Chapter III

Cultural Displacement

As an Indian I am a mix of cultures and influences, of Hinduism, Islam and Christianity, of East and West.

Nayantara Sahgal

The experience of colonialism, the struggle for liberation and the enduring impact of these movements in the socio-political praxis of contemporary postcolonial India, form part of the material conditions from which Nayantara Sahgal's fiction originates. So, naturally her fiction reflects preoccupation with ideological confrontation in postcolonial Indian society. Tracing this conflict, analysing the social, cultural and political transformations in contemporary India, Nayantara Sahgal's novels portray contemporary Indian life in its entirety. So apart from the political and personal preoccupations often discussed by contemporary critics, it will be useful to concentrate on the subtle references to cultural displacement in contemporary India as portrayed in her fiction.

In this chapter I would like to concentrate on the pattern of cultural displacement resident in Nayantara Sahgal's fiction. The cultural transition in postcolonial India is mediated by the failure of the
nationalist movement to attain its goal and the continuance of the colonial social structure, civil administration, power relationships and cultural priorities. Sahgal feels that the new government is built "on the destruction of a people's whole foundation" (SC 13). The cultural onslaught of the West has "overthrown a religion and a philosophy . . . , and tossed away an accumulation of racial experience. . ." (SC 13). The historical determination of cultural and aesthetic forms stress the pre-eminence of historical forces in the production of literary works. Moreover, it also validates the search for the presence of the socio-cultural content. Referring to the cultural transition in postcolonial India, Sahgal's novels trace the cultural displacement in contemporary India.

Displacement is a common experience in all postcolonial countries. But it occurs in widely different contexts. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin refer to displacement in postcolonial theory in the following way:

A valid and active sense of self may have been eroded by dislocation, resulting from migration, the experience of enslavement, transportation, or 'voluntary' removal for indentured labour. Or it may have been destroyed by cultural denigration, the conscious and unconscious oppression of the indigenous personality and culture by a supposedly superior racial or cultural model. (Empire 9)

The dislocation described in Sahgal's novels is not the result of migration or voluntary removal but the after effect of the oppression of
indigenous culture by a supposedly superior cultural model. As a result of this oppression freedom has not become "a habit of mind or a way of life". It is just "an isolated political achievement" (SC 227) which fails to evolve an indigenous method of overall social development. So an analysis of the displacement resident in Sahgal's novels demands a study of the cultural oppression in the postcolonial Indian society.

The prevalence of an oppressive system that operates in divergent forms is evident in the fictional space of Sahgal. The writer makes subtle references to the conditioning instituted by the colonial system that continues to make its presence felt even after independence. For the generation of Indians before independence the "Englishness" had been "a matter for pride and prestige" (TH 1). But soon after freedom the shocking awareness of the continuance of the colonial attitude descends. The conversation between Prakash Shukla, a veteran MP from Uttar Pradesh and Kailas, a Gandhian leader, is quite revealing:

"The frame work of democracy we have today is from the British but humanity we learned from the Mahatma". 
"Yes," said Kailas bewildered. 
"But there are those amongst us who do not understand or respect this humanity." He looked straight at Kailas. 
"Kalyan goes too far". (TTM 183)

The loss of humane values and idealism lead to the hegemony of a violent oppressive system. This transformation back to the old order is desperate. Disillusioned by this transition Devi feels, "Shivraj's
successors, playing at revolution, have set the clock back dangerously. All the sovereign forces that bring change and improvement and mellowness in the course of time have been cut off . . ." (SND 16). The oppressiveness of the social system develops further reformulating the dominance of an exploitative system based on authoritarianism and violence. Alienated and ousted by this mainstream culture Sonali feels:

Our joint life span, Papa's and mine, had seen the beginning, and now perhaps the end, of a gentler order, a political springtime interrupted before it had come into full bloom... It was sobering to imagine how many little victims the snapping jaws of the emergency were claiming in the course of an ordinary working day, how many big and small tyrants one act of whimsy had created." (RLU 198)

The transition from a "gentler order" to a tyrannous system suggests the reemergence of colonial priorities in the post-independence period.

Culture is always related to history. According to Ngugi wa Thiongo, "Culture is a product of the history of a people which it in turn reflects" (Decolonising 15). So an examination of the signs and images of history will help us to have a deeper understanding of the cultural displacement. The inter-relationship between culture and history makes this project a historicising one.

India was invaded by various races throughout history. The nation is supposed to have met with those challenges successfully by absorbing
their culture to the mainstream. While these invading races subjugated parts of India politically, they were in turn subordinated by the strong Indian tradition. This ability to amalgamate alien cultural forms added more colour to the already multicultural Indian society. But this does not suggest the absence of resistance but only the society's ability to accommodate newer and newer cultural forms to its fold.

Different from the earlier invaders who settled in India and became part of its culture, the British imperialists did not fit in with the Indian cultural milieu and social structure. One reason may be the class character of the invaders. It was easy for the earlier invaders, though they belonged to a different race, to mix with Indian society and vice versa as they shared a similar social structure which was dominantly feudal. But the British colonialists were different not only in race but in class as well, as they were representatives of the emerging European bourgeois capitalist class.

The civilisational missions of the colonial rulers, their intervention in the traditional cultural practices and the attempt to construct cultural homogeneity through modernisation are all related to the construction of bourgeois capitalist culture and economy in India. The early impact of colonialism is examined by Jawaharlal Nehru in his famous book *The Discovery of India*. Nehru writes: "The first reaction, limited to the small English educated class, was one of admiration and acceptance of almost everything western" (335). But knowingly or unknowingly it affected the existing cultural framework dominated by the traditional Hindu belief.
Sahgal refers to this cultural influence in her novels. In the novel *A Time to Be Happy* the narrator comments on the influence of Western culture on an English educated young man like Harish, "whose intrinsic temperament and attitudes bore not the slightest resemblance to those of the British, yet whose entire outlook and manner had been so moulded as to lead not the suspicion of an Indian about him" (17). Globally the Western domination over the Third World still continues and has become a perennial source of subjugation. Sahgal comments in one of her addresses:

... by and large, equality and control over one's fate remain out of the reach of most, in a global arrangement where the west continues to occupy a vast political space by virtue of the fact that it controls the institutions of power: trade and industry, finance, information and armaments, and the technology that serves all these; and uses these levers as it sees fit, including war as a tool of policy, when a crucial commodity is involved, as in the Gulf War. (PV 68)

The political and cultural dominance of the West generates cultural displacements. It alienates the individuals from their own cultural tradition and makes them "strangers to it" (SC 106). The dislocation of culture resulting in the alienation of vision and crisis of self image is referred to by Marx while commenting on the disastrous effects of colonialism on Indian society. Marx and Engels write:

England has broken the entire framework of Indian society, without any symptoms of reconstitution yet appearing. This loss of his old world, with no gain of a new one, imparts a particular kind of melancholy to the present
misery of the Hindu, and separates Hindustan, ruled by British, from all its ancient traditions, and from the whole of its past history. (On Colonialism 37)

Marx aptly points out the dilemma faced by Indian society as a result of colonial invasion. The assimilation of the western bourgeois capitalist culture and the negation of ancient feudal tradition raises issues of cultural displacement.

