Chapter Four

Deciphering Emotions in Mistaken Identity
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DECIPHERING EMOTIONS IN *MISTAKEN IDENTITY*

*Mistaken Identity* is a major modern novel, equally in terms of dexterity and theme, and reveals the contemporary issue of identity crisis. It stands out as a unique novel in the realm of Indian English writing due to its theme. There is a unique blend of western wisdom with the historical and cultural ambivalence of the Indian tradition. It deals with the absurdity in discriminating people as Hindus or Muslims, forgetting the basic truth that they are human beings first. The protagonist of this novel is different from Sahgal’s earlier novels, as she has given a male protagonist a significant role. The novel is set in the early twenties in a relatively insignificant Princely state of India named Vijaygarh. The ruler of this state is the father of Bhushan Singh. Though he wins the appreciation of the British residents for his contribution to the war, he is unsuccessful in transferring his non–existing title to his heir, Bhushan. The story opens in a jail where Bhushan narrates his misfortune to his comrades in jail, when he is awaiting his final trial. The Meerut conspiracy case of the 1920s forms the background of the story. Bhushan is mistaken to be a conspirator against the British Empire. The trial seems to take an absurd and uncertain course. During his confinement, he introspects his life in relation to the socio-religious set up of the country. He narrates the colourful episodes of his past to his cellmates Sen, Comrade Iyer, Dey, Yusuf and Pillai.
Sahgal deftly employs the technique of flashback and newspaper reports and shifting points of view among others to achieve verisimilitude in narration of a historic setting. Bhushan, the Prince of a small principality, falls in love with a Muslim girl Razia who is a commoner. A Hindu prince falling in love with a Muslim girl leads to communal riots in the city of Vijaygarh. For this reason, the Raja of Vijaygarh, Bhushan’s father, decides to banish him from the country under the pretext of pursuing higher education abroad. But Bhushan’s attractive features fetches him offers for acting in Hollywood movies of romance and adventure. He works for a short while learning the nuances of the trade. There he gets closer to Wilie May who is the daughter of Bhushan’s father’s close friend. She helps him learn the nuances of dancing and acting and they also develop a purely delightful sexual relationship. She is attracted towards him because of his oriental looks.

"She teaches him to drink cocktails out of a tea cup during Prohibition in the U.S. and to do the Bunny Hug, the Turkey Trot and all the other fashionable ballroom dances. This relationship has a beginning and an end" (MI 15).

She chides him for his obsession for Razia. "A woman who wasn't there, a woman I hadn't seen, heard or felt for three years, if that wasn't the darndest, weirdest, nonsense" (128). She gives herself to him in order to fill the vacuum created by Razia. She very explicitly declares her love for him. She feels that sexual relationship could help him come out of his obsession. She says "Everybody needs sex. Sex is good for you. We'd go crazy if we didn't get enough of it" (MI 128). In spite
of all her efforts Willie May fails to impress Bhushan and he soon returns home in search of his first love Razia. There is a beginning and an end for this relationship.

During one of his travels in search of Razia he is arrested by the Police in Bombay who mistake him for a traitor of the Empire and charge him with sedition. Bhushan desperately tries to prove his innocence and get released but his efforts go wasted. He lands up in the company of common criminals and self-confessed communists.

The days in prison actually help Bhushan to understand himself better. He spends his time reading and re-reading the same books from the jail library and also incidents from his past and each time arriving at a new perception about his own self. He says: “I knew who I was Actually this was what I didn’t know anymore” (84). Bhushan also believes that his mother understands him well.

The novel can be interpreted as having several layers of meaning, the most apparent being the case of Bhushan’s mistaken identity. Again there is a case of mistaken identity, when Bhushan murders the imbecile, mistaking him to be Razia’s husband. Naauzer Vacha, the defence lawyer of Bhushan turns his rival in the claims of Sylla’s love.

The colonial set up and the discrimination of Indians has also been raised as a serious issue by the author. Comrade Dey, Bhushan’s prison mate complains that a European prisoner is treated very royally; he is given a ward which is almost equivalent to a bungalow with its lights, fans, table lamps and bathrooms. There was also discrimination in the food served. The whites who were served milk, butter, meat
and toast to eat, but Indians got food which was unfit to eat. They used wholes dug in
the ground as toilets thereby creating a very unhygienic atmosphere inside the prison.
The dress code was also different for whites and non-whites. The whites wore suits
and tie whereas the Indian prisoners wore pyjamas with cut-off legs and shirts with
cut-off sleeves. The comrade Pillai believes that, days before the trial, the case is
closed to make a special tribunal to enquire and assure that they are proved guilty by
the tribunal. This was the strategy adopted for the Lahore conspiracy case. This is
again a testimony of how power is misused to victimise innocent people and cases are
fabricated. Bhushan is one such victim. He never dreamt of throwing the King
Emperor out of power.

