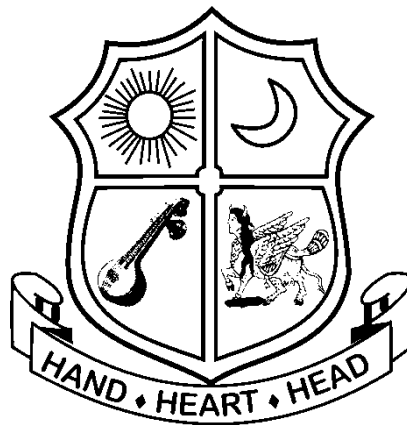


**The Pestilential Effects of Marriage and the Persistent
Endurance of Women in their Social Context:
A Study in the Select Novels of Nayantara Sahgal**

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Chapter - 5

Summation

Indian Literature in English has travelled a long way to achieve its present glory and grandeur. At present, a number of women writers through their writings offer penetrative insight into the complex issues of life. The fictional concerns of these women writers analyse the world of women and their sufferings as victims of male hegemony. They also express social, economic and political upheavals in Indian society. Among these women writers Shobha De, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and Nayantara Sahgal earn a separate space for their particular attention towards psychological insight and existential concerns. These new generation of writers talk about the self-realisation of women. The high class, educated, sensible women become the protagonists in their novels.

Women writers present in their novels the new woman who is assertive and self-willed, searching to discover her true self. Identity is a state of mind that is granted by our interaction with fellow beings in society and also by our acceptance in society. Earlier, a woman sought her identity in the roles of a wife, mother and daughter. She accepted this identity willingly. But now time has changed and she starts to reject this relational identity. She is able to understand the duplicity of this imposition on her by society so that she may restrain herself as a being. And now she wants to stand on her feet as a full human being, equal to man in society. She does not want to be known as someone's daughter, wife or mother rather, she seeks separation from these relations and wants to show her individuality. She also does not like the support of a man in this creation of her

own identity. And this quest makes her revolt against the traditional image of the Indian woman in words and deeds.

There are several challenges that an Indian writer faces while articulating the native sensibility in a foreign language. The emotions should be expressed in a language alien to Indian idioms and cultural connotations. But Sahgal's skill of organisation, combined with the constructive power, has helped her to give the readers the best. Sahgal employs a naturalistic and realistic style in her novels. The hardcore realities of day today life are presented with remarkable authenticity.

Sahgal, a prominent Indian English woman novelist, through her portrayal of variegated female characters and dramatisation of conflicting situations, dichotomies, marital tensions and domestic traumas, undertakes the quest for female identity in her fictional works. The problem is significant in that she is not only a sensitive woman artist writing in India today, gifted with keen observation and an artistic imagination, but has also been subjected to these problems in her own life, thus lending the quest theme a peculiar note of authenticity and immediacy.

Sahgal blends two sensibilities in her works – the sensibility of an artist and the sensibility of a humanist. As a humanist, she is for an unfettered freedom and pleads for the marital morality, based on mutual trust, consideration, generosity and absence of pretence and self-centredness. As an artist, she has great respect for the affirmative values of life.

Sahgal's novels delve into a plethora of themes ranging from personal dilemma, exploitation of women, fulfilment and frustrations of protagonists to the political upheavals that India has experienced since Independence. The boldness and simplicity in writing is the remarkable quality of the author. A reading of any of Sahgal's novel instantly draws a pen picture before the reader. The characters are not portrayed in isolation but in association with the social milieu as well as the historical background. The patriotic feelings of the author and her concern for the people of the country are seen in all her novels. Through the course of this thesis, the personal agony of married women is analysed and how Sahgal handles their problems is also discussed.

