CHAPTER – V

QUEST FOR IDENTITY

The patriarchal limitations are not only just confined women to their domestic area but even their families would not be allowed to come in between them and their professional pursuits. Chitra has the quality to take these gender issues to another plane where we observe the women strive for self-realisation, achievement, dignity to have their own identity portraying them as strong individual beings which would define them differently that makes them stand apart.

Women undergo a plethora of human emotions which make them combat the battles of their lives making them sometimes fall and get back even more strongly. Defeat is not seen in this struggles, where they are synonymous with victory, irrespective of the cultures and countries they live in. They give a new dimension to identity defining their self-hood. The novel sets ‘Oleander girl’ difference its part in India and in America who are trapped in same conditions. A vast difference is perceived between the selfless women and women in abundant freedom who can have her own choices in the adopted land. Karobi is not dependent on men, but the unexpected help and response she gets from those men like Vic and Mitra makes them act as catalysts in her adventure. Hence, she had the freedom to execute her ideas. Karobi’s struggle for her roots i.e. to discover her father is a transition from dependence to independence. This journey makes her adapt and search for her own self-surrounded by all positive and negative experiences. But she finally carries a bundle of joy, where her journey, struggle and efforts do not go futile but elevates her character, where people eagerly wait for her in India to give her a warm welcome.

Women for centuries have remained under the male subjugation not only in India but in the entire world. The holy scriptures of all the religions have put them in confines of the household. But with the spread of education and other external influences and movements urged for women’s emancipation from the traditional bondages. Since then there has been this awakening spirit among women.
The women’s identity has changed over a period of time and the earlier roles are redundant and relegated because of its relational identity. As she realised the duplicity of this she wants to make her own identity by being an individual. She does not appreciate the support of man in this ordeal. Hence, this quest for identity carves a new dimension as a rebel against the traditional image.

The novels of Nayantara Sahgal and Chitra Banerjee are centered on women and the experience of their lifes, making them essentially existentialists. In their journey through life, these two women writers have drawn characters who are fighting their identities in the quagmire of male dominated society. The novels have cured around women trying to find a meaningful existence for themselves where they can exercise their freedoms and choices.

The eminent psychologist Carl Rogers too admitted in ‘On Becoming a Person’ that the sole concern of an individual is to know oneself rather than to learn about the surroundings one belongs to. He said, “It seems to me that at bottom, each person is asking, who am I’, really? How can I get in touch with this real self, underlying all my surface behaviour? How can I become myself?” (16-17). The urge to know oneself, one’s own needs and desires, is at the base of the movement that finally forms ones identity. The characters can be studied according to the needs that they depict in the novels. They can also be assessed on the basis of Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Theory. Nayantara Sahgal’s characters lack gratification of lower needs like love, belonging, safety and self-esteem. They are engrossed and entangled in the struggle for survival in order to achieve these things. Consequently, they remain isolated and suffer silently. They always lead their lives in constant struggle and suffering. Sahgal, being a sensitive artist and a keen observer with brilliant imagination was able to portray the problems faced by women and her personal life lends this theme of quest a close testimony. Identity in diaspora is unpredictable upon many factors, individuals, social and personal as well as general. The diasporic women are always engulfed in the magnitude of opposing cultural forces, which result in the creation of a complex ‘self’, which has different elements that led to its formation. This “self” allows for the possibility of possessing modified aspects of both culture at one time. Identity is not confined to the
choosing between cultures but it is to redefine the terms of cultural practices and customs to fit one’s own experience. Thus, the diasporic Indian identity becomes vague with its changing perspectives on the atmosphere it is living and thus gradually the culture evolves. It gives an opportunity for the diaspora, to create his or their own identity absorbing the best from both the cultures and thus emerge as strong individuals. The modern genre of novel has given a new coinage for women empowerment where the dynamics of Indian women focused on nobility, sacrifice, struggle etc.

The globalization with its influence on the contemporary literature made them explore the boarders to make the cultures evolve as powerful expressions of the voices that were once considered as the subaltern. Many diasporic writers stand as a testimony to the readers with their first hand experience, representing themselves as models, to make the readers understand them in a better way.

In an alien country, their Indian experience in America and the conflict between the traditions of her homeland and the culture of her adopted country makes them torn between the two. Chitra’s fiction explores women, searching for their identity as human beings, independent of their traditional role as a daughter, wife or mother. Though Chitra portrays her protagonists to be stronger but they undergo trauma and pain. She suggests that women should not only determine to assert themselves as individuals but also draw their own limitations only with due importance to education.

Chitra Banerjee’s characters are ungratified at both the levels, lower needs as well as higher needs. Their life is damaged by the traditional social values and the ideology of human behaviour, and it is observed in terms of emotional disturbances they suffer in their lives. The lives of the women are governed by culture executed by male – dominating minds, the patriarchal ideology of life inherited by both men as well as women. Chitra Banerjee, who was one of the co-founders of MAITRI, had the opportunity to work with the immigrant women facing domestic violence in America. Her themes for her stories have been picked up by from these violent incidents faced by women that made her write her first collection of stories “Arranged Marriage” where it had some of the experiences of the immigrant married women who were suffering in their marriages.
During the last few decades, a large number of Indo Anglian novelists have tried to justify the theme of Existentialism. Among them, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao and Nayantara Sahgal have made remarkable attempt in this direction. Sahgal too, is essentially an existentialist novelist. Existential themes like freedom, decision, guilt, alienation, boredom find their way in the pages of the novels of Sahgal.

In 'From Fear Set Free' (London: Victor Gallancy Ltd., 1962, p.13) it is Nehru’s advice about shedding fear and to face the world with conviction that gave Sahgal her strength to choose between an unhappy marriage and a life she wanted to lead. Thus she found the right equation in her life and declared, “There was no need to bury oneself before one was dead and that life was most emphatically meant for living.” (13). She decided to set herself free from fear and oppression, political, or personal, with a determination of Satyagraha. She would not break the fundamental structure of tradition of family.

All the civilized activities should give us a comfortable life. Through her novels, she proved that freedom of expression will only be able to provide perfection in life. According to her, woman should revolt against the meaningless traditions and chauvinistic oppressions that were laid down by the patriarchal society. Sahgal’s marriage to a wealthy businessman Gautam was not able to fulfill her longing for self expression. The conflict that she was constantly facing was to free herself from her unhappy marriage and her determination continued for a long time.

She was caught at the cross roads of the rigorous past, where she has to adjust in an unhappy marriage and a flexible future where divorce can bring her some comfort. Though she can attain divorce legally, it is still a desecration against the customs and traditions that are prevalent in our Indian society. Hence the characters she created in her novels are reflections of her personal emotions.

This chapter deals with the novel The Storm in Chandigarh, where the reader could see a change in the character and attitude of the female protagonist in her novel, where Saroj feels the oppressive need that the duty to the ‘self’ measures greater than the duty to the family or society.
Dubey, a civil servant, in *The Storm in Chandigarh*, has a discussion with Professor Alderich regarding his research work on the role of Brahminism in Indian Culture. He argues that the most effective part of the inheritance is this quality. Dubey says, “Tradition has to be upheld and used in a big enlightened way. But it hasn’t so far. We have got this superb intellectual heritage supporting feeble issues like the preservations of cows, and we don’t seem to be able to climb out of the stagnation onto the high road where the fresh air blows. We have the unholy trappings of traditions going on and on, while the reality of it isn’t there at all (*Storm* 7). The scope of Sahgal’s efforts has been towards at reforming society. She has the courage to expose the injustices against the oppressed, especially, the women. On account of the male chauvinism that was prevalent, clings to traditions and scriptures, ancient codes, sometimes perverts them to their advantage to support their callous and unreasonable attitude towards women in general.

