CHAPTER-2

Social Condition of India and its People in Nayantara Sahgal's Novels
Nayantara Sahgal's novels are inextricably linked with the environment of their creation. Her novels clearly portray the lots of changes took place in India during five -six decades after the independence. Indian society faced manifold changes in all fields. After independence her maternal uncle Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru dominated India and he observed socialism as the only way to fight back both imperialism and mass poverty. India is already an independent State but Sahgal in her novels, trying her best and is struggling to establish India as socialist and democratic nation.

Second congress of the 'International Writers Association' held in London in 1936, defended a commitment of Indian literature to social critique, claiming that literature should-

"Deal with the basic problems of our existence today-the problems of hunger and poverty, social backwardness and political subjection."

Mrs. Sahgal has spent her life working as a committed advocate for freedom and civil rights and civilized values. She strongly advocated socialist India. Her novels present the overall development of the Indian society, few decades before independence to
seven-eight decades after the nation's independence. Her novels touch on the fringes of the dilemmas the country was faced with. She describes the national experience shared by the people at large- the national movement for freedom and then the struggle of the newly born republic to come to terms with the problems facing it. The nineteen thirty was a tumultuous period in the history of the country. The emergence of Gandhism in full splendor was the most important thing which happened to the country in this phase. Gandhiji advocated 'ahimsa' as a panacea, capable of curing all ills. But the post-independence political scene contributed to the failure of Gandhian panacea by the sixties. The country started to go astray, unable to mould old strategies to meet the problem posed by the new situations. All these situations are faithfully mirrored in the novels of Nayantara Sahgal.

The immediate post-independence phase saw a soaring of new hopes and aspirations. The nation also bled with pricks of prohibition, obscurantism and socialism felt in some quarters. The era of planned development entered the threshold of India. But the failure of Government over matter of national policy and security and death of Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru led to
nation's turbulence. The government's reaction was to proclaim a national emergency and incarnate all the leaders of the opposition. But the consciousness of the people made them continue their struggle for the shaping of a system wherein they could realise themselves and could resolve their identity crisis. Nayantara Sahgal artistically conveys the new sense of competence, confidence, independence, fearlessness, sacrifice and the creation of unified public opinion on political issues.

"It is possible to see a connection between this development and the rise of the Indian novel in English; for fiction, of all literary forms is most vitally concerned with social conditions and values."\(^2\)

Sahgal in her novels succeeds in capturing the authentic picture of Indian society and the fond hopes, ideals along with fears and disillusionment of the people. She powerfully evokes the tempo of the nation before and after independence. Her novels are satisfying samples of Indian culture, its society and the gradual evolution of the society. She spares no section of society. She spares no sections of society in unmasking the evil which has crept in everywhere after
independence-politicians, businessmen, educationists, unscrupulous civil servants involved in settling personal scores, astray leaders who are unable to lead the country to the right path of development. She also presents the human relationships very efficiently and shows how the people are devoid of human touch. She subtly and skillfully shifts her focus to the interior of the house and even to the depth of human heart. Her novels present the reality of the contemporary society. They analyse the present trends in all their details and also foresee in which direction the wind will blow. She describes Indian society as polyreligious, multi-cultural and multi-linguistic unit. In a society characterized by wide-spread ignorance and illiteracy, with fatalistic and other worldly attitudes, religion becomes a tool of exploitation. Hindus seem to be imbued with a paralysing fatalism which makes them unambitious and inactive. Hinduism emphasises self-denial, austerity, an unhealthy distrust of enjoyment, self fulfillment and pleasure. It makes the people uninterested and uninvolved in what happens to them or to those around them. This fatalism pushes the people down to passivity bowing to whatever is meted out to one in life. Like Rishad in 'Situation in New Delhi' realizes,
"to stir, to break and rebuild that mentality was beyond him and his group". In 'Rich Like Us' the students from Nehru University says much the same of his experience with peasants in Bihar. They all are use to bow before destiny that it never occurred to them that they could by organising themselves, demand something, change something. Sahgal in her novels shows the breeding corruption in the society as the direct consequences of the non-concern of Indians with their immediate problems. She deftly portrays the Indian society where people are unaccustomed to think for themselves and unable to move out of the cobweb of the customs and traditions, accept blindly whatever is around them, be that the insensitivity, the corruption or the violence. It is irony that those who are good-intentioned are inert, passive and don't try heartily to achieve something for them or for the others while those who act, do so in a thoughtless and violent ways. The need of the hour is that people have to shed off the stagnant ideas, customs and beliefs. To be a living force, requires constant renewal of the ideas. Sahgal through her novels makes it amply clear that the society has to reshuffle the priorities and give
importance to the welfare, happiness and satisfaction of the individuals.

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

For Nayantara Sahgal, State is an institution built up for the garnering of individual energies and then so canalizing them as to obtain the best results with regard to the welfare and upliftment of individual himself and the social set up he constitutes with other individuals. The individual is the criterion with which she judges all issues in politics, religion, sociology and ethics. In each of her novels she reveals herself as a social visionary and is deeply concerned for qualitative humanitarian values. Individuals can only shape the structure of the society. If people go astray they fail-

"To be aware, to respond fearlessly and intelligently to some of the challenges our society now faces."

The novelist doesn't give hope and validates Gandhian way for the emancipation and growth of the people in all realms-sociological, economic, religious,
political, violence, communal frenzy, caste and class conflicts, regionalism, populism and the unscrupulous craze for power. It is important not to give up hope and grow impatient; Gandhism is a potent force and synonym for humanitarianism.

"The survival of India's people can matter only as long as per spirit survives—the spirit of Gandhi and older than it is, the fathomless spiritual reservoir from which he drew his faith and inspiration."

Nayantara Sahgal's Gandhian vision has the individual as the point of reference. According to him if the individual is not counted, the society can not exist. Society and individual are interdependent. They are not isolated. Hence there is the need for social restraints in the interest of social good. Willing submission to social restraints for the sake of the well being of the whole society enriched both the individual and the society. The individual must learn-

"To adjust his individualism to the requirements of social progress."