The story actually begins when Bhushan returns from abroad to India in a ship
called ‘Conte Rosso’ and sets foot in the Bombay Port. He stays in Hotel Taj,
Mumbai and his Parsee friend Sylla comes to visit him in the Hotel. He presents her
with a book which she had asked him to bring from abroad. While he purchased a
book for Sylla he also took a book for himself because of its attractive cover and a red
binding. The title of the book was ‘Revolt of Angels’. Sylla urges him to act in the
play ‘The Scarlet Letter’ and stay in Mumbai for another week, though Bhushan has
told the hotel authorities that he would stay only for a day, he extended his stay for a
week. After taking part in the play, he leaves the place before the national anthem is
sung as he thought it was getting late for him to reach home. All these factors are
connected, and a case is fabricated against Bhushan, charging him with treason. In his
own words the case is “I had been charged with conspiracy to deprive the King
Emperor of his sovereignty over India.” (MI 15). Actually, Bhushan was a person who did not have a clear picture about his own priorities in life. His descriptions as well as the author’s descriptions portray him as an aimless Prince, who is after beauty and love. His childhood has played a great role in making Bhushan a different person. He grew up in an atmosphere where he had everything he got except true love. There were a lot of people to attend to his needs but all of them were only rendering a service for the pay which they took home. There was an inner craving for true love as a child. Hence, when he reached adulthood he started looking for this love, in the other gender. Razia, a Muslim girl, the daughter of the Inspector of Schools is the first person who Bhushan thinks fully understood him. To quote him: “How did she know what I wanted? Where did she get her intuitive knowledge of me? And had she been born knowing what it was to be free” (62). He was fully committed to her and she was everything to him. In his own words Bhushan felt:

“I was not meant for Geography and Mathematics. I had a vocation it was this. She and I were so intimately connected that when she stopped appearing in the window I felt I had been cut off at a vital artery” (62).

Bhushan’s devotion to his lover blinds him from recognising her true nature. He presumes that Razia is also as committed as he is, but she looked at this relationship only as a window to the world. She found Bhushan a good companion who would obey all her orders and do anything to make her happy. Right from his childhood, Bhushan had been under women who were very dominating in nature and decided all things for him. Even in this relationship Razia takes the lead.
He says: “Yet it was Razia who arranged our meetings and kept track of time, with her in
born knowledge of when darning ended and cooking began” (65) This indecisiveness
actually takes a toll on his life. He only takes orders from women who are very close
to him. Another instance is seen when he prolongs his stay in Bombay at the behest of
Sylla, who wanted him to act in the play ‘The Scarlet Letter’. The book in his
possession, his prolonged stay, all conspire to make him a victim. Had he been the
conniver of his destiny he would not have stayed longer in Bombay, thereby avoiding
the charge of treason against him. He fails to identify and set his priorities in the race of
life. His weakness is his love and he would obey any order or request of a loved one.

In the three affairs that Bhushan has, there is a common element. The women
take the lead and dictate terms and he willingly obeys all their orders. Bhushan is
portrayed as a character who would do anything for his loved ones because he deems
the relationship as a precious one. In each relationship, he finds a different hue of
love. With Wilie May it was a very candid relationship with delightful sexual
relationship. They could exchange almost all ideas even on delicate matters like sex.
But this relationship has a formal beginning and an end.

Bhushan’s relationship with Sylla was not merely physical; she was more than
a friend and almost like a lover. She had genuine interest in him but his irresponsible
ways made her look for another partner. But she helps Bhushan look at life with a
clear perspective rather than leading a life of trance. She helps him publish poems and
act in a play which was highly appreciated by reviewers, Sylla makes every effort to
make Bhushan forget Razia and start life afresh. She did not consult him when she
rearranged programmes and his feeling went like this: “I was snuggling up to a chastely, slender, green-eyed army Commander in high heel” (5). She was a modern Parsee girl who wore frocks and bathing suit, and moved with ease in a fast growing city like Mumbai. Hence, Bhushan’s proposal of marriage did not appeal to her because she was reminded of his mother whose life was within the four walls of the Zenana. Moreover, she was an extrovert who could direct plays, arrange the settings, act well, thereby proving herself to be very versatile persona. She is an emotionally intelligent character who understands her own emotions as well as the emotions of others well. She is quick to ascertain her mind as well as Bhushan’s. She perceives that both of them had different temperaments which will not get along when the youthful charm subsides. Hence she makes Bhushan realise that she is not an ideal match for him. This relationship had the tenderness, comfort and friendship needed for a longstanding relationship and so, they decide to remain friends forever. Bhushan feels indebted to Sylla for helping him to grow up into a mature individual. “I'm nothing but a tadpole...I'll never grow to maturity without you” (6).