Sahgal's critical acumen and imaginative sensibility have helped her transform the landmark events and happenings in the country into an oeuvre of widely acclaimed novels. The nurturing influence of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru's philosophies are the underlying thoughts in her novels. Literary corpus encapsulates the realities of the bygone era with scrupulous reality. There is an astounding sense of equilibrium with which the author gives her insight into various issues like gender inequality, political occurring and the social change which act as the catalyst of such phenomena. The writings of Sahgal often highlight her role as the vanguard of society as she is vigilant of the political practices and injustice prevalent in the contemporary society.

Sahgal is hailed chiefly as a political novelist. The national consciousness of Sahgal is evident in the choice of the socio-political issues of the particular era and its impact on individuals which forms the crux of every

novel. *A Time to be Happy* opens with the dawn of Independence, *Storm in Chandigarh* deals with the violence due to the bifurcation of the Punjab and Haryana with Chandigarh as the common capital, *Rich Like Us* delineates the Emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi and its effects on various classes of people. In *The Day in Shadow*, the gruesome scars of partition and how it has transformed Som to think that assets and wealth will ensure social security and status, is focused upon. In the mad pursuit of wealth he forgets to show love and concern to his wife and children.

This deep-rooted political consciousness of Sahgal makes her the only political Indian woman novelist today. Her novels emphasise the basic fact that politicians and individuals are interdependent and they greatly influence each other. Sahgal strongly believes that it is the conscious moral obligation of all right thinking people to protest against injustice and wrong. The autobiographical element once again comes uppermost when Sahgal's heroines are seen rebelling against established social inequalities and Hindu ambivalence. Sahgal's literary achievement lies in her ability to transmute the social, historical and political forces of her time into the organic structure of the novel.

In each novel, Sahgal invites the attention of the readers to the burning issues of that particular period, thereby revealing the author's national consciousness and commitment. Along with political theme, patriarchy and its derisive impact on the life of men and women are discussed. They are also victimised, because, they internalise the notions of a husband and wife so much

that, they lose the capacity to introspect and question the system and finally are abandoned by the family.

Sahgal's women characters are women of substance who raise cudgels against the stupefying cultural impediments that stunt the development of their individuality. The most inspiring aspect of her characters is that though they appear to be victims in the beginning of every novel, they gradually chart out strategies to release themselves from hostile circumstances. They are never portrayed as hapless victims who resign to fate but as creators of their own destiny. They handle major issues without raising a hue or cry. People around them are never led to know the torments they undergo. They are portrayed as the initiators of silent revolutions which bring an attitudinal change in the society. The enormity of the problem they encounter does not dampen their spirits.

The women protagonists of Sahgal's earlier phase of writing are not domineering. The later phase of her creations portray women who are hesitant initially but take sure but steady steps towards self-realisation and refuse to confine them to the norms of the patriarchy. In a society which is, and was, under the total control of men, few women including Sahgal have been successful in seeking an identity for themselves.

Family is more or less a universal institution where marriage is its beginning. Marriage is a union between man and woman, from the pre-historic period to the present. It is a backbone for human regeneration but it is also enforced as a social rule in some societies. Among Hindus, marriage is a sacrament that indicates a long lasting bond between husband and wife.

Invariably marriage brings not only two individuals together but also families and two societies together. It aims at social solidarity and contributes to emotional and intellectual inter-stimulation of the partners. It provides economic cooperation and leads to the establishment of the family.

On the contrary, in course of time, man uses marriage as a device to get woman under his control. He totally neglects woman and treats her as a partner for sex and child-bearing. Man has failed to perceive the very purpose behind life. He feels that his existence is for enslaving woman and for marital relationship. The masculine autonomy is imposed on women in the name of marriage curtailing her individuality and selfhood. Sahgal contrasts such male chauvinistic men with a new creed of men, namely, Vishal Dubey, Raj, Rakesh and Ravi Kachru who are liberal in their outlook and strive to establish gender equality. They give women the due concern and love and help them grow as individuals rather than suppress and oppress them by imposing traditions. In such a situation, Sahgal's novels come out with a solution to support and to propagate women's liberation that unfolds the feminist position and elevates the consciousness and critique of society.