The Gandhian insistence on the mass-elite dynamics has been well incorporated in Nayantara Sahgal's novels. All her positive heroes are either well
integrated with the masses already or they arrive at the stage of such integration in due course.

"Gandhi's entire emphasis on decentralization and the preservation of human values was designed to avoid the alienation of man from man and from his environment."\(^7\)

Sohanlal, the idealized Gandhian in 'A Time to Be Happy' takes to a politics as a mission. He has no other identity, no marks of distinction from the masses. The narrator and Maya in the same novel turn their backs on money and power to lead a life of dedication and service to the masses. Sanad also strives towards greater involvement with the people. Kailas Vrind, Abdul Rahman and Prakash Shukla in 'This Time of Morning' also realize their responsibility as public men. Usman and Rishad in 'Situation in New Delhi' go to the roots of the malady which afflicts the people, they go to the humblest constituent of the masses, the least common multiple to stir what lay moribund into action. They make it a personal individual crusade in their differing ways to solve the problems of the masses. Sahgal firmly believes that in a truly egalitarian society both political and social inequality
and repression must be abolished. Women are also individuals and they should have an equal say in all matters. The participation of women in social and national life has to be on the basis of their own.

"Individuality and not as labelled possessions."^8

Sahgal shows her special concern with the problems of the emancipation of women. Social equality would be meaningless as long as women continue to lag far behind their men folk in all walks of life. The novelist's main concern is with women as counterparts of men in the over-all social set up. Her women are not career-women treating men as their rivals in a highly competitive society. They in fact wish to relate themselves to the people around them and would like to be treated as equals. Only at an equal footing can the man woman relationship become a fulfilling one. Nayantara Sahgal shows her acute awareness of the dependent status of women in society. As a sensitive observer of the social scene, she realizes that their status in India is like that of a second class citizen. She stresses that usually it is women who suffer more and are denied the right of self expression. Social revolution is must. Individuals have to come to
their own selves for no human problem would be understood or solved unless human beings regard one another as equals. Freedom is very important and every generation has to do its bit to continue and preserve the tradition of freedom. Her women characters cross the conventional barriers of morality in their search for meaning. She exposes the hollowness of all ideological solutions where individual serve the ends of ideology. In her search for the values she limits her characters to no set formulas. Any Indian who had the capacity to think and act must use it in a big constructive way or a whole civilization would crumble under mould. Vishal in *Storm in Chandigarh* imbibes this lesson well; he turns to healthy decisive action. He faces the problems of violence and communal disharmony, on the one side and insenstivity, incommunicability and lack of the human touch on the other. He is motivated by the desire to check the spread of violence. The only way out Nayantara sahgal visualizes is for people to be consciously involved in the major task of building themselves as well as the society. Action is the need of the hour. Individual endeavour, doing one's duty in the real meaning from the depth of heart is the only way for the creative evolution of our society. Some
characters in her novels like Vishal, Rishad, Usman, Veena can break the inhuman shackles of convention around them and take their lives out of the grooves of state modes of action, bringing forth in the process a more healthy and humane environment for all. Rakesh in 'This time of Morning' resolves to-"Work for my own fulfillment because then I shall have myself, my whole fulfilled self to give others" would provide "a better contribution" to the, cause of society, for "the only thing that does matter is the human being, his calibre", as Kailas Vrind puts it.

Nayantara Sahgal's fair presentation of all issues is her remarkable artistic achievement. She presents all the issues in human colour. The long drawn out fight for freedom, the high hopes at the attainment of independence, the mushrooming of opportunists, the rise of pseudo-radicalism, apathy, unconcern and rank self seeking, pushing the nation to a point of extremity, the edifice of egalitarian democracy reeling under the unscrupulous emergency regime-the tortuous course taken by the country in recent years, comes alive in essentially human terms. She gives her creations autonomy independent of her and ensures that their inner reality is not subjected to an external or super
imposed view point. She presents her characters in life-like grey as blends of virtues and vices. She penetrates deeply into their psychology to discover the instincts which propel them to action. In 'A situation in New Delhi', the personal tragedy of the gang-rape Madhu is symbolic of the plight of the nation, where the individual is deemed to be only an instrument of the process. Usman realizes that such private disaster can be checked only by arousing the youth to a feeling of individual responsibility. Rishad gets a similarly thorough treatment with both the human terrorist and the humanist reformer rolled in one. One most creative contribution of Nayantara Sahgal is her integration of the personal, the political, the social and the religious into the psychological reality of man's mind and its ways of working. How one at individual level opposes indifference, insensitivity and inequality in human relationships as well as persecution, exploitation and unscrupulousness in the public realm, social attitudes, political conditions and religious heritage define, to a large extent, the parameters of opportunity available to individuals for self realisation. Sahgal catches the cause-and-effect sequence of these constituents of the environment. "A Time To Be Happy" offers much in
the realm of sociology, history, politics and ethics, so packed it is with problems concerning diverse disciplines. Her novels are attempts at evolving a generally acceptable and potent strategy to help those, who feel responsible for India, act in a positive and decisive way. Through her novels she,

"Transcends the horizons of society only when integrating the hell and paradise of human life into the symbols of the whole."³⁹

Nayantara Sahgal's major concern has been with freedom, social values and other related issues as well as with the responsibility of the middle class intellectuals towards their society. This is what she has to say about her novel-

"I deal with people and their situation but, looking back each one seems to reflect the hopes and fears the political scene held out to us at that time."³⁰

According to her, political and social forces shape our lives. So how can we unaware of them? Nothing is dearer to Sahgal than the inalienable right of every man and woman to be free. She advocates the inner freedom for her woman and demands recognition as equals by men at home and in society. She does not want
marriage to provide only financial and social security for a woman, but also love companionship and understanding. The traditional Indian society, glorifies the suffering of its women, Nayantara Sahgal rejects these established concepts. She does not totally reject Indian customs or traditions. She only rejects those ideas and beliefs that have compelled the women to unjust male subordination. Meena Shirwadkar points this out and says -

"Though Anita Desai and Nayantara Sahgal have brought some new life to the world of women, the major trend appears to look back nostalgically on the Sita-Savitri type."  