Bhushan is not able to forget Razia, his first love, and again he starts hunting for her. His love for her is more like an obsession with all its youthful vigour. But he is not able to digest the fact that he will never be able to trace out her because the family had moved out elsewhere due to the ignominy caused by the riots. This obsession lasts a longer time in him because he wanted her like his own life’s breath. Though two other women come into Bhushan’s life after Razia and shower all the needed love and comfort a woman can provide a man with, Razia stands out
and he longs to unite with her. This desperateness speaks volumes of his intensity of love. He even plans to murder the imbecile who was getting married to Razia. At any cost he wants her. His description of Razia goes like this:

“\( I \text{ thought of her face. It took me years to decipher its spell and understand why it haunted me. It defied unwritten laws. The Tartar cheek bones of this face should have had slanting eyes above them, but hers were long ovals, the lidded eyes of temple sculpture} \) (60).”

Spider was the name of the tutor appointed to coach Bhushan after he was removed from school for not doing any work. After his meeting with Razia, the tutor found that his work was impossible as he dreamt of her the whole day. After the riots the Raja (Bhushan’s father) wanted him to tutor his son on Rajput history. The primary purpose was to make him forget Razia and to orient him to take pride in their clan and its achievement and thereby do his best to the Rajput warrior tradition. But Bhushan found several other facts which shocked and appalled him like the numerous defeats of Rajputs in battles against Mongol invaders and Rajput views on to polygamy and infanticide. His father makes sycophantic efforts to please the British government, and obtain the title of Raja, coveted by the landed aristocracy. After reading all these, he again thinks of Razia as he did before. This behaviour of Bhushan highlights the fact that emotions rule one’s brain and no amount of external pressure can change the course of the mind. All the advice of his father and mother to forget Razia falls on deaf ears. But life gradually makes him understand that his love will never come back to him. Hence the realisation is that Time is a great teacher who
silently makes people understand great truths of life. Then he decides to find a new life partner and settle for life. The passage of time and the varied experiences he undergoes, all combine to make Bhushan understand himself and his emotions well.

The identity crisis of the young Prince of Vijaygarh, Bhushan, forms the subject of the novel. There are two levels of identity crisis; at the internal level we find him lacking an awareness of his own self and at the external level he is mistaken to be a conspirator against the King Emperor. In another perspective this is also a story of a woman who discovers her identity during the course of the novel and that is none other than the Rani of Vijaygarh, Bhushan’s mother. There is also a psychological similarity between the mother and the son; both of them are late to discover their own self. This, when looked at from the viewpoint of emotional intelligence, gives us another insight that both of them develop the capacity to handle problems during the course of the novel. The narrative is in the first person, and the story unfolds through the flashback technique. The three women in the novel, Sylla, Razia and Mother are studied from Bhushan’s point of view, which also is the author’s point of view. This novel has brought several accolades for Sahgal due to its intricate, elegant and well crafted structure.

In *Mistaken Identity* Sahgal gives a very sensitive depiction of the way women suffer due to the sexist bias in the patriarchal society which gives a subordinate position to women. Sahgal's *Mistaken Identity* is a major modern novel in its theme and craft. It reveals the characteristics of contemporary literature. The theme of 'identity' is a mixed blend of modern western sense and historical culture of Indian
tradition. As the novel proceeds, even the name of the narrator is less mentioned. Every other character in the novel is introduced in terms of race, religion, nationality and relationships. Superficially misunderstanding others but basically understanding oneself, life seems to be arranged for Bhushan by women. The journey between the mistaken identity and discovery of identity is a genuine experience. It is also Bhushan's discovery of the identity of womanhood.

Though it is a historical novel it does not talk of history, power and culture, but of illusion, reality and memory, which in turn is an in-depth study of human emotions. How the characters react to various realities of life, what are the implied results of such reactions, does it bring positive or negative impact is studied. Here the protagonist is found in a confused or a disillusioned state a few years back, but as he is tossed up and down during the stormy phase in his life, he emerges as a mature individual. The story can be studied as a feminist novel, for, Bhushan's story and visions are as much as his mother's. Ideas and thoughts of Bhushan are as much as that of his mother. Jasbir Jain describes Mistaken Identity as the history of a family, a country and a dream. (Realism 92)

The dream of Bhushan and his mother is not only that of lost love found but a secular India where rebellious Muslim women and idealistic Sikh men can unite without fear, in which Ranee openly declares her love for a communist worker. It is a dream of India where a mother is liberated from the clutches of myth and traditional roles. The Ranee of Vijaygarh displays her emotional strength when she decides to fly from the golden cage of age old traditions which had only crammed her indomitable
spirit. She leads the life of a commoner which soothes her heart. This decision is the result of a clear perception of both the past and the present. Her character grows and develops as the novel progresses.

