Chapter V

Aesthetics of Subversion

... verbal discourse is a social phenomenon -- social throughout its entire range and in each and every of its factors, from the sound image to the furthest reaches of abstract meaning.

M.M. Bakhtin

Very few novelists in India can claim the vibrant tradition of active political participation and involvement that Nayantara Sahgal rightly cherishes. Very few politicians or members of highly politicised families respond to their experience through fiction. So reading Nayantara Sahgal's novels give us a unique experience of passing through the workings of a sensitive mind that acts as a crucible combining the social, political and cultural history of Indian society at various stages from pre-independence period to the Emergency period. Focusing on the socio-political confrontations in contemporary India, Sahgal's novels trace two opposing movements. One is a movement in favour of the hegemonic centre and the other is a movement against it that subverts it. This subversive politics resident in her novels is an inevitable reaction to the oppression instituted by the centre.
While the authoritarian, exploitative politics of the imperial regime in the pre-independence period and the corrupt nationalist government that continues the colonial policies and attitudes in new terms in the post-independence period form the power centre, the subversive politics of the freedom movement and a liberal resistance to decadence generate the necessary impetus for opposition. The reverberations of this socio-political confrontation are felt in the cultural realm as well. Growing westernisation and centralisation of power, homogenisation of culture and language, growth of individualism and the nuclear family and the emergence of a general bourgeois perspective are all related to the cultural transformation in postcolonial India. The violence and male dominance within the family and in the larger social context is another concern of Nayantara Sahgal's novels. Analysing this continuing confrontation, Sahgal's novels reveal a pattern of progression in tracing the history of India. The theme reflects itself in the form. The use of irony and fantasy, the employment of double narrators and multiple perspectives and the many voices embedded within the narrative contribute to the subversive vision of Sahgal's novels. It helps her to challenge the existing assumptions and formulate a novel perspective integral to Indian culture.

A crusader for freedom and equality, Sahagl's humanistic vision is very much influenced by the freedom movement. A child of Gandhian India, Sahgal grew up during the heroic age of Indian history, "When India was being reborn from an incarnation of darkness into one of light" (Sahgal, PCC 15). This gave her political life sufficient motivation
necessary for the cultivation of a political culture that engenders idealism and humanism. The supposed journey from darkness to light gave the whole generation of nationalists a sense of direction and the vision of a glorious future. Sahgal writes on this peculiar experience that she had undergone, in her autobiography, *Prison and Chocolate Cake*:

Our growing up was India's growing up into political maturity -- a different kind of political maturity from any that the world had seen before, based on an ideology inspired by self-sacrifice, compassion and peace. The influence of these strange politics weave into our lives a pattern of unique enchantment. (15)

The influence of this liberal humanist ideology inspired by self-sacrifice, compassion and peace forms the central axis of Sahgal's political philosophy and her personality as a writer. The same social commitment and ardent nationalism explain her continuing obsession with Indian history and the nation's journey through the experiences of imperialism, national freedom and the reappearance of authoritarianism. Fictionalising the contemporary history of India Sahgal's novels trace the progressive deterioration of values and idealism in the contemporary society. Exploring the past and recreating the present Sahgal aims at a redefinition of the Indian reality.

During the colonial period the resistance to colonial domination adopted a nationalist perspective. The early years of independence generated great enthusiasm and hope regarding the future of the nation. It is these great expectations that resulted in a sense of betrayal, failure
and the final disillusionment. Nayantara Sahgal's novels share this despair and disillusionment. But this disillusionment seems to be as illusory as the expectation itself. Commenting on a similar problem in African literature, Neil Lazarus argues that the literature of disillusionment, "remained possessed of the illusion that the era of independence marked a revolutionary conjuncture . . . It was this illusion that motivated the intellectual obsession with loss and failure and betrayal in these works . . ." (23). Moreover the "literature of disillusionment" depended heavily on the values and images generated by the colonial discourse. The failure of the nationalist experiment prompts them to question the ideological foundations on which the nationalist movement and the narratives of decolonisation are constructed. Such an analysis brings to light the inter-dependence of the nationalist culture and the colonial culture. Now there is an increasing awareness among intellectuals to redefine the Indian context breaking away from the prejudices of the past. It forms part of the struggle against Western domination in both the discursive and socio-political fields which helps the move towards decolonisation.

The history of postcolonial territories has been to a great extent constructed and dominated by the colonialists as a means of cultural control. In this context Sahgal's novels about the socio-political and cultural history of India gains special significance. Her narratives strive to resist the historical "fictions" constructed by colonial masters and try to subvert the norms instituted by colonial historiography. The narration of history in the postcolonial moment becomes an ideological practice in
this context. The historical and political narratives of Sahgal thus aim at the construction of an alternative view of the society, politics, culture and the problems that beset the nation from an Indian perspective different from the colonial one. It is this subversive vision that differentiates a postcolonial text from its western counterpart. Analysing the points of intersection between postcolonial and postmodern fiction Viney Kirpal in her essay, "What is the Modern Third World Novel?", observes:

The third world novel, rather blends the technical resources of the modern -- the postmodern novel -- "point of view" interior monologue, symbolism, open ended plot, metafiction -- to depict not the private lonely alienated person of modern western literature but the modern third world person who is both an individual and a part of his society and community towards which he has a few explicit obligations. (149)

It is true that postcolonialism and postmodernism share certain thematic concerns and textual strategies. But these thematic concerns and textual strategies are put to widely different uses in postcolonial and postmodern texts. This is because the text reproduces the conditions of its production and it is reflected in the content of the text. Regarding the similarity and dissimilarity of postcolonialism and postmodernism Linda Hutcheon observes in her essay, "'Circling the Downspout of Empire:' Postcolonialism and Post modernism," thus:

Formal issues such as what is called "magic realism," thematic concerns regarding history and marginality, and discursive strategies like irony and allegory are all shared
by both the postmodern and post-colonial, even if the final uses to which each is put may differ. (151)

Linda Hutcheon's argument makes it clear that postcolonial writing establishes its difference through its political stance against colonialism though it shares some of the themes and techniques of postmodernism. So in the final analysis what differentiates postcolonial fiction from a postmodern one is its political stance that aims at the subversion of the colonial approach.

It is this subversive politics that characterises Nayantara Sahgal's fiction. Her novels become a subversive reading of an already existing history. Referring to the European domination in all fields of life including historical discourse, challenging the version of postcolonial history modelled on European master narrative and establishing the fundamental difference between Indian society and culture and the European one, Sahgal makes a perceptive comment on the need to establish the difference of postcolonial agenda. Raj comments in *The Day in Shadow*: "One mass is not like another," . . . "Ours, for instance, has built well under restrained leadership, under good men. It can again. We don't need other people's solutions" (DS 155). Through these words Sahgal is posing the problem of constructing an alternative method of perceiving and solving the problems of postcolonial society different from the established European models.

Nayantara Sahgal's later novels show a break with the illusions and prejudices of the past and an attempt to redefine the Indian reality,
whereas the early novels show the characteristics of the "literature of disillusionment." The disillusionment prompts her to resist the assumptions and practices of the dominant system and to challenge the dominant ideology that conditions and controls the subjects in postcolonial India. While forming part of these forces of resistance, Sahgal's novels intervene in the contemporary discourses of power, reasserting her commitment to the oppressed.

