CHAPTER-1

Nayantara Sahgal-her Personal and Literary Career
To discover Nayantara Sahgal-Novelist as a social historian, discovering Nayantara Sahgal-the individual is desirable. She has very strong emotional as well as intellectual attachment to her roots. We find autobiographical elements in her novels. She beautifully and artistically transforms the facts, the real incidents and the real persons in her life into work of art. The personal agonies and shocks are reflected in the novels of Sahgal and she successfully transmits these personal experiences into general one.

Nayantara Sahgal, born on May 10, 1927 is the second of three daughters born to Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit and her husband Ranjit Sitaram Pandit. Her father was a successful barrister and classical scholar who translated Raj Tarangini into English from Sanskrit. He died in Lucknow prison in 1944. Sahgal is a niece of Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru so she was placed in an environment where politics was an inseparable part. All her childhood was spent in Anand Bhawan at Allahabad with her parents, her maternal uncle Jawahar Lal Nehru and Her cousin Indira Gandhi so it is a Lucky coincidence that she is brilliant writer and in a privileged position to keenly observe political developments in post independence India.
Nation's environment left a remarkable impression in her mind. Her growing up was India's growing up into political maturity based on an ideology inspired by self sacrifice, compassion and peace. Though. She was part of the Nehru-Gandhi family, she maintained her independent critical sense. She was close to the centre of historical and political developments taking place in India before and after independence. Her views on politics, political happenings, socio-economic changes and all events, all seem prophetic because she firmly believes that human being is the basis of all action. She is the unique product of family heritage, traditional Indian upbringing, powerful political and literary influence and American education.

After her schooling at Woodstock in the Himalayan hill station of : Landour in 1943, she went to America for higher studies. She did her B.A. in history from Wellesley college, Massachusetts in 1947. She inherited this love of scholarship and sense of history from her father Ranjit Sitaram Pandit. Education in America helped her a lot to widen the horizon of life and to strengthen her belief in courage and freedom. She got married to Gautam Sahgal in
1949. There was a tremendous difference and wide gap in their background and intellect. Her husband had no link and connections with politics. Their marriage was not a happy one so it ended in divorce in 1967. Later on she lived with E.N. Mangat Rai—a Punjabi Christian and distinguished Indian Civil Service officer. To her it was—

*Not an affair but a revolution, a self discovery that life had to be lived more fully in order to be meaningful*\(^n\)

She married him in 1979. He died in 2003 in Dehradun. Her family was one of the most prominent in Indian politics and from an early age her fate was entwined with that of the nation. Her parents, uncle, cousin all were actively engaged in the country's struggle for freedom. Her house was full of fun, happiness and laughter. She learnt from her parents a lesson of love and affection, an interest in scholarship and action in life, and also great passion, patience and enthusiasm in work. She herself confesses this.

*Our growing up was India's growing up into political maturity—a different kind of political maturity from any the world had seen*
before, based on an ideology inspired by self sacrifice, compassion and peace.²

Her novels present the reality of the contemporary India and also they have prophetic tone. Current political happening and prominent political figures are her main concern. Her novels present Indian scenario from the last phase of freedom struggle to the breakdown of democracy in the mid seventies. She is so minute observer of political happenings that not a single event can pass unnoticed.

'It is a tribute to her as a political novelist that she could sense and show the danger in the new trend.... years before the country had actually experienced the culmination of such a trend.'³

The Nehru family influenced her life and outlook. Pt. Nehru's magnetic personality, dynamic life, refined sensibility and intellect impressed her very much. The balanced personality of Mahatama Gandhi also influenced her a lot. It is her privilege to know him directly through personal contact and discover Gandhi-the man, the leader. He was ready to change his views or to correct his mistakes. She feels that-

"Gandhi was not a politician"⁴
She is deeply impressed by Gandhi's belief in the human being and human dignity. She values Gandhian philosophy of non-violence. She is aware of the increase of violence and she regrets the decline in morality of Indians and in her novels. She portrays the importance of Gandhian values in everyday life. Though she portrays the realities of the times and the decline of human values, she gives a hopeful ending to her novels. She carefully balances the scientific and rational attitude of Nehru with the ideologies of Gandhi to present a better vision of future India.

Enriched with the first-hand knowledge of India's politics and the personal experiences of divorce and remarriage, she passionately devoted herself to writing. She deals with the two worlds - the personal world of man - woman relationship and the impersonal world of politics.

Beginning with her memoir "Prison and Chocolate Cake". Which was published in 1954, Sahgal authored nine novels, no. of political writings, a collection of essays, Point of View: a personal response to life, literature and politics. Nine novels authored by Nayantara Sahgal are:
A Time to be Happy, This Time of Morning, Storm in Chandigarh, The Day in Shadow, A Situation in New Delhi, Rich Like Us, Plans for Departure, Mistaken Identity and Lesser Breeds.

"Rich Like Us" won the 'Sinclair Fiction Prize' and the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1985 and 1986 respectively. Her earlier book "Plans for Departure" won the Common Wealth Writers Award (Eurasia) in 1987. She was also a fellow of the Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars, Washington from 1981 to 1982. In 1990 she was elected fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. In 1997 she was awarded an Honorary Doctorate For Literature by University of Leeds. The Library of Congress has twenty four works by her.

Nayantara Sahgal served as an advisor to Sahitya Akademi's Board for English from 1972 to 1975. She was a member of Varghese Committee for Autonomy to Radio and T.V. in 1977-78. In 1978 she was member of the Indian delegation to U.N. General Assembly. She has also held the post of Vice-President of People's Union for Civil Liberties. In 1980, she played an integral role in the formation of the People's Union for Civil Liberties, an organisation dedicated to the pursuit
of basic human rights. For her personal and literary achievements, Mrs. Sahgal has been honored worldwide. She was a Fellow of the Radcliffe Institute USA, Fellow of the National Humanities Center USA, got Commonwealth Writers’ Award UK, Pride of Doon Award India, Alumni Achievement Award from Wellesley College USA and Doon Ratna Award India.