The basic issue of humanity depends on the actuality of life's action. Therefore, Sahgal's narratives can be viewed as wondrous interplay of factual and fictional elements. Sahgal, while commenting on the novels *Storm in Chandigarh* and *The Day in Shadow*, says that pieces of her has gone into making the men and women she has created. Sahgal's pangs of marriage and estrangement get reflected in her characters. Through one of her fictional characters, she has voiced a note of emancipation of women. She tells that women themselves are afraid of inhabiting the world as equals. They do not believe in themselves. They have to come out of the 'ridiculous cult'. Likewise, her women in her novels achieve emancipation from unfaithful, unreasonable and domineering husbands. Bhushan's mother emerges as a liberated woman. The interaction of actual life events with fictional manifestation does not in any way depict a falsification of human experience. There would be deviations of course, which is only natural. A writer's experience and exposure go into the making of the novel. Hawthorne adds importance to this saying fiction is "twice told", all telling, ultimately retelling.

Bhushan's inward state nourishes the dream of establishing Hindu-Muslim Unity. He passionately searches for Razia, his long lost love. As he is obsessed with his past love he is unable to respond to his relationship with Sylla. He is reflecting on the meaning of his existence. He is fully obsessed with the past to the extent that he is
not worried about the misery of the present. Sahgal depicts all these impeccably, and with a great deal of skill that is highlighted by a fine use of language. She deftly captures the social and political climate.

Jasbir Jain points out that there is a network of mistaken identities in the novel. Dogma, caste, class and gender have the power to dominate and shape our lives, but with these external powers, we have failed to gain self knowledge and knowledge of others. We see ourselves and others in relation to the group, creed or code and not as individuals, with our own identity. It may be argued that people can only know themselves in terms of social structure and relations. However, Sahgal has demonstrated in a detailed way how social relations, which have apparent support of ideology, can ossify and become repressive. The deepest marks of such missing identity are seen in the sex roles which further complicates issues. The system of purdah is common to both Hindu and Muslim cultures. Bhushan pities his mother living in a mansion which was blocked by high walls. There are two ways in which Ranee, Bhushan’s mother, is prevented from communicating to the outside world. One is the purdah or veil and the other is the high walls. Both these are ways to thwart women from interacting with the outside world. If they are given a choice to do so, they will no longer remain as caged birds. Hence the society frames moral codes for women, which makes it mandatory for every woman to abide by it or face the threat of being ostracized.

The role of culture in ascribing roles, perpetuating certain beliefs and dehumanizing women is explicit in all societies. When Bhushan reads the family history of the Rajputan warrior clan, he is shocked to find that polygamy and infanticide was rampant among
people who took pride in their courage and valour. Where did these qualities go, when they committed female infanticide thinking these infants would grow up to become burdens for life? Will not their bravery aid them in providing for female children a good life? The vanity and pride actually prevents them from marrying off their daughters to a groom below their social standing. Again, this social status and prestige are only man-made and is transient; nobody is permanently rich or poor. This social status can be compared to a wheel which sometimes comes up and then again goes down. It is never static. But the society fails to recognize this fact and buries female children alive or strangles them along with the umbilical cord. After all such atrocities against the female gender, who are instrumental in bringing and nurturing life, they take pride in calling themselves warrior clan. A warrior is someone who protects the weak and the helpless. It is a contradictory fact that they call themselves as warriors when they are devoid of such virtues.

Bhushan is not free from the flaws of his clan. Though he does not marry many women like his father, he also has physical intimacy with three women. The justification of valour by the need to possess more women is ingrained in the society. Hence, Bhushan, the representative of the younger generation has no qualms in indulging in a physical relationship. Men have a different moral code altogether. They need not abide by such restrictions; they are left free to indulge in all sorts of pleasures. When Bhushan is caught making love to a Muslim girl, his father retorts by saying: “What beast have I fathered? What monstrous appetite has he got that the lower half of a well-known prostitute can’t take decent care of?” (72) These lines speak very much about the attitude of the father and the son. Bhushan’s father, the Raja of a princely state, looks at women only as an object of
pleasure. He transfers his beastly qualities to his son who is actually very much dedicated to his lover. He is not in a position to understand how desperately his son was in love with the daughter of the Inspector of Schools. But even Bhushan crosses the limits in the name of love. The father never had such an experience in life; hence he calls his son a fool who did not know how to indulge without being caught. The fact that prostitution was so rampant in the country is also evident from this fact. Here again Sahgal very explicitly urges for a change in the outlook of men towards women. She reiterates the message that women are not machines to give pleasure and give birth to babies and nurture them. They are also species of the same clan with feelings and long for love and care.