The prevalence of the colonial structure and institutions, even after the colonialists have left, ensure the continuance of the hegemony of colonial ideology. Being an extension of the colonial regime, the nationalist government continues its exploitative politics and authoritarianism. Though in the early years the revolutionary mask was more prominent, its real face began to be exposed later with the waning of early enthusiasm. Imitating the constitution, legal system, civil administrative methodology, education, historical and political discourses, literary movements and even attitudes and prejudices, the postcolonial Indian society ensures the prevalence of the colonial ideology. The operation of the multinational forces and the global scenario with distinct Western dominance in fields like military, politics, economy, culture, science, arts and sports provide the necessary support to this political structure.

The prevalence and continuance of the colonial ideology in the postcolonial period naturally generate resistance. The confrontation between the colonial power structure and the nationalist forces in the
pre-independence period, and the conflict between the nationalist government controlled by the colonial power structure and the neo-colonial powers and the liberal resistance to it by forces within the ruling party and outside it, form part of the dialectic of postcolonial India. But the nationalist resistance to the colonial authority is always ambivalent, the source of which can be traced back to its origin in the colonial discursive practice itself. The paradox of the liberal nationalist resistance as portrayed in Nayantara Sahgal's novels is that it is the source of resistance and yet an entity that represses a total structural transformation. So the dialectical struggle in postcolonial India results in the reproduction of the colonial ideology. Nayantara Sahgal's novels centre around this confrontation over a period of time and traces these developments in the Indian society.

Simrit in *The Day in Shadow* feels "disorganised." She who loves order and beauty excessively find her country "in a bit of a mess, with things not in their places, and not nearly enough of them to go round" (DS 14). Simrit finds no way out to escape from this disordered state. She asks, "Isn't there an Indian way for us to get ahead? Why must we get ahead the way other people have done?" (DS 192). Though the question is not fully answered in the novel, the posing of the question itself is indicative of the intervention that Sahgal tries to make within the contemporary postcolonial power structure.

Simrit's question points to the central preoccupation of the writer. It is posed in almost all the novels by Sahgal. The search for an Indian
The development indicates two important developments, one is their total dissatisfaction with the existing social conditions and second is the need to formulate an alternative structure that could subvert the present decadence. Resistance and subversion naturally signals the presence of a domineering ideology. The prevalence of the colonial power structure and continuance of its hegemony in the various realms even after independence coupled with the increasing intervention of the neo-colonial powers put pressure upon the community to imitate the colonial style of governance. The continuance of the system is reinforced by the extension of the capitalist system to the post-independence period with all its cultural connotations. Corruption, extreme desire for money and power, loss of human values in personal relationships are some of the cultural traits of the kind of "colonial capitalism" that prevails in India.

Commenting on the decadent politics practised in contemporary India, Saghal writes:

Politicians, whatever their political colour, and whatever they piously said, got fat from office. They could never banish the contrasts, never in ten thousand years build an equal society. How could they when they were products of the lot themselves, of caste, of vested interests and stinking old ideas? (SND 67)

Devi's dilemma expresses the disillusionment that she experiences in post-independence India. She finds duplicity everywhere, socialist propaganda on one side and authoritarian practice on the other; Non-violent, humanistic preaching side by side with the violent inhuman
practice. The reenactment of the colonial drama bewilders her. The receding of humanist values cherished by the leaders of the independence struggle create a vacuum in her and the whole tragedy is suggested through the death of Shivraj.

Thus a wholistic view of Sahgal's narratives reveal the portrayal of the emergence of a nation through the postcolonial period with its inherent confrontations. The subversive vision in Sahgal's novels reaches beyond the level of textual strategies and narrative artifacts. The rudimentary matrix of this subversive vision is her involvement with contemporary history and politics. A deep awareness of social transition in contemporary India enables her to present the dialectical conflicts within the postcolonial Indian society. It is true that the sites of this conflict is highly complex as the contrary pulls of confronting ideologies is prevalent in both these opposing forces. The prevalence of multiple interests, divergent ideological positions and opposing cultural preoccupations make this dialectical struggle a really complex one. But these multitudes of confrontations do not blur the fundamental conflict between the dominant colonial power structure and opposition to this hegemonic power led by liberal democrats in the Indian context.

In this power struggle between Nationalism and Colonialism, Sahgal is always on the side of the oppressed, whether it is the female or the colonised. Though her political vision undergoes changes her sympathy for the oppressed remains constant. Sahgal's protagonists often identify themselves with the oppressed and the marginalised.
Sonali, a committed IAS officer in *Rich Like Us*, Visal Dubey the officer in charge of bringing about peace between Punjab and Haryana in *Storm in Chandigarh*, Raj and Simrit in *A Day in Shadow*, Bhushan the young prince in *Mistaken Identity* and Anna Hansen the sensitive Danish lady in *Plans for Departure* are some of them. They try to propagate a philosophy of life that is opposed to the dominant system denying its rules, regulations and norms which are considered to be normal. Trying to subvert the dominant structure in the political as well as personal spheres Sahgal advocates a vision of life that is against all kinds of dominant oppressive systems. For Sahgal writing itself become a method of resistance and a subversive tool against oppression. It carries in its very texture the spirit of liberation, the undercurrent of her writings. Thus the subversive political philosophy becomes another important aspect of the postcoloniality of Sahgal's fiction.

Dominant power operates at various realms in the society including the political, cultural, economic and the intimately personal realms. Filtering even into the mundane activities of life it reveals itself in our attitudes, prejudices, hopes desires and even in the use of language. The oppressive nature of this power that stifles our freedom and the desire for equality creates resistance at various sites resulting in a dialectical interplay of opposites. Operating within the power field of dominant ideology it is this revolt that form part of the subversive ideology.
Throughout history, literature has been used by the oppressed to resist the cultural hegemony instituted by the dominant powers. Sahgal's fiction bears the imprint of oppression and in her hands it becomes a tool to resist political and cultural dominance. Fictionalising Indian history Sahgal strives to react to her contemporary society. Here fiction turns out to be the writer's response to the issues related to the dilemmas of human existence. Mixing past, present and future Sahgal portrays society with a fresh perspective.

According to Linda Hutcheon, "... its (post-colonialism) revolt continues to operate within the power field of the dominant culture, no matter how radical its revalorization of its indigenous culture" (162). Thus the oppression and revolt that occurs within the postcolonial society characterises the fundamental dialectic of postcolonial culture. This encounter introduces an alien value structure in the existing value structures of the society and causes "serious dislocations and fragmentation in the intellectual discourse of the colonized" (Devi, Amnesia 49-50). Originating from the confused and hybridized postcolonial society, the postcolonial text always expresses doubleness. This doubleness originates from the cultural confusion produced by the intermingling of various cultures.

The term "Postcolonial" suggests the predominance of the ideological conflict between the coloniser and the colonised. It is this central dialectical struggle in a broad sense that effects social formation in every postcolonial society including India. The entire framework of
the nation has been affected by imperialism. So the colonial experience becomes a major concern of life and literature during the postcolonial period. It continues to influence the life of the nation in divergent ways involving issues ranging from intimately personal to the larger social ones. The blind veneration and imitation of the West prevalent in the postcolonial subjects and the economic plunder instituted by the multinational capitalism continue the legacy of colonial exploitation and dominance in the post-independence period.