Sahgal is ready to crack the myths and traditions that would hinder reason and reality. The fragile relationship that is between Dubey and Gauri is narrated in such a way where Dubey was unable to put an end to it that has “mindlessly begun.” The relationship they shared together even when they had privacy was never always a physical one. There were times when he enjoyed just the sight of her. He understood Gauri very well and hence he felt that Gauri would also have been content to spend an evening in a quiet conversation. Sahgal opines why between men and women passion easily comes while affection and friendship are so to be cultivated. This friendship revolves over to a different plane of relationship between the opposite sex than immediate urgency of love or sex. In this regard, she puts an emphasis in her novels. But if this culminates to a physical gratification it would not cause a stigma to her but she perceives that the demand for something had lingered in their surroundings, not in their minds that they both surrendered each other in obedience to the exercise expected of them (*The Storm in Chandigarh*. 14).

As one reads her novels, one thinks of these questions: “what does Sahgal’s writings teach? Is it an extramarital relationship?” If it is so, does it not appear like a revolution trying to damage the typical Indian tradition, which she really wants to restore,
as she admits in some situations elsewhere? As per the Union Home Minister’s statement “violence lies very close to the surface in the Punjab” (Storm.1) which is significant that reflects the situation in Punjab. The clash between Gyan singh who adopts the cult of violence and Harpal singh the ideal of non-violence is a clash of their ideologies. But on the domestic front, violence was seen in the face of the male domination in the marital life of Saroj and Inder.

The description of the extra marital relation shows that she has been conscious of the gravity of the problem. But she insists that it is an emotional relationship in marriage rather than the physical relationship that one shares. Storm in Chandigarh: Saroj’s life is covered by loneliness. Robert S. Weiss identified two types of loneliness in his theory of ‘Relational Loneliness’: Loneliness through social isolation and another one through emotional isolation. Social isolation can be resolved by new social contracts whereas the ‘emotional loneliness’ refers to an absence of a reliable person with whom she develops a sort of attachment, just like a life partner. Weiss emphasis that one’s absence of this sort of attachment, one finds a substitution by somebody close or with an intimate bonding. This cannot be compensated by other friends. Saroj in the novel faces this type of loneliness and Inder never cared to involve her in his inner-world. Gauri on the other hand treats herself to be non-pretentious and calls herself a “social butterfly with positively no interest in life beyond my comforts and pleasures (149).

Gauri considers happiness lies in simple things like having a cup of tea in the morning. This un demanding nature attracted her to Dubey. But for Dubey it is the other way round. Hence found Gauri interesting and hence was attracted to her. Her nature made Dubey easy to stray, “Giving came easily to her and he strayed accidentally into that region of her natural, luxuriously feminine bounty”. “Storm in Chandigarh” (14).

Dubey and Inder contrast each other as Dubey is philosophical in regard to love whereas Inder is physical and mechanical. Sex to Inder is just a physical act with a definite beginning and an end, which has no prelude or after play. No soft caresses, physical or mental, outside the confines of the domain of sex. Saroj requests him to touch, feel the quivering of the child in her womb. But Inder does it in a clumsy manner. She observed in him that the companionship which she expected from him was always a
difficult one and it has become meaningless expenditure of time and was restless to always get back to his work. Saroj felt emotional involvement is more important than sexual relationship.

On the contrary, Mara is portrayed in a different perspective who thinks that her husband Jit always was soft for her and wouldn’t meet her small desires. Jit was blind to the excitements that were shown to him by Mara, even her physical beauty. May be that is the reason why she was attracted to Inder who always appeared to be hard. She wants to have “the softness of Jit and hardness of Inder” (47). This is the true predicament of a woman who had a man who will act according to her inner voice. Mara, though an Indian by birth, her foreign education could not make her understand the freedom she was given by her husband and seeks pleasure in the company of Inder illicitly. Her bold and passionate qualities, which were lacking in Saorj, drew Inder close to Mara, not that she has the ideal womanhood.

Sahgal wanted to achieve by living a life filled with emotions on one’s emotional freedom. “Was it wrong to fulfil and integrate oneself through fragments of their natures?” (The Storm in Chandigarh.47). This type of unchecked emotions lead to a sort of disharmony and break the foundation of the society, which she wanted to restore and bring back the lack of freedom or restraint upon emotional life of a woman.

Dubey’s marriage with Leela was merely due to his attraction to her where she was charming with radiating health, vivacity and bubbling with gaiety. She spells radiance all around. But he realized what is that he wanted. He wanted a friend in a wife who could be naked in spirit, to whom one could give the whole of oneself. But the self was soiled and tainted. On the contrary, his wife was selective in giving herself and had selected what she wanted of him. She chose to take, that came with his status. She scintillated in company, in little attentions of multitude. He failed to understand her, she had little to share. He could not recognise her needs and cater to them. Sahgal’s idea of morality does not lay in something that is ordinarily understood. According to her it is a search for value, an attempt to choose the better value, the real value in a situation and not blindly follow what other’s did or what is expected. It is not the superficial aspect
that you see. It would be hypocritical. But it is just like living by your own rules but not somebody else’s.

Saroj felt relaxed in Dubey’s company. She tells him how difficult it is to contain one’s emotions and small weaknesses and lead a pretended life. Most of the time one spends in acting or at least hiding which is very cumbersome to continue that sort of life. That’s why there was transparency in their relationship and Dubey assures that there would be no acting or hiding between them. The relationships can sustain only when two people use the ingredients in various proportions. Though love, affection are essential, they also should be done with great interest as well give some time to build up that relation. Even, sincerity in a relationship is important which eventually might reduce the heartbreak and loneliness of living.

Saroj’s relationship with Inder was only bodily where he failed to look deep into it. In the labour of living together, there had never been that intimacy between them. The union of two people is not only the physical relationship. It is in friendship, understanding and love that makes them reach to their souls. Then one feels assured in that relation and confirms to continue with it. Out of this comes the security when they finally decide to live together. On such grounds men and women build shelters and bring children to birth and grow old in the comfort that they live one in future generations.

Saroj’s liberal upbringing and Inder’s a stipulated nature strikes a contrast between the two. As Krishna Sarma, “Positive living: A Brief Examination of some features of Nayantara Sahgal’s storm in Chandigarh and The Day in Shadow, Journal of writes, “traditional values are stunted and (he) feels mocked and cheated by Saroj’s loss of Virginity before her marriage.”

Inder never left an opportunity to hurt Saroj on her past. Though Saroj revealed her past about her innocuous friend with a body of her age, Inder would exhibit his sadistic pleasure in pricking her past. He felt cheated on her virginity and was humiliated causing him to suffer secret disgrace.

Marriages happened with the consent of the parents, where they happen to meet the families on various occasions and if their children are of marriageable age they would
get them married. But later on small differences crop up leading to wide gaps. Mara felt there was some sense to child marriages where two people growing up and old together, gradually make them realize each other’s needs. Since she married late, when Jit too was old enough she felt their needs were both simpler and more profound. You attain that maturity where you will totally submit yourself. Jit’s nature would be more suitable to a young girl as he is like a romantic lover. But her emotions were more down to earth and simpler.

The conversation between Mara and Inder is a clear example of male ego. Inder discusses about Saroj’s behaviour with Raj where she goes for a walk with Dubey alone. Mara in a lighter way asks if they were involved in any extramarital talk. He was shocked to hear this as if it was like a blow on his face. He bursts out emotionally.

“Don’t say things like that. That Kind of remark disgusts me. The thinking behind it disgusts me. There was a time when such things couldn’t be spoken, or even thought, except with shame. There is no shame now a days, no barriers. Everything is taken lightly. And women talk and behave like man’ (Storm in Chandigarh.92).” The writer points out at the attitude the man has towards women. Most men do not have the courage to openly admit their inner feelings or desires but their haughty, crafty maneuverings evince their outspoken confirmations. Mara also questions him the dominating relation or attitude that Inder has towards Saroj which makes him fail to understand her. This cannot bring any happiness between the couple where the relations are not normal. Mara being a woman was able to clearly explain to Inder.