The nine year old saga that mother undergoes to get a son is oft narrated by the senior maid Bittan. They went on a one year pilgrimage to all the shrines in South India with four hundred tenants, and the following year they travelled to the North Indian shrines with two hundred tenants. Miraculously, mother conceived but mother did not stand like a "humble suppliant" for divine or human favour. “She was more like a warrior queen falling on her sword in defiance of defeat and disgrace” (28). This warrior queen did not impress the King for long as age and stress had withered her beauty. Therefore, he finds new brides who are more charming. All these insults and isolation actually drain the moral grit of a lady with great conviction.

The boldness and conviction of mother is gradually ruined by the seclusion that she was facing. She even goes to the extent of painting her room green as per the advice of the astrologer, in order to have some peace of mind. This gesture of the Ranee reveals how desperate she was in spite of her title, servants at her bid and all the luxuries.
Her achievement of bearing a son for the King also has lost its glory with the passage of time. Here again the dual standards of the society is revealed. Though she had given birth to two female children, she is not recognised either by the society or by the Raja, her husband. Bhushan even suspects whether his two elder sisters were still born babies as reported in the family chronicle. Only when she delivers a son, she gains some importance and that too was not a lasting one. The inner craving for love and the insecurity which she faces, make her feel like a bird locked in a golden cage. This proclaims the universal truth that luxuries and servants never make a woman happy. The love and care of the beloved is what a woman longs for, and if that is missing in life it is not glorious whether a woman is called Ranee or queen or commoner. All are women and their life is complete only when they receive the love and concern of their husband. This aspect is stressed by Sahgal in *The Day in Shadow* where Som provides Simrit with all the luxuries, but she fails to find happiness through possessing material goods. Material goods can be a way of expressing one’s love, but if it is simply dumped without a word of kindness or concern, it only remains a lifeless object which cannot express the love of its sender.

Still there are systems denying women's rights in Indian society. Female child is denied the right to live. Bhushan’s mother follows all the rigid dogmas of the society which restrict women, but is liberal towards the licentious nature of men. The dogma of the Rajput community looked at girl children as a financial burden, just because their pride will not let them marry their daughters to a person below their social standing. “The cost of marriage was astronomical. No daughter of a Rajput could marry beneath her. The right grade bridegroom was not easy to find” (77). The author states that there were records of
strangling with the umbilical cord and another popular method was the “pill of bhang” (MI 78). In this method, the midwife would put in the pill into the infant's mouth or smear the mother’s breast with this pill so that the very first suck would prove fatal for the child. Another method was to bury the girl child alive into a milk pit. All these accounts of infanticide in the society reveal the author’s concern for a major social problem. Even today after the passage of almost six decades, girl children are still looked upon as burdens. Technology has come to the aid of parents who can determine the sex of the baby before its birth and terminate it. The author has obliquely raised an important problem that India is facing, thereby divulging her love for the country as well as her own gender who are subjected to various forms of injustice. Female infanticide is a social evil which is capable of making the human race extinct from the surface of the earth.

Bhushan’s mother had a twin sister who was married to the same man as their parents did not want to separate them. But the chronicler has simply ignored the details of her death, as they considered it to be of no significance to the future generations. The death of his mother’s sister remains a mystery, but nobody raised a question to ascertain what circumstances led to her death. Women of royal birth or low birth were all toys in the hands of men who would do what they want with this gender. They also had the power to hush up all these atrocities without creating a ripple. All these instances show that women for use had been the rule so far, and the scenario is gradually changing due to the protest raised by such writers.

Women are held responsible for bringing up children in the right manner and looking after the household but when it comes to decision making, she is never consulted.
When Bhushan’s father marries a second and third time, she remains a mute spectator; even this reaction of hers does not bring any change. After a long period of observation, the Ranee of Vijaygarh, Bhushan’s mother, comes to realise that remaining aloof from her husband is not going to affect him in anyway but only makes her all the more lonely and deprived. Hence she decides to choose a companion for herself. In her choice, she gives no priority to wealth or nobility of birth. Her sole priority is to lead a life with a person who will understand her and love her. This decision is the result of the emotional stress a woman undergoes in various forms like dejection of being childless or not being able to give birth to a boy and the stigma associated with it. These emotions actually purge her character of all the flaws, and make her emerge as an emotionally intelligent woman who looks at life with a new hope. Ranee is a character who finds her own way and she can be called as one of the best women emancipators. Though she was denied a formal opportunity to take up education as she was married in her early teens, as the wife of a Raja, she could not step out of the portals of her palace. But she was humble enough to learn lessons from her son and keep her well informed. Both of them read nursery rhymes to history lessons together. Travel and adventure fascinated her. She also had a contemporary favourite, the Tzarina of Russia. She loved the Tzarina’s simplicity. She wondered why the Tzarina could receive Rasputin in her room, in spite of the miraculous healing that he gives her son. She raises a question of why low birth should be taken as an issue when almost all ‘Tantrics’ (MI 38) were low born. She held views ahead of the time she lived. The century which she lived in had rigid classification of the social strata, based on occupations. Those who served the Lord, the Brahmmins, were high born and those who did menial jobs were considered to be low born. But Ranee disagrees to this
man-made classification and looks at the goodness of an individual and not his lineage by birth. This is indeed what the Mahatma and many other social thinkers of India propagated to get rid of the evils of the caste system.