However, keeping the divergent cultural units under the common umbrella of postcoloniality has been criticised by many. It is true that the postcolonial society is exposed to various influences and experiences other than the central colonial one. The same is true in the case of the postcolonial text. Aijaz Ahmad writes "the ideological conditions of a text's production are never singular but always several" (*In Theory* 122). He cautions against the homogenising tendencies of postcolonial discourse. According to him if ever such a unity exists in the world it is that of global operation of the capitalist mode of production and the resistance to that mode which is ultimately socialist in character. Regarding the diversity in the material conditions in the so called postcolonial world, Ahmad writes:

In Namibia, the imposition of the capitalist mode takes a directly colonial form, whereas the central fact in India is the existence of stable and widespread classes of capitalist society within a post-colonial bourgeois polity; in Vietnam, which has already entered a post-capitalist phase-albeit in
a context of extreme devastation of the productive forces—
the character of this constitutive dialectic is again entirely
different. So the problematic of a 'final determination' is
surely active in each case, it is constituted differently in
different cases, and in each case literary production will, in
principle, be differently constituted. (In Theory 120)

Ahmad's opinion regarding the multiplicity of experiences that
constitute a postcolonial text holds conviction. It is multiple because the
experience of colonialism and the cultural context is varied in various
nations and also because experience, not directly related to the
postcolonial prevail in it.

Accepting the fact that postcolonial texts are produced in different
contexts and that the texts may vary in their preoccupations, one cannot
be blind to the ultimate unity and interrelationship of all these multiple
experiences brought about in the contemporary society, the dominant
historical experience of which is colonialism. Imperialism has affected a
kind of homogeneity among nations having racial and cultural differences
even though its impact and its influence may vary from nation to nation.
It is this larger unity that makes postcolonialism meaningful. We have
to be aware of this fundamental unity that runs through this multiplicity.

We have seen that Nayantara Sahgal's approach to the problems of
postcolonial Indian society is conditioned by her humanistic outlook,
sense of justice and her adherence to freedom. Engendered in the
national struggle for freedom and the liberal education Sahgal's
convictions make her a critic of the postcolonial society. Sahgal's critical realism sometimes turns towards her own previous convictions and becomes a sort of self critical practice. A sense of loss, disillusionment, resistance to the operation of hegemonic power, sense of justice and humanism dissolves in her attitude to form the subversive aesthetics. Sahgal's opposition to the colonial dominance, the corrupt political practices and the male dominance is part of this aesthetic practice.

Heterogeneous in its structure the Nationalist movement in India combined various classes and racial groups to fight against the colonial hegemony. Headed by the national bourgeoisie it compromised with the feudal lords in its opposition to colonialism. The influence of this movement upon intellectuals, writers and the general public is deep and wide spread. Nayantara Sahgal's personality as a writer is shaped chiefly by this movement. The prevalence of opposing ideological positions and class preoccupations within the national movement reveals its inner contradictions. Though opposed to colonial domination, nationalism is engendered within the colonial ideology. Resisting the centralised colonial power structure it combines the racial cultural and political differences effecting a false sense of homogeneity. This complex nature of the ideological formation of nationalism produces similar contradictions within the nationalist practice.

Thus Sahgal's position as a writer is fraught with ideological implications. Referring to the influence of nationalist movement on the writers, Makarand Paranjape in his essay "Inside and Outside Whale:
Politics and the New Indian English Novel," writes: "The dominant ideology of several of these novels on the freedom struggle may be characterised as nationalistic" (214). Paranjape refers to the strong influence of nationalism upon the fictional project of the writers of that time who wrote about the freedom struggle. Sahgal is not an exception to this general rule. While dealing with a specific socio-political milieu, Sahgal's novels trace the power struggle common to all postcolonial societies.

Nayantara Sahgal's novels project this subversive aesthetics both in theme and form. The use of irony, fantasy, double narrators, untranslated words, quotations and the many voices subvert the monologic structure of the narrative. The linguistic diversity in Sahgal's novels can be related to the cultural diversity and the multiple preoccupations of Indian society. Techniques like irony and fantasy subvert the existing order by presenting what is absent in it and engaging in a negative relationship. The excessive use of conversations resist the monologic voice of the narrator or the author. Dialogue also helps in presenting the divergent opinions directly without an agency. Thus inorder to express a subversive theme she adopts a subversive form as well. Internalising the confrontations in the postcolonial Indian society Sahgal rejects the exploitative power structures and visualizes a humane system based on love and mutual understanding.

Sahgal's resistance ideology as revealed in her novels exposes its ambivalence as it associates with the very same structure that she
resists. Though she is opposed to the violence, authoritarianism, corruption and the decadent culture prevalent in the contemporary postcolonial society, Sahgal's characters do not advocate a total structural transformation. Instead they try to fill the gaps advocating love, communication and mutual co-operation. This idealistic closure may be the source of ambivalence in her resistance ideology. It is the awareness of the therapeutic function of communication that transforms many of her characters like Kalyan Sinha in This Time of Morning. Love and friendship transform the lives of Saroj in Storm in Chandigarh and Simrit in The Day in Shadow. Inter-religious marriages metaphorically resolves the racial conflicts presented in Plans for Departure and Mistaken Identity.

Sahgal's novels often resist the unwelcome developments in the postcolonial system while being silent on the fact that it is the very same system that produces these aberrations. In Nayantara Sahgal's text we cannot fail to see the ways in which the liberal ideology of Sanad, Rakesh Raj, Simrit, Visal, Devi, Usman, Sonali, Anna Hansen and Bhushan is pitted against ideologies elaborated and reproduced through the State Apparatus. Sahgal's idealistic world is built around notions of truth, love, freedom and equality; in contrast the world around her imposes authoritarianism, violence, oppression and control. The text of course, provides a rather simplistic solution of a change in the attitude of the rulers. So the ideological resistance -- which also involves material practices -- to the oppressive system reveals its ambivalence.
The colonial ideology and the liberal nationalist resistance to it form a dialectic confronting and collaborating at one and the same time. The origin of nationalism in the colonial ideology further enhances the ambivalence in its approach to the colonial authority. The two opposing forces that confront in the fictional space of Sahgal are united in its opposition. So the centre and the periphery operate from the same ideological position. Presenting this confrontation, Sahgal's novels seem to suggest an imaginary solution to the real confrontations within postcolonial Indian society. The female resistance to male dominance is not an exception to this general pattern. While opposed to male dominance Sahgal keeps herself away from a total negation of the social structure that keeps woman subordinate to man. Instead she suggests measures like love, mutual understanding, communication and universal love for levelling these imbalances. Thus shying away from presenting a critique of the socio-political structure of postcolonial India, Sahgal relies on idealistic solutions indirectly associating herself with the existing social structure. This sort of an idealistic vision is the source of resistance in Sahgal's novels and paradoxically is the entity that represses its formation in the real material practices.

