Chapter One

Introduction

“How does newness enter the world? Of what fusions, translations, conjoinings is it made?”

– Salman Rushdie, The Satanic Verses

Nayantara Sahgal is a postcolonial Indian English writer whose work has been much researched. Yet, little has been done on the cross-cultural reflections found in her work and this study has taken up this neglected aspect for research. Sahgal saw herself as schizophrenic, according to her own definition: “. . . schizophrenia . . . [is] a state of mind and feeling that is firmly rooted in a particular subsoil, but above ground has a more fluid identity that doesn’t fit comfortably into any single mould. A schizophrenic of this description is a migrant who may never have left his people or his soil” (“Schizo” 93). She reflects that “it is perfectly natural for the inheritor of one of the earth’s oldest and most complex inheritance to feel fragmented” and that it is for her “Third Eye to reconcile these fragments through fiction and through . . . [her] sense of a plural self to produce a fiction other than that which a less ancient, more homogeneous, more settled society produces” (“Schizo” 99). Hence this study focuses on how Sahgal’s fictional works submerge a divided personality caused by cross cultural tension.
Traditionally, the word “culture” is a concept that includes a refining and elevating element. As Matthew Arnold remarked in the 1860s, each society was thought to be a reservoir of the best that has been known and thought. The modern cultural critics aim to combat the old definition of culture. The anthropologists Kroeber and Kluckhohn took pains to find the most appropriate meaning of “culture”. They collected many academic definitions of culture and grouped them under six headings: descriptive, historical, normative, psychological, structural and genetic. The descriptive definitions posited that “culture . . . is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, laws, morals, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (Smith 3). As per the historical definitions, “the culture of a group is the sum total and organization of the social heritages which have acquired a social meaning because of racial temperament and of the historical life of the group” (Smith 3). The normative definitions suggested that culture was a rule or a way of life that shaped patterns of concrete behaviour and action. The second form emphasized the role of values without reference to behaviour. Psychological definitions of culture emphasized its role as a problem solving device, allowing people to communicate, learn or fulfil material or emotional needs. Structural definitions pointed to the “organised interrelation of the isolable aspects of culture” (Smith 3) and highlighted the fact that culture was an abstraction that was different from concrete behaviour. Genetic definitions defined culture in terms of how it came to exist or continued existing.

At present, understanding culture revolves around different themes. Culture tends to be opposed to the material, technological and social structural,
something distinctive from and more abstract than, an entire ‘way of life’. Culture is seen as the realm of the ideal, the spiritual and the non-material. It is understood as a patterned sphere of beliefs, values, symbols, signs and discourses. Emphasis is placed on the “autonomy of culture”. It cannot be explained as a mere reflection of underlying economic forces, distributions of powers or social structural needs. Effects are made to remain value-neutral. The study of culture is not restricted to arts but pervades all aspects of social life. Ideas of cultural superiority and inferiority play almost no place in contemporary academic study. Generally cultured production produces concept systems and apparently “natural” understandings to explain who we are individually and collectively, who the others are, how the world works. Cultural production occurs all the time and it is distributed through literature. Literature is an institutional arrangement we have made to dignify some writing. This is not surprising for any culture values some texts more highly than others.

Cultural studies of literary criticism is an interdisciplinary method of studying the social power encrypted in text, poetry and even in media. This form of criticism was established in 1964 by a graduate program at the Centre for Contemporary Culture Studies at Birmingham University in England in order to expand the literary range beyond traditional approaches. Cultural studies involve the use of all methods of literary criticism. The primary goal is to understand the nature of social powers reflected within it. Thus a critic might explore the psychological, moral and political assumptions presumed in a given piece and then deconstruct them to see what benefits individuals and social classes might gain from having these interpretations as being true. The most common
methodologies used by cultural studies critics are deconstruction, Marxism, gender/race studies and psychology. In the broad diverse literature, culture theories provide tools for understanding the content of culture, the divergent traditions such as values, codes, narratives, ideologies, discourses etc. It explains the ways how culture works and how it should be studied. Culture theories also provide understanding of social implications, offering models of influence that culture exerts on social structure and social life. Theorists attempt to explain the role of culture in providing stability, solidarity and opportunity or in sustaining conflict, power and inequality. Culture plays an essential role in asserting action, agency and self, and the connection between culture and individual shapes human action at the most critical issues. Some stress on the constraining nature of culture while others point to its ability to enable action. Issues relating to cultural construction of the self, motivation and identity are fundamental to this argument. The analysis and evaluation of literary fiction using culture theories have given a new dimension and direction to the critical temper of the modern time.

Many anthropologists in the first part of the century, championed culture as an interpretation that is more value neutral and analytic. They assert that “culture” is to be found everywhere, not just in the high arts and in western civilization. The dynamics of culture involve arguments about the relationship between culture and nature, culture and society (including material social processes), the split between high and low culture and the interplay between cultural tradition and cultural difference and diversity. The cultural critics want to break down the boundary between high and low and to dismantle the hierarchy that the distinction implies. They also want to discover the reasons why a certain
kind of aesthetic product is more valued than others. The distinction between
great books as classics and a comic strip version as something low cannot be
accepted by these critics. According to Lois Tyson,

\[\ldots\text{a culture is a collection of interactive cultures, each of which is}
growing and changing, each of which is constituted at any given
moment in time by the intersection of gender, race, ethnicity,
socio-economic class, occupation and similar factors that
contribute to the experience of its members.}\] (294)

The role of literature in shaping a nation rises above political
circumstance. Societies have to reproduce themselves culturally as well as
materially and this is done in a great part by putting into circulation, stories of
how the world goes. Diverse institutions are involved in this (the media, religion,
political parties, education) and the “literary” texts present the attempt of literary
intellectuals in changing the condition of their medium and society generally. It is
through such “literary” texts that ideologies are reinforced and contested, for
subordinate groups struggle to make space for themselves and attempt to
legitimate the prevailing order. In the present global scenario, where boundaries
which restricted man to particular geographic space have crumbled, literary texts
raise complex questions of cultural affiliation and appropriation, while engaging
with the most sensitive issues.

Edward Said, who is a spokesperson for colonised and suppressed
communities, points out how the formerly subject peoples resisted the cultural
colonization of the colonizer. For him there is no culture which is pure and
superior. He says:
But the history of all cultures is the history of cultural borrowings. Cultures are not impermeable; just as western science borrowed from Arabs, they had borrowed from India and Greece. Culture is never just a matter of ownership of borrowing and lending with absolute debtors and creditor, but rather of appropriation, common experiences and interdependencies of all kinds among different cultures. This is a universal norm. (217)

The cultural studies approach investigates the degree of inclusion and exclusion, of domination and lenience, of violence and tolerance, of oppression and emancipation and a variety of other opposing factors. In addition cultural critics examine the complexities of treatises in institutions such as the causes and consequences of dominant beliefs compared to opposing beliefs – linguistic, social, economic, political, historical, ethical, religious, legal, scientific, philosophical, educational – and the modes of circulating these materials.

Cultural studies critics are notorious for using literary jargon and its complexity, in analysing otherwise mundane properties within a literary text. A cultural critic would look at a literary work to determine what kind of social behaviour the work might promote, what kind of readers might enjoy the work, why, what social understanding the work relies on, if the values of the reader are similar to the values promoted in the work and other questions that would connect the work to the culture that produced it and those cultures interpreting it.

In an article on “The Need for Cultural Studies” four ground breaking cultural critics have written that critics doing cultural studies should counter the prevalent notion that culture is some wholeness that has already been formed.
Cultural studies should . . . abandon the goal of giving students access to that which represents a culture . . . . Culture, rather, is really a set of interactive ‘cultures’, alive and growing and changing and cultural critics should be present – and even future-oriented. Cultural critics should be “resisting intellectuals” and cultural studies should be “an emancipatory project”. (Giroux 478-80)

Culture has also played an important role in the two big events of the world: colonization and decolonization. The Englishmen’s mission in India was to civilize the “lesser breeds” but behind such civilizing mission lay the imperialist greed. It was a simple truth that colonialism was viciously oppressive – not only economically and politically but also at the level of culture. Imperialism as an ideology upholds the legitimacy of economic and monetary control of one nation by another. It is not strictly concerned with the issue of selfhood. It does not require the settling of communities from imperial centre in another location. Colonialism is only a form of practice which results from the ideology of imperialism and specially concerns the settlement of one group of people in a new location. As Elleke Boehmer puts it, colonialism is the “. . . settlement of territory, the exploitation or development of resources and the attempt to govern the indigenous inhabitants of occupied lands” (2). The colonizing power gave nothing out of good will. The superiority of the imperial culture is visible in the “novels of empire”, in the classic modernist versions of Heart of Darkness, Passage to India etc. These colonial narratives were resisted largely by the western educated Indians in the country who were imbued with
western notions of liberalism, equality and nationalism. Their developing awareness of an “Indian” identity reinforced by the overt racism of Europeans and Anglo-Indians, began to take a decisively political direction. Grand narratives of emancipation and enlightenment mobilized the colonised to rise up and throw off the imperial subjection. Nations themselves became narrations. In the literature of the Third World after the II World War, “nation” and “nationalism” became more pronounced. Decolonization was not uniform across the different colonies, yet the vital part played by anticolonial nationalism in colonial and post-colonial politics about the mid 1970s cannot be denied. Said writes:

It is a historical fact that nationalism, restoration of community, assertion of identity, emergence of new cultural practices – as mobilised political force instigated and then advanced the struggle against western domination everywhere in the non-European world. It is no more useful to oppose that than to oppose Newton’s discovery of gravity. (218)

“Nationalism” signifies for the people all sorts of undifferentiated beliefs and practices and it is a useful term with which to identify the mobilizing force that united to resist against the empire. Freedom for one’s motherland from the alien hands became the message of the Indian leaders. Ernest Renan remarks in “What is a Nation?”:

The nation like the individual, is the culmination of a long past of endeavours, sacrifice, and devotion. Of all the cults, that of the ancestors is the most legitimate, for the ancestors have made us
what we are. A heroic past, great men, glory (by which I understand genuine glory), this is the social capital upon which one bases a national idea. To have common glories in the past and to have a common will in the present; to have performed great deeds together, to wish to perform still more – these are essential conditions for being a people. (19)

With decolonization across the globe the triumphant literary depiction of nationalism was considered romantic in Europe and the United States. Later with the advent of globalization and the blurring of borders, the explosive independent struggles in India and dozen other places, were no more romanticized. The heroic narratives of nationalism were slowly replaced by the international realities of multinational corporations and the telecommunications industry.