The most important thing as Nayantara Sahgal implies is that one should have the strength of character to act fearlessly. There is a firm determination to remain a human being with basic feeling of love, compassion and understanding and not succumb to the forces of materialism which destroys its very essence. She is aware of the increase of violence and the decrease of human values in modern materialistic society. She regrets the moral decline in the people. All her novels very honestly portray this situation of our society. As a socialist herself, Sahgal narrates through
Sonali (Rich Like Us) her own cynical awakening for the reality of Indian politics. The moment Sonali loses her innocent belief in the prominence of socialist ideals for the Indian state is a key point. That is the moment she diagnosis the coming crisis in the post independence Indian state. She represents the Emergency as a faceless, omnipresent power that inspires fear and awe. When the reader is given a view of how the Emergency worked, arresting people without a formal accusation or proper trial, often with physical violence showered upon demonstrators, is a good piece of evidence to show how her novels prove to be a social document and sensitive to all happenings in the country at that time of emergency. Capitalism in India is creating a system that will not bring about development, or better living standards. How can India be rich while denying the pressing social problems—poverty, disease, social exclusion, it has to handle? India is already an advancing nation respiring in modern democracy. Sahgal is considered as one of the main feminist writers in India. Sahgal's representation of Indian society takes for granted the active role educated women are expected to play in politics business, management and economy. Sahgal links the
historical processes set in motion with the transition to an independent India to a deep social transformation which would naturally have effects on women's condition as well. India's cultural identity would be settled by socialism because this ideology expects from women a modern active participation in society meaning the socialist nation would automatically settle women's issues.

The sati system was a great evil in Indian society. The first thing Sahgal denies about sati is the widow's supposed consent. They were often sedated and drugged, which is why there were no screams when they were dragged to the pyre, as they were projected as the symbol of sacrifice. There were superstition and social pressure in convincing some depressed widows to go ahead with it. Sahgal's novels present a set of directions for institutional reform targeting increased vigilance over possibilities of domestic violence, advocating social justice, protecting women's/widow's inheritance rights and demanding a public rejection of violent elements in Indian society. She beautifully and subtly describes the friendly relations between a woman with another woman. e.g. Sonali and Rose, Rose and Mona in 'Rich Like Us' share the relation of
support, encouragement and advice, Rose in the novel tries to manage a functional fusion between being British and Indian white and eastern. The important evidence of Rose's integration in India is her friendship with Mona, the first wife, after years of rivalry. Their joint search for a bride for Dev, and Mona's mourning over Rose's parents killed in an air raid during world war-II these two incidents illustrate the depth of their bond. Sahgal's presentation of this kind of bond, friendship from everyday life as evidence of the fact that people from different communities have taken pleasure in being together. Sonali is a fine Indian specimen of the new woman, has lived with women, has felt and experienced with women, she knows the pain of loss of freedom. She would never compromise; she could never afford to give her weak moment to the oppressors. She gets moral support and advice from Rose and she helps Rose after Ram's death. Mona and Rose, expamlify the concept of sisterhood which is an important step towards liberation. Sisterhood is the strong bond of love and friendship amongst women themselves. Rose's pain is lessened when she shares her thoughts with Mona. They are an excellent example of love and sharing. They realise that they are sailing in
the same boat, hence if there has to be any relation between them, it must be based on mutual sympathy, trust and understanding. Mona has so much faith in Rose that on her death bed, she gives the responsibility of Dev and his new bride to her. Sahgal visions the fuller co-operation among women which may lead to emancipation of women. But after her husband Ram's death Rose lives with her step son Dev and his wife Nishi, in an uncertain wife-widow-mother-in-law position. The relationship between Nishi and Rose is agreeable, although superficial, but Dev has always resented Rose's presence as the cause of his father's emotional distance from his mother-Mona and from himself, their son. When Ram dies, Dev certainly does not plan to give Rose her fair share of his father's fortune and then he forges his father's signature so that he could dispose of his money. Rose's material dependence on Ram and Dev, reproduces the actual situation of many Hindu wives in spite of the Hindu Code Bill. The uncertainty of Rose's position poses a social problem which in India is neither rare nor hidden from public awareness. Even actually she is murdered by her step-son Dev but her death is reported as an accident that she fell in the well and drowned and it
prevents the further enquiry. Through this, Saghal portrays the real picture of Indian society. Her novels present a set of directions for institutional reform targeting increased vigilance over possibilities of domestic violence and protecting women's inheritance rights and try to prove women as individuals.

Man and woman are two wheels of a cart. Both the wheels are equally important for the proper functioning of the cart. But woman does not enjoy the equal and prestigious status in Indian social set-up. Through it is generally thought that the condition of the women in west is better than here but if observed keenly it is found that women have been the oppressed class all over the world. Now the modern ideas of freedom, equality and human rights are making them aware of their exploitation and motivating them to raise their voice against equality and oppression. These modern ideas and social movement to improve the condition of the women is known as feminism.

"A Social movement that seeks equal rights for women, giving them equal status with men and freedom to decide their own careers and life pattern."
Nayantara Sahgal is a feminist. Her writings raise women issues and she struggle for women's emancipation. The gender bias is the main cause of all women suffering and has been haunting our society since ancient times. Feminism dreams of a world where there will not be any male dominance and female oppression. It aims to eliminate all their sufferings and to free the women from all shackles and passivity. It is concerned with all the issues of the women. These women-issues may be private and they may be public e.g. political, social economical and even philosophical.

"Feminism is not a one dimensional social theory and practice, but has arisen out of the varied responses of women to their specific form of subordination which in turn is determined by the interaction of gender and production relations."

In eighteenth century William Blackstone, a distinguished professor of Law at Oxford, described marriage as civil death of women. He states:

"By marriage the husband and wife are one person in law, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during
the marriage or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband, under whose wing protection and cover she performs everything."\(^{14}\)

If they want to realize the freedom they have to strive and struggle for power. This freedom should be economic, political, social etc. If women have executive as well as legislative powers, they will certainly take care of the needs of their less fortunate counterparts. Men cannot and will not understand the agony of women. Most of the literary works of Nayantara Sahgal seeks answer to the problems of women existence in the male dominated society. She portrays her women characters with good educational background and striving hard to prove themselves as an individual. They are aware of the biased attitude of society and are capable of challenging the taboos and destructive social norms.

