believes, it, and in persuasion as Jit shows it.

This strain of serious thoughts is described through symbolism that relates emotions like love, sorrow, cruelty and pity to the level of realism. When Vishal rolls up his sleeves and makes a cup of coffee for Saroj, it symbolizes his pure love for her unspoiled, innocent self that is just like a bruised bird, seeking shelter. When Mara makes no move to take the cigarette Jit offers it to her; her non-action symbolizes the violent sorrow that has shocked her into numbness. Mrs. Sahgal's symbolical description of wanton cruelty are matchless:

"Of all the debris of the shop
flung far out into the street,
his eyes picked out a carton of
toothpaste. Long flames 
devoured the carton and the 
stench of burning, blackening 
metal filled his nostrils as 
the tubes hissed and spit. 
The sight had started a long, 
screaming protest in him"(P.30).

All these qualities and more, make _A Day in Shadow_ 
a novel to remember and cherish. Symbolically titled to 
present the theme of a cruel divorce settlement that 
crushes a woman's life, it is a painfully poignant portrait of 
personal experience of the novelist. She has said in an 
article:

"In this book I tried to figure out something that has happened to me - the shattering experience of divorce... I wanted to show how even in a free country like ours where women are equal citizens, a woman can be criminally exploited without creating a ripple."  

If these three novels are grouped together from the 
thematic point of view, a pattern emerges. In the first 
two novels, divorce is suggested to make the heroines realize 
their individualism and enjoy the fearlessness so essential 
to the process of personality development. In _A Day in 
Shadow_, the divorce actually takes place and the heroine 
has to face the existential problems as she seeks her 
identity in a hostile society, determined to punish her.
It is a more current political situation that Mrs. Sahgal deals in and the politicians like Sumer Singh have little or no background of politics for they are too young, for one thing. And as a Sardar Sahib, the Senior Minister in the Petroleum Ministry puts it:

"A man of Sumer Singh's calibre in government was an indication of how Sardar Sahib and his generation has failed. They had built up no dedicated trained cadre in the party to take over. Sumer Singh was not a leader and never would be. He was an election gambit that had worked."

The immediate issue in hand is the oil deal between India and Soviet Russia in the Jammu region, which is finalised by the Junior Petroleum Minister Sumer Singh against the cautioning of the experienced politicians like the Senior Minister Sardar Sahib. Maj. the independent M.P. also speaks against it but Sumer Singh remains unmove. He considers the Russian collaboration vital to India's progress and therefore the terms and conditions of the deal document is conspicuously vague to give a free hand to the Russians.

The political situation according to Mrs. Sahgal is heading towards a new kind of dictatorship, promoted by the blind adoration of mobocracy, where democracy simply
signifies the larger number one can control. What Kalyan Sinha had aimed at in *This Time of Morning*, has been achieved by Sumer Singh, the Foreign Minister who rises like a meteor on the strength of this feeling. Sumer Singh speaks like a dictator when he tells Bixle:

"This people great? they are won't be great in a hundred years, unless we do something about it, now, to change them inside out, make a new people of them... we have got to get them into line, drill some purpose into them". (P. 192).

Sumer Singh and his cohorts represent the pseudo-modern approach not only in politics but in other fields also. The so called modernism with its atmosphere of distrust and high handedness, its suppressed resentment and hidden enmity that springs up to bare its fangs at the first opportunity, its lack of discipline and honesty, its hypocritical avowal of loyalty to the person who butters the bread, is depicted in lucid and direct terms through people like Sumer Singh. The old-world values of sincerity of purpose, the assessing of a proper perspective and choosing it fearlessly, to work for the betterment of others, to evolve a philosophy of blending and building in practical life, are as opposed to this modern approach as are Sumer's father, the Senior Minister, Bow Nishen and Naj to
to Sumer Singh, it is a question of power versus liberality, dictatorship versus socialism, the jungle law of brute forces versus sanity and civilization. Sumer violates the power over Sixie, Sarg and the population of India with money, threats and bribes.