Sahgal as a writer possesses cool analytical brain and a heart full of human sympathies. Sahgal's diverse fields of writings include her two autobiographies and a historic book "Freedom Movement in India (1970)' for school students. Her first autobiography." Prison and Chocolate Cake "gives an interesting account of Nayantara Sahgal's formative years. It reveals the reason to write her first autobiography-

"We grew up at a time when India was the stage for a great Political drama, and we shall all remain a little dazzled by the performance we have seen. This is the story of its influence on our lives and as such it may interest people whose childhood has been different from us "⁵.

Her second autobiographiy,"From Fear Set Free 1962)" becomes symbolic of a way & life, based on
truth and freedom. There is a firm determination to remain human being and have the strength to act fearlessly. She wrote this autobiography when she was trying to make a success of her marriage. She was finding it difficult to bridge the gap between her husband's world of business and commerce and her own acute political awareness. It was a shift from

"The atmosphere of a political crusade to one of commerce".

She finds this conflict as a great strain and comments:

"I was uneasy and restless, adjusting to the demands of a personality and an environment whose goals and texture were different from anything I had known or been comfortable with".

Nayantara Sahgal's work ranges from emotional autobiographies to fictionalized autobiography like 'The Day in Shadow' and about contemporary India. She shares the common Indian sensibility of Indo-Anglian Writers like Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan, Kamla Markandaya, Anita Desai, and others. Sahgal does not reject Indian tradition and customs like Nirad C. Choudhary. Whatever ideas she presents, are
Her idea of happiness at the cost of the family and society is against Indian tradition. Some of her women characters show extreme courage to defy Indian tradition of male dominance. Her women characters are educated one. They dream to be free. It means economic, social, personal, familial and political freedom. She also wants freedom from personal hesitation and reluctance. They are aware of the biased attitude of the society. She tries to resolve the conflict between tradition and modernity. She is a great supporter of complete emancipation of women.

"The emancipated woman wants to be an active taker and refuses the passivity man wants to impose on her. The modern woman accepts masculine values. She prides herself on thinking, taking action, working, creating on the same terms as men; instead of seeking to disparage them, she declares herself their equal."

Sahgal's woman play the roles of daughter, wife, mother successfully. She proves her importance as a working woman also. She is able to mark her presence in every walk of life. Her women seek fulfillment of desires and happiness of heart. She is a strong
individual not prepared to sacrifice her values and ideals. She seeks her identity as an individual.

Sahgal's another favourite theme is ambiguity and ambivalence of Hinduism. Sahgal finds that the root cause of the passivity of people is their inadequate faith on Hinduism. They depend on paralysing fatalism which makes them unambitious and inactive. Though this faith or religion can be proved as greatest motivating force. To be a living and motivating force it requires constant renewal.

"The people's belief was a great force which could be guided in good ways, made creative. When this great force had ceased to go to waste, it would no longer be a cause, blighting lives. It would be the country's truest asset."

The people should be consciously involved in the major task of building themselves as well as the nation.

"What sustains the people is an idea that people believe in and are willing to work for."

All her novels display the genuine effort made by the people to build this nation. Her novels are rooted to the period in which they are written but they seem to
move forward in time and action. There are recurrent themes which run through her works. The forward motion of the themes with passage of time is in keeping view with the change in attitudes and social behaviour in Indian society since independence. Moreover Sahgal's humanistic concerns are found in all her novels. She believes that India's numerous problems like poverty, famine, diseases and corruption can only be overcome with honesty, dedication, love and sympathy. This clear way for happy India, which is her prime concern. Her first novel 'A Time to be Happy' came out in 1958.' In this novel she deals with politics, freedom, marriage, religion, especially Hinduism and Christianity, the conflict between East and West etc. This novel proves to be a social document, describing the social status of pre and post independent India in which this novel is set. There is also a subtle comment on the new and old educational system and industrial politics of the Government. Sahgal in this novel takes the support of Gandhian ideology for the emancipation and progress in all walk of life whether it is sociological, economical, political, moral or religious.
The story of the novel is told through the narrator. The narrator is the author's main spokesman. His long association with most major characters or on their confiding in him make his description and narration more influential. He expresses his desire to remain beyond the scene of action but he remains unsuccessful in his attempt. He is surprised and horrified to see the wide gap between the mill-owners and the workers. He finds a big contrast in the social condition of mill-owners and workers. *'A Time to be Happy'* is Sanad's quest for identity. What exactly is he—an Indian or Englishman? He is so much confused that he is not able to tell his vexation till the end. Sanad's strange views is the result of the wrong kind of education, he receives. At the very end of novel he says, "I have the feeling of being lost in crowd ...". Sanad's frustration and confusion is genuine. He wants to be a balanced person. He marries typical Indian girl from the middle class to help him find his identity. He tries to learn Hindi and Spinning.

In this novel Nayantara Sahgal presents a great contrast in people, places, cultures, ideas, life style, education, political and religious beliefs and human relationship and above all the contrast between Pre-
Independence India and Post Independence India. The Sharanpur club is the best example of this. The club with its mixed clientele symbolizes the changed reality in post Independence India. So she discusses all the themes in brief which her later novels are going to discuss in detail. Most critics consider the novel to be loose textured and loosely knitted. K.R.S. Iyengar comments:-

"It is difficult to escape the feeling that the action and characterisation haven't been properly integrated and placed in the right relation to back ground."\textsuperscript{14}

The main theme of the novel is that after getting independence how the people of the newly independent nation are striving hard to prove their existence through self analysis and identity search. The main character in this novel is the best example of this. Sanad is the product of English medium education and by birth he is Indian. This is the main cause of his confusion. He is not able to identify himself either as an Indian or English man. He desires-