Concern with what has been called cultural contact or acculturation between different societies emerged during the imperialist expansion of capitalism and the need to widen the world market at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth. On the other hand, rapid industrialization and urbanization since the forties, with consequent massive migrations . . . in large urban centers and capitalist reorganization of the peasant economy and culture, intensified existing contradictions in the countryside, in the city, and between them: out of this process came the concern to understand intercultural conflicts within individual societies and between their different classes and ethnic groups. (Canclini 1324)
However Paul Ricoeur opines in “Universal Civilization and National Cultures”,

[On] the one hand, [the developing world] has to root itself in the soil of its past, forge a national spirit and unfurl this spiritual and cultural revindication before the colonialist’s personality. But in order to take part in modern civilization, it is necessary at the same time to take part in scientific technical and political rationality, something which very often requires the pure and simple abandonment of a whole cultural past. (276-77)

The developing postcolonial nations had to be a part in the modern civilization. Traditional culture had to undergo a radical revision. The nationalist bourgeoisie who worked towards the independent nation were completely ignorant of the economy of their own country. In _The Wretched of the Earth_ Fanon writes:

In an under-developed country an authentic national middle class ought to consider as its bounden duty to betray the calling fate has marked out for it and to put itself to school with the people: in other words to put at the people’s disposal the intellectual and technical capital that it has snatched when going through the colonial universities. But unhappily we shall see that very often the national middle class does not follow the national, positive, fretful and first path; rather, it disappears with its soul set at peace into the shocking way – shocking because anti-national-of a traditional bourgeoisie, of a bourgeoisie which is stupidly, contemptibly, officially bourgeois. (120,121).
Decolonization across the globe called into question the value of European culture. Sartre explicitly explains how the “civilizing mission” was exposed. “We must face that unexpected revelation, the striptease of our humanism . . . . It was nothing but an ideology of lies, a perfect justification for pillage” (153). The cornerstone of imperial ideology was that European culture represented the apogee of human achievement and the others were the savages – that is why they had to be rendered servile in their own countries. But decolonization proved otherwise, that the Africans, Asians and Carribeans were competent and did not need Europeans’ humanism and wanted them to leave. European self-esteem and the superior status of European culture were at stake. The crisis of self-esteem by the expulsion of the empire only proved that European atrocities were understood by the Third World people.

Fanon calls attention to the fact that the newly independent nations can find themselves administrated by an indigenous middle class that uses its privileged education and position cheerfully to replicate the colonial administration of the nation for its own financial profit. This class is neo-colonial in that it continues to exploit people in a way not dissimilar to the colonialists. It is a situation when “the national bourgeoisie steps into the shoes of the former, European” (122) rulers in a haste. This new administration by the national bourgeoisie only makes the new nation economically subservient to the old colonial to establish themselves in the new nation, by continuing to send raw materials abroad for profit purposes than feeding the people, by making the nation into a tourist centre for wealthy westerners.
In under-developed countries, we have seen that no true bourgeoisie exists; there is only a sort of little greedy caste, avid and voracious with the mind of a huckster, too glad to accept the dividends that the former colonial power hands out to it. This get-rich-quick middle class shows itself incapable of great ideas or of inventiveness. It remembers what it has read in European text books and imperceptibly it becomes not even the replica of Europe but its caricature. (141)

The national middle class profit by these manoeuvres but those profits never reach the people who remain powerless and in poverty.

To avoid the pitfalls of neo-colonialism, a nationalism grounded in the collective interest of the people must continue to dictate the conduct of the nation after it gains the right to self administration. The selfish indigenous rulers who act like the previous colonial regime, with no interests of the welfare of the people stand exposed to the public. Writers have an important role to play in exposing the computation and exploitation of the masses by the ruling party. At the same time, literature has an important role to play in the construction of a national consciousness. As the Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe remarked in “The Novelist as Teacher”, “Here then is an adequate revolution for me to espouse – to help my society regain its belief in itself and put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self-denigration” (56).

So rather than extracting from the past, what is perceived to be the most valuable timeless cultural treasures, the writers of post colonial nations try to modify, reinterpret and reform traditional culture at the service of forging a new
national consciousness. Emphasizing culture as first and foremost a vital unstable activity that is always in the process of being made and re-made, Fanon calls for “the breakup of the old charter of culture, a shattering which becomes increasingly fundamental” (197). Fanon continues to assert in *The Wretched of the Earth*:

We believe that the conscious and organized undertaking by a colonial people to re-establish the sovereignty of that nation constitutes the most complete and obvious cultural manifestation that exists. It is not alone the success of the struggle which afterward gives validity and vigour to culture; culture is not put into cold storage during the conflict. The struggle itself in its development and in its internal progression sends culture along difficult paths and traces out entirely new ones for it. The struggle for freedom does not give back to the national culture its former value and shapes; this struggle which aims at a fundamentally different set of relations between men cannot leave intact either the form or the content of the people’s culture. After the conflict there is not only the disappearance of colonialism but also the disappearance of the colonized man. (197-98)

Venerating one’s nation with all its merits and returning to one’s own culture and traditions became the call of the day.

More valuable by far than common customs, posts and frontiers conforming to strategic ideas in the fact of sharing, in the past, a glorious heritage and regrets, and of having, in the future,
(a shared) programme to put into effect, or the fact of having suffered, enjoyed and hoped together. These are the kinds of things that can be understood in spite of differences of race and language. . . . ‘having suffered together’ and indeed, suffering in common unifies more than joy does. Where national memories are concerned, grieves are of more value than triumphs, for they impose duties and require a common effort. (Renan 19)

The intensity of the freedom battle in India, the strength of Indian nationalism and the literature of the Indian elites, made “the suffering together” more valuable. Indians were united in the making of the nation. K.N.Panikkar in “Culture and Making of a Nation” remarks: “Nation is a political and not a cultural construct; yet, a nation cannot come into being without its people having a sense of cultural belonging as a shared experience, culture in itself does not create a nation, but it enables the transformation of different existing identities into a national identity” (para 6). The awareness of one’s own roots, return to one’s own cultural heritage and a zeal in establishing one’s national identity contributed to the resistance of the empire.

With the process of decolonization across the globe, the meaning of the imperial past didn’t disappear from the lives of millions of people who were colonised. The memory of colonization existed as shared memory, with its conflict in language, culture, religion, ideology and policy which still exercised a tremendous force. According to Frank Fanon,

We should flatly refuse the situation to which the western countries wish to condemn us. Colonialism and imperialism have
not paid their score when they withdraw their flags and their police forces from our territories. For centuries the (foreign) capitalists have behaved in the under developed world like nothing more than criminals. (101)

Towards the close of the twentieth century, postcolonialism emerged as a major critical discourse and the most influential mode of socio-cultural analysis shaping the current climate of literary studies. Postcolonialism has become a watchword for the fashionable study of cultural “otherness”. Like all other “post-isms”, postcolonialism has caused a rigorous ongoing debate among its antagonists and protagonists over the precise parameters of the field and the definition of the term postcolonial. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin in *Empire Writes Back* opine:

> We use the term ‘post-colonial’ however to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of pre occupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression. We also suggest that it is most appropriate as the term for the new cross-cultural criticism which has emerged in recent years . . . . (2)

Alastair Niven observes: “It may be becoming altogether inappropriate to speak in terms of national labels . . . . The impermanence of cultural rootings and the cross-fertilization of art, society and politics in the modern world . . . make national descriptions redundant” (1107).
Postcolonialism marked a growth of new literatures – literatures of erstwhile colonies which had in common the shared experience of colonialism. In addition to absorbing the influence of imperial culture, such literatures also resisted this influence and colonial control by asserting their differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre. The postcolonial literature thus chose to answer back to the universal claim of the western canon. All postcolonial studies seek to highlight the colonizational relationship between east and west. With the question of identity as the central theme, creating spaces for the non-European in western academia, postcolonial studies seek to deconstruct the Eurocentrism of western scholarship and cultural hegemony, and give voice to the voiceless and marginalized. Benita Parry in “The Institutionalization of Postcolonial Studies” recalls Spivak’s words:

Thus Spivak proposed that postcolonial criticism could seize the opportunity afforded by Derrida’s deconstruction of the discursive apparatus to occidental reason, since his “sustained and developing work on the mechanics of the constitution of the other” could be put to “much greater analytic and interventionist advantage than invocations of the authenticity of the other”. (68)

If the wide variety of writing that critics and readers group under the label “post-colonial” has anything in common, it is an awkward reliance on imperial reminders. The postcolonial nations have to come out of the shameful reminder. In “Postcolonialism and Fiction in English: Some Considerations”, Sheobhushan Shukla and Anu Shukla remark: “It is assumed that postcoloniality by itself brings in decolonization, empowers the margins, gives voice to the subalterns,
deconstructs the Enlightenment reason, valorizes the difference and induces the growth of native culture, especially literature” (5-6).