Naturally, therefore, these two world views bring in many aspects of importance in the novel: religion, political ideology, non-violence and the difference in the approach by the East and the West, the clash between society and individuals and the sanctity of marriage. But the basis of all these whatever form they may assume, is the same ideal of freedom from fear. Narayanan tells Raj that whatever may be one's principles, the foundation must be courage, the ability to face the facts and not to put them in cold storage. All 'isms' are inspired by the basic ideal of courage and honesty as Sanchi has shown by his principle of non-violence. Since courage is a thing most applauded but rarely found, specially in the present society, the rot has set in in every sphere: religion, politics and social relations.

Mrs. Sahjed is herself a fearless writer and there is an autobiographical touch about her, treatment of Simrit Raman who is a beautiful divorcee with teenaged children and is a freelance journalist like her. She has also
written a book and is planning to write another about India. She faces the same problem of discommunication with her husband Son, a successful businessman. After a tumultuous married life of six years, Simrit gets a divorce but pays a heavy price for it. For enormous sums of taxation are to be charged from her for a trust money that will go to her son when he reaches the age of twenty-five. It is a cruel revenge but she fights it with the help of Raj, who decides that they should be married to fight it together.

Mrs. Sahgal's mastery over characterization is unrivalled when she reveals the change in Simrit's personality through her appearance at the two identical parties held at the beginning and the end of the novel. At the first party: "Simrit caught sight of herself in a mirror, looking like a loser, her own rose shot & silk sari craping a ghost-no match for the alive and eerneacing company around her" (P.2). At the other party: "Simrit stood confidently near Raj. No cut-outs in her with an icy wind blowing through... For the first time an active interest in the people around her stirred Simrit" (P. 239). At last Simrit is rid of her terrible dream of insecurity in which: "she was clinging to a balustrade at the very top of the building, within reach of the sky, when her fingers were wrenched loose, one by one, and she was hurled to the
pavement below" (P. 50).

Hurt and confused as she is, one beautiful thing about her is that she does not lose her faith in goodness of man or sweetness of her nature, she has tried her best to understand son and live with his kind of code, but her inherent honesty does not allow it.

“She was basically tough, with the toughness of unavenged integrity... she had understood when she had to act, at least in that one crisis.

It is this natural honesty that prompts her to sign the divorce settlement that "was a butchery, the last drop of blood extracted" (P. 39), with an incredible trust in fair play by Son, "who always had a veto in everything, marriage, children, chair covers or even the drunken behaviour of the cook" (P. 38). But this shock and misery of the divorce has given her at least one good thing i.e. from being "a nice obedient domestic animal, sitting on a cushion, going as she was told, fed and sheltered in return, she has become a woman who exercised her mind" (p. 57-59).

Like Saroj she is an involved mother who rejoices in her children. Her pregnancies are another proof of her docility : when Raj asks her whether she wants so many children, she says: "Well I didn't think about it" (p. 37).
When she herself realizes that the children have all turned out to be like son or his family, she concludes: "It was part of the imbalance of her marriage, leaving her unassertive even in reproducing her kind" (P. 32). \( \text{๑} \) notices the fact that she gives in to her children too much because she believes in individual freedom. But if she can understand their needs and act according to that, she also learns to make them understand her needs and when she leaves them after preparing lunch and goes to Raj's house, she is perfectly clear and honest about the relationship between Raj and herself.

She understands the artificiality and abominability of the world she has lived in with Son and tells Raj: I'd got rid of my guilt. It was gone without a trace and in its place, there was a strong, positive feeling... its a fantastic piece of luck" (P.209).

Destiny is one thing that \( \text{๑} \) does not believe in. A Christian by religion, he believes in the wider faith of friendship and love, in individuality and freedom of spirit. His belonging to a minority imparts him a sense of objectivity as he points out to Simrit. This sense of objectivity is heightened in his character when one remembers that he has no family, has an independent vocation of a journalist and pursues his parliamentary career with the
position of an independent member. Outraged at any kind of dishonesty, hypocrisy and show of force, Raj considers people like Som and Sumer Singh as definite symbols of evil and brutality.