The cultural confusion resident in the postcolonial society influences the individual psyche. Nayantara Sahgal's characters experience this complexity and their ambivalent nature is expressive of the cultural confusion that they undergo. Sanad in *A Time to Be Happy* is a product of this dilemma. He is "puzzled and uncertain about his future" (2). Placed in between the East and the West, he struggles to
attain a self of his own. He explains the duality of his personality through these words. The question that emerges from this confused state of affairs is whether there is a relationship between the disorganised self of the individual and the divided nature of the nation. It is true that Sanad's personal experiences are intimately associated with the cultural dilemma experienced by the society. His experience is that of every English educated Indian. The colonial ideology alienates him from the Indian society. But it is his association with the contemporary realities of India that instills the awareness of alienation in him. The peculiar cultural situation that prevails in India is the creation of more than two hundred years of colonial domination and the divided nature of Sanad's personality is the product of this cultural milieu.

Shivraj's death marks the end of an era, an era luminated by the hopes and aspirations of the freedom movement. Shivraj in this novel is not just an individual. Chaman Nahal in his essay, "Indian Political Novel: Mulk Raj Anand, Bhabhani Bhattacharya and Nayantara Sahgal" comments on the symbolic suggestions associated with the character, Shivraj. According to him Shivraj is "the personification of a certain value system, a certain political system: a system based on empiricism, on industrialization, on the parliamentary form of government or rule of the law" (144). So naturally the death of Shivraj suggests the deterioration of the value system represented by Shivraj. Though the transition began earlier the charisma of the leader sustained optimism in the mind of the people.
Shivraj's death marks the eclipse of this vain optimism and idealism. The despair that results, propels resistance. The coexistence of oppression and resistance point to the doubleness of postcolonial society that incorporates the opposites, the oppressive colonial power structure and the nationalist resistance. This complex intermingling of the opposites constructs a hybridised society.

Moving in between political writing and fiction Sahgal's novels evolve a new genre of fiction. A peculiar combination of political reality and fiction this new genre refers to her dual identity as a political journalist and a novelist. Sahgal expresses her anguish, despair and deep seated concern for India and her contemporary society through these two forms. Her birth and growth in a family of political activists and her sensitivity to human problems naturally help her to develop such a concern for the nation. The spirit of independence struggle, the organic unity and the sense of direction that the nationalists showed during the struggle for independence remain the guiding principle in Sahgal's vision. The influence of the nationalist movement and her education in the West inculcated in Sahgal a liberal approach to life and a deep seated faith in values like love, mutual respect, non-violence, freedom and humanism. Sahgal thus seems to symbolise an ideal fusion of nationalist tradition and the Western liberal enlightenment. This duality was shared by many of the English educated Indians during the time of the independence struggle.
Sahgal's adherence to values, commitment to freedom and humanism made her an alien in the post-independence India. Her vehement reactions to the contemporary decadence naturally appear in her novels as well as in her journalistic writings. In other words they are monuments of Sahgal's resistance to this decadent culture. For an individual who is alienated from her own culture, fiction becomes a way of affirming her freedom and defending it from an imposing corrupt social system. Eagleton's opinion regarding art, which symbolises the autonomy of a personal imagination free from all repressive rules is true in the case of Sahgal who unburdens her aspirations and disillusionment through her fiction. Thus for Nayantara Sahgal, fiction becomes a kind of defensive mechanism against the overwhelming oppressiveness of the society. But this defensive mechanism is as provisional as the act of writing itself. Still fiction is fundamental to the existence of the writer within an oppressive social system as it enables her to react to her own contemporary social situation. She incorporates various issues like politics, morality, alienation, search for roots, identity crisis, separatism, corruption, violence, authoritarianism, and religious fundamentalism. Referring to divergent religious, linguistic, and ethnic groups and employing multiple voices, Sahgal creates a complex narrative.

The intertwining of past and present, in *Mistaken Identity*; use of double narrators in *Rich Like Us*; use of irony, multivoiced narration and long conversations in most of her novels; the employment of newspaper reports, quotations, letters, and dreams in *Mistaken Identity* and *The Day in Shadow*, are all directed towards the construction of this
heterogeneity. Having a double layered structure, these techniques form part of the novelistic discourse which is dualistic in character. Commenting on the double voiced discourse M.M.Bakhtin writes:

Double-voiced discourse is always internally dialogized. Examples of this would be comic, ironic or parodic discourse, the refracting discourse of a narrator, refracting discourse in the language of a character and finally the discourse of a whole incorporated genre -- all these discourses are double-voiced and internally dialogized. A potential dialogue is embedded in them, one as yet unfolded, a concentrated dialogue of two voices, two world views, two languages. (Dialogic 324-325)

The double voiced discourse is not a verbal exercise. it has to be studied in the background of the social reality for "verbal discourse is a social phenomenon" (Dialogic 259). Rooted in the real material practices of the society, the double voiced discourse explains the multivalent nature of social reality at various levels. The prevalence of various ethnic linguistic and religious groups in India and their inter-relationships is acknowledged by Sahgal in her novels. The interconnection between these belief systems, their co-operation and confrontation through many centuries has effected cross-culturality and has made the Indian society a mosaic of various cultures. In The Day in Shadow, Sahgal writes: "Whatever rigid choices have to be made elsewhere, ours is the ancient and seasoned soil of co-existence. It has held its contradictions tenderly, peacefully" (196).
Sahgal suggests that the existence of multiple cultures did the magic of assimilation. Through language, dress, music, art, architecture, literature, food habits and the like if not in other ways the alien culture becomes part of the Indian way of life. In this "ancient and seasoned soil of co-existence," Sahgal advocates a new belief system which is a healthy combination of various religious belief systems. Ram Krishan in The Day in Shadow observes: ". . . if the irreconcilables of Hindu and Christian belief could be sorted out, a powerful answer and a new basis for action might be found for India" (196). Sahgal's trust in the combination of various belief systems is suggested through the Hindu Muslim marriage in Mistaken Identity and Hindu Christian marriage in Plans for Departure. According to her "sexual unity was the acid test of unity . . ." (MI 130). The coexistence of divergent cultures form a dialectic resulting in the formation of a cultural mosaic that engenders new forms of co-operation and confrontation. Similar confrontations at various sites; political, cultural, moral and linguistic, form the duality that effect social formation. Sahgal's novels take shape from this complex socio-political experience that determines the dialogic structure of the narrative. The form is determined by the theme. The double layered narrative in Rich Like Us, A Time to Be Happy and Mistaken Identity evolves out of this dialectic of theme and form.

Though seemingly simple the works of Sahgal are preoccupied with a multiplicity of concerns. These multivalent concerns provide the background for the complex narrative which is double voiced and dialogical in its structure. In most of Sahgal's novels the past appears as
an ideal period luminated by idealism and hope as opposed to the oppressive and corrupt present. Though absent it is the decadent present that is indirectly referred to in these texts. Related in a dialogue, the past and present forms a unity in confrontation.