"I have always wanted to go to England to see what the original is like. The thing of which I'm a carbon copy."\textsuperscript{15}
He is confused whether he should work in a British firm or not and then outside the gates of Sharanpur club he decides to resign from the British firm. This act of Sanad represents the dying order of British influence. He marries a typical Indian girl, from a middle class home to help him find his identity. He is the younger son of Govind Narayan—a wealthy landowner but he is far removed from the world of reality in the Indian context. Sanad's brother Girish suffers from none of Sanad's tensions and confusions. He willingly accepts the British pattern of life because to him it indicates superiority. However Sanad is not like him. He wants to do anything only after analyzing it. He is not against borrowing good things from any other culture but he is against any kind of imitation. Girish is more like his uncle Harish. There are some person who believe in the philosophy of acceptance and compromise. Govind Narayan, Sanad's father is the same. He confesses that he cannot change his ways to accept the changing conditions and values of modern time. Both Girish and Govind Narayan believe in using the 'Raj' to their own advantage. Govind Narayan's Luxurious life, his way of thinking and his feudal grandeur is symbolic of a fast disappearing Indian way
of life. Harish, Govind Narayan's brother is anglicized Indian having firm faith in foreign label, foreign advice and opinion. It is the result of British Education followed in India that had nothing in common with Indian masses. His mother Ammaji symbolizes an older generation steeped in traditional values. After independence these British Raj products are terribly misfit in the new society. All changes suddenly. The typical Indian leader described as dhotiwallah has come into power. Harish is frustrated in his personal life also because his wife Maya is a typical Indian lady. She comes from joint family. Having received no satisfaction from marriage and family life, she decides to join the village upliftment programme. Sanad's wife Kusum tries to make him happy by learning to be fashionable and modern. She wears high heeled -shoes and starts drinking. She is under continuous strain and feels unhappy. In Kusum we find Nayantara Sahgal's reflection.

"Kusum's unhappiness in 'A Time to Be Happy' reflects her own and the coming together of Sanad and Kusum is perhaps a wishful projection of her own desires."16
Sanad's sister, Veena is young, gay and full of praise for the new political freedom, and accepts the changed realities without any resentment. She accepts the dirt and filth all around in Hotel Claudetle's and says -

"One can have an ugly child, but its one's very own".17

Veena is symbol of future India. Veena is energetic, full of new ideas and does not suffer from any kind of complex. She believes that to renew human relationship love is the sole way.

The Sahais family is symbolic of the typical middle class Indian family where British influence is not observed. In their family everything grows and runs naturally and children emerge as individual.

Sahgal uses various symbols to integrate her theme. She uses the club, the spining wheel, dhoti-wallah, Khadi, village and cottage industry. All these symbols indicate the rise of ordinary middle class Indians into the mainstream. She has used the Club as a meeting point for the diverse social tradition of the East and West. After independence, the common people also moved about freely within its once prohibited territory. These changes not only affected Indians but
also English life in India. Dora Grange's changed attitude is in reality a realization of the new social and political conditions. Those who were trend setters now would have to live life of adjustment. In the novel, Sahgal also comments on Hinduism that Hinduism does not propagate a fatalistic attitude towards life but it is time which determines action, and action determines 'Karma'.

At the last we find that Sanad, by having variety of experiences gets transformed and is able to find his true identity. He is influenced by Sohan Bhai—an ardent Gandhian. So Sahgal's faith in human effort is proved here. The changes become possible only because of the genuine effort. So it's really a time to be happy to live in independent India.

Nayantara's second novel, 'This Time of Morning' published in 1965 portrays a picture of a new nation trying to find it's foothold to establish itself as a strong nation following Gandhian ideology. Progress is essential but not at the cost of deterioration of human values. This novel 'This Time of Morning' indicates that morning with brightness of sun beams leads a good and bright day also. Nayantara Sahgal approves Gandhian ideology, his moral approach in
solving the manifold problems of a new nation. A nation can emerge as strong and powerful one only if its citizens are morally strong.

In the novel, Rakesh, a Foreign Service officer returns home after six years but notices disorder and confusion at Palam Airport;

"With Rakesh's arrival Palam Airport and his reflection on his surrounding we have the author not only commenting on the current situation but juxtaposing a form of disorder with a form of order."\(^{18}\)

So this novel is set in post independence India and catches the dilemma of a country walking on the road of progress at fast pace.

"Disorder was just round the corner always and no motley crew of parliamentarian would succeed in coping with it any more than picket fences would stem a deluge."\(^{19}\)

Men of virtue and vision, such as Kailas Vrind, Abdul Rahman and Prakash Shukla pushed to a corner while those like Kalyan Sinha who is a go-getter concerned only with results, promptly move to the centre of the stage. Sahgal authentically portrays such people in the novel.
'The winking at or condoning of such ends oriented people with not so clean hands right at the peak of the era of Nehruvian idealism is a part of post – Independence political history'.

Kailas Vrind says that the central consideration to any problem was the man who faced it. Nayantara also points out that any game was a dirty game if dirty people played it. She presents a conflict between means and methods adopted by the leaders to ensure progress. There are diverse and opposing views and this cannot bring out the best in an individual, family or nation. The basic difference in thinking and morality is the main reason of all the political, social, economic and moral disorder.

Kalyan Sinha is materialistic. Due to his dynamic, enthusiastic and totally unconventional personality, he is the most striking character and people are drawn to him for different reasons. Inspite of all his dynamism something vital is lacking in him that is the essence of true love, only when he experiences the magic charm of pure and selfless love from Neeta then only he gets aware of his own inadequacy and failure.
Kailas Vrind lives a happy and satisfied life with his wife Meera. There is her willing participation in all his efforts. She is ideal Hindu wife. Her marriage is a success because she strived to save it. Kailas joins Gandhi and his non-co-operation movement and finds a sense of direction. He becomes the director of the Peace Institute. He also replaces Somnath as Chief Minister of U.P.. He pursues his objectives with honesty. But men like him are very rare and few. Sahgal is fully aware of the dangers which lie ahead in the absence of able leadership. It is great drawback that young dynamic leaders with the right attitudes are not present, to lead the country.