Like Nakesh and Vishal, Raj also voices the political and philosophical viewpoints of Mrs. Sehgal. She herself has said in an interview with Mrs. Nema Jha "any writer of fiction creates his or her characters and of course we all make mouth pieces of our characters." Raj believes in non-violence and democracy and definitely voices his mistrust against the communistic leanings that endanger individual freedom. His faith clearly lies in the field of non-alignment as he says to Sumer Singh: "I still think that safety for us and for this whole region lies in no close alliance with any body... Twenty years of non-alignment had been bungled at times, but it had been a basically sound policy" (P. 134). Since there is to be the devil's choice between the glittering, affluent west and the hard working, sweating people of the Soviet Russia, Indians will naturally put their trust on the latter and Marx will win hands down every time. Unscrupulous leaders like Sumer Singh will take the advantage of this situation to lead the people, towards a stifling rule of dictatorship in the garb of socialistic communism.
A character like Maj is out of bounds for who is thunderstruck at Simrit's revolt and takes steps to penalize her in such a fashion that will cripple her entire life. He was astounded by the personality of the man who could dictate such terms and the complexity of motives that could carry a battle so far into the future, far beyond the end of the relationship (P. 173). Even the sex act for Som had this strict rule of servitude and when Simrit realizes that sex with Som has no tenderness, or is not capable of feeding the spiritual urgency, her desire freezes and Som "is angered as if she had attacked his honour" (P. 90). Som never believes in loyalty in any way as is seen in his dropping his friends on his way to success. First Merrilees weather, then Lallie and then Vetters, were shoved away, as bigger goods drew him. He worships money because it buys everything for him, including his son Brij who is enticed by his father's wealth even though the father forgets to give him love and attention in the form of a promised lunch (P. 214).

This disloyalty is not only personal, but it also touches the larger interests of the country and the government. Som does not care for the economic policy of the government and is least worried if the shares lose their values because "Som would simply get up and leave ano
live on the fat of some other land" (P. 222). The elemental quality in him is frightening as is pointed out by Raj "If only they had feelings too, progress wouldn't become a danger" (P. 220).

But more than any other person, Som's own children are the victims of his vengeance for a broken marriage. They have their mother, a whole person full of love and non-violence but it is not enough for them. Already signs of crack appear, Brij leaves Simrit, dazzled by the bait dangled by Som. And Simrit finds out by looking at the magazine in her daughter's room that "it was about the women of a famous millionaire family... it was a life that made sense to Som, and Lalli... And now to her daughter" (P. 65).

If Simrit adjusts with a life of casual comforts, what a clash of values is foretold for her children who would surely blame her for taking them away from their father and "cars and the house and trips and lots more pocket money" (P. 59). Already, the children showed their dislike for Raj so that Simrit wondered "if her children hated Raj or whether the young were just naturally disagreeable when they were uprooted" (P. 32). Mrs. Sahgal brings out the conflict in the young minds with sympathy and tender touches, especially in the symbolic gift of a stolen rose creeper to Simrit by her children Brij, or even in Jaya's symbolic statement that Simrit looked some how like a saint.
Mrs. Sahgal makes an impressive and effective use of symbolism in this novel to highlight tender human relationships. The kiss that Simrit gives to Raj after they visit Ram Kishan "was gentle and maternal. It seemed to come from the soft unhurried depths of a relationship. It met a hankering in him for reassurance that the bond between them was reliable" (p. 194). Love for Simrit and Raj is as binding as a faith, symbolised by the litany "I nothing lack for I am his and he is mine forever" (p.237). It is exactly the opposite in the relationship between Simrit and Som. The car journey which Simrit shares with Som only in the physical sense, comes back as a symbol in her dreams "she dreamt the incredible cliffs were leaning lower and lower over their car, preparing casually to crush it" (p.49).

This sense of crushing down others with a mind closed to every thing else but selfish ends is symbolise by the viewless window of Sumer Singh's office. The window looked out into a section of the walled verandah. Raj wanted to get up and assure that Parliament and the small court yard were still there, beyond this viewless window that stifled him. Sume's gesture of revulsion is another form of symbolic denial that Sumer Singh apprensended from the people: "He accurately read the grief and bewilderment in her face as though she were watching something precious burn, many like her would react the same way" (p.192).
A day in shadow has for its venue, the city of New Delhi and the season is Mrs. Sahgal’s favourite one, the winter with the cold, refreshing wind, bright, starlit sky and the blue haze of the evening mist. Delhi has a special attraction for Nayantara Sahgal and she expresses her impressions about it through Ram Kishan: "Delhi and Politics, all kinds, at all levels, were inseparable... It had been born in the old city and watched the transformation of a great stretch of barren land into a new capital with official buildings and gardens of classical beauty" (p.194). It is once again New Delhi that fascinates her as she prepares her next novel *A Situation in New Delhi* about the prevailing political conditions.