It is true that the term postcolonialism has become so heterogeneous and multidisciplinary, that it incites interest from academics across humanities and social sciences. However it is more a favourite site in literary studies. Pointing to this, Ania Loomba in *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* feels that: “. . . what has circulated as ‘post colonial theory’ has largely emerged from within English literary studies. The meaning of ‘discourse’ shrinks to ‘text’ and from there to texts written in English because that is the corpus most familiar to the critics” (84).

English is the medium through which postcolonialism as well as colonialism expresses itself, and it is also the medium of project globalization. Paul Jay asserts: “At the same time the remarkable explosion of English literature produced outside Britain and United States has made it clear that the literature is becoming defined less by a nation than by a language, in which authors from a variety of cultural and ethnic background write” (33).

This over emphasis on English might lead to the neglect of literature of other languages which too contain powerful voices though ignorant of the colonizer’s language. Talib says while talking about postcolonial literatures: “This should include literatures written in various languages and not only in the language of the colonizers” (17). So the literature of countries which were colonies to the imperial powers like Africa, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Carribean countries, India, Malaysia, Malta, New Zealand, Pakistan, Singapore, South Pacific Island countries and Sri Lanka produce postcolonial literatures in
English as well as in their native tongues. However, the literature of those who wrote in English gained global visibility.

In countries like India and Africa, the main burden of the postcolonial writers has been to revive and rejuvenate, an already existing but blurred literary tradition and culture. The writers had to go back to the past and recover their lost identity. Chinua Achebe tries to teach his countrymen, through his fictional works, that they are not without history and that their “past with all its imperfect form was not one night of savagery from which the Europeans acting on God’s behalf delivered them” (57). He calls novel writing as an act of atonement. More importantly in India, the colonial experience has been a form of cultural encounter that gave birth to biculturism. Most of the Indian English novelists up to 1970’s deal with this kind of situation. Krishna of R.K.Narayan’s *The English Teacher*, Moorthy of Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* and Govindan Nair in *The Cat and Shakespeare* are cases in point.

The main burden of postcolonial literature consisted in offering resistance to authoritarianism, recognizing multiplicities, and valorizing the views of the oppressed. The Indian writing in English written before Independence belonged to resistance literature. The Indians wrote against the authoritarian British empire and its exploitation of the Indians. Patriotism was kindled in the hearts of Indians by the national leaders to break from the bondage of slavery. Literature functioned as a signifier of national identity or heritage and Indian writers wrote in Hindi, Bengali, Tamil, Telugu and other regional languages developing the need for freedom. “Cultural nationalism” was in fact developed by these writers against imperialism. According to Simon During:
It was once said by an acute observer, and eloquent writer (Rousseau), that the love of mankind was nothing but the love of justice; the same might be said, with considerable truth, of the love of our country. It is little more than another name for the love of liberty, of independence, of peace, of social happiness. (138)

The love for one’s nation or love, for liberty, peace and social happiness prompt the colonized to defend a set of customs, memories, language and resources as his own, the fact that his culture is in no way inferior to that of the colonizer. This literature which was categorized as anti-colonial literature finds place in post colonial literature.

Peter Hulme while discussing the expansion of subject matter in post colonial studies, opines:

. . . that the field is getting bigger as the characteristic language and thematic concerns of post-colonial studies spread across many disciplines and that at the same time we are unearthing a lot of earlier anticolonial work, often neglected at its time of writing, that is allowing us to piece together a fuller history of the development of post colonial studies. (4)

The newly independent nations wish to give a universal dimension to their culture. The struggle against the colonialism had given new values to their national consciousness and “national consciousness which is the most elaborate form of culture” (Fanon 199) would gain a new international dimension when it opens the door to international communication. At the same time, the postcolonial nations realize, that they are still not equal to the European masters.
The crippling subaltern status of the postcolonial nations had to be transformed by following the oppressing dominant culture of the modern world. The postcolonial national identity is formed in this “in between” space, between his ache for glorifying his national culture and his compulsion to adhere to the dominant culture of the modern civilization. He becomes a cross cultural product – a hybrid, feeling at home nowhere.

For, in the period following the Second World War, English society was transformed by its earlier imperial encounters. The wave of postwar immigration to the imperial ‘centers’ – including in England the influx of large numbers of non-white people from Africa and the Caribbean and in America from Asia and Latin America amounted to what Gordon Lewis calls “a colonialism in reverse” (304), a new sense of what it means to be ‘English’. (Brennan 47)

This pattern of migration to the imperial centres’ led to a cross-cultural vision to many Indian writers who settled abroad and started writing novels. The diaspora writers depict in their novels, the state of exile they experience in the countries of their settlement. Homi K. Bhabha explains this migrant experience in a compact fashion. Standing at the border the migrant is empowered to intervene actively in the transmission of cultural inheritance and tradition (of both the home and host land) rather than passively accept its venerable customs and pedagogical wisdom. He or she can question, refashion or mobilize received ideas. The migrant is empowered to act as an agent of change, deploying received knowledge in the present and transforming it as a consequence. This does not
mean that received or traditional knowledge becomes dismissed. Rather, inherited knowledge can be reinscribed and given new, unexpected meanings. Bhabha calls this action “restaging the past”. From a migratory, minority position, the restaging of past “introduces other, incommensurable cultural temporalities into the invention of tradition. This process estranges any access to an originary identity or a received tradition” (2).

Robin Cohen in *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*, remarks, “Diaspora signified a collective a trauma, a banishment, where one dreamed of home but lived in exile” (ix). Such kind of experience is well expressed by Indian diasporic writers. The growing interest in culture studies has created a critiquing of the diasporic writers. Language and culture are transformed as they come into contact with other languages and cultures. Diasporic writing raises questions regarding the definition of “home” and “nation”. Schizophrenia and nostalgia are often the preoccupation of these writers as they seek to locate themselves in the new cultures.

Migration takes place due to various reasons and the movement causes dislocation and relocation of cultures. Diasporic writers live on the margins of two cultures and create a new culture. In the Indian context, migrancy is governed by historical, political economic reasons including higher education, better prospects and marriage. The Indian community has shown greater sense of adjustment, adaptability and mobility.

The chief character of diasporic writing is quest for identity, re-routing, insider and outsider syndrome, nostalgia etc. For example V.S. Naipaul is in perpetual quest for his roots and turns to India in search of it. Salman Rushdie
visits India to mythologise its history. Rohinton Mistry visits and revisits India for a kind of revitalization and to re-energise his aching soul. Bharati Mukherjee’s childhood memories of India tend to give a nostalgic element to her works. Anita Desai’s *Bye Bye Black Bird* reveals her cross cultural vision. Writers like Chitra Bannerjee Divakaruni and Jhumpa Lahiri bring out the elements of acculturation and assimilation seen in Indian immigrants. Clearly all these diasporic writers realize the importance of cultural encounters and the bicultural pulls which help in the emergence of a new culture.

Ruth Prawar Jhabvala’s novels too clearly portray the east-west encounter. Born and educated in Europe but married to an Indian and settled in India, she is gifted with a unique sensibility. She is familiar with the life and manners of her adopted country, at the same time her western sensibility endows her with an uncommon insight into the typical traits of Indians, particularly the urban upper and middle classes, as they keep on oscillating between tradition and modernity. Her novels *Edmund in India* and *A Backward Place* portray the problem of East-West encounter through mixed marriage. The sharp contrast between the two ways of living and thinking causes many awkward and unseemly situations in conjugal life.

At present there are more Indian women diasporic writers occupying the centre stage of diasporic writing like Anita Desai and Bharati Mukherjee who have been publishing novels for more than two decades and the ones who have been around for less than ten years are Chitra Banerjee Divakurni, Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri and many more, settled abroad and recording the bicultural pulls in their work with their lived experience.
Among these writers, Nayantara Sahgal’s stand is different. Born in Allahabad to Vijayalakshmi and Ranjit Pandit in the family of the Nehrus, Sahgal was exposed to idealism and determination that marked the country’s struggle for freedom. She received her education in Woodstock, an American missionary school in Mussoorie and later in Wellesley college Massachusetts. It is her unique family background being the nerve centre of freedom struggle and her education in America which has given her a cross-cultural vision undoubtedly. She accepts English as universal language even in India. English cannot be rooted out from India, for it is “something uniquely Indian, uniquely part of us through history . . .” (“Testament” 27). As she herself says, “I am Indian by blood, nationality, upbringing and conviction and western by virtue of my English-medium education” (“Testament” 23). It is this English medium education and her love for English, which prompted her to write in English. She says in “The Testament of an Indo-Anglian Writer”, “I did not take the conscious decision, when I began to write for a living, that English would be my medium. It happened that way because I had the reading and preference for it over a large number of years. It was most natural for me to write in English” (26).