The complex nature of this displacement demands a detailed analysis. Marx's famous contention, "loss of . . . old world, with no gain of new one" foretells the ambiguity and complexity of this cultural process. Marx's comment on the peculiar predicament of the Indian psyche, divided between two cultures suggests the ambivalence experienced by the postcolonial subject within this hybrid cultural milieu. Sanad Shivpal in A Time to Be Happy feels: "My body is in India, but my brain doesn't belong here. I might as well be an English man except for the colour of my skin" (TH 232). The displacement that Sanad experiences in India is the result of his colonial education. His feeling of alienation in India (though he is aware of his Indianness) and his identification with English culture show his predicament. But Sanad is still aware of his Indian origin. The reference to the colour of his skin and the very awareness of his alienation in India are indicators of this understanding. It is so because a feeling of alienation can originate only when one is aware of his real identity. In his psyche the Indian identity is suppressed and the Western takes over. However this equilibrium is upset when the repressed erupts in a trauma of 'non-belonging.'
Eventhough he doesn't belong entirely to India he cannot "belong to any other country" (TH 147). Interrogated by this problem of dislocation Sanad feels alienated both in India and abroad. This existence in between the two worlds is the common predicament of all postcolonial subjects. The same fate is shared by many of Sahgal's characters.

But Sanad's experience is not that of every postcolonial Indian. If Sanad internalises the "spirit" of western culture, there are characters like Ammaji who keep themselves away from such influences. Perhaps the majority of the traditional Indian population belong to this group, out of reach of English education. But even they are not free from the ideological conditioning and the political, cultural and economic control instituted by the colonial regime.

There is another set who resist the cultural and political dominance of colonialism though they have come under the direct influence of colonial education. The story is narrated partly by Sanad and partly by a person having such a nationalist perspective. The narrator's viewpoint is significant because in one sense it is he who controls the attitudes, desires and the actions of a majority of characters though he remains a minority. I think there is a parallel to this in the real social practice where the national bourgeois minority and its socio-political vision assume the role of majority perspective, especially after independence, marginalising the various groups and perspectives that claim differences from the mainstream nationalist one. Sahgal, whose creative vision is influenced by liberalism, concentrates on the
mainstream nationalist politics and the dissents from within, sidelining various other forms of resistance movements. Though she refers to the communist movement in *The Day in Shadow* and *Rich Like Us* and the naxalite movement in *A Situation in New Delhi* her chief concern is to reveal the relative merit of Gandhian nationalism. But this general rule does not apply to the last two novels, *Plans for Departure* and *Mistaken Identity*. So it is right to ascertain that socio-political movements different from the Gandhian non-violent project are sidelined in the early novels of Sahgal. But this lack is compensated in the last two novels by putting Gandhism to test. She seems to question the relevance of the whole idealistic tradition built by nationalism. Sonali's father asks, "Where had the tradition we were trying to build gone wrong?" (RLU 24).

Since the nationalist movement was an all embracing one it naturally tried to homogenise the multiple traditions and formulated resistance against the colonial hegemony. It was the product of the conglomeration of various streams of thought. Regarding the origin of Nationalism, G.N. Devy comments:

Nationalism was a response to the work of the Indologists, the missionaries and the British administration. This collective response, because of the nature of its genesis, freely combined liberal values, orthodoxy and cultural chauvinism. (Amnesia 109)

The combination of oppositional ideologies that act behind the construction of nationalist ideology reveal its weakness. Its motley
construction is explicit in the compromises that the nationalist
government has been forced to arrive at during the post-independence
period. In a multicultural and multilingual country like India, an
unhappy compromise of oppositional political positions add to the
complexity in the construction of the nation and its ideology. The role of
colonial administration in the construction of nationalism places it
further at an ambivalent position. Its dual role is well documented by
Partha Chatterjee. He writes:

Nationalist thought, in agreeing to become "modern" accepts the claim to universality of this "modern" framework of knowledge. Yet it also asserts the autonomous identity of a national culture. It thus simultaneously rejects and accepts the dominance, both epistemic and moral of an alien culture. (Nationalist 11)

The divided loyalty of nationalism and its hybrid status make it the site of ideological confrontation. The struggle between various participants for hegemony is inherent in the united effort for freedom. According to Aijaz Ahmad, nationalist indifference to economic disparity and social underdevelopment in Indian society and its artificial construction of cultural homogenity make it a bourgeois project. Nationalism was used by the bourgeoisie to construct its hegemonic project. Aijaz Ahmad observes in his essay, "Third Word Literature and the Nationalist Ideology":

For the bourgeoisies and the petty bourgeoisies, which arose within the colonial context, the "nation" was a
convenient site at which to construct their own hegemonic projects, in opposition to colonialism but also to displace the preceding and existing pluralities of the indigenous society . . . . In this alternative tradition too, in other words, there has been a fundamental tendency to assume that the "nation" is the dialectical opposite of colonialism and that anticolonialism (or anti-imperialism) is, therefore, the real content of all nationalism. (133)

The twin goals of nationalism -- to overthrow colonialism and to displace the preceding and existing pluralities -- explains its desire to formulate a new system displacing the existing colonial one. So nationalist displacement progresses towards two directions. One is the displacement of colonialism, second is the displacement of the traditional plural -- system. The rudimentary hybridity of nationalism and the construction of consensus in its very constitution makes this transition a highly complex arena for collaboration and confrontation at various levels. Edward Said comments on this transition when he writes:

The national bourgeoisies and their specialised elites, of which Fanon speaks so ominously, in effect tended to replace the colonial force with a new class - based and ultimately exploitative one, which replicated the old colonial structures in view terms. (*Culture* 269)

So the national bourgeoisie that came to power displacing the colonial rulers continue to show the class character of the former rulers and ultimately become a repetition of the old order. The transfer of power becomes superficial and fails in establishing the hegemony of the
suppressed. Kalyan Sinha in *This Time of Morning*, establishes "India Centre" at Boston in 1935, "with the object of stirring public opinion in favour of India's freedom" (TTM 57). Inspired by the western rational scientific thought Kalyan is a strict disciplinarian and a ruthless figure.

It is true that the confrontation between the oppressor and the oppressed results in a system that inherits the values of both the oppressor and the oppressed. The ultimate victory of the oppressed doesn't enable them to reclaim their original culture. According to Ashis Nandy it produces a system which is "either an exact replica of the old one or a tragicomic version of it" (*Traditions* 34). So there is a continuity between the oppressor and the oppressed. The subordinated is never a "pure" victim. Nandy explains, "One part of him collaborates, compromises and adjusts; another part defies, "non-cooperates", subverts or destroys, often in the name of collaboration and under the garb of obsequiousness" (*Traditions* 43). Thus the emergence of the nationalist government is accompanied by the reemergence of the colonial tendencies in a new form. Colonialism begets another form of colonialism alienating leaders like Devi who do not belong to the "new aristocracy" the "new privileged around the Cabinet table" (SND 130). It is in Kalyan Sinha that the authoritarian tendency, which was part of the colonial form of functioning is explicit. His method of functioning is neither liberal nor democratic. Sahgal comments: "He sought neither advice nor consultation" but "merely communicated decisions" (TTM 88). Kalyan's individualistic behaviour and the Prime Minister's admiration for Kalyan's attitude suggests the acceptability of his style of functioning in
that particular system. Extreme scientism, individualism and his rational approach amounts to his cold, inhuman, ruthless behaviour. The liberal tradition of nationalism is overpowered by inhuman authoritarianism.