Kailas Vrind's daughter Rashmi has bitter memories of an unsuccessful marriage with Dalip. This is the result of Indian traditional marriage. Once a girl got married, she remained with her husband, no matter what happened. Kailas Vrind understands his daughter's problem, but can offer no solution to this problem. Rashmi bears her misery till almost the end of the novel. Rashmi desires love in totality. This desire is not fulfilled by Neil. The theme of degeneration of man-woman relationship in the absence of true love is successfully presented in the novel. She believes that
all relationships can be perfected and strengthened by conversation. Rashmi at the end makes important discovery. Old contacts can be once again renewed and nurtured step by step. Rakesh provides Rashmi with the hope of new future. Self-assured, confident Rashmi is ready to face and learn to live again. The novel symbolizes optimism and fresh and fragrant beginning just as the Morning is the symbol of fresh beginning, activeness and enthusiasm of the whole day.

Nayantara Sahgal got published her third novel 'Storm in Chandigarh' in 1969. The theme of this novel is somewhat similar to her previous novel 'This Time of Morning'. She deals both with political and personal themes. In fact at personal level this novel is an emotional autobiography. If discussed about politics, the novel traces the growth of political culture percolating upwards from the States to the Centre. The novel describes the post - Nehru phase. It captures the bewilderment of a nation sandwiched between dying generation and the confused youths. The novel foretells the political scenario in Punjab in the 1980's. The demands put forth in the novel by Gyan Singh for the creation of a separate state is no different from the demand put by the militant Sikhs and their followers
for the creation of new country i.e. yet another partition from India.

"The Storm in Chandigarh' is historical and not merely fictional - The culmination of the populist, parochial, obscurantist forces brought to a head by the government policy of the linguistic reorganization of the states of the Indian Union".  

In 'Storm in Chandigarh' there is very tensed condition in Chandigarh. There is a threat of general strike. There is a storm or crises in the newly divided state of Punjab and Haryana. Sahgal presents the contrast between the two Chief Ministers of the neighbouring - states of Punjab and Haryana. The people who believe in human values like Harpal Singh, the Chief Minister of Haryana, are inactive and inert and cannot face challenges. Gayan Singh - the Chief Minister of Punjab has the ability of getting thing done or doing them himself. He has no use for words like morals or conscience and therefore no confusion and tension about using violence to get what he wants. The old Home Minister is the last surviving figure of the Gandhian era. He is in full control of the Home Ministry. These three politicians become the symbol of
three different kinds of political philosophies. Sahgal's descriptions of Gayan Singh's handling of Harpal's elections campaign exposes the reality of elections and Indian politics. Harpal Singh is totally dependent on Gayan Singh and becomes a mute spectator to his deeds of violence and murder but he cannot forgive himself for not strongly opposing his (Gayan Singh's) crooked ways. Harpal Singh and Gayan Singh are the examples of the fact that what politics does to politicians and what politician does to politics.

There are three miss-matched couples in the novel-Dubey and Leela, Inder and Saroj and Jit and Mara. Each character is in search of true relationship. This results in extra-marital relations. K.R.S. Iyenger remarks-

"It is almost like a chapter from John Updike's Couples.... What a set." 22

But Sahgal as an author, does not censure them for their involvements. Because her characters indulge in sex out of natural and pure love. They consider sex or marriage as means of fulfillment. They hate hypocrisy. The tenderness and understanding shown by Dubey for Saroj's emotional need brings radical
change in her personality. Sahgal believes that human relationships have to be carefully built up and nurtured.

This novel depicts the importance of moral value in civilized society because man’s very existence depends on safeguarding these values. Sahgal’s emphasis is on action. Dubey is Satisfied because he has succeeded in his efforts. By counseling Harpal Singh to face the strike, fails Gayan Singh’s attempt to completely immobilize public life. The sudden death of the old minister in Delhi is symbolic of the passing away of the Gandhian era, Gayan Singh takes the advantage of this incident and call off the strike. Dubey’s satisfaction is short lived in Delhi. He observes that people were satisfied by finding temporary solution. No one really went in to details of a problem and involved themselves with the roots to find answers. He tries to calm down the storm with his ethical and moral values and actions.

Her forth novel 'The Day in Shadow' first published in 1971, is very important in the sense because it is taken from Sahgal’s personal life. It portrays the culmination of Sahgal’s many recurrent themes of love, freedom, understanding, compassion,
religious involvement and moral and ethical values. Jasbir Jain has remarked-

"In her next novel 'The Day in Shadow' the crisis is already over when the story opens. Simrit and Som are already divorced and Simrit is trying to adjust to the aftermath of the divorce. What happens in the novel is a kind of resistance building up, both to the political and personal situation, which culminates in Raj's decision to resist the political decision and Simrit's decision to continue life as if the consent Terms simply did not exist".23

The harsh and cruel terms of the divorce is mockingly called 'Consent Terms'. Simrit's emergence from the trauma of divorce, with the determination to live as a free individual is an assertion of her personal freedom. She finds emotional security and every thing which she had been searching for in her husband Som. It is only with Raj's constant support that she emerges out of the shadows as a more mature and stronger personality. He helps her to regain her self-confidence by making her do things for her own satisfaction, rather than for others. This is what happened in real life with
Nayantara Sahgal. After divorce she decides to live with Nirmal Mangat Rai an I.C.S. officer of the Punjab cadre. He provides her with the emotional security, what she always craved for in her marriage with Gautam Sahgal. Sahgal herself asserts.