“She is your wife all right and she has borne your children, but she is not your woman and you are not her man. She flies from you apparently in search of comfort you cannot give her, and you are here drawn to me, almost against your will, for some reach you don’t even understand. So where does that leave us all husbands and wives thought we be? And do our neat labels protect us from our private torments?” (Storm in Chandigarh. 92).” The married couple should understand each other as individuals, fulfilling one another’s emotional needs or cannot attain that real marriage bliss. They understand each other that is sanctioned due to their wedlock but still they are not free from their private tortures or torments. Dubey when once visits Saroj at her house he
offers her to help in the domestic chores but she rejects saying that it is not man’s work. Dubey says, “Comradeship, he was saying, was a concern with the ordinary. Out of that could grow relationships closer and more powerful than any that the fevers of passion could conceive of” (Storm in Chandigarh.110). Sahgal unstrings the myth of romantic love where people would feel like to be in a state of buoyancy. It is not through drifting the heights in sex acts but the relationships that bond them truly as wife and husband are considered as rare moments.

Inder’s tormenting nature persists asking his wife about her past relations. “I was fond of him”, she said wearily, “and I was curious. Is that a Crime?” (Storm in Chandigarh.116) Inder ignores her modesty. Here is another question Sahgal would like to ask “what about premarital sex?” Radical Feminism and Women’s Writing: Only so far and no further – by Chandra Nisha singh. Atlantic Publishers and Distributors. She seems to approve of the crossing the lines once in a while. Sahgal shows how the young minds are curious to know more when they are restricted. They would like to go deep into these emotions but not an indiscriminate choice. When certain restrictions are imposed, their emotional growth gets curtailed. She doesn’t believe in sex as the ultimate act in one’s married life. When marriage sees the life partner as a friend with sympathy and understanding that matters more. She finds it difficult to support when people give importance only to chastity in married life. A woman fails to realize this sort of problems that come up in future, however honest and loyal they might be.

The theme of modern woman’s existential struggle to establish her own identity, in order to assert her individuality surfaces quite often in the novels of the Indian women novelists of the post-Independence era as it can be seen in the works of Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Prawar Jhabvala, Anita Desai and Nayantara Sahgal. Sahgal’s bitterness and agony of marital discord that has resulted in divorce, in her personal life, reflects in her novels, portraying an Indian woman’s struggle, for survival in the present day world and her quest for individual freedom and self-identity. With a profound understanding of feminine sensibility, she explores and voices the mute miseries of millions of married women through her works of fiction. Sahgal’s western education and
parental upbringing, sexual freedom was not at all a taboo, but still it cannot find favourable arguments in the Indian culture.

The predicaments faced by women are from a man’s point of view. Jit was unable to know why he has failed in making Mara understand his efforts to come close to her and make her happy. Though she has a loving husband, Mara still finds some dissatisfaction in her married life. Sometimes, he used to be in and think that she might like that brute force. He thinks, “she wanted some man to drag her, by hair to submission, bring her to a grasping shuddering climax in sex, and brand her personality with his on every waking hour” Storm in Chandigarh (p.120). Jit used to realize immediately that it was not true and Mara is proud and intelligent who would never allow anyone to exploit her.

Saroj finds an alternative to settle her life. She realizes that there is no meaning in continuing a relationship which sans love in it she states this realization “Mere living together under the same roof, only the accumulation of a life time’s living habits, without any real bond of intimacies, in spite of sex and children, the human substances between them dwindling, is nothing but the mockery respect and trust, honesty and freedom, without a thought of dominance” (Storm.18)

Sahgal opines that a woman cannot be suppressed of her emotional independence. She cannot be treated as a mere object without any value to her life. She has to be cared and treated well. She also needs someone to understand her needs rather than appreciate her physical appearance. Sahgal expects woman to be treated in such a way that she would give back more than expected. A woman expects sincerity, sympathy and friendliness so that she would reciprocate it, hundred folds sacrificing herself to work and joy. This is revealed in the lines where Dubey describes Saroj, “She is the kind whose natural climate is affection and one who would give it back in sweat and joy a hundred fold” (pg. 123).

Inder doesn’t agree to what Mara says: one can see how possessive Inder is when he talks to Mara. He says, “Even my shoes are special to me because they are mine.” Mara says, “They are special because they fit you. If they don’t you would throw them
away. And you can’t own a woman even if she is your wife” (Storm.124). Inder mocks at her that she cannot understand the sentiments of India because of her westernization and she being an alien cannot understand these sensitive things. But she retorts that these are the issues that she hates especially when they are burdening the women with these traditions and customs. “Old, useless impossible ideas going on and on. We carry them around like dead wood on our backs. It’s all ours all right, but some of it is rotten. We will die if go on like this. Sometimes I think we are already dead” (Storm .125). Sahgal speaks through Mara, where one can understand that women cannot live under the pressure or tradition or sentiments any more. She needs an identity that gives her a respectable place in the family first then it would be felt in the society. Men like Inder are around, their egos will never make them realize their mistake. Women should be treated as an equal whether it is in your own country or an alien country. She is another human being like any individual.

Vishal Dubey’s empathy for women facing patriarchal prejudice against them are strongly felt when one feels that Vishal Dubey, emerges as the spokesperson of the novelist, when he rightly sums up patriarchal prejudice against women. “A woman was be entitled to a past, not entitled to human huger, human passion or even human error. In the fires and desolations of living she ranked as not quite human” (Storm.190)

Sahgal highlights this point where women still continue to live with the strong heritage and are misfit in today’s society. They should be strong enough to face such tough situations and relegate the immoral, unreasonable and insensitive ideas. Inder’s relationship with Mara made him explore a new dimension in women. Both needed a vent to their dissatisfied lives with their partners. Mara is attracted towards Inder’s natural and passionate touches whereas, he finds the vivacity in Mara more attractive than his wife, Saroj. Mara taught him the finesse in making love and he also knew the sensualities of a woman. He had a new feeling that had tore the apprehensions apart and made him move freely, in her company. He always looked forward to meeting her on every Monday and would cherish each moment with her. These feelings had gradually transformed on to Saroj, his wife. The author explained the transformation in Inder:
“For the first time in his life no demons plagued his imaginations. The sight of Saroj, still asleep when he woke, touched a chord in him. Her blankets had slipped. One hand lay on the mound of her stomach, some part of her conscious of its burden even in sleep” (Storm.174).

The breakup between Mara and Inder paves way for her husband Jit to come close to his wife when he tries to better the relationship and says “You ‘ll never be happy in an emotional jungle—if that is there you are now , then let me help you to find your way out, my love” (Strom.16)

Here the readers can see a transformed Inder who is devoid of anger and irritation but filled with soft feelings. He sees her nightie not in place, it doesn’t arouse any animal instincts or passion in him but rather filled him with contentment and he moves out into the garden. Mara’s company gave him that inner peace. There was never a vacuum, whether he is in bed with Mara or not. The act of love, a thing with a beginning and an end with other women, never ended with Mara. “She stimulated his mind and involved him in ways no woman ever had” (Storm.159). With Mara, every act was an act of love. But today he is a transformed man.

The novel ‘Storm in Chandigarh’ brought out clearly the portrayal far from ideal marriages of three young couples – Vishal-Leela, Inder-Saroj and Jit and Mara. Though the novel chronicles the devastating state of a city torn, divided political loyalties, vividly portrays the young couples broken up compulsions of matrimony and call of new found love. Though Vishal Dubey was sent as a liaison officer to solve the political problems in Chandigarh he gets inadvertently involved in the private lives of estranged couples. His marriage with Leela, a vivacious woman, who tries to reach the person in her, leaves him empty of the reality of herself. Their marriage turns out to be a vanishing search for communication because mutual infidelity and their dreams and longings were fatal to fulfillment through marriage. His relationship with Leela abruptly ends due to her death and he accidentally strays into Gauri’s feminine bounty, who was already married to Nikhil Ray, an industrialist. But Gouri’s love to Vishal always invited him to come back to her with a certainty of welcome and she calls herself a ‘social butterfly’ with positivity ‘No interest in life beyond her own comforts and pleasures’. Unlike Gauri, Saroj suffers
under the brutal male heel of an uncompromising and fickle minded husband Inder. They are entirely two different kinds of people.