"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, and she declares herself their equal."\textsuperscript{15}

There is a marked difference between Sahgal's women characters and those of other feminist writers. Sahgal's women are not against men. Sahgal's universe is a place where men are not placed as opposed to women. They exist as cohesive forces. She reveals the suffering caused by the oppression of men but her women always try to overthrow the forces of oppression and seek happiness and fulfillment. They hate the evil and not the evil doer. Their relationships with men are very healthy. They in fact derive immense help from their male friends. They do not hate the institution of marriage but some of them do marry again and live a happy and satisfied life ahead. But in this male dominating society even-

"The poorest Indian male is fortunate in having opportunities for realising his impulse to domination and the fury of his frustrated ego, because he has a wife whom he can always treat as an inferior."\textsuperscript{16}

The call is for the recognition of woman as an equally important partner in marriage or in any other relationship. Disparity brings suffering to women and
as long as half of the humanity suffers social justice will only be a dream. Nayantara Sahgal portrays women in many roles as mother, as wives, as sisters, as daughters, as friends, as working women, as ministers as social workers etc. The novelist portrays a woman as a woman first and then a daughter, a mother or a wife. Her women have nothing against feminity; they are women to the innermost cores of their heart. Her women are strong individuals not ready to sacrifice their values and ideals, her women belong to elites of society. They are educated and financially strong. Most of them have not realised the evils of dowry, illiteracy and child marriage. They enjoy all material comforts. Their problem is social, psychological and emotional. They struggle for their identity. From Maya in 'A Time to be Happy' to Bhushan Singh's mother in 'Mistaken Identity' her women march from strength to strength. Nayantara Sahgal's works show the conflict between the male and female identity and individuality in the society. Woman who has been compared to the creator and is the centre of all human existence has sadly been robbed of her own identity. For man, his will is law but for woman there are certain norms and set of rules which she has to follow. Nayantara Sahgal's novels
show her deep concern for the emancipation of women. Her women struggle for their existence as individuals and continue their journey towards self-discovery. Their search for identity begins with her very first novel. 'A Time to be Happy'. This novel presents many facts of women. There is the narrator's mother who presents the picture of the traditional Indian women, sacrificing her dreams and desires, adjusting to the point of compromise and still living happily content and in perfect bliss. Her happiness comes not from satisfactory circumstances of life but from her acceptance of it. She is content because chosen to be happy and not because her life is full of bliss. Govind Narayan's mother does not see any match between the view of her husband and those of hers. She seems to be Sahgal's preparation for the new women in new era, the era of equality. She does not bow down before her husband. Though she belongs to older generation, she possesses individuality. Maya Shivpal in contrast to the traditional selfless ideal Indian woman advances towards self realization. Her dreams of self realisation take her to village. She is not contented by serving her husband only. The instinct to survive as an individual, as an entity draws her towards social work. Her quest
for identity is just same as that of Rashmi's in 'This Time of Morning'. All other women in the novel 'A Time to be Happy' are traditional though some are well educated like Kusum, Devaki but they are not discontented with their situation. Savitari, Lakshmi, Prabha Mathur, all these have become so much habitual of the subdued condition that they are not conscious of their separate identity. However Maya shows her unique defiance by removing all the sign of married status. She serves as:

"A harbinger to Indian women's awareness of herself"¹⁷

In 'This Time of Morning' Sahgal moves her attention from traditional woman to woman of new generation who dare to look beyond marriage. In this novel she presents the contrast between older and younger generation. Mira is devoted wife of Kailas. She achieves perfect happiness. She identifies herself with Kailas and with his cause. But her daughter Rashmi naturally gives Mira a cultural shock when she tells her plainly and determinedly that she would like to get divorce. She is strong woman who loves life and believes in living it up. She represents women who though strong inherently, are docile because they are
taught never to oppose. Her search for selfhood is delayed because of her indecision. She lacks the courage of Simrit of 'The Day in Shadow' and Anna Hansen of 'Plans for Departure' Nita's search of selfhood is described well. In her, Sahgal explores the place of a woman in Indian society before marriage. She is an independent minded woman who simply hates all the values and norms. She wants to live life on her own terms. She is not allowed to go anywhere alone but whenever she gets the chance she is fond of cigarettes and loves dancing in clubs. This should be examined in the light of Mrs. Sahgal's remark in an article 'Women-Persons or Possession?'

'When I heard someone remark, 'We never allow daughters to go out', or 'I can't do that my husband would not like it,' it sounded a very peculiar alien jargon as if, I thought women were property not persons'.

In Indian society females identity is hidden under males' identity. Women are identified as daughter, wives, mother, and grandmothers. They don't have their individual identity except the few. Here identity crisis is man's problem only.
"The crisis of growing up of choosing his identity, the decision as to what one is and is going to be, are considered only male prerogatives and women are told that, truly feminine women do not want career, higher education, political rights, independence and opportunities."¹⁹

Another woman in the novel is Leela who also comes from orthodox background. Because these women never experience even moderate freedom so when they get it they are not able to handle it. They become confused and misguided. Uma Mitra is misguided because her husband is not able to satisfy her emotional and physical need. In the novel *Storm in Chandigarh*, Saroj is tortured by her husband for a pre-marital affair of hers. Though she repents for all this and starts her married life with clear conscience but feels helpless by India's tyrannical attitude. His world is entirely different from Saroj's. In his world there is no question of self expression for women. He himself is involved with Mara even after marriage. Saroj tries to realise her selfhood within the sphere of marriage. She involves her in her children. It breeds a sense of security which renders Saroj a strength to bear
the humiliation caused by her husband Inder. But Vishal is just contrary to Inder. He believes that true partnership means accepting an individual as a whole with all his/her shortcomings. In the company of Vishal she learns to respect herself. Inder makes her feel guilty whereas Vishal convinces her of her purity. Saroj finally succeeds in breaking the bond of marriage and her final departure from Inder's home symbolises her marching ahead to confident and free self with separate identity. 'The Day in Shadow' has somewhat autobiographical elements. Simrit is the projection of Sahgal herself and her search of identity is similar to Sahgal's own search. Simrit's husband Som's world is men's world where women don't have any identity. They are for use. Simrit feels alienated in her husband's company. She has strong craving for selfhood. Even after divorce, because of consent terms, she discovers that clean break is not possible. She finds that marriage is one mistake for which she has to pay life long. But she finds Raj's support. What is special in Raj's company that she is herself with him? She needs not to pretend or to show of what she is not. Another woman character Pixie is also longing for self-realisation but Sumer Singh to whom she turns for emotional support
crushes her personality. If there are men like Som, Sumer Singh, there are also men like Raj whose support and advice proves very helpful to women for their quest of identity and selfhood. They have the ability to fill liveliness in life.