In Antonio Gramsci's opinion the revolutionary class must establish cultural hegemony over its opponents in addition to the seizing of political power. According to him the revolution will not be complete without such a "cultural revolution" (Prison Note Books 452-453). Considering the Indian situation in this light, one finds that the economic direction of the society was little altered by the transfer of power. Moreover the reorganisation of the political order in the post-independence era fails in effecting a total structural transformation. Thus the old order continues in new terms. Sahgal writes: "There was an intellectual vacuum a hundred and fifty years old to be filled in the country and it had to be filled by people who thought themselves" (DS 18). The failure of the independent nations to evolve a new self may be because of its inability to establish its hegemony in political, economic and cultural realms. In other words the dominance of the West continues in the postcolonial nations though in widely different ways.

Opposing the colonial regime and at the same time carrying its legacy, denouncing the traditional social structure, and at the same time compromising with it, the nationalist politics shows its ambivalent attitude and lays bare the fluid state of cultural transition in postcolonial Indian society.
Nayantara Sahgal's novels reveal this fluidity of postcolonial culture and illustrate the traumas that it undergoes in the private and public spheres. In an essay, "Politics, Culture and the Public Sphere: Towards a Postmodern Conception" Nancy Fraser writes: "public sphere is a site where social meanings are generated, circulated, contested, and reconstructed. It is a primary arena for the making of hegemony and of cultural common sense" (287-288). Allowing the discursive construction of social problems and social identities this concept situates discursive processes in their social-institutional context. Moreover it enables us to study the ways in which culture is embedded in social structure. The various stages of the cultural transition is apparent in Sahgal's texts. Let us examine the public sphere where the transition from a traditional to a modern westernised society is depicted. The disenchantment with the nationalist politics and culture and its inability to achieve the long cherished goals of freedom movement is a recurring theme in almost all novels. Novels dealing with the early post-independence period reveal optimism compared with the desperate mood of the later novels where the reemergence of the colonial culture in a different form and its oppressiveness are depicted.

We have already seen that the cultural transition in the postcolonial period does not progress in a linear fashion. The rejection of pre-colonial political institutions and the acceptance of the British colonial rule denotes the transition from the "despotic", "arbitrary" and "tyrannous" system to what is expected to be a liberal democratic one.
But this transition is not as abrupt as it appears to be. Quoting Christopher Bayly, David Washbrook and Frank Perlin, Partha Chatterjee writes that the early colonial regimes were continuations of prior indigenous regimes and the gradual transition from old regimes to the colonial regimes took place during the period between 1750 and 1850. Intervening in the structural contradictions in the precolonial society from within, the colonialists resolved the contradiction by providing a centralizing militarist regime and founded a regime based on "modern European principles, different both from the old regime and the early colonial regimes" (Chatterjee, *Nation* 27). The early expectation of a liberal democratic rule was far removed from the actual authoritarianism practised by the colonial rulers.

Authoritarian tendencies express itself in leaders like Kalyan Sinha. Gyan Singh in *Storm in Chandigarh* joins the rank of people like Kalyan. Gyan Singh, the Chief Minister of Punjab, is in conflict with the Haryana Chief Minister, Harpal Singh, for the capital city of Chandigarh. Gyan practices the deceptive politics which helps him to attract people. His words and deeds contradict each other. Sahgal writes: "During his work in the refugee camps near Delhi he had been able to establish personal contacts, even convey an assurance he had at times been far from feeling" (SC 41). He exploits the Punjabi's pride in their language to form a separate state so that he can become the Chief Minister of Punjab. Gyan is quite successful in this. He is the kind of leader who uses the strength and weakness of the masses for personal ends. Jit Sahni's comment on the contemporary political leadership explicates Gyan
Singh's style of functioning clearly. Jit comments: "Those people talking about leadership mean strength" (SC 51). Jit's comment alludes to the changing notions of leadership and the growing individualism, violence and oppressiveness.

The so called nationalist phase in the early post-independence period shows the dual face of nationalist politics -- its rhetoric in favour of the poor and its real bourgeois, pro-capitalist policies, its democratic pretensions and real authoritarian practice. Thus the nationalist colonialist confrontation resulted in the construction of a new hegemonic power that combined various political philosophies, class interests, religious beliefs and cultural diversities and that which continued the colonial form of functioning. It alienated the liberal minded people and marginalised the weaker sections. Sonali is a victim of the wrath of this power centre.

Sonali has been demoted and humiliated by the authorities by sending her back to state service where there was no vacancy at her level. Democracy has become a mockery and she feels that "the world's largest democracy was looking like nothing so much as one of the two-bit dictatorships we had loftily looked down upon" (RLU 26). If Sonali is punished through a humiliating demotion Bhushan is imprisoned on charges of conspiracy along with political leaders like Bhaiji, Yusuf, Iyer, Sen, Pillai and Dey. Actually Bhushan's first meeting with his "fellow conspirators" is in the jail. Rishad who dies in a bomb blast turns violent against a violent system which is controlled by the "ignorant and
uncultured" (SND 75) professional politicians. Usman Ali resigns his Vice Chancellorship because of student violence as well as total failure of the government to support his moves to bring back order. Observing the violence within the campus in the larger perspective he feels that the trouble within the University campus is not a matter of educational reform "but an illness of the whole society and one whose remedies would reach out to many areas outside education" (SND158). So violence has to be considered as a social phenomenon that spreads its tentacles on all aspects of life.

Sanad and Harish are products of an educational system that violently alienates the native from his own traditional language and culture. Bewildered by the displacement Ammaji exclaims, that she is worried about the "alchemy by which it transforms" her children and grand children "whose entire outlook and manner had been so moulded as to leave not the suspicion of an Indian" (TH 17) about them. Sanad and Harish represent the whole generation of English educated Indians alienated from their own native tradition. The state sponsored violence filters into the familial and personal realms acquiring various manifestations. Some of the characters like Mona resort to self-torture living in seclusion suppressing her frustration and anguish through fasts and prayers.

The curious combination of the orthodoxies and progressivism, authoritarianism and liberalism unravels the new government's divided loyalties. The nationalist movement was a site of struggle between
different classes, races and interest groups as it brought together large sections of society with conflicting interests against colonial rule. In her essay, "Class Alliances and the Nature of Hegemony: the Post-Independence Indian State in Marxist Writing" Kalpana Wilson claims that the independent state formed by the nationalists "thus became the focal point for a number of different contradictions whose strength varied over time: contradictions between different sections of the dominant classes, between the interests of the imperialist and indigenous capital, as well as between the producing classes and those who appropriated their surplus" (State and Nation 250). These inner contradictions reveal the ambivalence fundamental to the nationalist state. The appearance of nationalist government as progressive and liberal is negated by its authoritarian and inhuman practices and the compromises that it arrives at with various orthodoxies, religious as well as moral. This incongruity between the image and the object explains the essential duality of its character and suggests its similarity with psychic divisions.

Sumer Singh in The Day in Shadow represents the new generation of politicians who engage themselves in corruption and flamboyant politics that develop along with authoritarianism. A product of the bourgeois capitalist politics, Sumer is a queer mixture of glamour and politics. Sahgal writes: "It was hard to say how far he was astute politician, how far just glamour boy" (DS 12). Sumer Singh has a poor academic record and after his failure in the IFS entrance examination he thinks about joining films. It is then that the offer of a Congress ticket comes his way. He can not resist the offer as the "ruling Party's attention
had been flattering and politics had opened up possibilities that films would not have done" (DS 112-113).