Postcolonial studies has been at various times and in various ways intertwined not only with multiculturalism and ethnic studies but also with feminism. Until recently feminist and post colonial theory have followed “a path of convergent evolution” (Ashcroft et al 249). Both the theories defend the marginalised “others” against the hegemonic repressive structures of colonialism/patriarchy. According to Leela Gandhi,
Feminist and post colonial theory alike began with an attempt to simply invert prevailing hierarchies of gender culture/race and they have each progressively welcomed the post structuralist invitation to refuse the binary opposition upon which patriarchal/colonial authority construct itself. (83)

Women novelists confront a controversy surrounding the issues faced by ‘third world women’ and their western counterparts:

Some feminist postcolonial theorists have cogently argued that a blinkered focus on racial politics inevitably elides the ‘double colonization’ of women under imperial conditions. Such theory postulates the third world women as victims par excellence, the forgotten casualty of both imperial ideology and native and foreign patriarchies. (Gandhi 83)

But this idea of coupling postcolonialism and feminism leads to an unwanted division between third world women and their western counterparts. Chandra Talpade Mohanty in her influential article “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses” feels it was inappropriate to compare the women of third world countries with the western women. She argues that the representation of the “third world women as singular monolithic subject” within the feminist theory enacts a “discursive colonization” (51). Mohanty continues to argue:

Drawn in broad strokes within a global framework, ‘third-world women’ are typically seen as an undifferentiated group uncomplicated by the heterogeneity that characterizes their
conceptual counterpart (First world women) in the more
developed world. Oppression is then seen as a ‘Third-world’
preserve and ‘Third-world women’ reduced to objects of
consumption for a developed world . . . . (56)

Feminism within post colonialism must confront the dilemma of seemingly
divisive place and the tension between western feminism and post colonial
feminism continues. Differences between postcolonial feminist theorists surface
repeatedly as the category of “women of color” is fractured by the politics of
location, strife between minority communities in the First World, women in
diasporic communities and women in the Third World. Bell Hooks bemoaned the
fact that “white women who dominate feminist discourse today rarely question
whether or not their perspective on women’s reality is true to the lived experience
of women as a collective group” (3).

However Sara Suleri criticizes the work of Mohanty, Trinh and Bell
Hooks in her essay “Women Skin Deep: Feminism and the Postcolonial
Condition”:

Rather than extending an inquiry into the discursive possibilities
represented by the intersection of gender and race, feminist
intellectuals like Hooks misuse their status as minority voices by
enacting strategies of belligerence that at times are more divisive
than informative. Such claims to radical revisionism take refuge in
the political untouchability that is accorded to the category of third
world woman. (765)
Suleri is willing to retain the category of “third world woman” but is scrupulously clear that it must be activated through a materially located feminist theory.

Much more than other genres, the novel has been chosen by the postcolonial writers of different nations to express their suppression and marginalization. As Spivak writes, “If there is a buzzword in cultural critique now, it is ‘marginality’ ” (55). In India, though a lot of poetry and drama is being written in English, it is fiction that captures the attention of the critics and the readers. The publication of novel was expanding more and more, as the number of reading public, especially the middle class, increased.

The novel is popular amidst the postcolonial writers both men and women because of its spacious narrative and its capability to absorb in itself various other genres. Moreover, as Edward as Said argues in The World, the Text and the Critic (1984), the novel is more worldly than various other cognate forms. It is easier to inscribe social and cultural discourses in the novel than in any other genres. It has been implicated in social realism and cultural politics right from the very beginning. Jonathan White considers the novel “as an alternative way of doing history and politics” (209).

Post colonial writing in Indian English fiction can be considered in various ways. Many writers who wrote after independence like R.K.Narayan, Raja Rao, Shashi Despande, Amit Chaudhuri, Nayantara Sahgal, Kamala Markandaya and Anita Desai are designated as post colonials in spite of their protestation. Sahgal writes in “The Schizophrenic Imagination”, “First we were colonials and now we seem to be post colonials. So is ‘colonial’ the new Anno Domini from which events are to be everlastingly measured?” (93). According to
her, colonial experience “is simply one more layer added” (93) to Indian consciousness.

Postcolonial novels have specific structural strategies as well as thematics. They render engagement with colonial experience, deal with women as colonial subjects, with feminist issues, and sometimes with subalterns or with abrogation or appropriation of the language of the metropolitan centre. Indian English novel itself has been more obsessed with cultural interaction between the east and the west than with the discursive powers and strategies which led to the depletion of Indian knowledge and culture. Some outstanding writers who have explored cultural interaction between the east and the west and “the transcultural dynamics of the colonial encounters” (Gandhi 131) are Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Ruth Jhabwala and a few more.

There has been an upsurge of women novelists in English in India, allegedly brought about by postcoloniality. Many Indian women novelists have published more novels in English than in regional languages like Hindi, Bengali, Tamil and Telugu. There are several Indian women novelists like Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Shashi Despande, Arundhati Roy, Githa Hariharan, Shobha De and many others who attained international fame through their novels. They were post colonial writers writing on feminist issues as well as on many social problems. Amidst these writers Nayantara Sahgal’s forte is to write political fiction. Sahgal writes in “The Schizophrenic Imagination”: 
I did not set out to write “political fiction”. I have no ideology except a vague sort that feels uncomfortable with title and privilege, with kings, queens and political dynasties. I have no message either, unless it is the non-message that Europe is not the centre of the world. Politics for me was an environment in which every issue was a political issue and personal and political fates were inextricably bound. (97)

Nayantara Sahgal may be seen as one of the best socio-political novelists. Her novels mirror the contemporary Indian political scene and the changing scenario since the beginning of the Gandhian era. She is authentic in providing an overview of Indian urban culture with all its inherent contradictions. Sahgal’s fiction with its sense of history, deals with the socio-political issues, communal problems and cultural conflicts of the east and the west in post-independent India.

According to Sahgal, the Indian writers writing in English, cannot escape from the impact of this “collision of cultures”. At the same time they belonged to a generation who grew up and died doomed to inferiority, the “lesser breeds” in the expressive phrase of the imperial poet Kipling. With the end of colonialism, a new world and literature came into existence which gave freedom to the writers. Sahgal says in “Illusion and Reality”:

The first thing this set us free to do was to speak, from points of view based on assumptions and findings that had no bearing till then. We had something of value to contribute: a point of view – another way of looking at the world, an alternative art of politics, of love and marriage, of medicine, philosophy and nutrition. We
believed these alternative approaches might even lead to some useful shifts in perspective and would find their due place in the mainstream of affairs which until then had been undilutedly western. (55)

Sahgal is able to foresee the greatest political issue of the post independent India, i.e., the gulf between the poor and the rich. She is able to predict the future of India to a certain extent. She says:

India’s two economies, the vulgar ostentation and glowing consumerism on the one hand, and a continuing and even growing impoverishment on the other are a sign of the complete separation between the rich and the poor. It used to be said the poor had no nation. They have been and still are, lured or dragged across continents to provide labour. Now it is the rich who have no nation and no loyalty, except to money. (“Puzzle” 84)

A rare insight of Sahgal is evident here, as the present situation in politics and society depicts the rich with their first allegiance to money.

Nayantara Sahgal as a member of the elite society, has peopled her fiction with the elite circle. Many of the post colonial Indian writers who wrote in English belonged to the elite circle. Sahgal herself acknowledges this:

So present writing may well be an elite rehearsal for the more representative performance yet to come once these Indians – which means most Indians – can express themselves directly. Their expression will be less allied to western taste, patronage and
publication, and it may reveal an identity very different from the one we fancy ourselves as having today. ("Puzzle" 84)

According to Sahgal, a different kind of writing is yet to emerge from the margin. Here too her prediction holds good as we are able to perceive a lot of subaltern literature occupying the present arena of postcolonial literature.

Sahgal as a writer is against the practice of analysing the literary texts using the theories. She says:

I’m also bewildered by all the intimidating theories about writing. I can see the point of analysing the physical world . . . . The writer who is cross-sectioned and analysed is not only still around, she’s also changing . . . . And I’ve wondered if this extent of dissection of texts doesn’t make writers, readers and reviewers self conscious . . . . Do readers crouch in, wait for hidden meanings and writers labour to supply ever more “special effects?” . . . . And at the end of all these contortions, the experts seem to have come up with the melancholy conclusion that we are spinning without a centre, that in this post-modern era, there is no fixed meaning to anything since everything, including identity, keeps changing . . . .

(“Puzzle” 90)

But Sahgal is sure of her own stand:

I’m not spinning without a centre . . . . Mine holds, may be because I am not in the state of advanced modernity categorized as post modern. I’m not European and so I don’t have to go by
Europe’s categories or squash myself into Europe’s conceptual and cultural scheme of things. (“Puzzle” 92)

In opposing to place her whole universe of fiction to lend itself to European terms, she proves herself as a postcolonial writer seeking to establish an egalitarian climate, which would be possible only when “the white man lays down his burden and holds out his hands in equal partnership” (“Puzzle” 92).

Sahgal is a writer who chose to write from her own country. She is firmly attached to her roots but at the same time, she is able to respect the “cultural otherness”. The influence of the Indian past, with all its multicultural aspects has made an indelible impact on every Indian’s psyche. Sahgal feels Indians could never give up this cross-cultural vision. She says:

Where does one culture begin and another end when they are housed in the same person? There are powerful winds blowing through English literature. English is being assaulted by cross-currents of racial experience, by a vast expansion of its frame of reference, by new uses of imagination and language. The day of pure literatures, like pure or ruling races, is over and English, at least, is in a new flowering – one that expresses a vision, a vitality, an expansionism . . . . (“Schizo” 99)

Sahgal’s cross-cultural vision is an outcome of her own life experiences. Hence it is not out of place here to discuss in detail her biographical details.