"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."^{20}

Skinny Jaipal of 'A Situation of New Delhi' is an innocent, ordinary woman and she is unmarried so she feels lesser restraints on her freedom. But when she finds opportunity, she shows rare kind of courage and integrity. When Rishad comes for plundering her house, she meets Rishad and this changes her course of life. She joins his cause and helps him to plunder her father's wealth. She believes that revolution must begin at home. She affects Rishad's airy notions of revolution. Skinny, without any special efforts subtly becomes a woman with a powerful, remarkable personality. Devi is another kind of woman with imposing personality and unyielding authority. It seems that she has truly achieved the dream of equality. We
find her strong at every moment while facing her male acquaintances. She never feels weak because of her womanhood. She seems to depend on her brother and close men friends for her emotional and personal survival. She exploits these men for her own ends. Another character in novel is Madhu. She becomes the victim of male lust. The tormentors move freely but she is tortured every moment at the hands of society and even her own family. Even her parents are concerned only to hide the incident from the society. She is oppressed even by her own people. Happiness and reputation are the lot of those who blindly follow the norms of the society. Pinky is a truly feminine woman. She lives happy and contented life. She does not think to be valued as an individual. Sahgal does not approve of this type of women. Sahgal's women are sensible, intelligent and long for independent personality.

In her next novel 'Rich Like Us' she portrays a foreigner woman-Rose and a career woman Sonali. The story of the novel is presented through the conscience of these two women Sonali is a specimen of new Indian woman. Her job requires her to compromise on many issues but she is not ready for
that. But in world full of compromise sticking to one's ideals is nothing short of crime. She has to pay for her ideals. When humiliated and demoted she despairs and feels wronged. But from her father's family history, she discovers that she is not the only victim of the system. Some of them have undergone even more horrible experiences. Sonali is pressurized by the senior officers and ministers and in order to maintain her dignity she has to resign. She does this to save her ideals. She dares to rebel against the accepted norms of society. She defies all conventions. Sonali's struggle for self determination is different from Rose's. Sonali has to face destructive forces outside of her home. Rose faces this problem at home. The crumbling burden of society and custom crushes the personality of all women-Indian or Western. Rose left her people, her country and even her self-respect at times for Ram and comes to India with him. But she never feels contented. She is humiliated at times duped at other times, but out of her will she remains Ram's wife life long. It's her pride in her decision that she does not accept defeat.

"A woman's instinct to cherish and preserve."\(^{21}\)
An important step towards liberation is full co-operation among women. They can not progress until they are rivals to each other. Even in the novel Rose finds life more comfortable when she becomes friendly to Mona.

Sahgal's next novel 'Plants for Departure' revolves round a woman's story. Anna Hansen is the second female foreigner in Sahgal's novel. Hansen is unmarried and relatively free and independent minded. She comes to India in search of identity. She leaves the cozy comforts of her home and Nicholas only to be herself.

"Her journey to India is an assertion of her need to grow, not to be content with mere wifehood. She had decided not to wait to be born a man but to create more space around herself."22

Anna faces 'identity crisis' which is very common in male dominated society. For the sake of her identity she leaves Nicholas behind, when she feels he may prove hindrance in her path of self realisation. In Himapur Anna develops an intellectual relationship with Henry Brewster, the D.M. but she does not bind herself with emotional bond with him. She suspects
that Henry has killed his wife. She has strong feeling for freedom. So she takes keen interest in India's struggle for independence. She is full of respect for the freedom fighter. Anna's travels are part of her quest for freedom and meaning. Another woman character Lucille Croft is also suppressed one. Though she dared to marry a man against her parents will, she remains in awe of her husband. Later on she realises that her marriage was against her temperament and was misfit. Now she realizes the futility of her marriage. She plans a journey to freedom but she is found dead before she could undertake her planned journey. Stella Brewster also realises that Henry though her husband, was not her soul-mate. Stella is not able to identify herself with her husband so she is drawn towards Pryor. She does not hesitate in breaking the marriage bond. She marches ahead with Pryor to new world of freedom. So we find that Sahgal's woman characters are becoming bolder and bolder and they do not hesitate to break the marriage bond in order to satisfy their inner cravings.

In Sahgal's next novel 'Mistaken Identity' there are two prominent female characters, 'Ranee of Vijaygarh' and Sylla. Ranee of Vijaygarh is Bhushan Singh's mother. She refuses to follow the traditional
ways. She is always looking forward for horizons beyond her reach. She does not forget and forgive her husband's polygamous ways. She engrosses herself in her son. She forgets the existence of her husband. Before her son is born, she begs for child to almighty God because she wants to prove that she is not lacking in any way. This is symbolic of her search for identity. And at last she dares to marry Yusuf- Bhushan Singh feels that only person he had ever seen raving for more life to live was his mother. Another female character Sylla- a Parsee girl, is free and uninhibited. She belongs to a community and a family where she does not have to live according to the norms set down by others. She writes and directs plays and is free to pursue her hobby of reading good books. She has male friends. She is physically involved with the narrator and has a towering influence on him. In all the Sahgal's novels, she is the only woman who is fully emancipated and free. In her last novel 'Lesser Breed', Nikhil's daughter Shan, the leggy, grumpy little girl who grows into a charming young lady, chosen the turmoil of her country over the better life style in America. This shows her love and concern for the country. In the novel there is an Anglo-Indian girl
Lilibet who is not worried about her individual identity. She speaks mincing, stilted English. She mourned her beautiful black hair and longed for it to be a colour called ash-blond through which she would have worn a narrow-black velvet band. Her world is limited to herself only. So Sahgal portrays all type of women in Indian society.