The emergence of people like Sumer Singh marks the beginning of professionalism and personal ambition in politics. The emergence of glamorous politicians like Sumer Singh indicate how the political parties failed in focusing on their own ideals. Their growing alienation from the masses forces them to depend on the glamour of election gambits like Sumer Singh. But the damage caused by such opportunistic policies to the socio-cultural development of the nation is immense. Sahgal writes, "... a photogenic profile did not seem nearly enough qualification for the difficult decision--making that awaited his Ministry" (DS 12).

Though corrupt, Sumer always takes care to court popular support. Sumer Singh arrives at a secret contract with foreign countries allowing them to mine for petroleum without the knowledge of the Cabinet Minister, Sardar Sahib. It is a sign of his secretive moves for money and power while keeping a clean image in public. Thus the corrupt, deceptive and flamboyant Mr. Sumer Singh is a typical bourgeois politician who works against the interests of the nation while being part of the government at the centre. Sumer's anti-national policies in favour of the multinational powers denote his allegiance with neo-colonial powers. His deceptive politics allows him to keep a clean image while engaging himself in corrupt practices. The emergence of deception, corruption and selfish individualism point towards the embourgeoisiation of Indian society. But even this bourgeois transformation remains incomplete. Speaking about the incomplete nature of the transition in colonial India
Sumit Sarkar writes:

So many of the aspirations aroused in the course of the national struggle remained unfulfilled -- the Gandhian dreams of the peasant coming into his own in Ram-rajya (the rule of the legendary and the ideal god-king Ram) as much as the left ideals of social revolution. And as the history of independent India and Pakistan (and Bangladesh) was repeatedly to reveal, even the problems of a complete bourgeois transformation and successful capitalist development were not fully solved by the transfer of power of 1947. (Modern 4)

It is these absences and failures that form the back drop for the two novels of Sahgal, *A Situation in New Delhi* and *Rich Like Us*. In these two novels the ruling class assumes a dominant oppressive presence shedding its liberal democratic and humanist pretensions. Shivraj in *A Situation in New Delhi* is the embodiment of nationalist spirit. His death coincides with the culmination of the whole value system based on democratic, humanist principles and the beginning of a violent totalitarian state.

Postcolonial Indian history gives enough evidences of the alternative rise and fall of liberal and authoritarian tendencies. This sort of a play reveals the interrelationship between the two. When we overthrow a violent state power through an authoritarian method it ensures the creation of a new violent system and so the history of such a society becomes a continuing drama of violence. Ashis Nandi's comment on this problem is worth quoting:
...a violent and oppressive society produces its own special brands of victimhood and privilege and ensures a certain continuity between the victor and the defeated, the instrument and the target, the interpreter and the interpreted. As a result, none of these categories remain pure. So even when such a culture collapses, the psychology of victimhood and privilege continues and produces a second culture which becomes, over time, only a revised edition of the first. (Tradition 38)

Gandhiji stresses the fact that counter violence only establishes the permanence of violence, on the other hand non violent resistance can create a new society devoid of violence. Most of the heroes and heroines in Sahgal's novels advocate a non-violent resistance and those who advocate violence are presented as failures. The non-violent method is based on the moral strength of the individual rather than on their physical strength. The rape of a girl, Madhu and the violence in the University campus in the novel A Situation in New Delhi indicate its extensive influence. But in Rich Like Us authoritarianism and violence become an all pervading entity reaching out from the social to the individual level.

Sonali feels suffocated in this atmosphere. She feels: "if we could be certain of one fact, it was that everything was not all right" (RLU 23-24). The whole tradition of liberal democracy has been thwarted by the reemergence of these dark forces of authoritarianism, corruption, violence and oppression. Sonali remembers her father's words: "This was a democracy, he said, only because we believed it was, and felt morally
responsible about keeping it one. Two decades of parliamentary democracy would go up like a Divali cracker if this nonsense were allowed to go on" (RLU 152). The demolition of the democratic structure is preceded by the surfacing of the repressed elements in the post-independence Indian psyche. It may result in total breakdown of the mind effecting total despair.

Many of the ardent nationalists like Sonali's father and Sardar Sahib have experienced this helplessness facing the menace of authoritarianism. Liberal minded people are alienated from the power structure which reveal the growing menace of authoritarianism. Kailas and Rakesh look bewildered in the political scene dominated by leaders like Kalyan, Visal Dubey and Saroj in Storm in Chandigarh, Raj and Simrit in The Day in Shadow, Devi and Usman in A Situation in New Delhi, Sonali, Rose and Mona in Rich Like Us meet with the same fate in different contexts.

The alienation experienced by these characters is a sign of the displacement in the value structure. Violent oppression by the state and ideological and cultural difference between the rulers and the ruled breed alienation. It in turn generates violence. The violent resistance of the alienated sections can be seen as a byproduct of the alienating policies of the government. Devi in A Situation in New Delhi feels alienated in the Cabinet. Devi "felt queerly isolated. The Party, the great sheltering Party under whose tutelage she had grown, was now an entity outside her" (129). Devi who fails to adjust with the new breed of
politicians and their new set of values, feels isolated. Devi's feeling of loneliness springs from her estrangement from the party which was all in all for her. Everything outside her, including her own party changes for the worse. But Devi resists the transformation. When the political power falls into the hands of a limited few who discard all kinds of democratic norms she feels isolated in the Cabinet.

The appalling waste and the mindless mess shock Sahgal and she visualises a time when India will be liberated from the bondage. Referring to Sahgal's vision Shyam Asnani in his article, "New Morality in the Modern Indo-English Novel . . ." writes: "A trenchant defender of human values, Sahgal wishes the generation to come out of the shackles of bondage to the air of freedom and freshness to break off the orthodox rules and conventions that make people fearful of each other" (115). Sahgal's refusal to compromise with the establishment is evident here. It is to be noted here that the conscious and the unconscious, form a dialectic being part of the same psyche. In a similar way the liberal democracy and authoritarianism are part of the same dialectical process that is central to the capitalist construction of postcolonial Indian society. Authoritarianism erupts and takes over democracy during critical situations. Caught in this drama of collaboration and confrontation the postcolonial subject becomes the site of unending conflicts.

The psychic confrontation and division manifest itself in various traumatic experiences in the fictional space of Sahgal. The ambivalent and many voiced texts that depict the broken psyche, the crumbling
families and the socio-political confrontation naturally originate from the conflict ridden postcolonial Indian society and its turbulent neurotic experiences. Sahgal's assimilation of these multiple movements, the overlapping of the public and the private and their complex interrelations naturally result in ambivalent positions. The West that instituted an autocratic regime in India follows a democratic system in its own country. So its autocratic strategy in the colonies and its democratic practice in its own native land expresses the double standard that it adheres to. This fact alludes to the necessity to differentiate the disparate roles of the West in its own homeland and in the colonies. So the colonialist policies cannot be fully identified with the Western value system just as it can never be dissociated from it. So the West as experienced in the colonies is different from its original face in its own country. Moreover the Western economic order and the value system -- dominantly bourgeois capitalist -- differ from their representations in the colonies.