Born in Allahabad on May 10, 1927 as the second of the three daughters of Ranjit Sitaram Pandit and Vijayalekshmi Pandit, Nayantara grew up in Anand Bhavan, their ancestral home with her parents, her maternal uncle Jawaharlal
Nehru and his daughter Indira. Nayantara Sahgal’s whole family – her grand
father, parents, uncles, aunts and cousins were actively engaged in the country’s
freedom struggle. The visits of the police, the imprisonment of their parents, the
hectic political activity followed by long periods of silence all were accepted as
ordinary events. There were sad, lonely moments for little Nayantara during the
enforced separation from her parents, and she recollects how she cried in secret:

. . . crying over such matters was not allowed by our self
imposed family code. But we emerged from these spells each
time more convinced that our parents were doing the right thing.
The time we spent together in a family group became doubly
precious because it was rare; as a result family life became
happier, more closely knit and imbued with a deep sense of unity
common ideals. So childhood, despite its unhappy moments –
and what fairy tale does not have its witches and goblins? – had an
enchanted quality. (Prison 19-20)

These periods of separation also made Nayantara and her sisters,
Chandralekha and Rita more resourceful and courageous. She also recollects
how imprisonment of her parents was accepted as something ordinary, as arrest
was voluntarily courted and imprisonment gladly accepted by the Indians. When
she was three, the entire family was enjoying chocolate cake at tea time, when the
police arrived to arrest her father. Her mother pacified the children that there was
nothing to worry about and the children bid him good bye cheerfully. In her
infant mind, prison became pleasantly associated with chocolate cake and her
indelible childhood impression supplies the title for her first autobiography *Prison and Chocolate Cake*.

Childhood is an important period as a child’s mind is impressionable at this age, easily influenced and moulded by the ideas it is exposed to. Nayantara in her childhood was exposed to the discussions during national struggle in her own home as Anand Bhavan was the centre of discussion. “All around them political and moral ideas were being discussed and formulated and the girls were a part of it. If it was Nehru’s idealism which has influenced her political stance, it is her own father’s gentleness and courage which has influenced her moral stance” (Jain 12). Nayantara as a little girl was much attached to her father Ranjit Sitaram Pandit who was a loving and understanding father. He treated his daughters as equals and cleared their doubts even about complex political matters. Nayantara “resembles him both in looks and temperament and has inherited from him love of scholarship and a sense of history and perhaps a little of his love for open space” (Jain 13). Sitaram Pandit was a great Sanskrit scholar who had translated a number of classics into English including *Rajatharangini*. He had a passion for music and gardening was his favourite occupation. She also remembers him as a tolerant person and an indulgent and proud father.

As a child, Nayantara felt her world revolve around her parents. She recalls her mother’s personality in *Prison and Chocolate Cake*.

Her presence was like sunlight and we blossomed in it. When she walked into a room it became a house. When she put her hand to the most ordinary meal it became a banquet. When we were
guided by her, the most unpleasant ordeal become a challenge.

We were her ardent admirers. (Prison 27)

Though her father’s home was in Rajkot Kathiawar, after his marriage he chose to settle in Uttar Pradesh, the heart of the national movement, and Nayantara and her sisters were brought up in Kashmiri tradition. She recalls the estate ‘Khali’ her father’s favourite place, where they used to spend their summer vacation. It was situated in the Kumaon hills where her father had built a beautiful house surrounded by hills, pine trees, and pure sparkling streams. It was a heavenly abode where the family spent happy times together.

Nayantara was well aware of the efforts taken by her parents to provide the girls with normal healthy childhood and some kind of continuity in education. The presence of an older generation in Anand Bhavan, their family home gave them a sense of security. The order loving Nanima was ‘tiny and doll like’ and “Nanima disliked all children except those of her own family and made no bones about it” (Prison 38), and Bibima entertained the children telling stories about princes and princesses and animals which talked like human beings. They also learnt stories from the Ramayana and the Mahabharatha. Going to Anand Bhavan was an eagerly anticipated event, for it gave the Pandit girls unlimited freedom. They also enjoyed childhood games with their mother’s sister Krishna Masi and “their uncle Jawahar was not only an ‘uncontested hero’ but also a boisterous playmate who spent hours with them singing old songs and organizing new games giving the go-by to grown-up authority and discipline, inhabiting for a while their noisy exuberant world” (Jain 12). Standing on his head, in an upside posture was his favourite exercise not because it was a healthy practice but
because it was a good way of viewing the world bright early in the day. He allotted sufficient time for reading, writing and even imbibing the life of his time. They were a family of voracious readers. Above all he was a good human being. It is through his eyes that Sahgal viewed India. Freedom meant a lot to him and Sahgal’s ideal India was bound up with his ideal of it. Her revered veneration for him is obvious in these lines when she met him as the first Prime Minister of India.

There is a confining sound about the label of Prime Minister, as there is, for the matter about any label. It suggests specific duties. In Mamu, the human being seemed always ascendant to the label. He was a sensitive person passionately devoted to certain humane ideals before he was anything else. To me he resembled a knight in quest of the Grail or an artist dedicated to the completion of his task, much more than he did as a Prime Minister. *(Prison 204)*

Nayantara’s close association with her servants at her home is obvious from her description of the servants in her autobiography. In *Prison and Chocolate Cake* she opines:

No story of an Indian home can be complete without a description of those whose life’s work it is to serve it. Our family servants played a major role in our lives. During our absences from our parents we would have felt lost and uprooted if we had not had them around us, to bring us up with love and care looking upon us as their own children. *(Prison 67)*
The pen-portraits of several servants in the household are skilfully described by Sahgal. She describes Lachmania the sweeper woman who served the family day after day, broom in hand sweeping the dead leaves from the lawn and polishing the marble flowers of the house with a mop. She wore heavy silver earrings and heavy anklets. “She was poor and of humble origin but she was a woman, with a woman’s pride in ornaments” (Prison 68). Every year she delivered a baby and placed them under a tree while she worked. They grew like young plants unmindful of the discomforts of heat and cold.

Sundar of the untouchable class was their bearer. He was a dark short wizened man who took care of the Pandit girls with love and care. He accompanied them everywhere but he loved to stay in Allahabad. Nayantara also mentions about their family tailor Mohammed Hussain who sewed their childhood dress. Whenever he sat for his prayers, the children would maintain a respectful silence and the tendency to respect other religions was thus formed in Nayantara’s childhood days.

There were two chowkidars at Anand Bhavan, a day watchman and a night watchman. Hari was another untouchable boy whom her Nanuji Mothilal Nehru found as a bright boy and sent him to school. But Hari knew no rules and regulations nor any good conduct. He lied outrageously and stole whenever he could. When Nanuji heard about his misdeeds he thrashed Hari severely. Hari ran away from the house but he returned, and was groomed to become a valet, by Nanuji’s training. He used to tell impossible stories to the Pandit girls that would make them roar with laughter. Nanuji had great hopes for him and Hari’s golden
opportunity came when the Congress Party nominated Hari as one of their candidates in the 1936 election to the Legislative Assembly of the U.P. The Pandit girls canvassed for Hari and were wildly excited when Hari was elected.

Nayantara also mentions their gardener ‘the gentle Rama’ who was very close to Nayantara’s father who used to discuss about the various plants with him. Rama used to weep uncontrollably whenever his master was arrested. Her father used to embrace him and assure his safe return soon. There was a genuine master and servant relationship between them.

Sahgal recalls with gratitude Anna Ornsholt, a tall slim erect dame, a governess who became an institution in the Pandit girls’ lives. She taught them good habits, and exercises. She made the girls do their own work and made them self reliant. As Nayantara feels, “Tanta Anna brought harmony and happy discipline into our hitherto disturbed lives” (Prison 66). She was greatly admired by the Pandit girls and everyone who came to know her for her abundant store of energy. She swam, played tennis and badminton with zest. On hot afternoons she would ride on her bicycle to the bazaar a mile away, to do some shopping for her employer. Such was her energy and enthusiasm.

When Nayantara was sent to a convent for formal schooling, she found the experience unsatisfactory. The history taught in the school was mere fiction according to her, as it gave a wrong picture of the Indians struggling for freedom. Moreover she was weak in Maths. Later her parents shifted the girls to Woodstock, a co-educational institution managed by American missionaries at Mussorie. The atmosphere in this school was to her liking and school became fun instead of ordeal. Later her parents decided to send Lakha and Tara to
America for higher studies. It was war time and her mother was worried about their safety but her father and Mamu felt that it was the only possible course to ensure that their lives were not embittered by the political situation at home. Thus while their parents were still in jail, the two sisters sailed to America, on a troopship on May 14, 1943. Their Masi Krishna Huthee Singh who lived in Bombay sent them off with garlands of flowers and a red tika on their forehead. She also presented each with a coconut for good luck and a carved wood box containing a handful of Indian earth in case they got homesick. Love for Mother India was a dominant emotion in the whole family.

The experience of travelling alone gave the girls the necessary courage to handle their life situations in America. It turned out to be a study in freedom and moulded the girls. En route to America, Sahgal describes the different kinds of people she met in the ship and in America. She came across military personnel, nuns, missionaries and many more. She discussed Gandhian thoughts with them. Many Americans didn’t know about India. They met many renowned people during their stay in U.S. including Helen Keller, Pearl Buck, and Paul Robeson. Pearl Buck became Mrs. Walsh to them and they spent a summer vacation in Mrs. Walsh’s country house in Pennsylvania.

Nayantara completed her B.A. in history from Wellesley College. The death of her father in 1944 gave a traumatic shock to her. The full impact of it she realized only on her return to India in October 1947. India was not India without him. Independence had torn the country into two and had taken her father with it.
Never again would I see him walking on the dew-wit grass on early morning, as he had loved to do, a brown Kashmir shawl thrown over his white khadi-clad figure. Never again would I be able to talk to him of books and music of stars and trees and people, of the thousands things he had taught me to understand. Never again would I be with him in the pine-scented air of Khali, watching the sunset on the snow-topped mountain peaks or hearing him sing as he worked in the garden. (Prison 192)

Nayantara returned to India in October 1947. Her mother was in Russia as India’s ambassador and her “Mamu” was the first Prime Minister of independent India living in New Delhi. When she met her “Mamu” she felt her homecoming was complete even without her parents near her. She went with her “Mamu” to meet Gandhiji. Gandhiji himself was much disturbed by the horror and bloodshed of partition as his country men had forgotten the lesson of non-violence and this pained him. Yet he was receptive to young Nayantara and welcomed her to discuss her future plan with him. So she went after a few days to meet him again. This time she was accompanied by Indira, her little son Rajiv, Masi and Padmasi. While they were taking leave after a happy hour, Gandhi remarked “It is good you came to see me today because the next time you see will be in a crowd” (Prison 208). His casual remark made no impression or them as he was in a crowd always. But they realized its significance later, for the next time they saw him in his funeral procession amidst the gigantic mourning throng. Gandhi’s assassination had caused a panic, agony and a deep sense of loss. Yet she feels Indians had the responsibility to hold his banner and rebuild the nation
as the Mahatma dreamt. Sahgal ends her first autobiography with a note of hope
“Gandhi was dead but his India would live on in his children” (Prison 216).