The novels such as *A Time to be Happy*, *This Time of Morning*, *Storm in Chandigarh*, *The Day in Shadow* and *Rich Like Us* deal with woman's individual freedom before and after marriage. This is the central motif in all her works. Maya in *A Time to be Happy* yearns to be a free bird from marital bondages as her traditional upbringing makes her married to the Anglicised Harish.

Sahgal's first novel *A Time to be Happy* is set in the immediate pre and post-independent period, and deals with themes which are taken up by Sahgal in her later novels also. Some of these are those which Indian writers in English cannot avoid, namely the East-West encounter, the impact of English or Western education, the burning desire for identity and roots, marriage and Hinduism. In the novel the changes which independence has brought about affects the characters in different ways. Two of Sahgal's favourite themes, that of an identity, and of man-woman relationships emerge in the novel.

The personal conflict which is resolved in the lives of Sanad and Kusum and Harish and Maya, are symbolic of a wider and bigger synthesis in the political history of the nation. It does not matter whether the new Government lays more stress on the development of the heavy industry, or the cottage industry. The fact is that both are now a part of independent India and they could co-exist happily.

In *This Time of Morning*, Nita and Rashmi are projected as women who have the urge to achieve freedom and want to lead a more comfortable life. But the people around them fail to recognise their feelings and in the due course, self-respect is completely denied and are treated as mere slaves. Their husbands expect them to remain grateful for providing food and shelter. Rashmi emerges as a new woman and announces her parents that she wishes to opt for divorce.

In *The Day in Shadow* (1971), which Sahgal has called her most "personal" novel, the autobiographical element is uppermost. As a divorcee, a married Indian woman has no social status, much less legal status. The struggle

of a woman trying to establish her identity apart from her husband and family is unacceptable in society, especially Hindu society. Here Raj Garg, a Christian convert, comes to Simrit's aid and provides her the moral support that she needs. The novel is set in Delhi and close to the seat of power and justice. The inability of the law courts to translate legal theory into action is vividly brought about by Sahgal in the novel. On the political scenario it depicts the rise of politicians such as Sumer Singh, who are inclined towards super powers for collaboration and not to non-alignment for self-sufficiency.

Sahgal's most famous and award-winning book *Rich Like Us* reveals that the recurrent themes discussed in Sahgal's earlier novels reach their logical and realistic climax in this novel. Maturity of technique and characterisation and an experiment with language, all add to the success of the novel. Sahgal holds the view that the oppression of women in society has not changed, by comparing the Sati committed by Sonali's great-grandmother to the cold-blooded murder of Rose, euphemistically labeled suicide, no questions are asked or answered.

One of the most distinguishing features of Sahgal is that she is able to delineate Indian and foreign characters with immaculate perfection. This is because of her experience of living abroad and living in Allahabad which was the centre of the freedom movement. It also displays her skill in keenly observing people and recreating them in her novels, thereby giving them a new life in her novels. The characters in real life face too many impediments but when they are recreated in the novels they come up with solutions to problems which their real counterparts could not. For example, Simrit in *The Day in Shadow* is a replica of Sahgal who is granted the liberty of starting a new life

with Raj with societal sanction which was delayed in Sahgal's life due to various reasons. Thus, she is able to liberate her characters from the bondages which are like clips to the wings of a bird and set the birds free in the sky.

Sahgal views self awareness as a two way process retiring not only from the social circumstances conducive to it but also the sensitivity and fineness of individual sensibility in her two novels *Storm in Chandigarh* and *The Day in Shadow*. Sahgal employs women protagonists, in the novels, Saroj and Simrit, as not wage earners or career women but mainly as married women-wives and mothers. It is in these situations that the women characters wish to experience freedom and to become aware of themselves as individuals and to strive to be accepted as equals. But when all their efforts end up in vain they encounter marriage as an obstacle for their freedom and creativity.