However the intimate relationship between the colonial policies and the domestic agenda remain intact. The reception of the Western culture by the natives further problematises the position of the West in a colony. Homi Bhabha refers to this problem in one of his articles. Referring to a Hindi translation of the Bible he writes:

As a signifier of authority, the English book acquires its meaning after the traumatic scenario of colonial difference, cultural or racial, returns the eye of power to some prior, archaic image or identity. Paradoxically, however, such an image can neither be 'original' -- by virtue of the act of
repetition that constructs it -- nor 'identical' -- by virtue of the difference that defines it. Consequently, the colonial presence is always ambivalent, split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference. (Location 107)

Apart from the difference in articulation Bhabha identifies the difference in reception, which varies from culture to culture. So the Western culture perceived and understood by Indians is different from the original. This leads us to Bhabha's claim that hybridity exists at the very centre of colonial authority. It further enhances the ambivalence experienced by the colonized subject. On the one hand he cannot belong to the traditional Indian culture as he has been alienated from it because of the Western impact and on the other hand he cannot fully identify with the West because of his racial background and also because of its difference from the original.

So the predicament of a postcolonial Indian is quite ambiguous and the dual ideological struggles occurring in a postcolonial society "against the ideological basis of the traditional order on the one hand, and against colonial hegemonisation on the other" (Panikkar, 86) becomes even more ambiguous because of the heterogeneous nature of tradition and the duplicity of colonial authority.

Sanad in *A Time to Be Happy* reveals this dilemma. He experiences a sense of non-belonging both in India and in England. His existence is compared to that of a carbon copy in one of the passages:
"I've always wanted to go to England," he continued, "to see what the original is like". . . . "The thing of which I am a carbon copy," he said. (TH 231)

The use of the term "carbon copy" aptly explains the English educated Indian's association with the original English culture. He is similar, but not the same. Though he claims authenticity he could never attain it. His displaced self fails to identify with the West though he has lost his Indian identity.

Homogenising the cultural diversity of postcolonial India through the discourse and practice of modernity the colonial discourse remoulded not only the society and politics but Indian historiography as well by introducing European concepts like medieval/ modern, feudal/ capitalist, and the like which are used to describe the European social formation. Dipesh Chakrabarty in his essay, "Postcoloniality and the Artifices of History: Who Speaks for 'Indian' Pasts?" aptly comments: "Indian history, even in the most dedicated socialist or nationalist hands, remains a mimicry of a certain 'modern' subject of 'European' history and is bound to represent a sad figure of lack and failure. The transition narrative will always remain 'grievously incomplete'" (Contemporary Post colonial 239). The absences and gaps in the transition narrative point towards the inability of Indian historiography to evolve a theory and method of its own to evaluate the peculiar historical and cultural problems of India. In its absence the discourse of history becomes a mimicry. The same is true in the case of individuals as well. Harish is a typical example.
Harish, in *A Time to Be Happy*, is a Westernised Indian who feels more at home in the West than in India. Harish says, "My dear fellow, to tell you the truth, I'm far more at home in Paris or Rome than in the South" (TH 16). Harish "whose entire outlook and manner had been moulded as to leave not the suspicion of an Indian about him" (TH 17) marries a traditional woman, Maya, who fails to become "a graceful hostess to his European friends" (TH 18). According to him this marriage is the only mistake that he has committed. Harish's sense of displacement in India is the result of his education and upbringing that left nothing Indian in him except the colour of his skin. The same experience of displacement connects him with the postcolonial Indian milieu that sets the conditions for this cultural dislocation.

Authoritarianism goes hand in hand with violence. Both are signs of the growing oppressiveness of the ruling class. The post-independence scene in India as portrayed in Sahgal's novels is marked by corruption, violence and authoritarianism. Man and State appear as oppressors whereas woman and society assume the role of victims. Violence instituted by man over woman is not just physical, but it surfaces in the form of indifference, communication gap, arrogance, cynicism and even divorce settlements. A communication gap torments many of Sahgal's female characters. Saroj in *Storm in Chandigarh* feels that contact without communication is like a "mountain" (226) that lay between her and Inder. Simrit in *The Day in Shadow* has similar experiences with her husband Som. The writer observes: "Talk was a missing link between her and Som between her and his world. She had a famishing
need for talk. She was driven to a quiet desperation for want of it" (93). In both these instances it is the ego of the man that violently acts upon the female.

The indifference with which Ram in *Rich Like Us* treats Mona his first wife is another instance of violence. The ranee in *Mistaken Identity* is another victim of a husband's indifference. In both these cases polygamy, a traditional practice, keeps both Mona and ranee alienated from their husbands. Sahgal projects humanism and love as against violence. It is "an undercurrent" and "also a solution to political confrontations, social evils and individual conflicts" (Sarma, 43) in Sahgal's aesthetics.

It is this inability to succumb to the authoritarian regime and decadence in the personal and political realms that throw Sahgal's characters into loneliness. In *The Day in Shadow*, Simrit is totally alienated from the whole family only because she demands love from her husband. Her resistance to his autocratic methods throws her into total darkness where she stands "feeling as if she had been pitched into an indifferent outer nothingness cut off from light and sound" (98). Here also it is Simrit's rebellious nature and her rejection of the traditional role of womanhood that alienates her from her family and the society.

Sanad in *A Time to Be Happy* feels estranged because of his colonial education. He says, "I don't belong entirely to India. I can't. My education, my upbringing, and my sense of values have all combined to
make me unIndian" (147). Finally he overcomes the alienation by studying Hindi, spinning and marrying Kusum who possesses almost all the accomplishments of traditional India. Here the characters who were alienated are the ones who resist the dominant ideology. Their inability to conform to the accepted norms alienates them from the social milieu. The just and idealist are alienated from the ruling political system. Authoritarianism rules. It naturally breeds resistance. The consolidation of opposition may take the shape of a violent revolution advocated by Rishad. How ever the violence advocated by him is a sign of the violent social system that prevails. Rishad believes that a violent social system demands violent resistance. The presence of violence, corruption and decay in the political life is evident in Rishad's words:

They would be people who felt a recoil from the waste and affluence the country could not afford, hatred at the contrasts, determination that these must end. 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)

Rishad's comment points towards various malady's that affect the postcolonial Indian society: corruption, the indifference towards the problems of the poor and the marginalised, protection of vested interests and the decadent politics. The receding of the liberal democratic nationalism and the reemergence of the colonial values in a different
form are the two movements that characterise this social transformation. Rishad's alienation from the ruling structure and his revolutionary spirit originates from his ability to negate the existing system. He defies his association with the decadent political system through this violent negation which finally takes away his life.

Raj in *The Day in Shadow*, Visal Dubey in *Storm in Chandigarh*, Usman in *A Situation in New Delhi*, Sonali in *Rich Like Us* and Rakesh in *This Time of Morning* also feel this necessity to resist the reemergence of colonial practices. But unlike Rishad they are part of the establishment and they resist the unwelcome changes from within adopting a nonviolent method. Raj is an independent member of Parliament. Visal Dubey is a senior IAS officer, Usman is a Vice chancellor, Sonali is an IAS officer demoted to the state service, and Rakesh is an IFS officer. What is common in them is their involvement in the present system and their ideological leaning towards nationalist movement that advocated democracy and liberal humanism. They resist decadent practices like corruption, autocratic tendencies, violence and deceptive politics both in the personal and political fields. Though Rakesh is able to change the temperament of Kalyan through communication, Raj, Visal, Usman and Sonali find little hope in the end. Raj, though successful in uniting with Simrit has a distant gleam of transformation when he says, "Revolutions don't begin with an announcement" (DS 230).
Dubey's position is even graver as he finds no hope of a reconciliation of the opposites. What he feels in the end is summed up by Sahgal in these words: "All he felt was kinship with Harpal, who lay in hospital for no reason he could understand, and with Saroj, another kind of victim" (SC 243). While Usman actively participates in agitations against violence Sonali immerses herself in the past. Sahgal leaves little hope of a political transformation though she is more optimistic while dealing with personal relationships. This seems to be contradictory. Often Sahgal's characters resolve the problems in married life through a divorce or a separation from husband. Simrit, Rashmi, Ranee and Saroj follow such a solution. Sonali keeps herself away from the very idea of marriage. By adopting such a stance they challenge the family, the smallest social institution, and delink themselves from the existing frame of life which is authoritarian and build up a new relationship based on freedom. But Sahgal fails in employing such a positive approach in the political field as she finds no positive indication in the real political practices of her contemporary Indian society.