About *A Situation in New Delhi*, Mrs. Sahgal affirms: "the whole novel began with my curiosity and interest in the Naxalities who were just then, quite a force. This is in 1971 I am speaking of when I made a visit to Calcutta. The Naxalite movement and its influence on the students of the University of Delhi and other young people plays an important role together with the personal drama of Devi, the education minister Usman Ali, the Vice-Chancellor Michael Calvert, an English writer and Rishad, the brilliant young son of Devi. The political and personal themes interact each other by bringing out the interrelation between the characters and..."
Along with the activities of the Naxalite movement, Mrs. Sehgal also introduces the problem of student unrest and indiscipline that sprang out of the unrealistic and non-feasible policies and programmes of the government. Her repeated warnings in her previous novels about violence becoming a Leviathan to the administration through constant provocation are presented here objectively as realistic episodes. This novel also forewarns that in order to tackle this violence, the authoritarian government will seize the opportunity to lead the country towards dictatorship.

Dictatorship in India has tried to hide its malevolent appearance behind the facade of democratic socialism, according to Mrs. Sehgal. The political set up remains tense due to the mishandling of the high ups in the government after the death of Shivraj, the charismatic leader of the nation:

These were men who had never, by the looks of it, done anything with their hands or had any collision with real life.

The unrealistic approach and the loss of grip over the situation in the country by these defaulters are presented with an uncanny insight:
"And now here they were, trying to make a revolution by the rules of a book, while the class war they bitterly begun, simmered in the streets outside their offices, and they apparently had not a practical notion in their professional heads what to do about it."

The political situation travels on a swift, downward course from the first novel to this one and at the end, Levi waits with anxiety for the worst to follow. She knows with certainty that both Usman Ali and she, the firm believers in individual rights of freedom and the cult of non-violence, are no match for the coming onslaught of oppression and violence. Rishad's violent death symbolically activates the cult of terror that will train even the fourteen-year-olds to become deadly, detached and purposeful assassins (P.58).

The cult of violence has already spread in the student community that claims Usman Ali's eye. It is there in the rape of a girl student in the university premises. Without solving the main problem, here also the administration is either shelving it to secure time for their own selves or floundering the policy making.

The two commissions appointed by the Congress Government give more or less the identical suggestions that Usman Ali puts forward to rearrange the education system : "He had
suggested outlets for skill and training before university age and drilled neat holes in current theories about higher education being everyone's inalienable right... recommends free functioning of the universities. "None of this was original" (p.114). Vocational guidance, limitation of higher educational facilities to the deserving and autonomy to the universities, are crying needs for the current age and yet the Prime Minister and his cabinet reject Usman Ali's report because it ignores socio-economic implications and does not give enough weight to the principle of social justice on which higher education should be wisely based.

The disorder and violence is a sign of malady not limited to the educational field only, it has started to taint over the very texture of the nation. Usman Ali resigns the Vice-Chancellorship because he understands that protest must be made, but not through violence and the youth must be guided by a leader who is one of them." That was how progress and change might be brought about here, by touching the individual readiness for hardship, the personal desire for sacrifice" (p. 156).

As Usman Ali completely transforms the cult of destruction to the ideal of construction, and saves thousands of young and eager minds from annihilation, Nishtar falls a victim to the current of panic and violence he has himself
initiated. Violence begets violence, however pure may be the goal. Violence is simply titanic in destructive force when it is handled by such young and ignorant fanatics like Horen and Aisha:

"To build a new world, the old one had to be razed to the ground. The way to do it was through the systematic creation of panic. Panic to chaos to ruin. And out of ruin open revolt and power, only then could the new social order arise."