The Ranee of Vijaygarh actually serves as a contrast to the traditional ideal women. The women of the traditional society symbolize the tranquillity and inner certitude of Indian culture. They are _pativratas_ or the self-negating Indian woman who subjects her individual will willingly to the wishes of her husband. Indian mythology is replete with examples of such women. But Sahgal creates a very significant character who is the harbinger of changes that the society is soon to witness. The Ranee of Vijaygarh who lives in the 1920s does understand that she has her individual identity which is ignored by her husband, the Raja and the society at large. She is not ready to lead a self-negating life like her forerunners. When Bittan, her maid, advises her to ignore her husband’s absence stating that ‘a man goes from flower to flower’. (36) She very violently tears the tapestry of a prancing Hanuman from the wall and crashes her water pitcher. This violent outburst is actually an outburst of the bottled emotions or the pent up feelings. This can also be interpreted as the desperate act of a staunch devotee who is denied justice after long penance and prayers. Mother actually diverts her anger to God rather than having an open dispute with her husband, the Raja. This again is from the understanding that nobody will support her grievance as it is the way of the world to accept a king to have as many wives as it pleased him. She silently suffers all the torments and after making a thorough analysis of her own emotions as well as the emotions of the Raja, her husband, she comes to the conclusion that she cannot make him come to her. And there is no point of living in his
golden cage. Hence, she decides to live with a man who would treat her as an equal and give her the much needed love and affection. Another fascinating aspect of the Ranee’s character is that she is not bothered about the approval or the disapproval of the society. She lives her life for her happiness. This wonderful trait can be found only in an emotionally intelligent person. Only such a person can understand that nobody can lead a life, satisfying all or earning a good name from all people concerned, because people are not aware of the trauma or the battle that each individual wages. Hence they cannot be judgemental in stating somebody is right or wrong in his actions. A common yardstick to measure different people will not yield good results.

The Ranee of Vijayagarh is a marvellous creation of Sahgal. She is denied of all moral support and due concern needed for a woman. The apathy of her husband, illiteracy and the cultural confines does not hinder her from chasing happiness. There is no external support or mentors to guide her as in the case of Simrit or Sonali. She is a rebel and cannot be compared with any of Sahgal’s creations. She breaks the conventions of a Rajput queen and has no qualms of how the society may respond to her decision. Her conviction is that a society which was indifferent to her sufferings can never dictate terms when she has found happiness at her own cost. She broke away the multiple chains that were stifling her. She emerges as an emancipated woman solely by her own emotional intelligence. She understands the circumstances and relations in her life and perceives the impediments imposed on her. Finally she generates the emotion (courage) which redeems her from the bonds. The inherent strength, courage and will power grant her victory against the
tyrannical forces as a sole crusader. This saga makes her an emancipated woman though she is not aware of the term in its true spirit.

*Mistaken Identity*, like other novels of Sahgal, portrays two parallel themes. One is political, about the conditions of the natives under British Empire, and the colonial attitude of the rulers treating the natives as slaves who have no individuality of their own. Second is man the woman relationship in the male dominated society. The socio-political crisis in India is exposed to the maximum in Sahgal's fiction. In Sahgal's novel 'moment' remains the British regime and the freedom struggle, and the 'milieu' is based on this background. In *Mistaken Identity* freedom movement remains as the background and the plight of Bhushan who lands up in jail for reasons unknown to him, forms the structure.

In *Mistaken Identity* the writer's confidence and maturity is revealed. It is a major modern novel in its theme and craft. The quest for identity of the real man under the humbug of public roles, characterizes much of modern literature.

*Mistaken Identity* is stylistically different from Sahgal's earlier novels, especially from two most recent ones, *Rich Like Us* and *Plans for Departure*. The narrator in the novel is a man. It is written from the point of view of Bhushan Singh, a poet, who is the only son of the Raja of Vijaygarh. Sahgal analyzes the theme and events from the individual point of view of the characters with an unusual sensitivity of a mature artist. *Mistaken Identity* registers an important stage in her growth as a novelist and branches out in a new direction. The author tries to
understand the cultural, political life, the happenings and events, by adopting the technique of biography. It is different from any novel that she has written before.