Sahgal presents her protagonists Saroj and Simrit in a realistic manner drawing from her own understanding and experience of bitterness of exploitation and denial of justice by man and society. Saroj and Simrit are parallel in many ways. They are unable to find reciprocal involvement in their marriage. Their husbands are not only from different cultural background but they are different kind of persons altogether.

Storm in Chandigarh and *The Day in Shadow* of Sahgal present very authentically and specifically the sad plight of women in the male dominated society. The female protagonists – Saroj and Simrit of these novels experience conflict, frustration, long drawn period of stress and bitterness in the prison

house of loveless marriage. The novels also show how the protagonists nurture through their bitter experiences and eventually find a stable identity of their own.

Saroj of *Storm in Chandigarh* wants emotion to overflow into everyday life and live in the act of parenthood, in the walk of an evening and in the touch without sexual significance. She cries remembering her husband who is unable to give emotional freedom to her and similarly Simrit in *The Day in Shadow* longs for communication and understanding. But she is unable to find a place for her between the business of Som's over ambition and cry for money. She reaches the breaking point when Som and Vetter finalise to make a new deal arrangement, which indicates Som's inhuman activity.

Inder and Som are husbands known for greed, pride and prejudice. They lack continuity and warmth with their wives. So Saroj and Simrit feel isolated both physically and mentally within their married life. Such a kind of incompleteness in life makes them think of another man for their complete man-woman relationship. But those extramarital relationships are forbidden in the soil of India and in the hearts of Indian men too. Inder and Som get angry when Saroj holds hands with Vishal and Simrit with Raj. The heroines are morally supported by Vishal and Raj, whereas their own husbands are condemned and annoyed. Therefore, marriage which is seen as a tradition for man-woman relationship cannot provide the infrastructure necessary for woman's individual growth.

Alienation resulting from lack of communication and mutual infidelity, becomes the theme of *Storm in Chandigarh* whereas *The Day in Shadow* shows

how lack of understanding and inability to strike a sympathetic chord in marital relationship ultimately lead to divorce. The female protagonists of both the novels are striving hard for constructive and meaningful relationship with their men demanding mutual understanding and involvement. Having failed in their attempts as liberated women, they free themselves from their bitter survival to better survival.

The concept of individual freedom continues to be the central concern of the novelist in most of her novels. That is why her heroines, so deeply and loyally rooted in Indian culture, are portrayed to be struggling for freedom and trying to assert their individuality in their own right. These elements of character can be traced in the female protagonists: Saroj and Simrit. Vishal and Raj, intellectually, superior to the rest of the characters, have a 'Herculean task' to perform because Saroj and Simrit are not only individuals, they are the symbol of suffering and sacrifice.

It is significant to note that, both Saroj and Simrit try their best to be good wives as long as their marriages last and never take the conventional family structure lightly. It is only circumstances beyond their control that make them quit their respective households. Both of them stand for the emerging women of India who refuse to remain silent and submissive like conventional 'pativrates' in marriage. Breaking the shackles of hapless marriage, they prefer to live a life with a more compassionate person who can provide them with understanding, love and warmth of companionship and help them start life afresh.

Vishal in *Storm in Chandigarh* and Raj in *The Day in Shadow* are instrumental in giving new directions to Saroj and Simrit, showing them the way to live life meaningfully. Apart from being down-to-earth, practical and understanding human beings, they have the extraordinary 'capacity to counsel patience'. These men are strikingly similar – intelligent, articulate, compassionate, committed to preserving the values of justice and moderation.