They believe that revolution is made by circumstances, not men. The circumstances are ripe enough and yet, "the movement so promisingly begun has collapsed, it has not been able to create a proper revolutionary centre... its leaders have become hunted fugitives or too broken bodies to carry on. Its followers waited tensely in darkness for orders that did not come." (p.104). Their object is, however, noble and humane, they want to remove injustice, inhumanity and degradation and surrounding the lonely and the down-trodden, provide decent food, clothes and shelter overhead, remove illiteracy and restore confidence in oneself to demand justice if needed an overall awakening of human feelings. But the means to that end belies itself defeating the very purpose of creation of a fresh idea for the beginning is made with destruction and annihilation.
A follower of non-violence as a positive force in forestalling all political deadlock, Nayantara Sahgal has painted Shivraj on the model of her uncle, Pt. Nehru, the epitome of democratic thoughts. The novel is nothing if not idolatory reasurcted. Shivraj, the magician, the lion-hearted, worshipped by everybody, in every corner of the world, for whom an Englishman weeps i unashamedly and a Muslim pleads devotion until death, a mystic who knew and used words like love, honour and purity. For practical guidelines in politics, a gigantic figure in the realm of politics, and yet with all this adding up to a string of hyperbolic epithets, hardly a human character, suitable for dominating the reader's mind. In her blind devotion, the novelist herself, ironically has become the victim of the personality cult and if she disdains the votaries of political figures who are steeped in fanaticism, her description of Shivraj's motive in politics and his relation with his sister, merit no better judgement. He wanted to live long enough "for free institutions to become part of the soul"(P.93). How mature and experienced a politician was Shivraj? He trusted the present Mineral and Metals Minister, took him in as a compromise to avoid a rupture in the party and also because he thought this one was all right, good material for training"(P.93). And all this proved to be quite the wrong judgement because this is the
very man, who according to Devi is her most potent enemy and biased against all democratic functioning.

Shivraj's artificiality weakens the whole basis of characterization in this novel. Being too near the material and having too strong feelings about, the novelist loses the objectivity, lucidity and clearheadness that are so important in portraying characters as these. For they are public property and in a sense, prisoners of their own popular periods. Shivraj does not only show his inability to come out as a charismatic personality, his spiritual presence reduced Devi to no better a position than that of a Devdasi.

A woman like Devi, possessing all the romantic and practical qualities needed to project a fully developed personality does little better than attending various parties, attending to her cosmopolitan lovers and carrying on a shallow, bantering relationship with her only son Rishad. When Michael asks Devi what outlet is there, for instance, for Rishad, she replies: "I don't know. What would you do in his place?" (P. 92). The naiveté of a mature woman like her is inexcusable to say the least, and she is the education minister. As an education minister, she forgets about the violent uprising of the students in the university in which the Vice-Chancellor nearly loses an eye and rises
next morning complaining about the airconditioner, talking loftily about its symbolic significance. In normal circumstances, her phone would be ringing half the night and she would be on her toes, anxious and distressed, instead of asking her son over a leisurely breakfast: "can you tell me something about it?" (P.17). At the crucial cabinet meeting over Usman Ali's report, Devi, "the woman who knows how to exercise her mind and who has been trained by Shivraj with strong discipline" (P.129) utters three sentences with the wrong implication and "wanted to put her face down on her arms and weep" (P.130). She, on her own, does not contribute a single political thought, all are echoes of Shivraj. When Usman Ali refuses to accept the Vice Chancellorship, her only plea, like a damsel in distress is 'I need your help'. When Usman Ali urges her to leave her job and come out with him, indecision gnaws her mind.

"But it is peculiar at forty four to find yourself stripped of your fabulous past and your limitless future. Suddenly you are nothing. Even what I have of my present in the way of a reputation - something that people recognize and respect - will be blotted out the way I walk out of this house"(P.162).

In spite of all her tall talks, Devi is a typical, domesticated Indian woman, who needs a crutch always to lean
on. When Shivraj dies, she needs Usman body and soul, who makes love to her as she lies on her bed, mourning for her husband Ishwar. As soon as Michael arrives, he realizes that need, specially after Michael’s death, and he cannot get away, for “to remove himself from Devi when she needed him would be like tearing flesh” (P.164). Even Ram Murthi runs her life because he recognizes her inexperience to shift the important from the trivial. Even in her love affairs she is neither honest nor mature, nor unselfish. Ishwar’s bed is still warm when Usman Ali occupies it. When Michael asks her about her lovers, she gives an answer ambiguous enough “which didn’t seem to answer the question” (P.50).