The novel focuses principally on the depiction of the life of Bhushan. In 1929, he returns to India after his long stay abroad. He is put behind the bars on conspiracy charges by the British government. Sahgal, with minute precision and utmost care depicts the troubled and complex psychological mental make-up of Bhushan. She moves backward and forward in time to create the life story of Bhushan Singh.

The life of Bhushan is a triangular configuration with three corners. At one angle is his Razia, his first love who has made a great impact on his life. Another angle is Sylla, the link with reality is a solid, soothing guiding force. Only when he is linked to the third angle, the daughter of Yusuf, he turns to be a mature man with better perceptions of life. Until then his persona remains incomplete.

Vijaygarh seems a sleepy place very much like a tortoise–shell for Bhushan Singh. For Bhushan, his country is Vijaygarh and he cannot be a revolutionary or a nationalist. He is going back to Vijaygarh but is put in jail for sedition. Bhushan's third eye is poetry. Though he has no business and not interested in politics, his poetry is revolutionary. His poem 'Bridge' talks of Hindu – Muslim unity where marriage between them well serves as a 'Bridge'. But it is interpreted altogether differently. The question why his poem was interpreted differently, why it was published in the Soviet magazine and why he was arrested remains a puzzle for Bhushan. Hence his identity is mistaken to be that of a conspirator.
Bhushan is attracted to Islam and woman's beauty. In Razia he finds both these attractions. He develops a sexual relationship with Razia which satisfies him to the core of his soul. His desire to understand women and Islam fails. Razia, the Muslim girl Bhushan is obsessed with, is sixteen years old and is trapped in her religious and cultural confines. Razia is attracted by the freedom Bhushan offers her. She develops their relationship by arranging their meetings and keeps track of the time. Bhushan adores Razia for her beauty and Islam. He thinks Razia's beauty, her rhythm and her occasional nervous energy were part of the Islamic heritage. Bhushan sees in her the crystallizing of all the wonders in Islam. Razia on the other hand, has no special feeling for Bhushan and he is just a part of her experiment with freedom. Sahgal confirms this. She was not in love with Bhushan Singh. This is clear from the beginning. She is anxious to get back to her class. “She enjoys herself but she is not besotted. He is besotted” (65).

Razia after her escapade with Bhushan, is a "fallen woman". This relationship causes Hindu–Muslim riots in Vijaygarh. After this experience Razia is condemned to live as a second wife of an imbecile. Razia's infatuation with Bhushan gave her the resilience to withstand the world that rejected her. She is not the person to accept anything as fate. Bhushan's mother recounts how Razia, with her new found freedom raised her veil and "moved around talking to people like men" (181). She caught the attention of a Turkish Diplomat who stayed on and married her. Razia then had got what she wanted out of life; to be his woman and be loved for the independent Muslim girl that she was.
The strength of Razia's will is made absolutely clear by Sahgal. Any other woman who had been the cause of Hindu – Muslim riots would have been ashamed and would have meekly accepted the decision of the family and society. Instead, Razia defies one and all. Father has sympathy for Razia. But father is evidently mocked at by Sahgal. Contrary to father's predictions, Razia comes out of this situation unharmed. She gets married to a Turkish Diplomat. Razia’s marriage to an imbecile is arranged with great haste. This marriage is a kind of punishment for the pre-marital affair she has with Bhushan. Though she is a good looking smart girl, with enough educational qualification, she is engaged to an imbecile. Here the prejudice of the society can be witnessed; a fallen man escapes the situation and pursues his higher education abroad. But a fallen woman is not worthy enough to marry a sane man. Here again, Razia proves herself to be an emotionally intelligent woman. Though she commits a mistake due to her infatuation for Bhushan, she is not broken by her marriage to the imbecile. She very well perceives the circumstances that lead to her consent for such a marriage. She does not reconcile to fate but rather waits for an opportunity. When she finds a man who understands her and accepts her as she is, she is ready to share the rest of her life with the Turkish Diplomat. It is human to err but to realise one’s mistake and lead life without losing hope is a trait of an Emotionally Intelligent person.

Bhushan’s father had a very extravagant living. The Dussehra festival was a very lavish affair after his third wedding.
“There was a procession which had horsemen, swordsmen and spearmen. Father in his finery led the train of elephants on his painted, gorgeously caparisoned one flinging coins to the people from his majestic swaying height. Drummers and dancers made way for him. After him came elephants carrying family members and estate officials. Then horses, camels and servants” (76).

The Raja of Vijaygarh had a larger than life image. The festival of Dusserra was formally inaugurated by father by lighting the torch. But Bhushan was never excited by these festivities and he remained aloof from his father’s celebrations. He was closer to his mother and his mother treated him like a child even when he had grown up into an adult. After the riot, when he recovered from his shock and started thrashing the objects in his room, mother did not chide him for his escapade but commanded the servants to bring him food. “Good nourishing food. Can’t you donkeys see he is well?” (71).