The novel, *Mistaken Identity* written in the background of pre-independence India refers to the communal problems, very much alive in the contemporary political scenario. Referring to the multicultural existence of Indian society and the social, economic and spiritual influences of various religions, races and cultures on Indian society, Sahgal writes, "... all of this acquires a poignant meaning now that it is under attack, and now that an attempt is being made to deconstruct India into a purely Hindu identity and squeeze her into this single mould" (PV 48). It is in this context of the threat of fundamentalism that Sahgal has written *Mistaken Identity*. Visal Dubey in *Storm in Chandigarh* is aware of the transformation that occurs in India. He finds that "The map of India, once a uniform piece of territory to administer, was now a welter of separate, sensitive identities, resurrected after independence" (SC 15). The united past and the divided present is contrasted here. The disintegrated present makes the united past look more acceptable. The past and present is contrasted using two characters, Sardar Sahib and Sumer Singh in *The Day in Shadow*. Sumer Singh is the corrupt politician of the present and Sardar Sahib represents the dedicated selfless leadership of the past. Juxtaposing these two characters Sahgal evaluates the past and the present. She writes:
A man of Sumer Singh's calibre in Government was an indication of how Sarder Sahib and his generation had failed. They had built up no trained dedicated cadre in the party to take over. Sumer Singh was not a leader and never would be. He was an election gambit that had worked. (DS 126)

Sahgal's early novels participate in a dialectic of the "noble past" and a "decadent present" and visualise the formation of a better future. The intertwining of past and present is successfully employed in the novel, *Mistaken Identity*. Bhushan's present existence as a prisoner is juxtaposed with his past experiences as a prince. The past and the present intermingle to form the central structural principle of this novel.

The use of double narrators serve to present multiple viewpoints. Sahgal uses two narrators, an omniscient narrator and Sonali in *Rich Like Us*. Sonali narrates her own story while the omniscient narrator narrates the experiences of others like Rose, Ramswaroop and Mona. Writing about *Plans for Departure* in an essay "Narrative Technique in Nayantara Sahgal's *Plans for Departure*" Zerin Anklesaria observes:

Sahgal uses a variety of devices; Newspaper items; despatches to Henry from his immediate superior; conversations such as those between Anna and Madhav Rao covering the trial and imprisonment of Tilak; and letters to her from Nicholas who is a British diplomat and has inside information on the happenings in Europe. In this manner the author creates multiple perspectives, ranging over the past and relating it to the present. (40)
The duality of the narrative is sustained through various methods in novels like *A Time to Be Happy* and *Mistaken Identity*. In *Time to Be Happy* the narrator explains his own experiences as well as that of Sanad's. In *Mistaken Identity* the narrative moves in between past and present.

The duality is also resident in the ironic comments present abundantly in this novel. According to Linda Hutcheon: "Irony is one way of doing precisely this (Use existing language to reclaim speech for itself). A way of resisting and yet acknowledging the power of the dominant" (162-163). Having a double edged programme, irony becomes a popular strategy for dismantling existing discourses while working within it. It resists the dominant power while acknowledging its presence. Irony has been used by the postcolonial writer as an effective and powerful form "in the rethinking and readdressing of history" (Hutcheon, 154) particularly in novels like *Rich Like Us*.

Sahgal uses irony specifically for this purpose as a powerful tool to resist the dominant power structure and to acknowledge its presence. In the novel *Rich Like Us* irony is directed against the authoritarian rule that prevailed in India during the Emergency. The degeneration of the democratic institutions instill contempt in her. Laughing at the corrupt, decadent politicians and the total failure of the democratic system Sahgal writes: "All would be well because there was a building outside my office called Parliament" (RLU 31). The disillusionment of the whole generation who dreamt of a "heaven of freedom" and the total
failure of democracy is evident in this statement. To her dismay Sahgal finds that poverty and backwardness in post-independence India, makes independence and the whole democratic process a mockery.

Referring to the huge amount of money being wasted for defence purposes even at the expense of keeping poverty unaffected, Saghal writes, "In fact we had both new and hereditary poverty staring through the tall glass doors of five star buildings" (RLU 150). The insensitivity of the government "which can stay static for incredible amounts of time" (DS 8), indirectly suggests the failure of the democratic system in bringing about progress. Democracy has degenerated to "the victory of numbers" (DS 156). In this system nothing happens without the intervention of the bureaucracy. Saghal writes, "The only thing you could get without a hitch was a divorce" (DS 4). The democratic institutions become a hindrance to progress as well as to the smooth functioning of democracy itself.

Presenting the bleak side of our democratic system with its corrupt, decadent and authoritarian tendencies, Sahgal stresses the need to negate it. Such negation of the undemocratic, colonial tendencies threatens to subvert the norms that control the very system. Conversation is considered to be a democratic act as against monologue which is one sided and colonial. Sahgal makes use of this dialogue form to great effect in her novels. It enables her to present the opinion of her characters through their own mouth rather than narrating it in a monologue of the narrator. Dialogue also serves to present a first hand
account of the conflicting views and attitudes and gives the readers enough freedom to explain their own position in problems of dispute.

Dialogue "is a non-oppressive, non-authoritarian way of communication" (Paranjape, *Decolonisation* 16) that enables us to negotiate, tolerating and respecting the differences. Sahgal makes use of long conversations in several of her novels. Long discussions between Saroj and Visal in Chapter nine and the discussion between Trivedi and Dubey in Chapter five of *Storm in Chandigarh* are good examples of how Sahgal exploits the method of conversation. One such passage from *Storm in Chandigarh* is reproduced here:

Trivedi's wife and daughters were uncommunicative at meals and left immediately after dinner to go to their rooms. There was no feeling of family in the house. Trivedi seemed to live alone.

"A drink for you, Dubey?"

Dubey, in his early twenties, groggy with sleep, yet unwilling to leave, did not notice that his chief had poured him one, ignoring his refusal.

"As I was saying, then, this heritage of ours is all up in the air. The most ancient tradition known to man has been dependent these many thousand years on a sheeplike adherence to ritual. Dependent on pots and pans, if you like, on what we eat, when we fast and how often we bathe. And if it can be called worship at all, it is a worship of subtleties and abstractions. What actually are we commanded to believe?"
"Sort of like the British constitution—unwritten," murmured Dubey comfortably, not sure he would be heard. In a talkative mood Trivedi did not generally register what Dubey said. He became fascinated by his own theme, winding in and out of it, revealing glimpses of erudition, flashes of anger and suspicion, until at last he noticed the time and called the evening to a close. But this time he had heard.

"The British," he said heavily, grudgingly, "are the only people on earth who could sustain an unwritten constitution. Any other people would have served each other's entrails up for breakfast and dissolved into miserable confusion by this time."

He brooded on his love-hate for the British in silence before he spoke again.

"But this lack of definition doesn't suit us. Doesn't suit us at all."

He was apt to get repetitive as the evening wore on.

"I am not, understand me, Dubey, trying to circumscribe God."

"No sir."

"What I want is much simpler. I want to understand this 'dharma' of which I and my kind—you, too, Dubey—are the guardians. What is the meaning of Brahmin? Yes I know: priest, law-giver, adviser to sovereigns, custodian of the intellectual and spiritual heritage of the race. It's all there in the books. But how do you and I represent
that image today? By joining the Civil Service? Where is the evidence \textit{now} that those scriptures can inspire people to \textit{live}?"

A cluster of insects buzzed around the standard lamp and Trivedi studied his assistant somberly.

"Why did you join the Service, sir?" Dubey asked.

"Because," he said, suddenly amiable, "my grandfather was a good friend of Sir Norman Trace. That's why most of us do things. Not because the light beckons. Why did you?"

"I tried for it because the family wanted me to, never thinking I'd get in. It was a fluke, I expect."