Inder a man with confidence and muscular grace, a product of “he-man school” while his wife belongs to a “sphere of intense, sharpened sensibility.” With diverse ethnic backgrounds and temperamental incompatibilities, their marriage was a disaster. It is not Saroj’s assertion that fracture their marriage but the other man with whom she had premarital sex, was the thorn that was pricking the couple. As the revelation continues to haunt, Inder fills his mind with repulsion against Saroj. As a result, she forfeits the right to live in peace from the day she told him, of her first experience and had been branded a sinner.

Inder could not exercise the ghost of the other man and blames Saroj for her impurity. But Saroj suffers abjectly to make her living possible to the terms and conditions laid down by the patriarchal society. Inder’s Westernization could not change his anachronistic attitude, who clearly demarcated the roles of men and women. Sex, with Saroj comes easily and satisfactorily to him but even that costs him an effort to make it, as it calls for his lingering attention and demands, when he gives her part of himself for a while for no specific reason. For him, to take a walk with Saroj becomes a meaningless expenditure of time, as he is totally involved with his business, so for Saroj, “the subdued sex, creatures not yet emerged from the Chrysalis, for whom the adventure of self-expression had not even begun” (Storm.171). Vishal becomes a liberating agent who tells her how one has to rebel against the odd, and it is one’s human right to be free, making her realize the imperfect human being, to be valued. The new awareness prepares her to leave her husband because she doesn’t belong to that place because, it is not a home but a prison where she was incarcerated spiritually and physically. Sometimes the kind bred in a woman outraged him, who never resist to the tyrannical behaviour of men in the patriarchal society. Sahgal speaks, through the character expressing the inability of women silently accepting the norms laid down by the society. “Dubey had no use for martyrdom in any form, but the kind bred into women outraged him” (Storm 171).

Mara also suffers from an acute sense of emptiness. The Western influence on her made her an ambitions woman who always seeks beyond her own domestic frontiers. As
Jit is away, she takes stock of her situation and wonders if it was her destiny to marry him whom she met eight years ago in a party. Though Mara was intelligent, independent and educated with deep awareness, she fails to diagnose the cause of her discontent. Mara felt that Jit lacked the harder grain of behaviour, which Inder accomplished. Hence, she was drawn to Inder in spite of her obvious dislike for his manners. Though the characters of Leela, Gauri, Saroj and Mara expose their distinctive characteristics under the façade of fidelity, she holds no arguments for their attitudes. But when the reader focuses on their interactions and attitudes, it holds a true reflection of the society that subjects women to the extreme situations of exploitation. The female characters revolt against the obscure ways of the world and experience the pleasure of emancipation from the bondage that has been thrust upon them since patriarchal times.

Sahgal was able to analyse the culmination of joy and satisfaction, which is the real outcome of the two spirits who had experienced the union of their bodies with a strong desire and urge to yield themselves wholeheartedly. When one undergoes this sort of experience it brings about calmness in one’s mind, releases the stress and it fills your heart with ecstasy. Thus, it relaxes the mind and body paving way to an enchantment for each other, a longing desire for one another wholeheartedly. Sahgal conceived this sort of relationship between man and woman where one can easily make an effort to understand each other and act accordingly. This sort of relationship can be developed by being friendly and sympathetic to the other partner. Saroj’s past life was haunting Inder and had bruised him to the core. It was only for Mara who could heal and vanish it by lifting it away from him.

People should be given an opportunity to be open and frank and should not force them to pretend. Then they would be more transparent and free communication would be possible. Pretension comes out of false behaviour or constrained conventional standards. When there is no freedom, they will be under constant grip of fear and are apprehensive to say anything. Dubey says, “It is only when you don’t pretend, when you are determined not to pretend, that you get a relationship of Supreme Worth” (Strom.169). You will be under constant pressure when you are curtailed to talk. This suffocates a person as it happens in case of Saroj. Many times Dubey persuaded Saroj to share. She
was caught in a dilemma whether to express or not, though she found some strength, solace in his words. Sahgal expresses:

“She stopped, torn between reticence and a longing to bring the thing she wrestled within in secret out into the fresh air, to exercise it once and for all from her being, at least never to struggle with it alone again. But it was the one thing impossible to put into words” (*Storm* 171).

The author shows this suffocation as a common act of any Indian women. It is the society that laid some norms for a woman to behave in the society. She doesn’t have the right for individual expression result in leading a subjugated life. Women would be acclaimed only if they obey and sacrifice their lives for the welfare of the family. This is deeply imbedded in the minds of women and hence it is difficult to come out of that cocoon. Dubey says, “Whatever womanhood had once meant in India had been lost in the mists of antiquity. In its place there had long been a figure of humility, neck bent, eyes down cast, living flesh consigned to oblivion” (*Strom.* 171).

Women had served a hard apprenticeship. Few things intrigued Dubey when women were not a subject for discussion. They played different roles but they belonged to their men by contract or by blood. Their job is only to give physical pleasure and involve in procreation. They were made dependents and men lusted for their bodies. They did not believe in themselves. Dubey could see Saroj as fresh as a rose who did not believe in her own purity. Dubey felt that he was not going to yield to the archaic cult. He decided to liberate her, leaving behind her past when she wanted to come walking with him. He was surprised to notice an educated woman like Saroj with good upbringing was feeling the pinch of her conscience when he mentioned about chastity in women. She wondered if she deserved to be called a chaste woman as per the norms of the traditional society. “The mixture of gay candour and earnestness he had found so attractive faded before the sudden beauty of this pale, fearful woman” (*Storm.* 172). Saroj realized that life could remold or break the system that lacks righteousness and reason. One has to rebel to chose from the best light it could see. She felt that marriage to someone like Dubey would not be a shaky affair. It would take not only the best that one had to give but also the trivial and absurd as well. There was something beyond the
physical attributes that might be imperfect but she would be valued. A marriage like that would be uncommonly strong and pure.

Saroj’s revolt to speak her mind about Dubey when she says to Inder “I like to talk to him. He is a good man” (Storm.175). Saroj mustered courage to speak her mind when she was questioned by Inder. Dubey’s words of encouragement gave her strength. After a long time, she felt that there was somebody who accepts her as a whole and a clean person. All these days she believed in loving herself but now there is someone who understood her emotionally and supported her sincerely. Due to this change in her innerself, she was able to tell Inder frankly her opinion about Dubey and admit honestly and she went for a walk. Dubey recollects his past. The chase between he and Leela had opened early and never quite closed. His wife Leela had an affair with Hari, seated in secrecy, when confronted, there was not a crack in her façade of perfect wife but admitted nothing. She never admitted but blamed him to be insane. Till the end she had released only the emotions appropriate to ‘wife’, but maintained the friction. It had enabled Dubey finally to say with composure that fidelity isn’t something that either Hari or Dubey could demand of Leela. There was a tumultuous rage filled him with no erupt. The rules, regulations and laws made people fearful of each other. Dubey, for all his idealistic talks on freedom of men and women could not prove himself good to his own wife, though he was true to himself. He failed to understand what life did Leela lived outside their common orbit. Even his generosity must have frightened her. He wondered if his ardour for the truth between them had done actual harm and made her feel like a lost soul wandering in a land of not her own. There are both types of wives and husbands who are frivolous and irresponsible, Sahgal equates, “She saw the human substance between them dwindling until in old age they would just be two people who happened to live under the same roof, no real bond between them, only the accumulation of a life time’s living habits” (202). Saroj was well aware of the life she was leading with Inder. “It’s not being alone I mind. I enjoy that. It’s the loneliness. I am alone even when Inder is here” (203). What use it is to live a life like that when your own man doesn’t care for you. Saroj tells that she has an ambition to live like a virtuous woman may be the code of conduct laid down by the society and Inder’s constant pricking of her past must be making her feel bad for this. The past was like a mountain in between Inder and her.
Dubey strongly feels that any living being yearns for freedom, which is quite, but natural. Nothing can stop this feeling and it pervades everywhere. It is an isolated political achievement for us. Still we have not assimilated it and made it a habit. We are still slaves to the meaningless concept of patriarchy and we do not agree with people those who don’t conform. Saroj showed immense courage in revolting against the rigid customs of the society that were choking her to death. She felt that being true to herself, finding true happiness in her life is more important than being a silent sufferer enduring the pain endlessly throughout her life. She decided to walk out of her marriage along with her children and lead a happy, contended life with Dubey.