Sonali confronts a political system that demands her slavish adherence. Sonali wonders, "where had the tradition we were trying to build gone wrong" (RLU 24). Sahgal attempts an analysis of this problem through her novels. Colonial values reappear in different manifestations during the post-independence period. It ranges from individual characteristics to the policies of the State. Kalyan's authoritarian politics, Sumer Singh's corrupt practices, Gyan Singh's lust for power, violence in the University campus, the indifferent Government
in *A Situation in New Delhi* and the institutional violence in *Rich Like Us* refer back to the violent enslavement of the colonial period. The futility of freedom that failed to materialise its cherished ideals finds expression in *Rich Like Us*.

Republic Days had come and gone, with caparisoned elephants and camels, smiling school children and folk dancers, MIG-215 screaming across the sky, tanks dipping their muzzles in salute to the President, all Made in India, and so was the beggar, made before the MIGs and the tanks, and still a beggar. In fact we had both new and hereditary poverty staring through the tall glass doors of five-star buildings. (150)

The contrasting images of MIG 215 and the beggar, suggest a lot about the Government's policies, programmes and priorities. Signs of a violent enslavement like autocracy, curruption, violence, the evil link between politicians and industrialists, decadent politics and authoritarianism that developed through these years find its culmination in the Emergency. The whole development is also linked with the "embourgeoisment" of the society in the postcolonial context.

Being a divided society postcolonial society is the site of unending power struggle. The peculiar nature of its power structure is described by Hamza Alavi as having a general capitalist mode of production. But, the State is not fully controlled by any particular "ruling class" as it is the site of the conflict between the native bourgeoisie, the metropolitan bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisies of the other advanced capitalist
countries. All these groups fight to preserve their own class interests though no one has got full control over the State.

The prevalence of such a complex ideological context influences the social as well as the personal behaviour. The loss of idealism and the extreme desire for money and power, the loss of intimacy and the growing individualism are all signs of the peculiar growth of bourgeois modernity in India. Here rejection entails a reappearance. Regarding the social transition depicted in Nayantara Sahgal's novels Manmohan Bhatnagar writes:

Her novels truthfully depict the gradual deterioration in the political life of the country from the post-independence period, when titans were at the helm of affairs, with their eyes on heaven, to the stage, when liliputians have come to the fore giving ideological garb to their personal craving for power and using men as means to that end. However, all her novels have one character or the other who fights for the sake of the humanitarian values, and even though he may be outrun by the pace of developments, at least a trail is blazed following which a fight can be waged. *(The Fiction 86)*

The sudden fall from a glorious ideal to the depth of political decadence create a vacuum, an absence in the psyche, unable to cope up with this quick turn of fortunes. It is these absent spaces that inform Sahgal's novels. The post-independence India is a figure of lack. Absences and failures mark this period of great transition. The Gandhian dream of Ramrajya, the left ideals of socialist revolution and
the capitalist desire for a total bourgeois transition were not achieved by
the transfer of power (Chakraborty, 227). It is in this background of
"absences" and "failures" that Indian postcolonial literature weaves its
texture in the post-independence period.

We have already discussed the references to the growing alienation
of the masses from the State and the increasing violence, in the novels of
Nayantara Sahgal. To a certain extent alienation is a product of the
blind observance of the Western democratic system. The constitution, the
legal order, the federal set up, the concept of development and the very
parliamentary democracy, the pillars on which the independent India is
built, came to India as colonial package. There is very little that can be
considered as belonging to indigenous tradition. Analysing the
heterogeneous nature of the traditional order, G.N. Devy finds two chief
components in the traditional order, Marga and Desi. According to him :

The traditional sense of parampara in India contains two
essential components : Marga -- the metropolitan or
mainstream tradition and Desi -- regional and subcultural
traditions. Indian culture has a very long history of
exchange and tension between the two. It would be
appropriate to maintain that the addition to this
relationship of a "Western" intellectual tradition extended
the relationship, without altering it radically. Thus the
modern Indian sense of "tradition" should be described as a
tripartite relationship involving desi - parampara,marga -
parampara and western tradition, each of which conflicts
and collaborates with the remaining two in a variety of
ways. (Amnesia 18)
By identifying the two streams, *Margā* and *Desi* in Indian tradition G.N.Devy points towards the multiplicity of our tradition. It is true that the inner dynamics of traditional, intellectual and cultural life varies according to difference in caste, class and parampara. But at the same time there existed a common network of religion which allowed these diverse traditions to exist without opposition and to effect a synthesis.

Colonial subjugation of India is followed by cultural transformations. With the scientific spirit imbibed from the Western rationalist tradition they turned back towards their own traditional roots to reinterpret and reform the age old practices. The influence of the rationalistic scientific spirit helped the Indian reformers to sideline the superstitious practices and turn to the pure vedic philosophy. Social reformists and political leaders from Raja Ram Mohan Roy to Mahatma Gandhi belong to the various stages of this new emerging tradition which inspired the Nationalist movement. Regarding the multiplicity of Indian culture D.D. Kosambi writes: "The endless variety is striking, often incongruous. Costume, speech, the physical appearance of the people, customs, standards of living, food, climate, geographical features all offer the greatest possible differences"(1). Kosambi points towards the economic disparity and the cultural variations that exists in India. Like many other thinkers both Devy and Kosambi identify the essential multiplicity and confluence of Indian culture.

Sahgal alludes to this cultural diversity in India by presenting characters belonging to various cultural, religious and racial
backgrounds. The presence of Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Christians and Europeans as characters in Sahgal's novels contribute to this multiplicity. *A Situation in New Delhi* develops around characters like Michael, Usman and Devi. *Mistaken Identity* has a rich religious and political variety in Bhushan, Usman, Razia, Pillai, Sylla, Sen, Bhaiji and Nauzer. The diversity of political ideologies presented through these characters is also significant. *Plans for Departure* presents characters like Sir Nitin Basu, Miss Anna Hansen, Henry Brewster, Madhav, Lulu, Nicholas and Stella; different in opinion, attitudes, political belief, racial background as well as religious belief. Similar pattern is followed in the other novels as well. The diversity does not end with characters. It is evident in the narrative itself. The speech diversity and the variety of voices embedded in the narrative of Sahgal explains the power of the writer to reveal the essential multiplicity of Indian social life. Sahgal is also aware of the wide gap between social groups within Indian society. According to her India cannot claim a uniform social development and as a result people live in different worlds: "some in yesterday, some in tomorrow, some in middle ages". (SND 42)