Trivedi gave the high-pitched chuckle that served him for a laugh. "As I was saying," he stopped to refill his glass and looked with regret at the level of the bottle as he held it up to the light, "you and I and our Brahmin ilk are the custodians of something we haven't a notion about. 'We worship not what we can but we cannot understand.' I came across that in a book. Forget which book. It's all there in the books--the world's oldest. You are looking very sleepy, Dubey."

"No sir, I'm not." said Dubey stoutly.

He was struggling with the overpowering urge to let his dropping eyelids close, to lean back in the cane chair and sink into a few minutes' delicious unnoticed sleep. But he did not want to leave Trivedi. If the first ten minutes could be mastered he could stay awake and last another
hour. He wanted to last for the sake of a man he liked and one whom he knew would face the defeat of an empty bedroom when he left. By day they tackled a desert of thirst and poverty. There was even a therapeutic quality to these nights they spent together. In the solitude of the district Trivedi had only him to turn to, while Dubey had the whole district, every bit of red dust in it. It had become his passport to a new kind of living. He had discovered to his astonishment that he would never be alone, that his home would be wherever he chose to make it. Trivedi was not like that and his loneliness was Dubey's responsibility, as his conversation and his keen, critical mind were Dubey's pleasure. And what he said was right. What use was this heritage to ordinary men? What did it create but quietude? Did it toughen fibre, give emotional satisfaction? Did it help the soldier to fight better, the businessman to do his job better? Did it hold any comfort for Trivedi in the night? Was it the thing you could cry out to, kneel to, surrender your spirit to? Was there some Intelligence to receive all that, or did the human cry fall unheard into a gaping void? Dubey sat up with an effort and took a cautious sip from the full glass before him.

"Of all the books, only the Gita tells us something specific, something besides ritual. Have you read the Gita, Dubey? And the fact that I have to ask that question goes a long way to illustrate what I have been talking about."

"Not cover to cover, sir, but passages."

"Well, do you know why Arjun fought and the Lord himself advised him to?"
"He did his duty," said Dubey.

"He fought because it would have been cowardly not to," said Trivedi, ignoring him. "Because you recoil from bloodshed is not sufficient reason not to fight. The pacifists after the First World War made the mistake of using that as an argument. They pointed out the horrors of war and said, 'Look what it does. Doesn't revolt your soul?' And it did, but not enough to prevent people fighting another, as they had to, when it came upon them. The pacifists were appealing to cowardice, to revulsion from an ugly sight. It wasn't good enough. Men cannot commit themselves to any course of action based on cowardice. They have to act on some principle. They have to go forward. And that always has its dangers. Arjun had to go forward into battle."

The ice in Dubey's drink had melted. He fished out an insect with his finger and placed it carefully on the edge of the cane table. It staggered drunkenly, then shook its wings and flew away.

"But even the Gita does not explain," Trivedi went on. "It assumes. It assumes a caste system as the natural order of things. Even Arjun is not quite free to choose. When he faces his kinsfolk in war he is facing the total result of his past actions. But where the Gita triumphs, Dubey, is in its interpretation of the nature of action."

"I know those lines," said Dubey, and to his own surprise recited them flawlessly.

"Nonattachment," Trivedi summed up the Sanskrit verses, "duty unallied to reward. A job to be done. I
suppose that's why I joined the Civil Service, apart from my grandfather and Sir Norman Trace."

It was one of the ways he explained it to Dubey, trying to understand his role in a political system his soul did not accept in the still of night, as he sat on a patch of exhausted earth in a tortured corner of his country. His blood tugged him earthwards while his mind looked for a solution that would contain all the contradictions. Dubey's affection for him was boundless.

"The Gita is occupied more with ethics than morality. I suppose that is what makes it so sensible." Trivedi, tired now, looked at his young companion, "What are your views, Dubey?"

"On ethics, sir, or morality?"

"Whichever you like." With a grand gesture Trivedi flung open the field to him in the middle of the night.

"I have very definite views about morality," Dubey said, wide awake now to the full throbbing impact of a favourite subject. "I don't accept what's commonly understood as morality."

"Indeed? You believe in free love and all that sort of thing."

Dubey laughed delightedly and took a great gulp of his drink.

"It's nothing to do with that at all. I don't--that is, I've decided not to accept the established ideas about
morality, not to be bound hand and foot. I--for me--well, I've thought about it a bit, a good bit, and I've come to the conclusion there's a higher morality than all that. In fact, that's what I call it, the Higher Morality."

"The Higher Morality? So we have an original thinker among us. Well, what's this Higher Morality all about? The wail of conscience in new garb?"

"It's more than that." Dubey sat forward eagerly. "It's a search for value, and an attempt to choose the better value, the real value, in any situation, and not just do what's done or what is expected."

Trivedi sat silent, thinking it over.

"The search for value is a dangerous formula for living," he said dryly. "Well, well, Dubey. If you hadn't got into the ICS by fluke, as you put it, what might you not have been the prophet of new order?"

"Nothing of the sort, sir I just like living and you have to live by some rules. Why should they be somebody else's?"

"Why indeed? History is full of those who didn't live by anybody else's rules-- and of what happened to them. I suppose you do read history?"

"Oh yes," said Dubey.

"Then you have been forewarned."

Trivedi got out of his chair suddenly. "It's late. I never know the time when you're here. What do you get out of
it, Dubey?" he asked abruptly.

Dubey gave the simple, obvious answer, "Your company."

The discussion between Dubey and Trivedi breaks the monotone of the narrative voice and helps in presenting divergent viewpoints within the narrative. It also enables the readers to think about the problems discussed analytically. Trivedi refers to the transformation of the role of Brahmins in the postcolonial India from that of the "custodians of intellectual and spiritual heritage" to Civil Servants; protectors of the colonial bureaucracy. He also refers to the message of positive action present in Bhagavad Gita, connecting it with the contemporary discourse on non-violence and the struggle against war. According to him to "recoil from bloodshed is not sufficient reason not to fight." We have to go forward facing the dangers. He exposes the futility of a blind reverence for non-violence. Moreover discussions like this affirms the solidarity of human beings as against the separatist designs of individualism. At the end of the above passage Trivedi asks Dubey about the benefits of Dubey's discussions with him and Dubey answers, "Your Company." Dubey affirms man's desire for communication and compassion and his eternal quest for friendship.

A long conversation between Raj and Simrit, running several pages (8-42, 16-140, 180-184, 207-210), on Som's divorce settlement and Simrits growing intimacy with Raj is present in The Day in Shadow. Mr.Shah and Raj discusses Simrit's divorce settlement at another
occasion (142-147). During one of these discussions Simrit expresses her love for Raj. She tells him:

"I think I fell in love with you" she said on the way home,"the day of the debate in Parliament." "On oil!" said Raj; "I might have known love would dawn on you in the chilling chamber of the House in the middle of a debate about oil." (DS 184)

Simirit's intimacy with Raj generated out of the mutual understanding that they developed through long conversations, helped her to gain confidence and face the atrocities with courage. Saroj in *Storm in Chandigarh* faces similar problems in her relationship with her husband Inder. The long conversation between Saroj and Visal Dubey in chapter 6 and chapter 9 of this novel enable them to analyse the complex relationships that exist between the two couples, Inder and Saroj and Jit and Mara. Saroj finds a true friend in Visal. He realises the importance of communication in building, human friendship. Visal asks "Is there anything on earth to compare with the great glory of communication and that is only possible when people accept each other in truth" (SC 226). Here Sahgal seems to advocate communication as a non-violent method of solving differences in our society. Meaningful communication demands mutual respect and is a humane method of resolving conflict. Discussion is a dialectical process. It evolves a resolution by subverting the existing dominant assumptions. It will be naive to equate discussion with a revolutionary activity. However it unsettles the rules of literary representation of the real by allowing the characters to speak for
themselves and by minimising the control of the narrator. This in itself is a democratic activity as against the autocracy of a monologic form of narrative.