From Fear Set Free is Sahgal’s sequel to the first part of her life narrative
Prison and Chocolate Cake published in 1954. Her second autobiography was
published in 1962. Prison and Chocolate Cake ended with Mahatma’s demise
and From Fear Set Free begins with Gandhi’s unshakable trust in truth,
satyagraha and nonviolence. It is dedicated to her husband Gautam Sahgal,
referred as ‘G.S’. Nayantara’s own preoccupation with freedom is perhaps
obtained from Gandhi’s ideology. In the preface, she quotes Gandhi’s words.
“The outward freedom that we shall attain will only be in exact proportion to the
inward freedom to which we may have grown at a given moment” (Fear 6). To
be fearless, one’s heart has to be filled with unlimited love to dissolve hatred and
fear. According to her, non-violence, satyagraha and freedom are all synonyms
of love. She opines: “Love had pervaded my childhood . . . when the people . . .
had cheerfully gone to prison without rancour against the government that
imprisoned them. Love, the guiding principle of all good men had been Gandhi’s
lodestar too . . .” (Fear 8). He believed that an individual could bring about a
change.

Walking down the memory lane, she recollects how the spirit of
freedom was an all pervading power to the Nehrus. The deserted state of Anand
Bhavan, her childhood home, resurrects the memory of her father who was no
longer with her to see India liberated. Her Papu was not only angry about the
arrogance of “the damned Britisher” but the spineless submission of “the damned
Indians”. The loss of her father brings to her mind, the partition, the loss of a part
of her motherland which had made thousands homeless and orphaned. She talks about the refugees: “Their eyes were empty giving them a curiously faceless look and they were silent” (*Fear* 13).

Nayantara mentions about her soft corner towards an artist Mr. Max, but the affair didn’t take a serious turn as Max wanted to settle in New York but Nayantara was bent upon returning to her homeland. Moreover she cherished a romantic dream to marry a history professor and do research into some remote period of Indian history. It was her adolescent fancy, but life had something different in store for her. She was swept off her feet by an attractive ambitious young man working in a British firm, Gautam Sahgal who was not even remotely connected to her world in any way. Politics was not his cup of tea and Gandhi was only a name to him with no emotional significance. She recalls her attraction to him: “I stole a tentative look at him out of the corner of my eyes and my history professor wavered like a reflection in water” (*Fear* 20). When she expressed her doubt about the differences in their background, Gautam assured her of their happy future. “He tackled problems with a figurative lawn-mower . . . for me life resembled a rock garden full of small crevices and obstructions. How could I enter his world and he mine? ‘We would make a new one’ said Gautam” (*Fear* 21). Both of them convinced their elders and got married in Allahabad.

Nayantara Sahgal took marriage seriously as it was a lifelong alliance which gave cent percent space and freedom to both. She had difficulty in adjustment as she was well aware of the gulf that existed between their cultures, customs and ideologies. His home in Lahore, before partition had the best linen,
glass and coire that his father’s trips to Europe could provide. On the other hand, Nayantara’s parents and grand parents had abandoned all that was found foreign and followed Gandhiji. Gautam Sahgal was not so. “. . . this was an Indian to whom Gandhi was just a name and freedom for his country an event that had deprived him of his home and a part of his inheritance” (Fear 21). Like many Indians he doubted the efficacy of Gandhi’s teachings. “With the Punjabi’s earth-bound instincts he had always believed in his strong right arm. The partition had convinced him of the efficacy of this. Everything else was a talk. Non-violence had gone up in blood and smoke” (Fear 27).

Nayantara Sahgal has interwoven her personal world with the current affairs of India at her time with the fineness of a skilled weaver. From Fear Set Free reconstructs not only her past life but also the history of her motherland. She discusses the partition experience, Hindu-Muslim conflicts, Gandhian ideals, Nehru’s distress over national problems, Gautam viz a viz. Tara in an objective manner. Even at the time of engagement, she was well informed of the current scenario of the world through her Mamu. When she informed her mother her wish to marry Gautam, her mother invited her to Moscow for “a daughter is too precious to be handed over in haste to anyone, however good, at least, that is how my father felt about me and how I feel about mine” (Fear 33). However she agreed to their marriage.

Sahgal has depicted her visit to Moscow in a detailed manner, describing the Russian culture, the kids, the Russian embassy, Russian ballets and theatres. She also describes the impact of modernization in North Indian cities like Kanpur, Allahabad, Delhi etc., “with the coming of railways, roads, telegraph
wires and electricity superimposed modernity on the map of India. It did not penetrate the rural areas where lived three quarters of India’s people. But the cities reflected it...” (Fear 43). Description of people, events and place give a special aura to her autobiography.

She describes her marriage to Gautam conducted according to the Nehru’s family custom. She shifted to Kanpur with Gautam and her marriage was “happy, healthy and gay”. As per her mother’s wish, she had her first daughter in Washington whom she named Nonika. Her second child was a boy named Ranjit and the third Geeta. She frankly confesses that she was not a skilled homemaker who had to depend on her servants to manage her home and kids. She tells in the life-narrative, Gautam’s plan to shift to a new house in Chandigarh but by the end of her autobiography, Sahgal is separated from her husband and lives with her children. Nothing is stated openly but she confesses that “the need for a common background is particularly significant, in a country where provincial differences range over dress, food, language and customs” (Fear 32).

Sahgal’s autobiography expresses her inner life and the temper of her era. She has described the cultural diversity in India, and the creeping modernity in the cities. The autobiographies present Nayantara as a happy-go-lucky child born in the affluent family of the Nehrus. The exposure and freedom she enjoys in America and the education she gets in Wellesley College picture her as a woman born with a silver spoon. The image she projects in From Fear Set Free as a happy wife and mother married to a considerate husband is created to satisfy the dominant male culture. Nayantara has maintained silence over certain aspects of her life, perhaps “hiding” the true self to her readers.
Nayantara’s first marriage was disastrous and she had to opt for divorce which was not easy for her. But the final divorce settlements in early 1967 were harsh and involved a heavy responsibility for taxes eliminating all her capacity to earn for herself. Some relief was offered from the economic burden along with a freedom to marry again. Talking about her unhappy marriage, she says that she should not really have married when she was too young to take up family responsibilities. But society in India pressurizes girls to marry young. All her personal traumas and agonies are reflected in her novels as Nayantara herself acknowledges “pieces of me going into the men and women I created when I really began to write” (“This Time of Fulfilment” 15). Kusum’s unhappiness in A Time to Be Happy and Sanad’s final reconciliation with her reflects the author’s own wishful desire. Similarly Rashmi in her next novel, This Time of Morning feels smothered in her marriage to Dalip and gets separated from him in the end. Her next two novels Storm in Chandigarh and The Day in Shadow are termed as Nayantara Sahgal’s emotional autobiographies. The protagonists Saroj and Simrit resemble their creator in their sufferings within their suffocating marriage and their final decision to marry a person who would make their life meaningful. Sahgal too decided to make a new life with Nirmal Mangat Rai and married him in 1979.

After her divorce, she plunged into two different kinds of writing – fiction and journalism. She has successfully established herself as a creative writer and political columnist. She has to her credit nine novels, eight non-fictional works and some uncollected short stories and a wide gamut of articles published in several journals. She was writer-in-residence twice at the
(1994), Point of View (1997) and her recent work Civilising a Savage World (2002). Sahgal’s training as a historian and her family background gave her an opportunity to learn about Indian politics from a very personal perspective. At the same time, the liberal ideas and broad outlook she had imbibed through her American education placed her at crossroads, endowing her with a duality of vision.

The novels of Nayantara Sahgal selected for this research are A Time to Be Happy (1958), This Time of Morning (1965), Storm in Chandigarh (1969), The Day in Shadow (1971), A Situation in New Delhi (1977) and Rich Like Us (1985).

Sahgal’s first novel A Time to Be Happy is located in the time immediately following the freedom of the country but its narrative space is dominated by pre-independent times. The locale is Sharanpur, a small textile mill town. The story is told in the first person by a Gandhian bachelor who belongs to a mill owning family of Sharanpur. In response to the Gandhian call, he gives up his luxurious life and joins the freedom movement. The narrator’s close friend is Govind Narayan Shivpal, a rich landlord who “is still living in the era of Nawabs” (42). Govind Narayan’s brother Harish is a deputy collector of the British government, an Anglicised Indian to the core. Govind Narayan’s elder son Girish is the youngest director of James McDermot and his brother Sanad, the protagonist of the novel, is employed in Selkirk and Lowe. Harish and Girish are more than comfortable in the British society, whereas Sanad who moves closely with narrator, a Gandhian, finds himself a misfit in the British society. Sanad
feels aligned in his working place as he is not able to move closely with the English men or the Indians.