Sahgal's writing has the unique feature of establishing a synthesis between tradition and modernity. Tradition is a repository of both good and evil and its use and abuse should be separated from tradition itself. Similarly, the word 'modern' does not imply that it is all good. It only means the latest. These are not unitary concepts but have to be studied in relation to the tensions, contradictions, stress and hurdles. Sahgal has a remarkable skill in juxtaposing the traditions of the Indian society and how these have reappeared in a new form. For instance, the practice of Sati denied the right to live after the death of her husband. In the novel *The Day in Shadow*, Som punishes Simrit with financial burden so that she is driven mad by penury and proves that it is impossible for a woman to live without the support of a man. But her heroine shows the courage of a modern woman and does not succumb to the modern version of Sati.

The conflict between tradition and modernity can be witnessed in literature. There are a few writers who are traditional in their approach like Raja Rao whereas Mulk Raj Anand is anti traditional in his approach. But Sahgal has traced a middle path, thereby accepting the composite character of the Indian tradition and also allowing maximum freedom. It is understood that she is not an extreme feminist who decries the established norms of the society but a

committed writer who shows the society the errors that have crept into the system and how it can be mended through her writing.

It is found that Sahgal advocates harmonious relationships and individual liberties in her novels. Marriage is an agreement of partnership based on respect and consideration. Man-woman relationship should be devoid of all pretence and firmly rooted in honesty and truth. Then only matrimonial bond can be strengthened and no incidents of the past destroy the future. The husbands must understand the individuality of their wives and respect their feelings. For women's liberation movement to take place in India, their education should bring about rational and civilised changes.

Husband-wife relationship from the social, political and cultural point of view and the transitions involved is the focus of the author. Sahgal has dealt with bigamous marriage in all the select novels. It is found that the first wives are uneducated and simple whereas the second wives are modern and educated. They set the standards; they live in the same house, but mark their territories. Under such a divide and rule regime, it is the first wife who usually bears the brunt as she is equated to an obsolete article of less importance and never given the consideration of a human being. It is then that they show their emotional balance or imbalance.

Mona, the first wife of Ram breaks down at his second and third choices. Her emotional breakdown does not imply that she is timid or docile as it is natural for any human being to feel desperate when the unexpected happens in one's life. She can be called a failure had she decided to take her rival's life in

order to make her life secure. But Mona does not resort to this type of measure. She accepts the hard realities and understands how to proceed further in life. She is able to empathise with Rose when Ram finds Marcella to be a better choice. They understand their own emotions as well as the emotions of the fellow sufferers. Thus, a great number of married women who undergo moments of excruciating pain after marriage are found in Sahgal's novels.

Characters in Sahgal's novels are people from the cosmopolitan cities. In her wide canvas, politics forms the background and people leading very sophisticated life from the outward appearance are presented, but their inner traumas and pangs after marriage are portrayed in a heart-rending manner by the author. Sonali Ranade is one such character but the traumatic experiences of an I.A.S. officer are narrated with dexterity. The political scenario of that particular period is reflected with the deftness of a political columnist. But the author has taken enough care to compartmentalise politics and personal issues so that there is no collision or confusion.

Sahgal's novels are instrumental in revealing the male superiority and the wretched condition of women due to the social norms framed by men for men. Women always have to play second fiddle to men. If women try to relieve themselves from the yoke of the injustice meted out to them by men in any form, may be through a divorce, they are branded as the transgressors of the social code. This is the case of Simrit and the author. They find their partners to be devoid of love, concern and respect due to the wife. Hence, they decide to part ways. But Simrit's condition is so pathetic as Som wants to penalise his wife

and teaches her a lesson though she is not his wife anymore. He wants to wreak havoc in her life.

Simrit's action is justified as it is very explicit from the actions of Som. His chauvinism is seen when he does not let Simrit to decide anything in her life. She should not punish a cook for his drunkenness. Moreover, he crushes her individuality totally and does not allow her to pursue her interest in writing, but Raj nurtures the talent in her. Sahgal is not against the institution of marriage, but the changes that should be brought in the mindset of men are insisted upon, through her characters. The understanding that should essentially dawn on all men is that marriage is not a bond of servitude for women rather it is an unbreakable agreement to help each other grow with mutual love and support. All the novels of Sahgal very clearly delineate the disturbances caused in the lives of men and women when there is lack of understanding and love in marriage and ends with a new bond.