Like any other mode, literary fantasy is determined by its social context. It gives expression to the desires and fears that are absent in the real material practice. It "gives utterance to precisely those elements which are known only through their absence within a dominant realistic order" (Jackson, *Fantasy* 25). So the fantastic and the real in a literary text engages in a negative relationship. At the same time the forms taken by any particular fantastic text are determined by a number of forces which intersect and interact in different ways in each individual work. So for a total analysis of the fantasy one will have to place the text in relation to history. Sahgal uses dreams and fantasies in many of her novels that express the desires and fears which cannot be portrayed using a realistic narrative. But at the same time it is an expression of what is lacking in the real social context. In *The Day in Shadow* Sardar Sahib has a strange dream in which he sees Ganges being burned. Sahgal presents the situation thus:

He fell into an uneasy doze, and between waking and sleeping the frontiers on the map dissolved and India and the Soviet Union lay welded together in one vast monolith. And there was a caravan, no, column of smoke, or fire, or both, travelling down the Indian plain, leaving a trail of fine ash behind it. A trail, he could see, that ran precisely along the rivers and their tributaries. Why they are burning the Ganges, he saw in pure astonishment, even
burning the Ganges, he saw in pure astonishment, even the Ganges. Now they will rewrite history and tell us the Ganges was never there. Sardar Sahib woke up chilled to find the nurse in his room. (DS 127)

Sardar Sahib, a freedom fighter and the present Petroleum Minister, represents the generation that fought for national freedom. The present condition of India creates disillusionment in him. The loss of noble values and the unholy developments in the political and cultural fields generate a sense of despair. The burning of Ganges is indicative of this deep sense of spiritual draught in India. The drying up of Ganges, the water of which is the embodiment of spirituality can make India a waste land. Sardar Sahib's dream expresses this fear.

In *Mistaken Identity* Bhushan visualises Sylla's old age. While she looks into the mirror Bhushan looks at her from behind. He sees in the mirror the repulsive figure of old Sylla. Bhushan narrates:

There in the mirror I conferred old age and decay on Sylla. I clothed her in folds of flesh and monstrous fat, then abruptly stripped her of it. On her bent and bony frame I hung the rags of her dilapidated breasts. While he smiled unwarily into my eyes I broke her in two and threw her away. (MI 16)

Bhushan visualises death and decay. The repulsiveness of old age unnerves him. Bhushan's dream points to the fact that the opposite also exists in one and the same thing. Sylla, a beautiful young girl in real life can be juxtaposed with the image of an "old" decayed Sylla of the dream.
But Bhushan is not ready to accept her in this form, he "broke her in two and threw her away." Sylla is a social activist and it is Bhushan's association with her that make him a suspect in the case. So the image of Sylla is always associated in Bhushan's mind with social activism. Thus the decaying of Sylla's body may run parallel to the the disintegration of the social uprising against the colonial government. By suggesting the inevitability of death and decay the writer may be giving a clue to the unavoidable decadence that may affect every social movement in course of time. By transforming an unreal situation into a real one fantasy subverts the conventions which are supposed to be normal and thus reveals the hidden reality.

Sahgal quotes from original sources, poems and speeches of the leaders of the independence struggle disrupting the fictive nature of her novels and creating a complex ideological and intertextual connection between history and her own fiction. She quotes Mohammed Iqbal's poem "Whose Land?" in Mistaken Identity:

'You claiming it, I ask : Who owns this land?  
You? Your forebears? Tell me who rears  
The seed in earth's darkness, who lifts  
The cloud from the sea, who brings the rich  
Westerly wind and the rain?  
Who owns the sun's streaming light, who  
Fills the field with pearls of wheat,  
Who taught the seasons revolution?...  

I say: It belongs to him who rears  
The seed, lifts the cloud,brings the rich  
Westerly wind...' (MI 141)
Mohammed Iqbal's poem is a sign of the spirit of resistance to the imperial domination. In the same novel Sahgal quotes Motilal Nehru's and Amar Nath Dutt's debate in the Legislative Assembly, Simla. It refers to the death of Jatindranath Das and the condition of political prisoners in India. The motion moved in the Central Legislature by Motilal Nehru on September 14, 1929, reads:

Sir, the charge is that the government stood still while human life was ebbing away... When there was time for government to realise that these devoted, high-souled men, however long they may have been hunger-striking, would not surrender their principles, what did the government do to save their lives?.

Amar Nath Dutt said;

Sir, I rise to offer my tribute of tears to the memory of the great departed... Sir, I charge government with the murder of Jatindranath Das who laid down his life to vindicate the elementary rights of political prisoners in India. (MI 82)

These quotations from original sources create the effect of reality. So the narrative can be said to be mediating in between fact and fiction. By disturbing the normal rules of the narrative these quotations -- which can be considered as experiments in form -- run parallel to the subversive theme of Sahgal's fiction.

She uses untranslated words in her fiction to inscribe difference with the Western discourse. Such words signify cultural experience that
cannot be reproduced or translated into another language. Sahgal uses words like "tonga wallah," "ranee," "sathyagrahi," "sola topi," "dhotiwalla," "Chowki dar" and many such similar terms consciously aiming at rooting her writing within the Indian cultural context. These be seen as interface signs which affirm a cultural distinction. These untranslated words act as a counter linguistic force as against the monolingual sphere of the text. Since words carry culture, metaphorically speaking, these words help to strengthen the counter cultural forces of subversion.

The multicultural discourse that Sahgal's novels engage in can be further seen in her use of language. According to Bakhtin "The novel can be defined as a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized" (Dialogic 262). This linguistic diversity in the novel can be juxtaposed with the unitary language which is an expression of the centripetal forces of language. Thus, two opposing movements operate in language, one is the centripetal movement which is directed towards unification and centralisation and the other is the centrifugal movement which is a continuous process of decentralization and disunification. Being a social phenomenon, language carries the prejudices, attitudes and even the representations of power relation in its fold. Literary language, being one among the heteroglott languages is further stratified into languages that are "socio-ideological". The centripetal and centrifugal forces act in the literary language, making it a contradictory unity of two opposing tendencies. For Bakhtin: "Every utterance
participates in the "unitary language" (in its centripetal forces and tendencies) and at the same time partakes of social and historical heteroglossia (the centrifugal stratifying forces)" (Dialogic 272). In this sense every word is an integral part of the whole just as it has its own individual existence different from other words. The double movement of union and struggle form the dialectic of language use. These contradictory movements operating in the literary language can be juxtaposed with the socio-ideological movements. The centripetal and centrifugal forces of language develop along with socio-political and cultural centralisation and decentralisation.