Sanad’s meeting with Kusum of Shai family, of a middle class Indian background steeped in the independence movement and his subsequent marriage to her intensifies his alienation. Sanad and Kusum belong to different worlds, yet he struggles to overcome his Englishness and fit into the world of his loving wife. With Kusum’s help, he decides to establish his Indianness by learning to use the charkha and to learn Hindi from her. Sahgal in this novel, clearly depicts the plan of the British to train a class of Indians to think and work like them for administrative purposes. This class of Indians are alienated in their own motherland, and remain as outsiders to the indigenous masses. Sahgal herself is ambivalent in her attitude towards the British and this attitude is powerfully portrayed in Sanad’s character.

This Time of Morning, Sahgal’s second novel is set in post-independent India. It begins with Rakesh, an IFS officer returning to India after serving abroad for six years. Rakesh finds that Kalyan Sinha, the strong willed, self-serving member of the U.N. delegation has acquired a position of power, whereas the Gandhian like Kailas Vrind is missing in the political scene. Kailas’s daughter Rashmi, a close childhood friend of Rakesh whom he has grown to love, has returned to her parents’ home to decide whether to divorce her husband or not. After a brief affair with a Danish architect, Neil Berensen, Rashmi indicates to Rakesh that she recognizes that the love Rakesh has for her is taking a deep root in her heart too.
In addition to the above main characters, the novel is peopled with many bureaucrats, politicians and their families. Nita, the young daughter of Dr. Narang refuses all offers of marriage but finally becomes engaged to a young man whom she neither loves nor admires and then enters into an affair with Kalyan. Leela, the Indian student in Boston, influenced by Kalyan’s self-serving philosophy of life, falls in love with a youngster, becomes pregnant and commits suicide. Uma, the young, physically attractive and demanding wife, whose affairs have cut her off completely from her husband Arjun Mitra’s love and forgiveness, does not conform to the virtuous stereotype. Mira, the wife of Kailas is the only woman who remains faithful to her husband even when he is imprisoned.

Sahgal in this novel, reveals the two generations, one which struggled for freedom making a lot of sacrifices following the Gandhian path and the second generation to whom freedom is no longer a dream but a reality. Kailas is the true Gandhian, thinking of serving the people always whereas leaders like Somnath and Harimohan adhere to the Gandhian values in name but not in spirit. Sahgal juxtaposes the different types of leaders and assures that it is a question of material priorities versus human values. The modern politicians feel that non-violence is a spent force, after the violent episode of partition. But according to Sahgal, it is not the inadequacy of the Gandhian policy of non-violence, but the weakness of the human material that couldn’t handle such policy. To Sahgal the disillusionment of post-independent Indians could be solved by following Gandhian philosophy, if not all the ideals, at least the practically possible ones like truth and honesty.
In *Storm in Chandigarh* the novelist is concerned with an India which is bewildered in its retreat from Gandhian values. Vishal Dubey is a promising young officer who has been chosen by the Union Home Minister to go to Chandigarh and resolve the crisis brewing between the two Chief Ministers of Haryana and Punjab, namely Harpal Singh and Gayan Singh. The state of Punjab was bifurcated on the linguistic basis with a common capital Chandigarh. Gayan Singh, the uncouth Chief-Minister of Punjab in the novel, belongs to that category of national leaders who have, in their lust for power, merely stepped into the shoes of their imperial rulers. He is successful in reaching out to the masses, exploiting their love for their land for his own ends. Harpal Singh who follows Gandhian ideals works for the underprivileged section. Vishal Dubey is able to understand the simmering discontent in Punjab and Haryana due to the partition. Dubey supports Harpal and makes him take a stand when Gayan threatens Harpal with a crippling strike of the workers of Bakra Nangal power project. Due to the sudden demise of the Home Minister, the strike is called off, though Harpal is wounded in the strike demonstration. Vishal returns to Delhi to pay homage to the Union Minister.

Against this political background, we are shown Dubey getting involved in the lives of men and women of varied temperaments. Saroj the blissful housewife lives her life as if it were a doormat for her husband to tread upon, and is intensely and passionately taken up with her own self and the wondrous condition of child-bearing. Inder who has his “ancient tribal roots” (*Storm* 86) feels mocked and cheated by Saroj’s loss of virginity before marriage and tortures her at every possible situation with his cruel questions. Tamara, called
Mara, an Indian brought up abroad, unable to enjoy the loving freedom given by her husband, seeks solace in Inder’s company. Later, Mara understands her husband Jit’s love who saves her from the “emotional jungle” where she felt lost.

Vishal Dubey’s marriage to Leela is also unsuccessful. His marriage to Leela turns out to be “a vanishing search for communication” as she keeps her extra-marital affair a secret from him. She is unfaithful and silent. He realises that torture means nothing to “two people living in intimacy all their adult lives and still remain strangers to each other” (Storm 29). Finally the death of Leela due to a surgery of an incompetent abortionist leaves no mark on the inner core of his being.

Saroj meanwhile quietly endures the taunts of Inder for the sake of her two children and the third on the way. Vishal Dubey is shocked to see how Saroj accepts and lives a life entirely on Inder’s terms though it is a torture to her. Under the influence of Vishal Dubey who assures her that she is not “soiled” by caste, Saroj begins to protest against Inder’s authoritarian ways and is abused by him. Soon the situation worsens and Saroj decides to leave her husband once for all, taking her children with her for confinement to New Delhi, under Dubey’s advice and support. Saroj exhibits a different kind of virtue, the virtue of courage which makes her admirable.

*The Day in Shadow* can be considered a sequel to *Storm in Chandigarh* as Simrit in this novel resembles Saroj in the earlier novel in many ways. As a sensitive and refined woman, Simrit longs for communication and understanding. Her husband Som, whom she marries against her parents’ will, turns out to be a ruthless entrepreneur interested in earning money and more money. But Simrit is
not happy in his rich world. She needs a world “whose texture is kindly” (Shadow 89), and all she wants is a happy family. Som like Inder, relegates only a secondary role to women. Wife is a mere possession for him. Her usefulness to him has never extended to areas of the mind. Ruddy Vetter, Som’s friend from Germany, tries to understand their predicament. Som feels that nothing is wrong with her physically. Simrit is agitated by her husband’s indifference. When she comes to know that Som is going to produce armaments and bombs with the help of Vetter, Simrit is shaken. Something in her goes limp and she is unable to respond to Som’s sexual act. Som decides to part and Simrit is utterly lost. Simrit is bewildered by the emotional shock of divorce and the brutal “Consent Terms” which burden her with a heavy tax. Struggling to build a new life for herself and her children, she meets Raj, a brilliant rising member of Parliament, who prizes her learning. Raj wants to shake her violently because the “The Consent Terms” infuriate him. When he reveals the seriousness of the problem to her and how stupidly she had agreed to it, Simrit realises her mistake. She understands that Som had done it purposely as a gesture of revenge. Raj seeks the advice of his father’s friend Ram Krishnan, an ex-professor and a journalist. Reading the whole document, he tells them, how she could overcome it. At the same time Raj also proposes to Simrit. He knows his marriage would bring a heavy responsibility of her children and the tax problem. He decides to take the challenge with loving Simrit near him always.

*A Situation in New Delhi* describes the political vacuum created by the death of the Prime Minister of India, Shivraj who is none other than Sahgal’s maternal uncle Jawaharlal Nehru. The narrative centres around Devi, the
Education Minister and sister of Shivraj, and her son Rishad a brilliant student and a member of the Naxalite Movement. Both represent two different ways of dealing with socio-political issues. Devi follows the non-violent approach, whereas Rishad chooses violence to establish a new social order. Both want change and change occupies the centre stage in the novel.

Usman Ali, a close friend of Shivraj and the Vice-chancellor of Delhi University is attacked by students when he suspends three students, for raping a girl student in the campus. The students are angry because even with a degree, the problem of employment is looming large. Usman feels that the youth are leaderless and so they go berserk in their pursuit for change. The Vice-Chancellor admits that the failure of leadership coupled with faulty educational policy causes aberration in the students’ lives. He advises Devi to delink the degrees from jobs. “Universities can’t be scattered like birdseed. It isn’t possible to deal in ideas until we become much more selective and we can’t do that if every job requires a degree” (Situation 22). He tries to formulate a new education policy which does not win the approval in the parliament. Devi is sad that she is unable to help Usman. Rishad, her son, believes that the cult of violence alone could build a new society for the exploited underdogs of the society. He wants to bring a radical change overnight. Rishad’s meeting with Skinny Jawipal brings a change in his life as he falls in love with her. His leader Naren meets with his death and Rishad understands that violence would not help to build a new world. He finally becomes a victim of the same violence.

Michael Calvert, a journalist and biographer has remained close to Shivraj and wishes to write his biography. The present government censors his book and
Michael Calvert is able to feel a sea change after the death of Shivraj. Usman’s initiative alone gives him a hope. Usman as a true patriot, resigns his job and decides to lead the student community in his quest to revise the values Shivaraj had stood for. The younger generation, especially the students should be led in the correct path.

Nayantar Sahgal’s *Rich Like Us* gives a realistic portrayal of the national emergency proclaimed by Indira Gandhi in 1975. Sahgal has translated this nightmarish period into human terms without any of its repulsiveness being lost. In it we find an intermingling of the individual and contemporary politics and how the suffocating political environment bears down upon the lives of a few sensitive people.