Sahgal advocates women power but Indian society does not fully accept it. The need of the time is that woman should be valued as human being and to be brought to full power and full participation in her life and events. Social constraints again have a major role to play as hindrances for women searching for fulfillment. Gender- bias is another cause for women suffering. In times of Prabha Mathur in 'A Time to be Happy' men used to indulge in bigamy or even polygamy in order to become proud fathers of sons. Prabha goes to the extent of permitting her husband Harilal to marry again so that he may beget a son. Prabha represents the lot of headless women who exist but do not seem to live. Early marriage was a means to crush a woman's soul even before she had become conscious of its existence. Mostly women do not want to disturb peace and harmony of their homes and this
becomes the main cause of their suffering. Sahgal demands social justice for women. She in her novel creates awareness about various problems and restraints that tend to crush the very existence of the most important members of society-its women. In Sahgal's novels there are two types are women, characters like. In the first group are women Lakshmi and Devika of 'A Time to be Happy' Mira of 'This Time of Morning', Gauri of 'Storm in Chandigarh' and Mona of 'Rich Lie Us', who are suppressed one and have no individual personality. They are so timid that they can not break the bond of marriage despite consequent humiliation. The second group is of the women who have independent existence. They are able to prove their identity. Rashmi of 'This Time of Morning', Saroj of 'Storm in Chandigarh' Simrit of 'The Day in Shadow', Sonali of 'Rich Like Us', Anna of 'Plans for Departure' and Bhushan Singh's mother of 'Mistaken Identity' belong to second group. Once they discover that something wrong is going on, they do not hesitate to break any bond, any social constraints and solve their problems. They have strong analytical mind, they can struggle to prove their identity. Sahgal is very much sensitive to the suffering
of Indian women. She wants them to become aware of their existence as individuals. She has a humanitarian dislike of suffering and equality.

"If Galsworthy was the champion of the poor, Nayantara Sahgal is the champion of the much wronged Hindu womanhood."\(^{23}\)

She is not only concerned for the women but for the whole society and its rapid and continuous progress. She agrees that-

"India, almost alone in Asia, had made a heroic attempt to combine the two, to bring a working democracy as well as social and economic change to the level of the masses and that it had succeeded to a remarkable degree."\(^{24}\)

Things have worked but not fast enough, not efficiently enough so what is required, is the reform towards more speed and efficiency for social and economic change and progress. Sahgal strongly believes that a true sense of selfhood does not depend on the inflated glorification of a nation, the trumpeting of its virtues or the drumbeat repetition of what it stands for. No show and pomp is needed to provide people with the basic amenities of life. If these are not
there, there is nothing on earth to prevent a government from getting down to providing them if indeed it regards food, water and shelter as a priority, Sahgal gave emphasis to the education also because unfit education deviates the path of youth in India. They go astray and are not able to contribute for the progress of the nation in a positive and appropriate manner.

"Uneducated, a man has no effective voice. He is the tool of other people and the average Indian today is certainly the tool of other people. He is helpless, inert a commodity to manipulate. He has to accept what he is told to do. Unhappily, many whom we call, educated are in this category too, so it is clear beyond doubt that education is needed not only in the formal, or in any reformed institutional sense, but in a way even more fundamental."

All the dreams of equality, social justice, intellectual freedom, economic development etc. are only be fulfilled through proper and right kind of education. Educated person is aware of his rights. The novelist's very first novel 'A Time to be Happy' deals with the new and old educational policies of the
government. In the novel 'A Situation in New Delhi', the youth because of improper education, have started taking the law into their hands. It is tragic and realistic account of the inefficiency of the government and the loss young lives. She further believes that people must react against injustice in personal life also to preserve their identity and freedom; she knows that it requires more courage and strength of conviction.

Sahgal's novels are social barometer. There emerges a loving family portrait of the Indian joint family system. The mixing and intermingling of grandparents, parents, grandchildren and loyal servants reflect close human ties, and remain of the most nostalgic memories consistently found in all her novels. Even in her novel 'A Situation in New Delhi'; she can not overlook the advantages of a big family and rightly thinks that-

"A big family.... cushioned your against shocks, put ups and downs into focus was simply there, a broad soft bosom."26

The strong bond of kinship among family members bestow firm determination to retain faith and companionship and to remain a human being with basic feelings of love, compassion and understanding
and not succumb to the forces of materialism which
destroy its very essence. The most important thing as
Nayantara implies is that one should have the strength
of character to act fearlessly.

All her novels also revolve around man-woman
relationships in which she tries to show that marriage
should not only be considered as a social institution,
but also as a means of personal fulfillment. Her novels
also represent the multidimensional realities of the pre
and post independent era in which the novel are set. All
her novels cover the span of twentieth century Indian
history from the eve of world War I, through the
decreasing days of British imperial rule, into the stormy
early years of independence and partition of 1947 and
the struggle in the last quarter of the century, to
preserve democracy under the threats of autocracy and
bitter religious and ethnic conflicts.

Sahgal pursues humanistic, positive approach and
it has been evident in all her novels. Her novels imbibe
the spirit of the age and have growing sense of
individualism. For Sahgal 'only thing that matters is
human being...." She wants to remove in equality and
the concept of equality to be prevailed in our society.
All human beings are important men as well as women;
one can not claim to be more important than other. None is more equal than the other. A.V. Krishna Rao comments:

"Mrs. Sahgal's fictional probe into the cancerous proliferation of social hypocrisy and political pretense in modern India is incisive like that of a surgeon's knife but is tempered with compassion and love. Its analysis and interpretation of the human predicament is informed of newer and truer insights into the human psyche."²⁷

So Sahgal has truly Indian approach to the issues and problems faced by our society. No corner of the life is remained untouched by the keen sight of the novelist. She very authentically describes the social development that took place in the county in the last 50 to 60 years. She is of the view that many lofty concepts arise out of education, equality, intellectual freedom and freedom itself. These will remain only a dream until our people are educated.