It is found that in each novel, men use different weapons to subjugate women. In *Rich Like Us*, the patriarchal practices are deeply rooted in the myths and legends. When Rose asks for divorce, Ram quotes the scriptures and says that the Hindu marriage is a sacrament. Sahgal asserts that the fundamental value of fidelity is violated and is justified by quoting the scriptures for selfish ends.

Similarly in *The Day in Shadow* Som uses the weapon of wealth to silence Simrit. At home she only existed and never had her say in any matter. It is because Som provided her with all the luxuries and he expected her to provide

comfort in bed and serve as a machine for producing babies. When Simrit refuses to take this role with humility, he plans to enslave her for life by imposing the tax burden. Simrit longs for the peace and liberty which she enjoyed at her parental home. She is attracted by the flashy life which Som shows her. But very quickly she perceives that the mirth and colour of this life is only superficial and it can never provide her eternal happiness.

Sahgal belongs to a new class of Indian women writers who have expressed the innermost desires and wishes of the modern woman. The women of the twentieth century are quite different from their counterparts of the earlier centuries. They are brought up in the same conservative environs like the women of the earlier centuries. But the difference in them is their strong determination, courage and sense of freedom, which helps them emerge independently both at social and economical level.

Sahgal's writings are intended to reveal the emotional hurt and pangs the womenfolk suffer due to the arrogance and cynicism of the menfolk. The loneliness, frustration and the rebellious spirit are the consequences of the stressful relationships and it often results in an emotional void. But they never succumb to such circumstances. Instead they evolve into stronger and successful individuals.

A study of Sahgal's novels is a journey towards the development of women's emancipation all over the world and especially in India. It is not just a survey but an introspection on the co-relation between the preached values and what is practised. She brings out the irony through several instances in her

novel. In the twentieth century, there is propaganda that man regards woman as his better half or his equal. But even in domestic matters women are not given the liberty to decide on several issues. Simrit in *The Day in Shadow* punishes the cook for his drunkenness but he is reinstated by Som. This is not fictitious reality, it is a gross reality of every Indian household. There is just a variance in the degree. Some wives have to consult their husbands while some should wait for orders and there are a few others who are given the authority to run the house. All such issues, the change in the mind set of the society and the anticipated changes which would help a harmonious marital relationship are all touched upon in the select study of the novels.

Through the novels selected for study the courage and endurance displayed by the characters and sometimes the lack of it, in various circumstances in life are evaluated. In each novel, there is a fine blend of characters who are under the control of their husbands and a few others who protest against them, thereby providing a perfect contrast in characterisation. For example, the narrator's mother and Lakshmi in *A Time to be Happy*, Mira and Nita in *This Time of Morning*, Rose and Mona in *Rich Like Us* are the characters who do not have the courage to speak loudly against their husbands but the women characters like Saroj in *Storm in Chandigarh*, Simrit in *The Day in Shadow* and Sonali in *Rich Like Us* are not portrayed as super humans but as women who fall upon the thorns of life and bleed but recover very soon to start life afresh thereby proving their endurance and adaptability.

In *The Day in Shadow* there is an autobiographical similarity between Simrit and her creator. Both are victims of a bad marriage but are courageous enough to break the bonds that are stifling and overcome all stumbling blocks that they come across in life. Sahgal and her creation Simrit are heavily burdened with taxes, which make their life utterly miserable but finally they resort to writing which provides both mental and financial relief. There are characters like Som, Moolchand and Vetter who represent the chauvinism of the patriarchal tradition. Raj is a liberal thinker with Christian ideologies and believes in the upliftment of women. He helps Simrit revive her writing and stands by her own at the most crucial moments in her life.