"Why write a novel about a divorce? Because writing of any sort helps to put your own world in order, all the shapeless, bewildering fragments of it. It helps you to figure out what is happening in and around you. And in this book I tried to figure out something that had happened to me-the shattering experience of divorce. There are things that will never be understood until they are written, and somewhat not even then. But writing helps the process. So Simrit turned out to be somewhat like me, even to being a writer and very stupid about practical matters".24

Sri Rashmi Talwar rightly observes-

"In presenting the evolution of Simrit, Sahgal has captured, as if the whole gamut of experience of Hindu womanhood from the
earlier days of oppression to the recent times of freedom, legal and personal".25

Sahgal once again returns to her favourite theme of the ambiguity and ambivalence of Hinduism. In Raj’s opinion Hindus had no belief they could define or defend. Hinduism, in fact forms the very basis for the differences in her, two major characters in the novel, Raj and Simrit. Both are the product of their particular religion. Raj is a Christian and understands better the ‘mystery of Christ’ than the ‘enigma of Hinduism’. To him it appears that Hindus just had an endless sponge like capacity to absorb. Raj wants Hinduism to stand up to the tests and demands of time. Raj is convinced that Simrit’s condition is the result of her religion. To him Simrit seems not an individual. She is culture, a tradition, a patient enduring passivity. But in fact this is not Hinduism, but it is what Hinduism has come to represent.

Sahgal points out-

"Hinduism must change, revitalize itself if Hindus are to become an active, positive breed with something to give the world and not be swept away by alien tides ".26
Simrit's tolerant and submissive attitude angers Raj. He wants to literally shake the apathy out of her. There is a parallel political theme which runs alongside the main theme of the novel. The old Petroleum Minister served his country well but failed miserably in bringing up the younger generation in his tradition of dedicated service. Nayantara Sahgal presents a true and realistic account of the hypocrisy, corruption, double standards, and the lack of morality, prevalent in the Indian political system. Sumer Singh is the successful politician because he embodies all the qualities.

"He (Sumer Singh) does not even have the blunt honesty of Kalyan Sinha and Gayan Singh instead he consciously lives life at two levels one being the level of his public image with his professions of socialism and prohibition, the other his private self with the twiddle wink in his pocket and the sex on the mind". 27

Sumer Singh comes from rich family of landlords. But it is a tragic reality that he is no better in morality and ethics than Kalyan Sinha and Gayan Singh.

In the novel she takes the theme of love, sex and morality. She distinguishes sex for mere pleasure from
the sex as a means of fulfilment. Simrit also seeks fulfilment but unable to find it with Som. This becomes the main reason for her dissatisfaction in marriage. She seeks something deeper and finer than the mere performance of an act. Sahgal's women characters indulge in extra marital relationships but do not suffer from sense of guilt because they achieve the satisfaction of mind and soul. Simrit can look ahead to a life of fulfilment and companionship with Raj. Sumer Singh has succeeded in his ambition of becoming the powerful Foreign Minister. People like Som are fully beneficial for the progress of nation only if they have feeling and humanity too. They are required to possess pity, sympathy, concern and responsibility. The society can come out of any shadow through faith, confidence, courage and humanity.

Her fifth novel 'A Situation in new Delhi' (1977) deals with the political situation and the consequences of these situation immediately after post-Nehru era. Here politics is the main theme. How the political decisions hamper or accelerate the progress of the nation. The novel suggests pre- and post Emergency political scene. The government did not try to reduce the mute agony of the people but tried to cover it.
There was more censorship, control over newspaper, films, books etc. The novel presents the indifference of the western countries to a nascent democracy. They thought that democracy would be a failure in the poly-religious, multi-cultural and pluralistic society in India. So there was a lack of supportive attitude.

In this novel political and human themes are interwoven. Sahgal skillfully brings ideas and ideologies into life. She artistically adjusts politics in a nonpolitical framework by humanizing it. The novel describes the situation of a society in which students have lost their morality. This is due to lack of new educational policy and the failure of the parents and teachers to understand their children and students. The novelist foresees the circumstances and the direction towards which India is moving.

Actually the death of popular and eminent leader Shivraj is the symbol of Nehru's death. At the time society faces various changes and one who is able to adopt these changes, can survive comfortably in the society. This adaptability and the adjustment to the change taking place in the social environment is the main problem that Rishad faces in the novel. Flaws in the education system and failure of the govt. to harness
and direct youth energy are the main theme of the novel. If the energy and tremendous strength of the youths of a nation is not properly directed then certainly this tremendous energy will find its outlet through anti-social actions. We observe this release of energy through Rishad. Rishad is Devi's son who is Education Minister. Sahgal here presents a society in which we find communication gap between the parents and their children, between teachers and students, government and the people and everyone else in the society. Devi doesn't give proper time to her son Rishad. She is not able to reach to the depth of her son's heart, Rishad is annoyed with the atmosphere around him. He believes that the passive society around him can only be activated by becoming violent so he becomes like this and finally becomes the victim of the same violence himself. Rishad feels that to build a new world the old one has to be razed to the ground.

The way to do it was through the systematic creation of panic and panic to ruin. Only then could the new social order arise. This helps to create an 'Indian Utopia' - just food in the stomach and a decent wage, love, equality, fraternity. Sahgal portrayed Rishad as a
typical product of aristocratic background and western education.

Sahgal deals with very important issue the govt. in the 1980’s confronted with, that is which type of education should be imparted to our youths. Nehru, Gandhi and Tagore felt the need for the education that is more suitable for the development of personality and individual ability. In the novel Usman Ali, the Vice-Chancellor of Delhi University says that jobs must be delinked from degrees, to relieve pressure from the universities and allow them to become ‘Centers of Learning rather than machines for producing degrees. Same were the views of Gandhi and Nehru also.