Nayantara Sahgal says-

"My own priority would then be education. National self-esteem flowers ultimately through the development of language, of
industry, of science and art, and all of these have their starting point in education. Until it is widespread related to our needs and geared as much for adults as for children, there is no use talking about mature nationhood or the voice of people uneducated a man has any effective voice. He is the tool of the other people, and the average Indian today is certainly the tool of other people. He is helpless, inert, a commodity to manipulate. He has to accept what he is told to do. Unhappily, many whom we call educated are in this category too, so it is clear beyond doubt that education is needed not only in the formal or in any reformed institutional sense, but in a way even more fundamental. 

She is a great advocate for the right education policy. In her novel 'A Situation in New Delhi.' She highlights that Rishad goes astray and to much extent the improper education policy is responsible for this. There has been tremendous change in all fields since independence. The leadership after independence took defined and definite steps for the monumental changes
in India. The most important requirement of independent India is to establish social justice in the society. In all her novels we find the immense craving for this. India has made a heroic attempt to bring a working democracy as well as social and economic change to the level of the masses. The post-independence years were revolutionary. It was a revolutionary step that a poor, over populated, underdeveloped country of Asia should progress on the path of development within a democratic fame work of government. There have been changes at every level. Modern India represents multicultural society. She in her novels tries to portray secular India. Her novel 'Mistaken Identity' is novel dealing with India's identity. A nation is the ultimate result of all the influences that have been brought to bear upon its people, social and economic no less than spiritual. It is all about India struggling for freedom. It is about a belief in an India where there is not Hindu and only a shared tradition created and enriched by a fabulous joint culture, by the people who lived as good neighbours side by side for centuries. So we find broad universal approach in her novels. Hinduism and Islam meet in Bhushan Singh, the hero of the novel. He loves
a Muslim girl Razia, who is free of all fears. Bhushan
Singh's mother and his Muslim beloved Razia, are the
remarkable women of Indian society. They are full of
inner strength and determination to be free. Whatever
was happening in 3-4 decades after in dependence had
been foreshadowed in her novels. Sahgal herself
admits-

'The Day in Shadow' had had as an
accompanying backdrop to Simrits divorce
settlement, the growing Soviet influence on
our subcontinent and a definite Indian tilt in
that direction. I finished writing the book in
February 1971. The Indo-Soviet Treaty, a
landmark of its kind, embodying this tilt, was
not signed until August that year. The
situation creeping upon us in 'A Situation in
New Delhi' a book I had completed writing
in January 1975 was upon us in June and I
myself was hung with it."^{29}

Sahgal's main concern has been with freedom and
other related issues as well as with the responsibility of
the middle class intellectuals towards their society. Her
novels also present the reality of the contemporary
scene. They analyse the present trends in all their
human details and foresee the future events and the modes which will be followed by the society. Sahgal feels and reflects in her novels the strong creative stirrings in the face of big events-events that are not only historic in value but also exquisitely rich with the stuff of human passion. She presents the factual picture of the Indian society. Her first novel 'A Time to be Happy' creates an authentic picture of those tumultuous days. There is description of Bengal famine of 1943, indirect mention of 'The Quit India Movement', 1942 through the happenings in the lives of two minor functionaries in the novel. The novel creates a society marked by segregation of communities, discrimination against Indians, servility among the rich and well set people. We also come to know all movements launched by Gandhi to arouse and uplift the people. Gandhi's message cuts across simplistic, sociological, political or spiritual formulations. There are earnest, ceaseless campaign against the evils of drinking, meat eating and getting vaccinated against diseases. 'This Time of Morning' is set in post Independence India and catches the dilemma of a country passing through the birth pangs of evolution. All canons of decency and decorum are
overthrown in the unscrupulous hunt for power. Men of vision, such as Kailas Vrind, Abdul Rahman and Prakash Shukla, seem to be pushed to a corner while those with a ruthless approach to problem move to the centre of the stage. Condoning of such end-oriented people with not-so-clean hands right at the peak of the era of Nehruvian idealism is a part of the post Independence political history. 'Storm in Chandigarh' focuses the bewilderment of a nation sandwiched between a dying generation and the confused youths. The old leader's feeling of withdrawal and young generation's feelings as let's get on with it"

"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."\textsuperscript{30}

'The Day in Shadow' depicts post-Nehru scene with more fever than calm in Delhi. The fissiparous forces splitting the nation's unity and strength, slogan-mongering, the newest catch-word socialism and the growing, struggling middle class. 'A situation in New Delhi', in its capturing of the desperation and the
urgency of the situation, it suggests the immediate pre and post-emergency political scene. The government was trying to cover the mute agony of the people and not doing anything to lesson it. There was a general drift in the direction of more controls over newspapers, films, books and so on. Through a brutal show of strength on the bodies of those who dare to raise their voice against the apathy of the government, the authorities suppressed all dissent and opposition of the common people. The novel presents graphically the indifference of the western countries to a nascent democracy. This novel truthfully captures the western attitude to democracies in the Third World, especially India, the refusal to think a new, to have a close look at the situation, to help where help was needed. Taking it for granted that the democratic experiment would fail in the poly religious, multi cultural and pluralistic society in India they prophesied chaos instead of supporting. 'Rich Like Us' describes the period of one month after the declaration of the Emergency, the sea-change which the leaders, their means, sense of ends and also the institution have undergone. The emergency in all its political and human fall out is accurately described, trade unions crushed, news
blacked out, bureaucracy politicized, in short the silence of suspended animation has descended on the nation. Delegations of teachers, lawyers, school children, entrepreneurs and other pass through the motion of praising the leader for timely wisdom. The novel faithfully records quite a few of the development historically set in motion by them (Mrs. Indira Gandhi and her son Sanjay Gandhi) the family planning and afforestation drives, the move for Japanese collaboration in the small car project etc. The novel also deals with-

"Attempts to foist family rule, P.M. s designs to make herself President and to bring her son to power by the backdoor, violation of all norms in making the PMs son an entrepreneur overnight government arranged rallies to hail the promulgation of Emergency and so on J.P's. arrest for his anti-government activities his, incarceration under Emergency provisions, his deteriorating health all historically verifiable facts."\(^{31}\)