A more pitiable and resentful phase of a woman's marginalisation begins after her marriage. She is never recognised as an individual, an equal and a human being with her own needs and desires. She is usually seen as an object providing sexual pleasure to man, an asset as a decoration piece and a nursemaid to bring up the children and to shoulder all the responsibilities of the household. Her feelings and desires are completely ignored in marriage, while for man marriage means complete gratification on all fronts. Men are free to indulge in extramarital relations without experiencing any sense of guilt while he can persecute his wife to any extent on mere suspicion of an infidelity. Sahgal exposes the hypocrisy, meanness and double standards of men in her novels.

A married woman often feels greater loneliness than a single woman because her loneliness springs from the emotional injuries and sometimes physical injuries as well which she suffers at the hands of her husband. As a

result woman often feels suffocated and deprived in marriage. Even motherhood, which is seen as the final fulfilment of a woman and often craved for by woman, becomes a stifling factor in a woman's life. Children, instead of being the symbol of love between the parents, are often seen by husbands as instruments of gaining power over wives, because bringing up children makes women economically more vulnerable and emotionally more dependent on men.

Juxtaposition and symbolism are the best techniques devised by Sahgal which can be seen in *Rich Like Us*. This is done by contrasting the past with the present and historical evidences from the past in the form of letters to the editors of various newspapers. Sonali quotes the Calcutta Gazette of December 7, 1829 which applauds Lord William Benedict for his efforts in abolishing Sati. She discovers another instance in the Bombay Courier dated December 29, 1929. Such an evidence from the past also reveals the authenticity of Sahgal's writings. A conversation between Sonali and her father also narrates how his mother was forced to jump into the funeral pyre of her husband. The writer thoroughly knows the history of her motherland and gives the reader an insight into the past and the present of the nation.

Sahgal's family background, her western education, her rich parental tradition of national commitment are some of the factors that contribute a great deal to the selective style, techniques and the theme of her writings. Her first-hand intimate knowledge of upper class people, their power and position succeed in presenting a highly complex picture of the upper class society.

Sahgal has matured into a seasoned writer of autobiographical fiction after having tried her hand successfully at writing realistic, candid, but emotionally surcharged autobiographies. Her writing facilitates the readers to peep into the innermost recesses of her creative mind and then one comes to know what has conditioned, moulded and formulated her way of thinking. Sahgal is a creative writer, who aims at an artistic self-expression. In an autobiography there is no compulsion to see events enacted to their end, or to build up logical connections between happenings, or for that matter, to delve into the psychology of motive as there is in the fictional form. An event or an incident is included because it becomes valuable or enjoyable. At the same time there are certain limitations. It is also not possible to explore and discuss certain areas of personal life with the degree of freedom which may be possible in a work of fiction. The whole truth cannot be told due to various - social and personal considerations.

There is also a change in the narrative from the first person to third person in order to help the reader understand the characters well. The purpose of using the first person by the author is to make an in depth study of a character's emotions and mind, and at the same time the third person's narrative technique helps the author to judge the character from an objective point of view. She alternatively used both these narrative technique according to the needs of the occasion. A very unique factor about Sahgal's style of writing is that she never forces a formal closure for the problems in the relationships thus making the novels open-ended. This technique actually makes the readers think about the changes that have to be brought about in society to establish peace and harmony.

Thus, Sahgal portrays the suffering and agony of women which results from uneven power-division in marriage, privileging one sex all the time and marginalising the other. After having suffered in marriage which denies them any right to be an equal, independent individual, most of Sahgal's women decide to break the bond of marriage. They decide to live on their own to fulfil the needs of their own self. Sahgal reveals the suffering caused by the oppression of men. The call is for recognition of woman as an equally important partner in marriage or in any other relationship. Her needs, her freedom, her personality, her individuality should be equally valued. The existing set up with its uneven power division will continue to bring suffering to women. And as long as one half of humanity suffers we cannot hope for a better world.