Michael is haunted by Shivraj as if his life and death depends on him. A man like Michael, who has gone through experiences bitter and thrilling, has travelled from Calcutta to Kashmir to find out the real India, thinks of the sermon on the mount at his first meeting with Shivraj. An original mind like him, who, his editor tells him is the only person to call Attlee a revolutionary, loses the opportunity to ask political questions at the second meeting with Shivraj and only thinks about Devi’s eyes which are like Pansies (P.48). Within a few days, they become lovers and Devi begins her endless eulogising about Shivraj, giving Michael few details, mostly sentences like “It was I who
dragged him around, made him ride with me, take the boat out on the river. May be he was the inside and I was the outside of the same person" (P.51).

So he is another puppet, attached to the string that the modern Pharaoh has put round his sister's neck, probably because he can't marry her in the modern age (P.52). A journalist of repute meets the enlightened sister of a political luminary and their sole achievement is an outrageous quarrel over how to cohabit without any one's knowledge, the lady refusing the safer course of marriage because "I can't do the things other people do" (P.52). Lover boy returns to marry and divorce twice, to write three major biographies and puts on weight, not with regard to his mental achievement, but in purely physical sense. As he looks at the news item of Shivraj's death, Michael bursts into loud weepings and decides that he must go to India to write his biography.

He is upset because his manuscript must be censored if need be. So with the most 'boorish' manner, he tries to convince the British High Commission that Shivraj was next to God and nobody, but nobody has the right to check his biographer in this holy work (P.106). In sheer protest, he buys a present for Devi who says "I still have some influence— I think. I can speak to the information minister... But I
won't" (P.111). So they sit together" and the apochal sadness of shivraj's death, and what had died with him, held them both" (P.111). Living or dead, shivraj holds his puppets with the string firmly attached.

It is the character of Usman Ali that brings back the Nayantara Sahgal of This Time of Morning to the reader. She herself admits it when she says",... Usman Ali, the Vice Chancellor of Delhi University, who, without trying very hard seemed to become an independent character. He sort of sprang to life and when I began I was not going to make him very important. But it turned out in the end that he became very important because he gave himself life.14 His dramatic entrance in the novel through the declaration of the cult of violence by his students and his equally dramatic victory over it by his own practical application of the creed of non-violence makes him the only character who lives a life without being encumbered by the memory of the bygone days.

An atheist by faith, Usman, nevertheless understands the basic principles of religion and activises them without blunder. As Mrs. Sahgal says in her interview to Hema Jha: "Politics is something which can not be ignored if you are writing about the changing Indian situation. Similarly, religion is a part of the Indian scene. Not that everybody is a religious person but there is an awareness of religion
as such and that is very much intervened into our lives to our detriment as well as to our benefit.\textsuperscript{15} Usman Ali represents this blending of politics and religion when he answers Michael's question that since Christianity and Islam both have their basis in fighting holy wars, how they are different from Hinduism, that fought the battle of Kurukshetra and preached violence with detachment:

"The difference is, your religion and mine don't make a virtue of non-violence. It's these Hindus... who need to know what they stand for. ThisTrimurti business three faces to every action, will be the ruin of this country and look what passes for modernity among them... (p. 79)."

When he stands on the make-shift dias to address the students, he visualises the gathering in the form of a restless cross-coss that is as pure as the religion and as vital for it is a hunger of the soul. Usman gives the creed of non-violence a deeper glow of religious purity that enables him to turn the tables on the administration. In spite of utmost provocation, he leads the violent students to a peaceful struggle:

"He was covered with dust, his face stony, the glitter of an avenging angel in his light eyes as he told them of his anger at the massive police presence and his hideous fear that one wrong move by them would flare into violence and destruction, ending at a single stroke what he had just begun. Fortunately
Usman is a man who makes his own decisions, unfettered and uninfluenced by 'isms' or persons and sticks to them. He has never allowed Shivraj to shower him with lucrative or influential positions because he believes: "there should be one man of your acquaintance who does not profit in the remotest way by knowing you" (P.83). He has left a brilliant academic career to join the national movement. Even years after, he leaves the Communist Party to follow another leader. To him the problem of education is not a single track one, it is attached to the problem of corruption and mismanagement all over the country. As a teacher of long experience, he understands the youth perfectly well and realizes the rage and agony, "the cold indifference and vicious fury, an unnatural alliance terrifying in its implications... it would happen again and again" (P.23). A communist turned Congressite, his political values are clear: "Revolutions went on. They did not get congealed in their tracks or follow beaten tracks. And people who loved as he did, the past, the present and the future of their country, had to be willing to change" (P.30).