Sahgal’s emphasize is towards the spirit of freedom that is conducive for the development of an individual’s growth. She challenges those doctrines to stand for the test of time. If values are lacking in the system, they have to be reframed and cast away what is not required. Freedom is not that is superficial but it is within, the individuals, between the married couples, leading to the progress in the society by giving equal status to women as they also constitute half of humanity.

The existential quest of Nayantara Sahgal’s female characters have to be judged against the backdrop of an heritage wherein a woman is taken as a “sex object and glamour girl, fed on fake dreams of perpetual youth lulled into passive role that requires no individual identity.” (Women: Persons or Possessions).

According to Bala Kothanda Raman in her article “Structure in Nayantara Sahgal’s Storm in Chandigarh” “The main point about the emotional plane of the novel is the quest for “Personal relations” in E.M. Forster’s Phrase, particularly on the parts of Dubey, Saroj and Jit.”

She opines that Dubey’s marriage to Leela turned out to be a vanishing search for communication where he realizes the torture of living intimately with someone who remained a stranger to him, and he to her. Saroj’s life with her husband rests on a precarious emotional balance due to the mistake she committed before her marriage. He not only tortures her but also himself, by constantly raking up the brief affair she had had before their marriage out of curiosity, which she had long forgotten. Jit himself stands for
a rational approach to life and circumstances. Jit’s concern for the city of Chandigarh is more sensitive who has a larger perspective in mind and can articulate better than Nikhil Ray who is also an industrialist and husband of Gouri.

Bala Kothanda Raman brings out a better understanding between the couple who were drifting their ways of morality especially Mara and Inder. She understands Jit as a better husband who was able to understand Mara and empathise with her and reaches out to her by talking about his past and makes him understand that Mara is also the same as he is. A new understanding opens up for this couple where Jit realizes his role towards her and assures her “You’ll never be happy in an emotional jungle – If that is where you are now, then let me help you to find your way out, my love, (P.16) (Nayantara Sahgal’s (Storm in Chandigarh), Delhi Hind Pocket Books Edition 1970). They gave room to a new understanding in terms of personal relations. But on the contrary Vishal Dubey has been the cause of Inder’s anger where Gyan Singh mentions of Vishal’s and Saroj’s evening walks that came out in the paper. But this had not distanced Vishal and Saroj from seeing each other as he becomes more committed to Saroj. Though Inder’s possessive nature outrages him, yet Vishal never gives up. The novel has thrown light on the couple who were able to come together in their marriages but Saroj and Inder parted their ways whereas Saroj seeks in self-identity.

Sahgal’s expectations of a man, found its spokesperson, Vishal Dubey who rightly sums up patriarchal prejudice against women when he says, “A woman was entitled to a past, not entitled to human hunger, human passion or even human error. In the fires and desolations of living she ranked as not quite human.” (Storm.191) the double standards of patriarchal morality is obvious with the fact that Inder who points out Saroj of her premarital sex, but in the third person narrator reveal his many seawall experiences before marriage,” he has been precocious and successful in sex, robustly collecting experience where he found it.” (Storm.134) Women cannot question the male promiscuity whereas the same are considered to be male prerogatives.

Saroj’s conscience fills with a new awakening spirit that endurance is no virtue and human relationships cannot be left to chance. Sahgal portrayal of relationships cannot be left to chance. Sahgal portrays her as a symbol of modern woman who not only aspires
for freedom, dignity and equality in a relationship but also has the coverage to condemn
the decaying relationship in favor of new avenues without bothering about the patriarchal society.

From the discussions above it is evident there has been an obvious progression in
view the female protagonists who have been vaguely craving for the air of freedom and freshness and struggling to break off the Orthodox. Indian Conventions and Moribund tradition Asngini, New Dimensions of Indian English Novel (P.61) Delhi Doaba House, 1987 that create fear among them and the women broke the chains of bondage in their efforts to regain their self-abnegated identity. As one observes freedom, here meant is not in superficial aspects such as in matters of social etiquettes but something deep inside the individuals, which can be attributed to the author’s deep rooted humanistic attitude to love, marriage, companionship, communication as aspects so central to the female world.

According to Beulah Ranjith Singh in her article Sahgal’s female protagonists: Storm in Chandigarh and The Day in Shadow – by Beulah Ranjit Singh compares the creator Sahgal to Simrit and Saroj who tried to be good wives and tried to be submissive like conventional ‘Pativratas’ in marriage. They freed themselves from the shackles of marriage and preferred to live with their lovers who were more understanding and also provided the warm companionship which gave them a new life to start afresh. Neena Arora in ‘Nayantara Sahgal and Doris Lessing: A Feminist Study in Comparison. (New Delhi. 102) observes, “Sahgal’s women depend on some help to escape oppression and exploitation which in their cases is usually provided by a man – a friend or a father who often helps them to come out of the miserable relationship or give them moral strength to smash the taboos and assert their identity to live a meaningful life.” (102) Nayantara cannot be misunderstood as if she was opposed to marriage as a social institution but her point is there is a need for loyalty and mutual understanding in any man-woman relationship Chaman Nahal in her: The New Literatures in English, “In each case the attack is not against the inequality and justice that is forced upon women by men using the institution of marriage.” Thus Sahgal’s women as she herself acknowledges are “Strives and aspirers towards freedom, towards goodness, towards a compassionate world.” (Jasbir Jain’s Nayantara Sahgal). Hence, we seek Saroj who underwent a lot and
endured the insults for the sake of marriage and also to give her best for the family to be intact.

Tonil Moi in his essay “Feminist Literary Criticism” point out that men can be feminists and it is the sole prerogative of a woman to be a feminist.” Hence, Sahgal showed Dubey’s ideas in the novel with a deep concern about a lot of women in present times. “It was a subject he would have talked a great deal about if anyone had given him the opportunity. Women were wives, daughters, and mothers. They belonged to their men by contract or by blood. Their sphere was sexual and their job procreation. They were dependents, not individuals. You wanted them apparently for sex. The one thing you could not crave, the thing that was a crime, was that they should inhabit the world as your equals, with the splendor and variety of human choice before them…. A woman was not entitled to a past, not entitled to human hunger, human passion, or even human error. He felt that with Saroj he was not going to pander to this ridiculous cult” (Storm in Chandigarh.172). With her, he meant the quality what Saroj is as a human being, rather than be judgmental of her chastity.

Sahgal’s feminist ideology was expressed through the words of Vishal Dubey wherein he expresses the end of a cult and for that matter chastity “would be easier to safe guard it by keeping men in seclusion not women.” (Storm.173). The human being in Saroj was more charming than her physical appearance. Sahgal portrays Saroj as a symbol of modern woman who had the courage to leave the relationship as she aspired for freedom, dignity and equality in a relationship and thus never cared about the patriarchal society. As a cultural ideology, women’s movement can be traced back to the earliest phases of human history and specifically, it originated in eighteenth century, with the publication of Mary Wollstonecraft’s essay A Vindication of the Rights of Women in 1792 which had the revolutionary ideas on women’s need for economic independence, political activism and personal freedom from injustice in the hands of men. It created an awareness among women about the biased treatment given to them in the domestic and social ambit of life. A Room of one’s own (1929) by Virginia Woolf also presented the unequal treatment given to women seeking education and alternatives to marriage and motherhood. The novel The Storm in Chandigarh by Sahgal voices her protest against the
denial of freedom and individuality to women. It is not only in defiance of old-fashioned traditions but also shows how women will refuse to tolerate injustice and remain passive. Through her protagonist, the writer urges that women need to be seen as man’s equal and abhonored partners seeking a self-identity of her own.