Sahgal envisions a world which should be based on equality, sharing and harmony between the two sexes, where the needs, the functions, the virtues of women are valued equally along with those of men. Her vision thus is identical with that of feminists in the eighties like Marilyn French, Dale spender, Hynne Segal who also ask for a world built on equality of sexes, where male and female are valued equally, and act as complementary to each other, a world built on sharing and harmony.

Sahgal views marriage as neither a promotion nor an advancement in life. It is just a trap in which every modern woman gets bound and aspires to rage against it. Saroj and Simrit are not fictional characters, but they are the representatives of the married women in the world. Sahgal feels the sufferings

and bitterness from her first-hand knowledge that rages against the trap of marital relationships through her women characters.

The present study makes it very clear that Sahgal, who is modern and liberal in outlook, believes in new humanism and a new morality, according to which a woman is not to be taken as a mere toy, an object of lust and momentary pleasure, but man's equal and honoured partner. Sahgal investigates the problem and issues that are likely to occur between husband and wife especially in an Indian society. Not only she exposes the recurrent hardships a married woman faces but also she gives the solutions to solve the problems. Some of the solutions are decent human relations do not happen by luck or chance, but are cultivated with care, time, interest and above all truth to the maximum extent. Sahgal does not expect perfection because men and women have their own limitations. She states that communication is the powerful tool to bind human relations together and it can break the barriers.

While summing up, it seems that Sahgal believes in freedom at all levels and the doctrine of peaceful existence. Her concept of freedom is not merely political. It includes the full expression of one's personality and discovering one's true identity. Her protagonists show faith in an individual capacity to communicate and reach others through debate and discussion. She has a profound conviction that all progress, whether social, political or economic, is possible only in an atmosphere of freedom. She projects immense possibilities of life for both personal as well as political crises. Sahgal wishes the generation to come out of the shackles of bondage to the air of freedom and freshness, to break off the rules and regulations and the laws that make people fear each other.

By bringing to the forefront the struggle for liberty, equality, compatibility and self-reliance, Sahgal proves her credentials as an impressive writer. Her women characters try to give up their intolerably subservient role to vindicate their independence and self-respect and readjust themselves to their new role with dignity and responsibility.

It is evident that there has been a visible progression in the vision of the novelist in that the female protagonists in the earlier novels have been vaguely craving for freedom, whereas in the later novels, they come out of the shackles of bondage in their struggle to regain their self-abnegated identity. It is also noted that only in Sahgal's early novels does society emerge as a force while in her recent novels, the individuals seem to withstand the social pressures.

Through the present study it is revealed that Sahgal projects, injustice towards married women in this society. Women in all the select novels seem to have the urge for freedom and liberation. As men use different types of weapon, some women like Maya and Nita fail to emerge out of the bondage. But women in the recent novels struggle hard and refuse to remain silent and submissive. In each novel, Sahgal's attack is not against marriage but against the inequality that is forced upon women by men using the institution of marriage. Not only does she expose the recurrent hardships a married woman faces but she also gives the solutions to solve the problems.

She advises that being accommodating, adjustable, loyal and understanding, the married life will become more musical and harmonious. Hence, it is evident that all the novels taken for the present study have a vast

scope for further research studies like identity crisis, theme of alienation, conflict between tradition and modernity, East-West encounter, assertion of selfhood, social and political concerns in the novels. Hence, all the novels of Sahgal can also be compared with the novels of Kamala Markandaya, Shashi Deshpande, Anita Desai, Kate Chopin, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Shobha De and Gloria Naylor.

As trenchant defender of human values, Sahgal, in all her novels, pleads for 'enduring comradeship', frank and friendly communication, a compassionate approach in order to untangle the personal and social problems, more particularly the problem of man-woman relationship, Sahgal has eminently succeeded in impressing this idea on the reader's mind.