The repeated references to Gandhi in the novel are obviously meant to highlight the sea change in the
scenario. Novels of Sahgal abound in both overt and covert indictment of many ill-founded, ignorant and superstitious beliefs by linking the plight of their protagonists with these inhibiting convictions. Sahgal's 'Rich Like Us' is a case in point. Sahgal's next novel 'Plans for Departure' is a woman's story facing identity crisis Ana Hansen is the second female foreigner in her novels after Rose in 'Rich Like Us'. She visits India in search of identity. She wants to reach out to the world as a means to reaching out to her. Her priority in life is freedom. She has a will to stand on her own. She is a woman of conviction. She, though a foreigner, praises the freedom fighter. She finds similarity between herself and these brave fighters. These freedom fighters have to challenge all oppressive forces against their country where as she has challenged and keeps challenging all oppositions to her personal freedom. She understands the language of freedom so well that though she does not know English well she can sympathises with the cause of Tilak and Khudiram, Jasbir Jain rightly remarks-

"Anna's travels are part of her quest for freedom and meaning"32
Sahgal recognises women-power but is aware of the fact that in Indian society personality and identity is a luxury for most of the women. Indian society still does not accept women as equals. But the novel 'Plans for Departure' presents-

"A whole new look at women—not as the property of father, husband or son, and dependent on their bounty but as valuable human material to be brought to full flower and full participation in her life and events."\(^{33}\)

Her next novel 'Mistaken Identity' written in the backdrop of India's struggle for freedom has only one married couple i.e. Bhushan Singh's mother and father. There is no mutual interest, no common ideas to share between this couple. His father the Raja keeps looking for greener pastures and has ceased to exist for his wife after his third marriage. Rani's dreams and desires lie buried in the innermost recesses of her heart until she meets comrade Yusuf we find great power of endurance in most of Sahgal's women. It is only, when their patience is taxed too long that they dare to rebel. From her first novel to her latest novel her women are becoming stronger and stronger. Her earlier creations
find it difficult to break the binding shackles of stifling relationships, but they are certainly not weaker women. If they stick to their homes it is because they believe in the sanctity of marriage and not because they are afraid to lose the security it seems to provide. In her latest novel 'Lesser Breeds' Sahgal describes a tumultuous century of pre and post independence India; Atrocities over the lesser breeds i.e. Indians in a heart touching manner.

Sahgal explores the possibility that non-violence was the fantasy of one man which may or may not have worked. The protagonist Nurullah propounds the view that non-violence made little difference to the fortunes of the nation. But as the action in the latter half of the book shifts to America, Sahgal makes us aware of the fact that Gandhi's ideology of non-violence and non-cooperation affected the life of individuals and communities the world over. The novel deals with the bitter issues such as partition of India and also unveils harshness and unpleasantness in prevailing sacrosanct-ideologies- non-violence and religious fundamentalism legacies we grapple with till today.

Proving to be social barometer, all her novels deal with every niche and corner of the society. Indian who
are unaccustomed to think for themselves and move out of the grooves of tradition got accustomed to accepting blindly whatever is around them be that the insensitivity of husband or the corruption of a chief minister as their destiny. This in activeness, passivity, apathy and unconcern is the root cause of the slow pace of progress. Vishal in 'Storm in Chandigarh' feels that the worst part of the tragedy in Chandigarh was the apathy of the people. The actual problem was not even that there was a crisis, but that people now took it for granted.

Sahgal skillfully portrays the elite mass dynamics. Sohanlal, the idealized Gandhian in 'A Time to be Happy' takes to politics as a mission. He has no other identity, no marks of distinction from the masses. The narrator and Maya in the same novel turn their backs on power and money to lead a life of dedication and service to the masses. Sanad, too towards the end of the novel, decides to efface his anglicized background and strive towards greater involvement with the people. Leaders like Kailas Vrind, Abdul Rahman and Prakash Shukla in 'This Time of Morning' realize that their responsibility as public men is to check and divert popular aspirations in proper channels rather than let
them to carried over in the current. They take their role like that of a parent in relation to their children with the masses. While Gayan Singh in 'Storm in Chandigarh' is another study in distorted elite-mass dynamics. He is the self-styled spokesman of the people. He exploits their helplessness. It is ironic that while such leaders carry the day, men like Harpal Singh with humanism, secularism and Gandhian values fail to make an impact. It is in Usman and Rishad in 'A Situation in New Delhi' that Sahgal presents the positive aspects of her view of the elite-mass give-and-take. 'The Cabinet Intellectuals' believe in division of the masses into the Poor and Small' against the 'Rich and the Big'. But Usman and Rishad go to the roots of the malady which afflicts the people. They go to the humblest constituent of the masses, to stir to action. Sahgal's main concern is the ultimate benefit of the human being and has an intense faith in the human being. Humanitarianism has got special consideration in her novels. She firmly believes that material progress can not be a substitute for the individual instinct to realize itself in a free environment. There is urgent need for change.

"We are urgently in need of revolution both social and economic. It is so terrible and
crucial significance what kind of human material leads this revolution and in what manner."³⁴

Revolution begins with oneself. It is only through re-evaluation of what is the desirable virtue that a code of conduct can be framed for these critical times when the world is at the threshold of immense changes. If the inert masses of people do not realize their power that they are their own master, they can change their destiny and the destiny of the nation, the selfish, cruel, and cunning among them would dominate and try to overpower the nation in their own way. Only sincere and responsible action can contribute to nation's progress. She focuses on man-both as an individual and as a social being. She integrates individual as well as social-psychology and reflects its working in both personal and public action. She dreams India as a self sufficient strong nation capable of fulfilling the needs of its people otherwise we do not deserve the independence we won. She authentically portrays all ups and down in the country after independence and also describes the progress the nation has achieved and the obstacles that came while walking ahead on the path of progress. She says -
"In 1947 we were new on the world stage and somewhat starry eyed. We are of age now and the only thing we have to ensure reference others is our capacity to defend ourselves. Independence has no other meaning."

Overall in her novels, Nayantara Sahgal creates a picture of an entire society a political system or mankind as a whole embracing the multiplicity of the contemporary scene with its economic, social cultural and governmental aspects.
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