R. Sudarshan, writing about constitution observes: "A liberal legal order, legitimated by democratic consensus, remained an aspiration of the nationalist movement. But when the opportunity arrived for framing a constitution incorporating new ideas, continuities with colonial history proved more important" (60-61). As a result the constitution, legal order and the federal democratic structure fail to solve the problems of the multilingual multicultural nation like India. Sudarshan has more to
India's federal structure finds it increasingly difficult to accommodate the growing consciousness of cultural-linguistic identities... the continued erosion of State autonomy through central control over the legislative authority of the states and their leadership has diminished their capacity to contain a variety of social conflicts. The judiciary may again have to provide 'relief' to an impotent political process by converting into constitutional discourse critical issues that are best handled in terms of political discourse. This is a legacy of the very nature of the Indian Constitution. At the same time the judiciary is ill-equipped to handle grave problems arising out of the assertion of 'Hindu nationalism' and Muslim 'fundamentalism' or the claims of Other Backward Classes for employment quotas, or, for that matter, inter-state reparian disputes. (84)

The failure of the federal structure to accommodate the multiplicities of India, the growing tension between the centre and the states, the weakness of the constitution and the inability of the judiciary in handling issues related to communalism, casteism and the inter-state disputes reveal the inapt system that prevails in India, modelled on the European institutions.

Apart from the institutions a decisive influence over the postcolonial society is instituted by colonial modernity. Modernity is central to both colonialism and nationalism. In one of his essays on the structure of nationalist discourse entitled, "On the Structure of Nationalist Discourse" Sudipta Kaviraj writes: "Nehru's nationalism
viewed colonialism as the main obstacle to India's path towards a westernized scientific modernity; therefore, in a paradox, removal of European power was the precondition for successful emulation of European history" *(State and Nation* 331). This emulation of the European institutions and practices with a view to spread modernity resulted in the construction of a power structure in the image of the European one.

It is true that the modern rituals and practices like "individualism" and "citizenship" apart from the institutions have been introduced in India by the British rule. Dipesh Chakraborty analyses the introduction of modern individualism in India in his essay, "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for "Indian" Pasts?":

"Many of the public and private rituals of modern individualism became visible in India in the nineteenth century. One sees this, for instance, in the sudden flourishing in this period of the four basic genres that help express the modern self: the novel, the biography, the autobiography, and history. Along with these came modern industry, technology, medicine, a quasibourgeois (though colonial) legal system supported by a state that nationalism was to take over and make its own. (229-230)

But the mimicking of the institutions, legal order, citizenship, and the like can not be treated as a copy of the Western counterparts as "these themes have existed -- in contestation, alliance, and miscegenation -- with other narratives of the self and community that do not look to the
state/citizen bind as the ultimate construction of sociality" (Chakraborty, 232). The modern individualism can be treated as a point of reference to analyse the nature of modernity prevalent in Indian society as depicted in Nayantara Sahgal's novels.

The colonial modernity that filtered into the social and familial space of the colonised nation altered among other things the traditional joint family system. With the development of career opportunities more or less unrelated to their family background individuals belonging to different jatis or the joint families got opportunities to work together outside their own cultural milieu. This helped in the generation of individual identity different from the casteist or communal identity. Sahgal's novels discuss this transition and the growth of individualism in Indian society. This "individualism" can be considered as the essential feature of "modernity". Regarding Sahgal's preoccupation with individuals Manmohan Bhatnagar writes: "The individual is the most important factor in Nayantara Sahgal's thinking. The individual is the criterion with which she judges all issues in politics and religion, sociology and ethics" (The Fiction 86). But individualism in Sahgal's novels affirms the liberation of the individual from controls instituted by the oppressive systems and ideologies and in a more positive sense an effort to transform it.

In an oppressive, totalitarian society individualism turns out to be a revolutionary idea in the hands of the oppressed, just as it can transform itself to a menacing autocratic attitude in the hands of the
wielders of power. While affirming solidarity with humane ideals, Nayantara Sahgal's characters oppose the inhuman power centre. Most of her characters are alone, rejected, negated by the society and family, the embodiments of a broken system. But while concentrating on their individual problems they are also aware of the necessity to relate themselves with other oppressed masses. So while being alienated by the power structure and the mainstream decadent political setup, Sahgal's characters relate themselves to it by resisting this power structure.

Women characters like Simrit, Saroj, Maya, Devi, Sonali, Rose, Anna Hansen, Ranee, Razia and Sylla and male characters like Sanad, Harish, Kalyan, Raj, Visal Dubey, Usman Ali, Dev, Nitin Basu and Bhushan Singh can be seen as individualistic in widely different ways. The secular individualistic characters in Sahgal's novels reveal a contemptuous rejection of the traditional binding ideologies and the recognition of modern secular identity. Simrit in *The Day in Shadow* and Saroj in *Storm in Chandigarh* leave their husband-centred family life to liberate themselves from the power structure of the male dominated society. If they concentrate on themselves it is because of the oppressive society that they have to confront. Having lost the "protective" traditional system and being introduced to the modern notions of equality and freedom, they find it difficult to pursue a slavish existence accepting adversities peacefully "without reason or question" (DS 51). Raj recognises the free spirit behind the personality of Simrit. According to him Simrit "could be that rarity, a woman with a profession, an
independent person living her own life. She didn't need a man for identity or status. There was an intensely private rapture in making and shaping one's own life that few people recognized" (DS 139-140). Simrit's urge for freedom and love was not matched by Som's ruthless dominance. Having lost almost everything during partition, Som's only intention in life is to compensate the loss. He succeeded in achieving his goal but lost the ability to react to the tenderness and love, as he was too much absorbed in his own world of ambition. The individualistic attitude of Som finally results in breaking the bond of marriage.

The displacement of "holy" marriage and the disintegration of family remains a recurring theme in Sahgal. Saroj and Inder have a stormy existence. Suspicion and arrogance destroy their married life which turns out to be "a vanishing search for communication" (SC 25). Inder ignores Saroj as he comes to know about her relationship with a person before marriage and Saroj withdraws into herself. Her "preoccupation with herself" unnerves Inder. Inder's indifference to Saroj in one sense is indicative of his preoccupation with his own self.

A similar individualistic attitude in Leela causes the breakdown of her marriage with Dubey. Leela uses Dubey for her own purpose without ever loving him. The self-centered, possessive Leela, "had selected what she wanted of him : the distinguished escort at parties, the successful civil servant with a promising future, the husband who could be relied upon to take pains with whatever problems she took to him" (SC 71). Marriage has become a torture and Dubey leaves Leela to escape the
If Saroj, Simrit and Visal leave their married life in search of freedom, equality and warm friendship, Sonali rejects the very idea of marriage. Her love for Ravi, a Marxist and a revolutionary during student days and a chief explainer of the Emergency later, fails because of his opportunism. Blinded by ambition and opportunism he becomes "the right hand and left leg of the Prime Minister and her household" (RLU 24). Ravi is a typical middle class bureaucrat who compromises with the system for his own personal benefits. His transformation from a revolutionary to a slavish bureaucrat reveals how the system conditions the individual. Ravi's desire for money and power is contrasted with the idealism of Sonali. His transformation from a young revolutionary to an ambitious bureaucrat is evident in Sonali's words, "... he's so rigid, so bossy, so selfish, if I married him I'd have to agree with him all the time" (RLU 180). If Ravi utilises the political situation in his favour, Dev capitalises on his father's paralysis to capture more power and money. He even goes to the extent of murdering Rose, his stepmother as he suspects her to become an impediment on his way.