Various forms of stylisations, illustrations, dialects merge in the unitary plane of the language of the novel. This diversity resident in the fictional language can be related to the multiplicity of socio-ideological contradictions that co-exist within society. Being a multicultural discourse language is "populated -- over populated -- with the intensions of others" (Dialogic 294). In a novel the author's speech reveals the intensions of others along with his own. The multiplicity of voices resident in the narration reveals the cultural diversity of the concrete environment in which the consciousness of the writer is shaped. Some of the hybrid constructions present in Sahgal's novels are discussed here. In Mistaken Identity Bhushan narrates his experience thus:

I woke during the night, covered with soot and cinders, to find it had stopped. It was pitch dark and someone was pounding on the door demanding to be let in. I opened it to an Anglo Indian police sergeant who told me he had a
warrent for my arrest. Without asking my permission he ordered his men to lift out my luggage. (MI 21)

Though Bushan is the narrator of the above passage the voice of the Anglo-Indian policeman is also embedded in Bhushan's voice. The warrant carries within it the voice of the authority. Its autocratic way is suggested through the phrase "without asking my permission". Though the above passage belongs to a single speaker it contains within it various utterances. But these utterances are not divided by any "formal compositional and syntactic-boundary". The division of voices takes place within the limits of a syntactic whole. The authorial speech conceals not only voices of others but also the current opinion, the opinion of the public. A passage from The Day in Shadow is cited here as another example:

Simrit smiled back at the people near her, hoping they would not draw her into their conversation, though she recognised Joshi in the group. Delhi was a place where a civil servant's reputation need not have much to do with merit, developing instead in a cloudy haze of good English diction and good manners. The civil servant's traditional anonimity had over the years been replaced by a vague unobtrusiveness, characteristic of an atmosphere from which decision and daring had disappeared, along with efficiency. In this twilight Joshi was the kind of non-personality who stayed out of trouble and survived. (DS 3)

In this hybrid construction the narrator's words conceal another's speech. His comment on the condition of Delhi has got an objective tone.
It is presented as a general discourse. So the narrators opinion about Delhi and the civil servants, derive from general opinion. But the narrator's comments about Simrit and Joshi are her own.

We have already seen that the multiplicity of voices in the narrative resides within the unitary language of the text. The variety of voices reveal the multiplicity of attitudes, opinions, tastes, prejudices and cultures resident in the material environment from which the text originates. This variety has got a negative relationship with the unitary language of the text. Negating a centralised system it reveals the multiplicity of this common language. It is a subversive act that becomes part of the dialectic between the variety and unity of language. It can be translated into the social phenomenon where the multiplicity of cultures negate the forced unity demanding their own separate identity. It is a move towards the homogenisation of native culture by instituting colonial standard, language, culture and norms. In this sense the exposition of variety and multiplicity becomes a subversive act against the homogenisation of culture.

Sahgal's writings seem to be undermined by a progressive force. The first book published by her is an autobiographical piece, *Prison and Chocolate Cakes* and the novels written later by and large, turned out to be the biographical sketches of India. The aspirations and hopes of the young nation during the time of the attainment of freedom, its search for an identity of its own, the gradual deterioration of the conditions and the reemergence of authoritarian tendencies that culminate in the
Emergency, are described in these six novels. In the last two novels written after *Rich Like Us* Sahgal turns back to the pre-independence society. *Plans for Departure* and *Mistaken Identity* mark a departure from her previous novels as they portray Sahgal's liberation from the nationalist, racial and political consciousness and the adoption of universalist philosophy transcending boundaries of religion, race and the nation. The central role given to Anna Hansen, a Danish lady in *Plans for Departure* and Sahgal's distenciation from the various political ideologies like, Gandhism and Marxism in *Mistaken Identity* can be explained in this context as the transformation in the author's attitude. This departure actually begins in *Rich Like Us* where one of the narrator's (Sonali's) disillusionment surfaces as a vehement attack on the whole idealistic tradition in which she is brought up. Her reappraisal of the idealistic tradition built on "monumental lies" is expressed in these words:

\[
\text{... how naive the cast-iron idealism I had been brought up with, believing we were moderate, tolerant people, steeped in civilized ways. I should have been differently taught, told how casual we are about cruelty, depravity. I had grown to adulthood nourished on monumental lies. (RLU 30)}
\]

The loss of old faith and the absence of a new one to depend upon, forces her to look at various political ideologies with disbelief. Bhushan's opinion about Gandhi in *Mistaken Identity* is to a certain extent shared by Sahgal. Bhushan explains, "Gandhi makes no sense to me at all. Goes on bleating about Hindu-Muslim love but a Hindu-Muslim marriage
would send him on a fifty-day fast" (MI 46). Here Sahgal seems to laugh at the Gandhian concept of secularism as well as the non-violent method of political agitation. It is an expression of her desperate consciousness that has lost all its moorings. The failure of the nationalist ideology in building up a nation based on equality and fraternity and the horrible reincarnation of the colonial authoritarianism lead Sahgal to liberate herself from racial and national boundaries. By adopting such a universalist position, Sahgal proves herself to be an eternal crusader for freedom and noble human values as against all sorts of oppressive power structures.

Sahgal's negation of the nationalist ideology and the Gandhian philosophy that she cherished in the past originates from the failure of these philosophies to evolve a noble social system based on freedom and justice. The absence of a hopeful sign creates a vacuum. Commenting on this in an interview with Jasbir Jain, Sahgal says that she is "... writing about a nation emerging through idealism and then progressive destruction and decay. In fact what has happened, in my view, is total destruction" (Nayantara 168). Sahgal's disillusionment with the Gandhian non-violence and the idealist tradition originate from the frustrating, desperate experience in the postindependence period. Thus her subversive aesthetics lead her to negate her own earlier ideological position.

Thus tracing the confrontations in the postcolonial Indian society Nayantara Sahgal's novels resist the dominant ideology while
collaborating with it. Adopting a liberal humanist approach to problems, Sahgal's characters expose the ambivalent stance of collaboration and confrontation. It is the absence of a just political order, the ideals of non-violence, commitment to the people, purity and honesty in public life, that forces Sahgal to resist the contemporary decadence. Connecting the fictional presentation of contemporary politics with the real practices in India, we notice that the socio-political scenario continues to be dominated by the colonial ideology and that a resistance movement powerful enough to subvert this ideology and its power structure is absent in the discursive as well as material practices. We cannot be blind to the efforts -- though feeble -- made by intellectuals and activists to resist the colonial discourse and its power structure by redefining the Indian context.

But a powerful subversive force both in the material and discursive fields is yet to come into being. So the absence of a structural resistance to the colonial ideology in the contemporary postcolonial society as portrayed in Sahgal's novels can be traced back to the lack of a similar movement in the contemporary socio-political praxis. Thus, while presenting confrontation and progression in contemporary postcolonial India, Sahgal traces the dialectical relationship of the forces in confrontation revealing their fundamental unity. But her approach is fundamentally idealistic and the solutions posed by her are more imaginary than real. Yet Sahgal's fiction by its total negation of the corrupt authoritarian system and the vehement rejection of the domineering colonial ideology becomes a mode of resistance by itself.