Simrit in the *The Day in Shadow* bears in many respects the image of her author. The anguish of the protagonist authentically echoes from the author’s personal life because it was written in 1970 soon after her divorce in 1967. The novelist herself acknowledges the above fact in her article *Of Divorce and Hindu Women referring to The Day in Shadow* she observes:

“In this book I tried to figure out something that has happened to me the shattering experience of divorce. I wanted to show how even in a free country like ours, where women are equal citizens, a woman can be criminally exploited without creating a ripple.” Simrit also in the same way, who was a freelance journalist and writer, marries a businessperson of her choice experiences a sense of bewilderment and a shattering emotional shock of her divorce and the brutal consequence of an unfair divorce settlement, inflicted on her after seventeen years of married life. In the same way, Sahgal too had this burden thrust upon her by the divorce settlement where she could overcome them only through a harrowing experience and independent efforts.

In her in interview to Jasbir Jain she says: “My husband defrauded me also. Not only defrauded but hung me with taxes. I would not have had otherwise. I had a huge struggle after the divorce to make money and I made it. I feel pleased that I managed to do it [.....] by my own efforts.” (1994, 185) The experiences of this bitterness of the exploitation of woman and denial of social justice Sahgal presents through the protagonist the existential problems of women in a male dominated society in a realistic manner. Simrit, like Sahgal too finds comfort in the comradeship of the Member of Parliament Raj Garg who was like E.N. Mangat Rai ICS whom Sahgal married after her divorce. A close examination of her women characters Saroj and Simrit tried their best to last in their marriages who never took conventional family for granted but it is due to their circumstances, which were beyond their control made them quit their households.
Elan Showalter in her book *A Literature of their own* [Virgago, 2009.13.print] has analysed feminist consciousness and classified it into three separate phases “the feminine phase of internalization, the feminist phase of revolt and the female phase of self-discovery” (13) Women who face the crucial phase are caught at a juncture where they can neither accept or reject which is considered as an evolution of a feminist consciousness towards finding out their authentic self. This is quite a common situation wherever the woman might be and it is a universal predicament. The status of womanhood has undergone many changes from time to time. India has seen many ups and downs right from the part of glorification to degeneration, from spiritual dominance to ethnic problems, from subjugation to independence. Women have carried out many roles from being a deity to dasi, from Shakthi to Abala, from a homemaker to a working woman clearly portrayed in Indian writing, especially, in the genre of novel, depicting the various changes that were present in the Indian society.

Treating women as an epitome of any culture and tradition has been synonymous to us. But when it comes to empowerment, no serious attempts were made in this regard. Women underwent several changes over a period of time, which have reflected in our literature. The portrayal of the characters has evolved from a docile, timid women to strong women with a deep urge to be identified, which has become a common trait in literature. Immigration and their consciousness, being articulative have become the core of their identity. When they move out of their orbit, it shows how compatible they are and how they deal with the opposing factors, they face within themselves and the outside world.

The achievement of political independence may be considered to be the most significant event in the history of any nation that has been under foreign political domination, which, in Sahgal’s words, “reduced a country to penury and a psyche to fracture” [Puzzle 80]. This sort of fractured psyche is obvious in the works of Nayantara Sahgal, who apart from being a representative writer of pre and post independent India has the unique personal background of belonging to a family deeply involved in the rise of nationalism, political upheaval and the struggle for freedom. Sahgal notes: “I am a novelist and a political journalist. My novels have a political background or political
ambience. I didn’t plan it that way .... Political and Social forces shape our lives. How can we be unaware of them? I believe it is “Poetics of engagement where commitment and aesthetics meet and give each other beauty or power.” Her political consciousness made her understand the problems in Indian Politics that were revolving in between Gandhian humanism and Nehruvian socialism because the former was a strong critic of westernization and the latter was enamoured of Western Science and Technology. Though Sahgal believed in Gandhi and his ideology, her rationalist ideas differ due to her western education. Nehru tried to merge his modernization with Gandhian and principles for the welfare of the country. Sahgal, who was influenced by these two great leaders, wrote in *Passion Called India*, “Politics was of course my background, and my environment, and it became my natural material. I grew up at a time when literature and politics went hand in hand and helped to illumine and interpret each other ....... I do not believe in Kings, queens or political dynasties. I have no ideology. I never belonged to a political party.” (244) Though she never wanted to be labeled as a post colonial writer, she could not shake off her colonial heritage.

Like many other writers of post-independent India, Sahgal also portrayed the changing face of India. The Indian elite circle was educated abroad and were able to write fiction in English with a liberal outlook challenging the established social norms. As she belonged to Nehru’s political dynasty, she was not uncomfortable with the comforts and the privileges that were bestowed upon her. Shyam M.A Sani writes, in *Contemporary Politics: Its Portrayal in the Novels of Nayantara Sahgal*, “Politics can be called her primordial predilection, the central idea of whatever she writes. That’s why almost all the major characters in her novels are drawn irresistibly to and deeply involved in the Vortex of Politics”. (109). Her own “non-message that Europe is not that the centre of the World” (108) proves her post colonial identity. Her protagonists too belong to the same westernized elite class, hence they too inherit the same identity, and “hybridity” which becomes their self identity. On account of her background, she makes an ideal spokesperson for the cross section of women.

The British encouraged Indians’ capability to take the English opinions, moral and intellect. Colonialism had trained the natives in anglicized ways, groomed to behave and
think as the Britishers did, mainly for administrative purpose. These anglicized Indians were considered as outsiders by the natives and the British. They used them, and never treated as their equals. Thus, they were considered as “Lesser breeds”. Nayantara Sahgal Portrays this type of Indians in her novel ‘A Time to Be Happy’ in the character of Girish and Harish who ape the British ways. The novel portrays a clear dichotomy between anti-colonial majority and the pro-colonial minority characters.

“In academic as well as popular reviews of her work, Divakaruni has been praised for her literary creativity and personal sensitivity in dealing with cross-cultural complexities of self-identity, family relationships and community values. Most notable has been her continuing concern for these issues in connection with the experience of Indian and Indo American women. As Divakaruni explained: “My Hope is always that what I write is artful enough that art and social criticism are balanced and social criticism comes to us through the lives of the characters”. (Lanhamin “Author Interviews” section of bibliography following his essay).

In the genres of poetry and fiction her work sees her desire to “go beyond the silence” about Indian and American women who strive to achieve strong individual’s identities, often in opposition to the demands of their families and communities”. (“Chitra” Time.com in “Author Profiles”). Divakaruni’s story telling power is grounded with social awareness.

Public and scholarly reception of her writing suggests that Divakaruni has been the most admired for four qualities in her overall record of work to date: (1) an empathetically personal and boldly imaginative style of story-telling that draws readers into the lives of people across cultures, particularly the lives of Indian and Indian American Women, (2) a poetic sensibility and love of language that makes reading itself a richly textured experience; (3) An unusual ability to break down many different kinds of boundaries (eg. Those between East/West, Prose/Poetry, Magic realism, past/present ad native/immigrant) through the dramatic style and social content of her work; and (4) her continuing growth as a writer who wants to “bridge the divide between high literature and main stream fiction” (“Reviews”, The Mistress of Spices).
Identity explains thoughts and feelings of an individual, his or her psychic nature and the place of his living, his attachments or longings, dreams and derives. One’s identity is formed through a number of random or particular accretions or incidents. One’s individual identity comprises of several factors. It can be the childhood instances and aspirations, which play a crucial role in forming and nurturing it. One’s defiant or the restive nature in an individual develops the way and how it evolves finally makes an important aspect to determine one’s identity. The other important factor is the tenors of the times that an individual is living will also contribute to one’s identity. One’s a person attains his youth and he gradually develops different qualities that are present in that particular period. The most important influence on one’s identity is his or her family, parents, home, society and the zeitgeist contribute to the final outcome of one’s identity.

“Erikson, Erik, H”. (The concept of Identity in Race Relations Daedalaus. 95.1 145-171) web has also used term “negative identity” for the state of an individual in which “I” is suppressed, rendering him unable to participate in the society. Negative Identity is a state in which the individual acts not in accordance with the dictates of his “core” self or “inner conscience” but as per the prompting of the “other self” and “outer conscience”. As quoted by Suchitra Mishra in her thesis “Women characters in the novels of Chitra Benerjee… A search for Self-Identity.”