Usman Ali's difficulty lies in the fact that his creator is Nayantara Sahgal who tries to manipulate his personal life to bring him back to his Levi through his link
with his leader Shivraj. It enslaves him to artificiality and his dealings with Devi and Nadira, are not in honest colours, much as the novelist labours for it. A handsome man of fifty, he has a sensual quality, that he uses expertly on both women to get his own way: "Osman had a quality that made women cling" (P.33). He never meets a woman on her own ground but always takes her and "when he took a woman, he took a mind as well" (P.33).

If Nadira has been inaccessible in spirit before, it is his failure as much as hers, and he accepts it, in the face of his overwhelming spiritual indifference that alienates her from him.

Most of the characters are either typicalities or contrasts. Ishwar, like his namesake, remains invisible in spite of Devi's sporadic salvific reminiscences. Nishad is the angry, young man, idealising a man, his hero Naren and victim of the personality cult and unsure of the ideology he follows. Nishad's destruction of Jaipal's house is a stage-managed affair, reeling under artificiality. His tragic death is an unnecessary stunt to bring back a sense of tragedy in Devi's life, so that she can hold hands with Michael in peace. His sudden change in his relation with the young girl who is dramatically changed from 'Skinny' to 'Priya' again reeks of manipulation by the novelist. For,
after all is said and done, love simply does not rest on such an insecure base as "half moon breasts" (P.142) even as much Rishaad interrelates their growth to the development of a genuine attachment between them (P.144). Who knows skinny may grow on to a full-bodied Pinky who has not the remotest idea about all this nonsense called 'love'.

Pinky and Priya are contrasts even as Arvind as to Rishaad. Pinky and Arvind represent the affluent, bored, insensitive young generation of the society, happily insensible to the likes of Priya, Madhu and Naren, who consists of the dissatisfied and thinking lot. People like Arvind and Pinky die of high blood pressure through unlimited drinking, dining and pleasure-seeking. People like Priya, Madhu and Naren die as the victims of scarcity in everything; physical comforts, spiritual help and sympathetic understanding needed to breakdown the dehumanising process of society.

Nadira and Lydia's misfortune is that they have married mountain-loads of ego, personified in Usman Ali and Michael Calvert, and are always in indirect confrontation with Levi, the enigma. If their rigidity in religious matters and creature comforts taint their characters, it can also be argued that these points are highlighted in ways, more than needed and deserved, because, for one thing, man is not perfect, and for the other, marriages have continued
in spite of greater and baser defects than these. In fact these marriages have gone sour because as Neil so shrewdly puts it "the Arabs have no use for women except as women. Nor do you. You go on using them up like matches because the right one wouldn't have you years ago... it's not self-respecting being married to you" (P.12).

Lydia and Nadiya are women "to make love to by daylight, to linger over in bed, and have nothing whatever to do with for the rest of the twenty four hours" (P.33). Unmistakably both stand as foils to Levi, they are the unhappy married ladies contrasted to the happy widow, the latter experiencing the wonder of spiritual and physical love with the spouses of the former. A pathetic situation but not really material for a real tragic situation that catches the heart and strains the emotion.