Devi, the Education Minister is conscious of her two responsibilities- the Ministry and Rishad. The Education Ministry needed a change to evolve more suitable curriculum of studies for students. Rishad does not tell her mother anything about him. After her brother Shivraj’s death his mother –Devi is not able to understand the debates in Parliament. Shivraj symbolizes the integration of all the ancient religions in the world – Hinduism, Christianity and Islam. He is an ideal human being for Michael Calvert-an Englishman who admires Shivraj a lot. To him Shivraj is a symbol
of the fight against colonial rule. He is the leader beyond his own borders. There is not going to be another like him in hundred years. The post-Shivraj era shows the absence of capable leadership. We find that Rishad and his friends are attracted towards Naren with petty leadership qualities. This is a blind hero worship. Observing the worst condition and understanding the disease affecting the young, Usman Ali resigns as Vice-Chancellor and takes up the leadership of the restless youth. He feels a sense of fulfillment in helping the students. He sheds the pressures and limitations on him and takes up the challenge of leadership and leads the youth in Shivraj’s footsteps. This novel does not talk only of politics, problems of an education system or violence but also presents deep study of mother-son relationship.

Skinny Jaipal-Rishad’s friend is a combination of better qualities of both tradition and modernity. She believes that revolutions begin with one self whereas for Rishad, revolution is for others. She is unique. Rishad, at last becomes the victim of the same violence by which he had thought of shocking others. Through the novel, Sahgal warns about the Indian political
system, educational system and social system. This warning was so intense that—

“One publisher who had contracted to publish ‘A situation in New Delhi’ apologized for not being able to do so and withdrew their contract. An other publisher, eager to pick up the option, also found it unsafe to handle, on the informal advice, they said, of someone in the censor’s office”.

Sahgal herself confesses-

“Two novels, The day in Shadow and ‘A Situation in New Delhi’ reflected the mounting unease and at times the feeling of impending disaster I had as I wrote them”.

The novel has optimistic end. Michael Calvert’s optimistic discovery is that –

“Perhaps the strongest thing in human life was influence, transmittable through one’s lifetime or the ages... And perhaps we’ve been in too much of a hurry to say Shivraj is dead”.

In her sixth novel ‘Rich Like Us’ first published in the year 1983 is the daring novel about the
Emergency Period (1975-77) in India. About the novel and the title 'Rich Like Us' Nayantara says-

"Do like we do" the west declares, "and you" will be "rich like us". So Rich Like Us was the title I gave to a novel of mine in which a fizzy drink called Happyola allies itself with local corruption and a dynastic dictatorship to launch India in to modern times".\(^{31}\)

The novel weaves together the critical situations in India in the period from 1932 to the mid 1970s. So it describes the freedom struggle, Indian independence and then partition's and it's after effects. The novel highlights the suffering and oppression endured by the masses. There is representation of political violence during the Emergency period of 1975-77.

The novel opens with a third person narrator following the thoughts of Mr. Newman the Western businessman attending a dinner party offered by his new Indian partner Devikins. In Devikins opinion, business is business. This justifies corruption, irresponsibility and disregards the negative social consequences of profitable business. His character
clears the superficiality and banality of the elite businessmen.

His step mother Rose asks Dev that from where all the money came all of a sudden. Her question is very important because it voices the side effects of the business agreements being settled and points out the social cost of business at the top and argues against capitalism. Rose, in fact is one of the most generous and aware characters in the social world represented by Sahgal.

Sonali a socialist is the joint Secretary in the Ministry of Industry and she takes her job very seriously. She rejects the proposal to build a factory to produce a fizzy drink called Happyola since it does not fit the directives of the Indian state. She is replaced by no other than Ravi Kachru the bureaucrat. By coincidence she ends up in the foundation stone ceremony of the same project with Rose. Like Rose, she is also socially concerned citizen.

Sahgal describes emergency as a terrible omnipresent power that induces fear. ‘Madam’ has a ‘club’ of followers, all of them with good prospects if they do not dare to raise opposition or eroticism and they have to stop thinking critically, actively and
morally. During Emergency people were arrested without a formal accusation or proper trial, physical torture was showered upon demonstrator.

The novel presents resistance to globalization as the main challenge to keep the government of India focused on the need to improve the living conditions of its own people. This resistance diminished dangerously during the Emergency, there is lack of responsibility of Indian businessmen and changing policies offering India to foreign exploitation. There is a conflict between a global socialist project for India and the defense of its traditional communal identities.

Indian society does not value the active role, a woman can play in politics, business, management and economy. However Sahgal tries her best to provide equal status to them in any sector of activity. Sahgal links the historical processes set in motion with the transition to an independent India to a deep social transformation which world naturally have effect on women’s condition, as well. Sonali remembers her father’s vow of confidence.

"Women like you are going to Indianise India".32
This certainly means the reconstruction of Indian identity free from British colonialism and educated woman can successfully play the role in constructing India’s new identity.

Sonali is Western educated woman and she decides to study hard and wants to “opt out” of marriage. Unmarried condition of girls is considered as tragedy to the eyes of most traditional Indian family.

When Sonali is dismissed from her post at the Ministry, Kiran –Sonali’s sister is only concerned with finding a solution to get Sonali back to good terms with “the top”. Kiran, like Mona or Nishi stands for traditional feminity. Any sensitivity concerning Sonali’s professional pride and her ethical disappointment with the system is beyond Kiran’s more domestic mentality.

When Rose’s husband Ram dies, she fears her destiny may not be very bright after him. She asks Sonali to get her a lawyer but when Sonali tries to approach a lawyer, she is given the hint that nobody will dare to fight Devikins, nobody will like to upset, the new blooming millionaire. The uncertainty of Rose’s position poses a social problem which, in India is neither rare nor hidden from public awareness.
Sahgal seems to seek release from the nightmare of Emergency. Sonali resolves not to be cowed down but to work for the future of the country. In sharing the perfect understanding of Nishi- the wife of Dev and Rose; and Mona and Rose, Nayantara Sahgal explores the possibility of full co-operation among women which may lead to freedom. Sonali, uses terms and situation reminiscent of the political reality, the novel deals with.

In her seventh novel ‘Plans for Departure’ first published in 1986, Sahgal deals with the themes of love, compromise, anguish and mystery.