Simon De Beauvoir in her book “Second Sex” says that in patriarchy, women have been always given the second position inspite of the fact they constitute at least one half of the human race. It is not due to their feminine characteristics but rather by strong environmental forces of social traditions and education, which have been under the control of men. This is universally perceived and the situation varies with the availability of education and social equality. But some of the issues related to be psychological, social and political bring them inferior to men. The challenge of their identity arises when they become aware of the patriarchal society.

Identity is the projection of the self. The urge to identity with the present, stimulates one in the quest for identity and is seen at all levels whether it is private or public. The concept of female identity indicates how female experience is altered into the female consciousness often in reaction to male archetypes for female experience. The
female consciousness opposes the political, economical and cultural relegation of women to positions of inferiority.

Sahgal’s characters seem to have a very realistic approach to life. They do not flee from their problems. They perceive the problems, understand it and manage the situation because of their emotional balance of thought story. A thorough blend of the literary elements and political criticism in the novel makes it very interesting and enjoyable for the reader. The great skill is seen in the narrative technique adopted, the way different situations of the novel unfolds the themes, which gradually develop in the due course of time.

In the novels of Sahgal, social and political themes are inter-related. The elements of suspense, fear and turmoil are seen throughout. We are guided to the partition period where Dubey comes to Chandigarh as a liaison officer. Narration and language make a deep impression. She vividly recalls the matchless patriotism, selflessness and sacrifice of freedom fighters were less before the partition and after the partition people like Gyansingh and Harpal are (Storm) in contrast showing greed, selfishness and shamelessness of the contemporary society. Degradation of moral values in pursuit of materialistic gains shows total lack of conscience even in the educated class. Leader like Gyansingh who is ready to do anything for money and its impact on the country are ignored- Storm in Chandigarh .131-133). The political event has transformed into a powerful human drama lingered in the mind and soul of the people of the nation. Successful transformation of politics into art, speaks the potential of the writer as a novelist. Political events are shown in terms of human implication. The impact of strikes, riots, bandhs are depicted along with the emotions of the affected people.

The power politics is always working as a motive in the relation of man and woman “reducing the status of woman to merely a utility item, an object for decoration, for possession and for man’s sexual gratification” Arora Neena Mistaken Identity: A Critical Review (175-177) which is similar to this novel.

Sahgal’s women look for happiness and self fulfillment in a world shared by both the sexes. The details of women’s exploitation in the Indian society keep unfolding at
several levels. Besides, the male voices too vehemently expose the violence done to women who mattered so much to them, making the novel far more intense legitimate and shows the violence done to women in Indian Society.

Sahgal has dealt with a wide gamut of themes ranging from personal dilemmas and problems, joys and sorrows, fulfillment and frustrations of female protagonists, to the political upheavals that India has experienced since Independence. The force of her conviction and urge to make statement have found a powerful outlet in fictional format. Her novel *Storm in Chandigarh* of Sahgal focuses on the predicament of women in a patriarchal Indian family. The Indian women are dependent on a male member of a family may be it is the father, husband or son.

The inner core of the sensitive women, who are in an eternal quest for meaningful life, is portrayed with much authenticity. The suffering of the protagonists in their quest for love, emotional bonding and understanding are depicted with much authenticity. As this novel is not simply a work of fiction it is also based on true events in the postcolonial India and its author is the member who belongs to the first family of India’s political dynasty. The facts provided are authentic and the inference made from true incidents will be useful for proving one’s level of emotional intencity.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s *The Oleander Girl* is a thought provoking novel on identity. The novel involves women from three generations – Karobi the youngest, her mother Anu and her grandmother Sarojini. Each of the woman is typical of their experiences belonging to their own periods. Sarojini being the oldest of the three is projected as a meek and docile woman who was always obedient to her husband. On the contrary Anu and Karobi have the shades of new woman who are strong and had lot of self-confidence to face the world even if it is alien to them. Both of them travelled to an alien country for a different purpose. Anu, in pursuit of her higher education which was a dream for her to fulfill whereas Karobi to identify her roots though it was causing displeasure to people around her for various reasons.

Karobi Roy a young teenage girl was raised by her grandparents in a very protective atmosphere. She was engaged with the charming and elegant Rajat Bose
whose parents are Jayashree and Shantanu who owned an art gallery at the posh Park Street Gallery in Kolkatta. The novel opens with Karobi Roy leading a perfect life. She was happy in the guardianship of her loving grandparents above all her love with Rajat was leading to the engagement. Suddenly after the engagement, her grandfather dies of heart attack. Then comes a blow on her life in the form of a secret that was revealed by her grandmother regarding her father who lived in America and was alive.

Evidences establish one’s identity as a person. John Locke describes personal identity as the sameness of ‘Rational Being’. A rational being can consider him in different times and places and can know his identity through time, only by means of that consciousness that constitutes personal identity. George Herbert Mead says, “one influential view of self-identity is that a person does not begin life with a self, but rather develops a self (and self-consciousness) by interacting with others” (Wikipedia).

Karobi’s upbringing has developed a good bonding with her grandparents and thus takes her identity from them. But she becomes conscious of her identity when she learns about her father. She feels shocked and shattered when she comes to know her true identity and determines to go in search of her father. Her identity now is associated with her father.

Chitra’s interview with Leavittville Caroline, throws light on identity “Identity is a shifting thing. Often we think it lies in externals because they are easier to measure, such as family pedigree, parentage, race, education, religion, socio-economic circumstance, but it’s more slippery than that. Facing it and the truth can be pretty painful, but that kind of pain can help us grow, or it can destroy us.” Karobi feels shattered when she first comes to know about her father from her grandmother Sarojini. She knew the effect of this painful truth. “Sarojini knows that this is what hurts her granddaughter the most. Not just the deception, but as it came from the man. She had trusted more than anyone else in her life: (Oleander.63) Sarojini knew that it was an unpardonable mistake that they both committed towards Karobi, keeping her true identity under the wraps.
Karobi’s strength lies in her sincerity in revealing the truth to Rajat with whom she would share her life. She did not want to hide it from Rajat and perpetuate the lie the way her grandparents concocted and denied her father. She determines to search for her father though that seemed to be impossible. “I am so confused” All the things I was so proud of, my family, my heritage – they are only half-true. The other half of me – I don’t know anything about it. Except that all this time my father was alive, and in America.” (66). Her priority now becomes to trace her father than get married” (67). Karobi’s determination is strongly seen in when she decides to go to America and she takes the help of a detective’s Mr. Desai. “If Mr. Desai finds a lead, I will follow it to America ……… If it is so important for your business, I am willing to release Rajat from the engagement.” (79). This proposal to her mother how strongly she was determined and was ready to forego her joy in life. Her grandmother wishes her to enjoy A great adventure (89).

A young girl like Karobi has shown confidence that comes with age but did not have any experience. This journey made her go through so many experiences that made her grow up. Karobi’s strength lies in her determination, which is clearly visible in America when she deals with Mitra to carry out her search successfully, protects herself from a thief when she reaches America and then handles Rob Mariner with a trick. Karobi brought up in a protected atmosphere manages all the things and events dexterously. She has epitomized her name and proved worthy of it.

As interviewed by Debby DeRosa, Divakaruni was asked about using this particular flower and its importance in the story, she replied as. “The oleander seemed to be perfect symbol for the book on many levels. It is ambiguous, positive and negative, beautiful and dangerous - and hardy, capable of protecting itself --- It is a flower that grows in both India and America, connecting the two worlds, through which the novel and our protagonist travel.”