The conflict between traditional order, racial and religious and modernity, rational and humane, is mediated in characters like Anna Hansen, Ranee, Razia and Bhushan. Anna Hansen comes out of her European racial background and "her priority was life and freedom first" (PD 62). It is this extreme desire for freedom and self knowledge that led her to India. Anna observes: "it is not the silly wonders I am after. But
what other way can I break out and be me?" (PD 62). Anna's efforts to be on her own is prevalent, though in a very different way, in the Ranee. She breaks the role of a traditional obedient suffering wife to marry Yusuf, a man of her choice.

Rejecting the traditional practice of polygamy and a man who "goes from flower to flower" (MI 40), the Ranee reveals her ability to know herself and act accordingly. In a similar rejection of the religious control Bhushan marries Yusuf's daughter. A "poet" and a "dreamer", Bhushan may have strange "fantasies of wiping out the dividing lines between Hindus and Muslims" (MI 184). Anyway whether it is successful or not it is his fascination for the world of fantasy that enables him to reject the oppressive world of reality. Bhushan like the writer herself uses his imagination to liberate himself from the oppressive ideologies.

The private realm portrayed in her novels is not totally unconnected with the public. At closer analysis it will be clear that the intense self absorption, and a preoccupation with one's own personal problems, visions and imaginations evident in Sahgal's characters originate not out of narrow selfishness but because they have to face dehumanising oppression; political, patriarchal and cultural. The oppressive public sphere which alienate the individuals from the mainstream contribute a lot in the construction of the individualistic private. Establishing the connection between the growing sense of individualism and the alienating social milieu, V. Mohini Madan writes: "There is a growing sense of something alien, a feeling of loneliness, a
finality and farewell. This of course is a corollary of the growing sense of individualism, characterising the novel of the last three decades and more specifically the novels of Nayantara Sahgal" (Indian Literature 125). The private is highly significant in Sahgal's novels. Most often her narrative is preoccupied with the interior landscape.

The domestic in Sahgal's novels is in total disarray. The household of Saroj is a model in this case. Saroj "doesn't care what she looks like from morning till night. The house is in a mess" (SC 53). The total confusion in the domestic sphere, physical as well as psychological is also indicative of the nature of human relationships within it. What they lack in the domestic sphere is order, freedom, equality and peace. Simrit feels "disorganized" living in a country which is "in a bit of a mess with things not in their places, and not nearly enough of them to go round" (DS 14). Living in this mess Simrit longs for discipline as she "loved order and beauty excessively" (DS 15).

The ideals like order, freedom, equality and stability are intimately associated with the concept of modernity. Dubey identifies the thirst for freedom prevalent in all living beings. According to him "there's a yearning for freedom in everything that lives. The way plants grow towards the sun. No power on earth can prevent that happening" (SC 227). In The Day in Shadow Simrit reiterates this love of freedom: "I hate this century except for the freedom it brought for countries and people, especially for women" (35). Freedom and equality are allied goals in the political as well as in the personal realms.
The desire for stable, ordered life is another sign of civilized life. In Sahgal's novels the desire for order and stability is expressed by some of the characters as they are aware of their disintegrated life. Simrit expresses her desire for order and stability during a conversation with Raj. Raj asks, "What do you want out of your life, Simrit?" Simrit answers, "Permanence" (DS 37). Here the world of material reality which is full of chaos is juxtaposed with the desired world, stable and permanent. A resolution to this division between what they possess and what they earnestly desire for is sought in enduring comradeship between human beings. Sanad's association with Kusum, Saroj's love for Visal, Simrit's union with Raj, the friendship between Devi and Usman, Bhushan's association with Yusuf and his daughter and Ranee's escapade with Yusuf are all instances of such comradeship through which they desire to fight for achieving freedom, equality, order and peace. This is one way of crossing the boundaries of limiting individualism.

Like individualism, freedom is another term in the rhetoric of colonial modernity. The concept of freedom differs in India and the West. According to Dipesh Chakraborty, the word 'freedom' "was assimilated to the nationalist need to construct cultural boundaries that supposedly separated the 'European' from the 'Indian'" (233). Intimately associated with the movement for freedom the term is received differently in India. Just as in the case of the term "individualism", "freedom" also undergoes transformation in its reception in India.
Freedom in India meant freedom from oppressive system, political and patriarchal and also freedom from the ego; rather than lawless self-indulgence. Dipesh Chakraborty argues: "Freedom in the West, several authors argued meant Jathechhachar, to do as one pleased, the right to self-indulgence. In India, it was said, freedom meant freedom from the ego, the capacity to serve and obey voluntarily" (235). Here we find the various possibilities of meaning and the essential difference between the Indian and European concepts of freedom. Freedom is one of the central concerns of Nayantara Sahgal. "She views freedom in all its meanings and manifestations. It is personal, political and spiritual at one and the same time. Regarding her obsession with freedom Nayantara Sahgal writes: "I grew up in an India that was not free. But all around me at home, freedom--personal, political, spiritual was a prime value, a necessity" (PV 28). Freedom is presented as a universal experience, latent in all living beings. In Storm in Chandigarh Visal Dubey explores man's extreme desire for freedom: "And in people, since time began, sooner or later, in one way or another, the yearning bursts out and spills over" (SC 227). There is a yearning for freedom in every human being. Visal is giving expression to this basic instinct in man.

Concepts like equality and fraternity find expression in Sahgal's novels. In A Situation in New Delhi Naren conceives a realm of equality where "people met and communicated and shared each other's pain" (SND 146). The concept of equality is not limited to economic considerations. But it develops beyond that to include emotional and temperamental unity. Man woman relationship is the site where Sahgal
develop the concept of equality. Equality leads to fraternity. Here also equal status is associated with the ability to know each other and to understand each other. It is evident in Simrit's questions to Som, "Can't we lie side by side like brother and sister, like friends and talk? Can't a husband and wife be friends?" (DS 96). Sahgal's references to equality, freedom, discipline and order suggest the absence of these ideals within the society.

Nayantara Sahgal's novels discuss the concepts like freedom, discipline, individualism, equality and fraternity in the public and private spheres. The connection between personal discipline, freedom and similar concepts in the domestic and in the public spheres is quite obvious. Speaking about this interrelationship Dipesh Chakraborty writes: "The desire for order and discipline in the domestic sphere thus may be seen as having been a correlate of the nationalist, modernising desire for a similar discipline in the public sphere" (234). The private creeps into the public. The absences in the private project the vacuum in the public sphere. The vacuum in the private sphere is constructed by the absence of love, order and discipline as portrayed in Sahgal's novels. Extending this experience to the public sphere she is trying to fill this vacuum by projecting a philosophy of universal love and fraternity. The coming together of Jason and Gayatri in Plans for Departure refers to this vision. According to A.V.Krishna Rao this union indicates the "ideological intermingling of cultures" and it denotes the "integral vision of the novelist" (119).
We can identify a double movement in Sahgal's novels -- one towards the present and another towards the future -- in which the present is recognised as the site of disorder, inequality and slavish control and yet the characters move away from this space in desiring a discipline that can only exist in an imagined but historical future. This discrepancy creates a vacuum. This vacuum refers to the duality experienced by the postcolonial subject moving in between the real and the imagined. The discrepancy between what is desired and what is acquired and the modifications that the Western bourgeois modernity undergoes within the postcolonial society, reveal the ambivalences that the cultural displacement is subject to within a postcolonial society.