Miss Anna Hansen- a Danish women who is in love with Nicholas, comes to India to unveil the new meanings of life. There is another fellow named Marlowe Croft who is determined to build a church in the hills faces many problems in his way. His wife Lulu, whom he considers as an instrument to realize his ambitions is the main obstacle to his mission. Marlowe is bullying obsessive man. His wife dares not to speak in front of him. Their married life is not a happy one. At last when Mrs. Croft is unable to bear him she plans for departure. Before this planned departure, she is
killed by her husband and finally departs from this world.

Anna Hansen is ahead of her time. Before her stay in Himapur is over, Anna is attracted towards the District Magistrate Henery Brewster- an enigmatic figure but shaken by the mysterious death of Mrs. Marlowe Croft. She also plans for departure from Himapur.

‘Plans for Departure’ in particular is most unlike her earlier novels. The story is set in a remote Himalayan hill-station and by focusing on the life of Anna Hansen, the author seems to have broken out of the political, feminist, suffering and oppression theme.

"The latter novels after "Rich Like Us" concentrate on the quest for self-discovery of the protagonists as individual".33

In the novel, Anna Hansen is the second female foreigner after Rose in Rich Like Us. Hansen is free and independent mind and has come to India in search of identity. At home she had her lover Nicholas and sense of security but she wants to reach out to the world as a means to reaching out to her. So she leaves the comforts and sense of security of her home only to know herself. She was fully determined to search her
identity. The freedom of heart and soul could never be snatched away from her. She faces identity crisis which is very common in male dominated society. She loves Nicholas but not more than herself. That's why she comes to India in order to feel herself and her very existence. She wants life and freedom first. It is her this very desire which forces her to leave her native place and also provides her with enough courage to face the different culture of a foreign land when she comes to India, during her stay at Himapur, she gets acquainted to Henry Brewster, the D.M. and develops a kind of intellectual relationship with him. She suspects Henry has killed his wife and because of this suspicion, she leaves him. So she is a woman of firm convictions. Due to her strong feeling for freedom, though a foreigner, she takes keen interest in freedom fighters. As these fighters fought for the freedom of their nation, Anna also challenged all oppositions to her personal freedom.

'Anna's travels are part of her quest for freedom and meaning'.

Marlowe Croft is a person who is loyal and devoted only to his cause. His wife Lucille Croft’s existence is meaningful only in as much as she is a
good and faithful wife and loyal to his cause. Later on in her life she realizes that her marriage was not a union of Soul. She starts thinking of herself and finally she plans for departure. But her dreams are unfulfilled and she reaches her grave. In the same way Stella Brewster also realizes the same thing. Stella could never identify with her husband Henry and attracted towards Pryor. She breaks the bond of marriage. So we find the instinct of freedom in all women characters of the novel.

Sahgal represents that the problems experienced in a wrong marriage do not much differ from region to region. It is world wide. As the human nature is same all over the world in the same way problem created by human nature are also not vary. They are almost same.

Marlowe Croft is himself a zealous missionary and he wants that his wife should not have her own will; she should completely follow her husband’s footsteps. Marlowe himself never thinks of adjustment. His wife Lulu is always filled with terror. Marlowe married her because she went to church regularly and helped him in religious activity.
"He had never been dependent on her in any vital sense but not till tonight had she understood his complete autonomy".35

He had always taken her as secondary to his religion.

Sahgal through this novel focuses the light on Men-Women relationship and shows that this lack of love, faith and togetherness leads to unhappy marriages and cold relations. There is a need to develop mutual interest and some common ideas to share and to have faith on each other and to fulfill emotional and physical needs.

Sahgal's next novel 'Mistaken Identity' first published in the year 1988 is written in the backdrop of India's struggle for freedom. This novel is the story of a man, Bhushan Singh, son of the Raja of Vijaygarh, charged with treason and thrown into jail. There he comes to know the news about the civil war in Turkey-the rise of Mussolini, Gandhi's Salt March, mass arrests, and the death of hunger-strikers in Lahore etc.

Sahgal portrays Bhushan's mother 'Rani of Vijaygarh' as oppressed one at multiple levels. But she is strong enough and survives every blow. All her female children were brutally murdered because they
had been girls. In this novel, Sahgal deals with the problems of society like purdah system polygamy, brutal killing of female fetus and male dominancy.

'Mistaken Identity' is about India's identity too- India's identity is not related only to a land mass, or defined in terms of territory and boundaries. This is a sort of meeting place of human race where the search for the identity is main objective. It has different tradition of music, dance, arts, crafts, food, dress and manners, poetry, drama etc.

The novel portrays the plight of its counter-hero, Bhushan Singh, who suddenly finds himself taken off a train in the middle of the night and carted off to jail. Where he is imprisoned along with several communists and followers of Mahatma Gandhi for no reason he can understand.

"1929, the year when the novel starts, is a year when revolutionary ideas inspired by men as unlike as Lenin and Mahatma Gandhi are spreading across India. There is industrial strife and political unrest. It is a particularly uncomfortable time for the British Raj which begins to unearth, or imagine, conspiracies against it and plots to
overthrow the king Emperor. Arrests are made all over the country, men are thrown into jail or sent to the gallows, and a number of famous conspiracy trials take place. **Mistaken Identity** was inspired by one of these, in which a group imprisoned for about three years, is then released as no evidence is found against them".36

Bhushan's mother- 'Rani of Vijaygarh' though belongs to old generation but unlike the women of her age, she refuses to follow the traditional ways. She is looking for horizon beyond her reach. Her husband marries three times; she keeps herself busy in her son, forgetting the very existence of her husband. Bhushan analysis of her mother is-

"*She was more like a warrior queen falling on her sword in defiance of defeat and disgrace*."37

When she was child of five, she got married and brought to the palace at the age of thirteen. It's here that she attains maturity and loses her identity behind purdah. But it is here again that she becomes conscious of herself as an individual. Finally she elopes from the house and marries Yusuf.
There is another female character in the story i.e. Sylla - a Parsee girl. She is free and she does not have to struggle for her freedom. Her will is the only guiding force for her. She has male friends, she writes and directs plays. She is physically involved with Bhushan and has great influence on him. Through Bhushan's mother, Sahgal throws light on the life of a woman who is oppressed at many levels. She is killed as many times as her baby girls are brutally murdered. In her own right she is wronged woman, a woman deprived of freedom and choice of fulfillment. Rani is strong enough and survives all blows. Jasbir Jain remarks-

"The middle-aged Rani represents a strong force of change".38

Bhushan Singh when in prison, discovers that his sentence may have something to do with his Karma and not with the crime of trying to overthrow the king Emperor of which he is accused. As a way of passing time, the fellow prisoners ask him to tell them about himself. So he describes his past and re-lives his past.