Karobi was perplexed at the choice of her name, which means poisonous flowers. She questions her father the reason for the name. Her father Rob Lacey tells her the reason. “She did actually because the oleander was beautiful – but also tough. It knew
how to protect itself from predators. Anu wanted the tougheress for you because she didn’t have enough of it herself” (Oleander. 253)

Chitra Banerjee’s other women characters in the novel Sarojini, Karobi’s grandparent, Anu Karobi’s mother and Mrs. Bose mother of Rajat who are delineated and very strong women. Though Sarojini belongs to the old generation, she has played a very crucial role in the novel. It elevated after her death of her husband. She was an obedient wife who always followed her husband’s words and never made any decision of her own. But Bimal Roy’s death made her stand at cross roads, making her an independent woman who had to solely take certain decisions regarding her family and her granddaughter. She says “All my life you insisted on making the decision until I forget how to think for myself.” (Oleander 44). Sarojini never even questioned her husband about Anu’s husband when he refused to answer. She was brought up in such a way that she would weep and suffer but would never question her husband. That was her upbringing. Sarojini herself was surprised at the transformation of her own self. “Sometimes I look at myself and wonder, how did I become this Sarojini, so stand and responsible, so different from that girl who liked to climb guava trees in her parents ‘home and play tricks and burst into laughter for no reason? I don’t want that to happen to you.” (Oleander: 90) These went unnoticed by Karobi, distracted by Grandfather’s leonine aura and never bothered to notice.

On reaching America, Karobi met Mitra take a cab to reach his home where Karobi had to pay and she felt the pinch of it and decided to ask for a cheaper transportation since she could not afford to pay. She was on the verge her Indian courtesies and started thinking in terms of survival, like an immigrant. Mitra’s wife Seema a typical woman wanted to talk about India and feels nostalgic to listen more from Indians. Chitra shows the pitfalls of displacement like isolation, loneliness in a foreign country and longing to talk to someone were also the qualities that she tried to portray through seeman’s character.

Karobi’s mother Anu was a precious child to the Roys who was born after three miscarriages. Her life was guided and guarded by her father. Anu was excellent academically but always remained silent confirming her life to her father’s friends and
society. She learned to live a double life, assertive and competitive at school and college and compliant and voiceless everywhere else. That was the how Anu was groomed by her parents. Anu applies for American Scholarship and when she receives it, plans to depart to America, Bimal Roy takes a word that she should not marry without the approval of her father. Though he imposed strict restrictions, Anu becomes adventurous after going there. When in Kolkatta she was a recluse but there she becomes culturally and socially active. “She would tell us in her letters about folk dance lessons and plays she had seen in San Francisco. (57) Not only this when it was to choose her life partner she makes a choice of her own. When any disclosed her love to Bimal Roy, he opposed her proposal of marrying a foreigner. Anu takes Roy’s permission to come to India and he persuades her to stay in India to take permission for her marriage, but unfortunately, she gives birth to the illegitimate child much before marriage. This burns Korabi when she comes to know that she was an illegitimate child, she imagines humiliation in front of all her relatives.

The other women characters are confined to the boundaries of home and family is not allowed to come between them and their professional pursuits. According to Chitra identity is seen when they strive for self-realization, self-fulfillment, individuality and when they struggle for their own space to define themselves. Women are shown experiencing different emotions like jealousy, depression, surprise, shock, separation and their indomitable spirit to achieve success are commonly found irrespective of their culture and country. The characters change their identities according to the situations they are going through and redefine themselves. The novel weaves a common plot in India and as well as in America. She portrays a selfless woman who has seen in her motherland and a free woman with abundant freedom in an alien country. Korobi is an independent woman who sets her priority to search her biological father in America. In this quest, she even ventured to risk her marriage with Rajat. It was a matter of her existence that mattered more to her than her marital life. There was a drift from dependence to independence. The character adapts to the new environment and goes in search of herself in spite of its ups and downs.
Korobi’s upbringing is similar to the upbringing of the mythical princes who is brought up by the snakes in an underground lake. Her quest for her father shatters many of her illusions about herself just like the princess’s quest is destroyed by the harsh realities of the outer world. This folktale is a part of the Bengali folk tradition and has been utilized by Divakaruni as a literary device to bring out the contradiction that exists between fact and fiction. Korobi’s nature as a strong individual capable of facing the vicissitudes of life just like the oleander flower, which is intrinsically strong and tough despite its delicate appearance.

Identity is an intriguing concept both in psychology and literature. Many modern literary texts revolve around this concept. An identity crisis is a period of serious personal questioning where the individual makes an effort to affirm one’s own values and sense of rootedness. Though Korobi goes through the identity crisis, she redeems herself and her values towards the end with immense fortitude, courage and perseverance. Korobi comes to terms with her past and present. Chitra’s characters reflect the predicament of being caught between two conflicting cultures, the Indian and the American, with two different approaches to life, the internal and the external.

Divakaruni’s prose flows smoothly though lacks evocative phrases. The Indian immigrant woman (Anu Roy) present in the narrative conspicuous by her absence. The women characters in the novel ‘Oleander girl’ never give up even in a traumatic circumstance; instead, they always make the circumstances better for them. They try to put together their fragmented selves to construct new identity. Amitav Ghosh: (Amitav Ghosh and the 2001 Common Wealth Prize Tracking the Controversy, 18 March 2001) comments, “in accordance with the modern woman”, where he says, “Today a woman is a woman- fighting for truth, for honesty, freedom and if not for equality”.

Karobi the protagonist in The Oleander girl is a young, seventeen year old girl, was orphaned by birth, who faces the circumstances, which make her understand the nature of life. She loves Rajat Bose and at the time of her engagement, her grandfather dies of heart failure. She learns about her father and the shocking truth that he lives in America. This makes up her mind to abandon her marriage and search for her family but Rajat understands her feelings and stands by her in spite of the opposition from his
parents. Though she feels isolated at the beginning, her determination gives the fragile girl, an inner strength to continue her search. The Boses, especially Mrs. Bose dissuades her to call off her search for various reasons. For Karobi the search is crucial as her survival. Even Rajat wants to pursue the search after the marriage but her strong conviction makes her continue with the quest. She convinces her grandmother, “I am sorry for causing you so much grief. I am no longer sure about anything. Except that, my mother would have wanted me to find my father. That way, what my dream meant, grandma, I am sure of it.” (*Oleander*: 83) The resentment she faces within her family doesn’t hinder her path of journey. In the US, she meets Mitra who was adamant in nature and creates problems. Her meeting of Vic and Desai gives her a ray of hope and support in her pursuit. Vic’s constant support in this endeavour solves her problem Karobi’s journey makes her nostalgic of the memories of her beloved ones and her homeland.

The reader can see how the diasporic literature gives rise to nostalgia and reminiscence a well forged relationship with the new world and its people, giving rise to different conflicts and splits the personalities. Though dislocations are a prominent offshoot of diasporic conditions they are dealt with the different ways to embed and assimilate. Divakaruni craftly exposes the contemporary society where diasporic status is an inherent reality. The other major part of experience is the sense of alienation where they also become victims to experience it. Divakaruni’s novel suggests that the endurance in the host society cannot be misunderstood for the diasporic characters for having a feel at home, attitude but it is their mental pain that gives them the strength, as well find remedies to handle them.

The quality of exclusion and alienation in search of identity are the important traits of Divakaruni’s characters. Her characters are either alienated from life or society but they confront and react to it which there by show their inner strength. They do not surrender to the vulnerable situations but find solutions in the alienated surroundings and also mingle with the new culture. They suffer and are well aware of the existential dilemma. Though her women protagonists suffer, they react positively because of their strong will for authentic existence rather than to yield to the vulnerabilities of destiny. The sense of feminine sensibility, power of articulation and sensitivity of her, women
show their strengths of longingness, aspirations and frustrations. The threatening 9/11 attacks causes identity issues where Karobi faces the repercussions. They are already struggling to ascertain their identity but had also to confront new issues of identity whether they belong to the country in which they are living or not.

Divakaruni’s personal experience during 9/11 attacks also surface in the novel as she witnessed when Indians were attacked and their business ventures where targeted. Her skillful delineation of the social setting exposes the actual predicament of woman where they caught into. Identity is an interesting concept one can perceive in both Literature and Psychology. There are many themes that focus on identity. When one faces identity crisis there arises a serious personal questioning, where one makes a move to focus on one’s own values and sense of direction. Saroj and Karobi go through this identity crisis. Saroj undergoes the transformation as a strong woman and makes a choice of her own to become an independent woman whereas Karobi redeems her values with a great struggle and at the end, she exhibits great fortitude, courage and perseverance. The following chapter discusses the Psychological analysis of her characters when they are in midst of their predicaments and what those predicaments and how their quest for their true self forms the crux of the novels.