Both the political situation and the personal situation have proved to be the Achilles heels with Mrs. Sahgal in A Situation in New Delhi. Neither there is that vigour, nor that intensity which are distinctly hers in other novels. An author-narrated novel, it lacks the structural craftsmanship that elevates a novel to the category of 'the' novel. Mrs. Sahgal herself marks it as an experimentation, saying "A Situation in New Delhi did not begin with a hero or heroine. It began with an episode and then it was around
that I built this book." Perhaps this is the cross that the book has to bear, for the episodes are strung around the characters and around one another, with the barest line discernible. It begins with Shivraj's death, introducing Michael Calvert and sundry others, brings in Devi, Rishad and Usman through another episode of the violent student demonstration and rape of Medhu, backsteps to analyse the bond between Michael and Devi, comes to the situation of plunder by Rishad (around which the book is constructed), introducing skinny Jaibal, heading to the next meeting between Devi, Michael and Usman and another backstepping, more parties abruptly going at a tangent to introduce Naren and his activities, more comings and goings of Michael and Usman to Levo who suddenly finds Rishad returning one night very late, tries to unravel the mystery behind it, but is forestalled by fate disguised as fever. The next important episode brings in Usman Ali's resignation, celebrated with gusto at Michael's room, another party, Rishad's sudden recharge of attraction towards skinny, Rishad's death and Medhu's death following in a quick succession to pick up the almost unmoving tempo of the plot, Usman's demonstration, and the going back again to square one with Michael thinking about Shivraj. In fact, the only interesting episodes are grouped together at the end, the beginning and the middle streams moving almost sluggishly.
The symbolic stopping of the air conditioner sets the mood for the novel. Devi thinks that "All the sovereign forces that bring change and improvement and mellowness in the course of time have been cut off like that air conditioner. Perhaps deliberately" (P.16). Similarly, Manse Ram, the cartoon figure is symbolic of two opposite lines of thinking to Rishad and Devi. Rishad takes him to be symbolic of the mass, deprived and oppressed, Devi explains him as the stoic messenger who shows the other side of laughter (P.20).

The utter destruction wrought by the cult of violence is symbolically presented in the broken chair that Devi tries to put on its legs and fails. It points towards the consequence of such brutal attacks on the whole system (P.20).

The mirror at the Jai pal house has the same symbolic presentation of deliberate destruction. For Rishad "it reflected the whole rotten system propping the means to buy useless mirrors" (P.57). It takes him quite a few blows to break the tough surface of the mirror. Shivraj's broken portrait, under Machu's feet is the final symbol of destruction of the democratic system by the mob violence, unleashed by the failure of the administrative machinery (P.155).

Struggling against this violence, trying to set up order, and moving for individual freedom, Usman Ali looks
at the gathering of the students in the formation of a gigantic cross, symbolising the sacrifice and fearlessness devoted to the cause (P. 163). Symbolism is used as a device to highlight the theme of the novel and bring in the fluid grace of language, distinctive to Mrs. Sahgal.

Mrs. Sahgal uses her sentences as a musician expounding the finer elegance of a particular strain, coming out gently, little by little, with a pleasantly unexpected turn that sweeps one away. It is evident in the passages dealing with the habit of reading:

"There was a tiny human filling sandwiched between the great majority below and the thin skin above, who, in the course of a lifetime acquired and, practised the skill known as reading (P.33).

A writer of chaste English, Mrs. Sahgal has tried to Indianise herself by using Hindi words as 'Roti' 'Lafanga' and 'Kheer' in this novel. She has also used the Indianised English like 'orivery' to bring realism in the dialogue. But she has used these words with a sense of systematic pattern and without over emphasising them so that the Indianness has an in-built depth about it and blends exquisitely with the English language.

She uses her language power to express the humorous and
the ludicrous with keen insight. When Ram Murthi tells the teapot that Usmen Ali could not meet her or when Devi is introduced to the small, neat, square young man, who is to marry Pinky, the descriptions fit the characters like gloves. The British High Commissioner's talinces is described delightfully: "his knees jammed at a ten past ten angle" (P.89), or the American Presidents' wives looking at their husbands' faces lit with dazed rapture come to Devi's mind as she looks at the cabinet ministers looking at the Minerals & Metals Minister. Priya, at the party looks fascinated at the cancers, "the girl near her looked as if she were driving a car and her partner seemed to be drying his back violently with a towel" (P.141).

It is the magic of the language that holds this novel together, for neither the plot nor the characterization come up to expectation of a Bengali novel. Even though there are some repetitions of sentences like "a woman having a mind of her own" (Simrit & Devi, or emphasising "the beauty of a small lawn", (Raj & Devi), or "marriage being a thing of friendship and love" (Raj and Usmen Ali), the language is full of elegance and delight, and captivates the reader's mind almost immediately as he begins to read. If the novelist does not reveal the emotional heights of other women novelists like Anita Desai and Kamala Markandaya, she unfolds an
exquisite tapestry work of vigorous yet restrained prose
which is simple, direct, lucid and full of artistic delight.
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