He fell in love with Razia but she is separated by cruel arranged marriage. His affair with a Muslim girl triggers a Hindu-Muslim riot and Bhushan Singh's banishment to college in America but his love for her
remains an obsession with him and the novel is about his search for Razia. So the story is about obsession. It is about the fact that we find what we are looking for, though not always in the way we expect.

This novel is also about an India struggling for freedom, and the kinds of lifelong commitment all kinds of people gave to this fight. And it is about a belief in India where there is no Hindu and no Muslim. Sahgal herself admits-

"I think of this novel as a hymn to racial impurity, and in praise of the mixtures that have combined to produce the modern Indian, in this case with the interlocking of two traditions, Hindu and Muslim, within an individual life".39

So Hinduism and Islam meet in him (Bhushan Singh), in ways both practical and mysterious. In her latest novel 'Lesser Breeds' which is published in the year 2003, she shows the diminishing value of non violence in the minds of youth. Nurullah, an English teacher aged 23, comes to the city of Akbarabad in the year 1932. He encounters a non-violent resistance movement against British rule. But this non-violence seems to him something strange to fight against such a
powerful empire. During the ten years stay with a non-violent family observing the situations he becomes resistant to non-violence. According to him non-violence is a Lunatic's fantasy. In 1968, when the book ends Narullah reconsiders and now has completely changed outlook An American. Scholar comes to India searching for the surviving strands of non-violence, when disarmament remains a distant dream.

Imperial era was no illusion. It was a business like arrangement that had divided up the globe into rulers and the ruled, masters and the slaves. Some of the land masses of the colonies were strangely known as Europe’s possessions and carried European ownership titles: British India, Dutch, East Indies, French Indo-China and so on. Trades routes opened up by these owners carried everything from silk and spices to human flesh, west-ward. Europe became the centre of the world and its inhabitants as a superior race. This race got the right to exploit non-Europe for its profit and pleasure. These exploited people belong to ‘Lesser Breeds’.

"Non-Europe in this scenario was a mixed bag of ‘Lesser Breeds’ a wonderfully expressive phrase immortalized by the
imperial poet, Kipling, and these ‘Lesser Breeds’ were long overdue for European enlightenment’.40

When Nurullah went to America, one mid age lady commented that India is so complicated a country that it is hard to figure out that if a person is Hindu or Muslim, capitalist or communist. Nurullah had no idea that the world outside India was so cubby-holed and cubic led. He had faith and belief in the present and in the future. Leda began to connect this optimism with new nationhood when he remarked that arrival into freedom was an incredible experience. Leda planned to live with Nurullah in the idyllic beauty of Brookham, Massachusetts. But Nurullah was describing some other Shelter called Akbarabad. His attachment to his teaching job also affected him the same way, lifting him up into a transcendence that was emotional, spiritual and oriental. She could observe in him the bursting fullness of heart and mind. Now she consoled herself by thinking that Lovers could live continents apart and meet on each other’s terrain.

In a world where the west is a world and the rest of humanity a fringe on its edge, it is very difficult to
prove the existence. It is very difficult for the Lesser Breeds to express their desires and hopes.

'Kipling's stories were about Europeans in the proverbial heat and dust of a dangerous land where the lesser breeds were willfully hell-bent on obstructing the progress of empire and good natives were the ones who showed a doglike devotion to the white man. He describes the lesser breeds as half devil and half child'.

In the novel one question is asked on the issue of disarmament and CTBT i.e. a ban on the nuclear weapons and the assurance of security for non-nuclear states. This disarmament is only possible when the whole globe as a single unit vows not to keep nuclear weapons. Non-violence is the only remedy for all the problems. It is in any case the path of evolution and the only way the world will be in time to come.

"A basic human right-the right to live without fear- is violated when such weapons exist in any hands at all".

But Nurullah, though follower of non-violence find it quaint way to over come the terrifying situation
of the world. This situation puts that fantasy (non-violence) to rest.

So by going through her nine novels we find that Sahgal's novels are full of revolutionary ideas and describe the contemporary India. Most of her major characters resemble some well known public figure of their time. Her novels are the political and social barometer of the time. They portray the social, political, economic and revolutionary changes of the time. Through her novels she also exposes the distortion in the Indian democracy. She skillfully and artistically displays these distortions and gives the hopeful remedy to these problems and she also gives voice to the oppressed women in the male dominated society. She has tried to resolve the conflict between tradition and modernity.

V. Mohini Madan, while trying to define her novels writes that they are-

'Multivalent, offering multiplicity of unique perspectives, imbibing the spirit of the age ... her novels are very modern in the choice of theme.'

43
Her novels are about contemporary hopes and fears, set in political situations and the implications of political events on people's lives.

She asserts-

"I write novels with political settings, this was not a deliberate choice. Politics was all I had to work with, if I may use the word to signify a childhood filled with the sound and fury and overflowing with the yearnings, of the national movement for independence, when all issues from the cloth you wore, to the food you ate and the company you kept- were political issues. When personal and political fates were inextricably bound, and political and social history merged with private lives. I could no more distance myself from that inheritance than a shoemaker's child can escape the smell of shoe leather"."44
References

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