The story centres around Sonali, a young lady who is the Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Industry. Unaware of the secret deal between the minister and a foreign businessman and his Indian collaborator Dev, about the setting up of a fizzy drink factory, Sonali refuses to give her sanction for such a project. Sonali doesn’t know that the fizzy drink “Happyola” factory was only a cover-up for the import and storage of car-parts required for the manufacture of an “indigenous” car by the Prime Minister’s younger son. Sonali is demoted and transferred to her home town and Ravi Kachru, her former lover takes over as Joint Secretary. The factory is established and the Indian entrepreneur involved in this shady business is Devikins, the son of Ram, an old prosperous businessman who is totally paralysed. Dev forges his paralyzed father’s signature and draws a huge sum from his father’s account. The real loser is Dev’s step-mother Rose, who has been close to Sonali since her childhood. Rose is anxious about her future, voices her
suspicions to Sonali and Sonali tries to help her but before she can do anything, Rose meets an “accidental death” which is a planned murder by Dev.

Sonali seeks the help of Ravi Kachru who tries to intercede in the matter, goes out of favour and is about to be shunted out of Delhi. The dejected Sonali is picked up by a British couple who have come to see their paralyzed friend Ram and she accepts the work assigned to her whole heartedly, the study of the decorative arts of Medieval India, one of the most glorious periods of Indian history.

The sub-plots and minor characters are portrayed with a telling effect. Sonali’s flashback after reading her grand father’s diary tries to establish the fact that “Sati” in the past was as frightful as the present emergency and in all ages there would be people to fight out such cruelties. The heroism of Kishori Lal, the father-in-law of Dev, while in the prison is great, for he refuses to accept the release arranged by his daughter Nishi. Instead he says, he would prefer to be in prison with the young student who was arrested for his Marxist leanings. The limbless beggar’s attachment to Rose and Rose’s kindness in asking Sonali to arrange for artifical limbs for the beggar, reveal that the spirit of India is too powerful to be overwhelmed by such emergencies and heroic souls would reveal their protest in the world of power politics.

The present dissertation takes up for analysis the above mentioned fictional works of Nayantara Sahgal, with special emphasis on her cross-cultural vision and the resulting schizophrenic imagination.
**Statement of the Thesis:**

As a postcolonial writer who was born and brought up in British India, with patriotism and nationalism in her blood imbibed from her family of freedom fighters, and was gifted with a liberal American education, Nayantara Sahgal breathes two cultures, and bears evidence to the fact that for a postcolonial, the inherent purity and originality of cultures is untenable. Her novels written out of her schizophrenic imagination, carry evidences of her cross-cultural vision.

**Objectives of the Study:**

- To study the biographical details of Nayantara Sahgal, and trace the roots of her cross-cultural vision.
- To assess her political stand and see if her cross-cultural vision has influenced her political affinities.
- To explore the complexities of gender construction in India, which has passed through the stages of tradition, transition and modernity, through an examination of Sahgal’s women characters.
- To examine how Sahgal’s cross-cultural vision reacts to the different religio-cultural issues and practices prevalent in the country.

**Hypotheses:**

The present study has been conducted based on the following hypotheses:

- As a member of the elite circle of Indians educated abroad, while belonging to a family deeply involved in the rise of nationalism, Sahgal’s political consciousness is fraught with an ambivalence, which is reflected in her novels.
Sahgal’s westernised notions of individual freedom, as well as her deep-rooted moorings in the traditional Indian patriarchal social norms, lead to her creation of women characters who are at cross-roads, between tradition and modernity.

Though Sahgal affirms her faith in Hinduism, she is not blind to its drawbacks, and she has a broad enough vision to give equal validity to other religions in her fictional works. Her dualistic perspective towards religio-cultural issues results in a kind of schizophrenic imagination in the creation of her characters.

**Review of Literature:**

Nayantara Sahgal’s corpus, both her fictional and non-fictional works, have attracted a lot of critical acclaim and research. The inbuilt multiplicity of her works have made the critics review her works as national, political discourse, as feminist writings, as narratives of historical consciousness, and as expressions of Sahgal’s preoccupation with the crisis in post-independent India.

The first full-length study was taken up by Jasbir Jain in 1978, who published a monograph *Nayantara Sahgal*, which was revised in 1994 to include her later works. A.V. Krishna Rao’s *Nayantara Sahgal: A Study of Her Fiction and Non-Fiction* (1976) is a major critical work that makes a detailed study of her fictional and non-fictional works. Shyam M. Asnani in his critical work *Critical Response to Indian English Fiction* (1985), deals with Sahgal’s fiction along with eminent writers like Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan, Manohar Malgonkar, Ruth Prawar Jhabvala, Khushwant Singh and Nirad C. Chaudhuri. His focus is on contemporary politics reflected in Sahgal’s work and Sahgal’s treatment of

A vast gamut of articles has been published by scholars and writers from different parts of the world on Sahgal’s fictional and non-fictional works. To name a few, Feroza Jussawala’s “Of Cabbages and Kings: *This Time of Morning* and *Storm in Chandigarh* by Nayantara Sahgal” (1977); P. Marica Liu’s “Continuity and Development in the Novels of Nayantara Sahgal” (1980); Lakshmi Sinha’s “Nayantara Sahgal’s *Storm in Chandigarh: A Search for Values*” (1987); Urmila Varma’s “Social and Political Scene in Nayantara Sahgal’s Earlier Novels” (1990); Tom Mulcaire’s “Nayantara Sahgal’s *A Situation in New Delhi*” (1991); C. Vijayasree’s “Towards Freedom from Fear: A Discussion of *Rich Like Us*” (1993); Anita Mahajan’s “*Storm in Chandigarh: An Assessment*” (1993); O.P. Mathur’s “The Nausea of Totalitarianism: A Note on Nayantara Sahgal’s *Rich Like Us*” (1993); Meenakshi Sharma’s “Riches Galore in a Land of Poverty: Nayantara Sahgal’s *Rich Like Us*” (1995);
Meera Bai’s “Feminism as an Extension of Existentialism: Women in Indian English Fiction” (1995); Minoli Salvado’s “Myths of the Nation and Female (Self) Sacrifice in Nayantara Sahgal’s Narratives” (1996) and Janet Power’s “Polyphonic Voices in Nayantara Sahgal’s Rich Like Us” (2003).

As far as doctoral dissertations are concerned, Dr. Beulah Ranjitsingh was awarded Ph.D. in 1996 by the Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for her thesis entitled “Nayantara Sahgal and Akilon: A Comparative Study”. Dr. Geetha Kanagaraj got her Ph.D. in 2007 from the Madurai Kamaraj University for her dissertation “Novels of Nayantara Sahgal”.

The present study focuses on an area which has not been covered so far by other scholars. The researcher has focused on the bilateral pulls experienced by Sahgal due to her colonial experience in India, and her schizophrenic imagination which has resulted in her dual perspectives.

**Outline of the Dissertation:**

- Chapter 1 “Introduction” defines culture and records the various aspects of culture theories. It also gives a glimpse into the post colonial theory and its resistance to eurocentrism along with the evolving neo-colonialism and its impact in the political realm of the post-colonial nations. The chapter also gives a bird’s eye view of the Indian diasporic writers and their cross-cultural experience and hybrid identity contrasting it with the alienation of the elite intelligentia due to cultural clash in British India. A bio-sketch of Nayantara Sahgal, who belongs to one such elite family of the Nehrus, the reasons for her cross-cultural vision and her resistance to use Eurocentric yardsticks to judge her works are discussed in the introductory chapter.
• Chapter 2 “Political Ambivalence and Post-Colonial Identity” gives a short history of colonialism, highlighting the hegemony that prevailed in the relationship between the colonised and the colonizer, the civilizing mission of the colonizer and the imperialist greed behind the mission. The role of the Indian intelligentsia in exposing the imperialist greed to the people and uniting the illiterate masses with the heroic narratives of patriotism are discussed in this chapter. The emerging post-colonial literature and its importance in the Indian context along with Nayantara Sahgal’s contribution are discussed. The hybrid identity and ambivalence experienced by the protagonists of her select novels namely A Time to Be Happy, This Time of Morning, The Storm on Chandigarh, The Day in Shadow, A Situation in New Delhi and Rich Like Us are discussed in this chapter.

• Chapter 3 “Women at Cross-Roads: Gender Identity in a Cross-Cultural Context”, discusses the relationship between “woman” – a cultural and ideological composite, the “other” constructed through diverse representational discourses (scientific, literary, linguistic, cinematic etc) and “women” – real, material subjects of their collective histories, as one of the central feminist issues. The chapter discusses the difference between the Western women’s problems and the oppression faced by the third world women. They cannot be grouped on the basis of their “shared oppression”. Women are constructed as powerless, weak, emotional, shy and anxious to please the patriarchy in the literary texts. This cultural construct curtails the freedom of women. Women are not treated on par with men. Sahgal’s
protagonists are re-presented against such construct and they fight their way to freedom with the support a man who saves them from the crisis.

- Chapter 4 “Religio-Cultural Issues: An Investigation of Nayantara Sahgal’s Select Novels” describes the pluralistic character of Indian culture and its diversity due to the reign of powerful dynasties that ruled India. The chapter also describes the peaceful co-existence of different religions in India and the distinct religious identities of Indians and their cultural synthesis. The multi-religious and composite culture of India formulates some key themes in the writings of Indian English novelists. Nayantara Sahgal’s preference is for Hinduism but she is able to accept other religions with a secular outlook. She chastises Hinduism for its ritualistic practices. Her various novels portray her dualistic perspective in religio-cultural issues with suitable references from her select novels. She also suggests a prescription for the political ills of our society by amalgamating the best of Hinduism and Christianity.

- Chapter 5 “Summation” recaptures Nayantara Sahgal’s greatness as a novelist and the themes of her select novels. This chapter also summarises the three core chapters. Sahgal’s narrative technique and style are also discussed here. The adverse reviews of her novels and the negative aspects revealed by critics are given. The chapter sums up the findings of the research and suggests the scope for further research.

The dissertation follows the methodology recommended by the seventh edition of *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. 