The Raja of Vijaygarh was a great lover of music. Bhushan also shares his fathers trait. He says: “There is an abject streak in all of us. Father’s was made of music. It alone could reduce him to tears fill him with tearful exaltation. His temple and his brothel met in music” (MI 81). This inherent trait of the father helps Bhushan follow the dance and music lessons offered by Wilie May. Both Wilie and her father Mr.Goldberger tried their best to make Bhushan take up a career in acting, as they found his face similar to actor Ramon Novarro but Bhushan did not wish to take up music and dance for life. For him life was Razia and hence he returned to Vijaygarh
though Mr. Goldberger warned him of the riots and the trouble which was waiting in his hometown. Mr. Goldberger is of the view that Hindu–Muslim unity can never be established as they were riotous from the beginning. This remark offends Bhushan and he retorts saying only a test of the blood samples of both the communities will show how well they have mixed. Here, Bhushan is voicing the author’s view to look at the Indian society without the communal divide.

It is an interesting fact that men are not prejudiced against so called fallen women. Mother, for instance, is quite annoyed at accepting Razia. It is amazing how mother is quick in condemning Razia. After all, she must have been planning to leave her father. When Yusuf turns up, she leaves her husband and leads an independent life without the pomp of a queen. She does the same act that she herself condemned of. Sahgal in her comment on mother's action says: "Mother, who wants to conceal what she wants out of life, passes judgement on Razia" (Women Novelists, 93). Being an intelligent woman she does not want Bhushan or anyone to suspect her plans. Razia had done what mother had always wanted to do but could not, having let herself be ruled by society.

Vijaygarh experienced a Hindu–Muslim riot, "claiming the lives of 15 Hindus, 10 Muslims and two policemen" (MI 49). The riots in the city was itself a revelation of how foolish the people were. If a Rajput boy and a Muslim girl were in love, what was the point in slaying and raping women of each other’s community. The author has very vividly portrayed how insensible people are when somebody instigates them to go on a rampage to show that their religious sentiments are hurt.
A mob of five or six hundred had a Hindu-Muslim war with knives, stones and broken bottles on the front lawn of the female college. Someone sets fire to one wing and the mob stampeded in to loot pots and pans and sewing machines with the yells of ‘Allahu Akbar’ and ‘Ram Ram’. Then they went on a rampage through the town, and the killed and raped count was rising in the hospital. (70)

But do they ever think how all these killings and cruelty are going to uphold their religious beliefs. Innocent people who are in no way connected to this issue become victims. Ironically, the two persons who were the cause of this riot are safe in their houses. After this incident, Bhushan's father sends this troublemaker out of his taluk and Bhushan comes out of the country. "All my poems are about Razia" (129) he accepts brazenly, for, he thinks Razia opened up his inner self.

The riot and its aftermath are all incidents happening in a secular, democratic country like India. There were several riots in the history of India which took a religious colour and claimed the lives of thousands of people. The riots after the partition of India, the killings and the rape of innocent women and children all are indelible in the annals of history. The partition of India on religious grounds and its after-effects are well described in Sahgal’s novels, especially in *The Day in Shadow*. The intention of the author in discussing in detail the riots is not to incite riots but to make people or the readers understand their folly. The author wants her countrymen to look before they leap, or in other words, she wants them to understand a problem and then decide the course of action. She actually bemoans all the violence perpetrated in the name of religion, where innocent people are
victimised like “The fishmonger’s son had his teeth shattered by a lance blow. Another Mussalman had his arm ripped off by an explosive. The Hindu picked it up and waved it like a flag” (70). This pride in severing the limb of a fellow human being makes us inferior to animals because, however hungry they are they do not devour an animal of their own clan. A lion never hunts a lion, even if it has to starve. Here it is not killing for hunger but honour killings to satisfy one’s pride in one’s religion. Religion goes to the background when somebody is cremated or when the body decomposes in the grave. This empty pride is detested by the author. Hence she has taken every effort to make this novel an eye-opener for the readers.

Later, Bhushan meets Sylla, a Parsee girl, who smokes and wears western clothes. She is a modern girl full of satisfying love relationship. Bhushan is a man without ambition or occupation. He says to Sylla: "You are my nest from storm, plague and pestilence, not to mention Hindu–Muslim love–madness that rages in my middle ear" (155), and that is why he needs her. Even in Mumbai, Hindu – Muslim love madness keeps on raging within him and he keeps visiting the red light areas in Mumbai, in the hope of meeting Razia to cool his madness. His visits to red light areas disgusts Sylla. Bhushan needs her company to overcome his sexual urges.

"I was Sylla's (mistress). I was more feminine, more gentle and compliant than her. I was the one who waited at home for her visits. She came when she wanted to... I was the one who loved to linger, loved to perform small services for her..." (150).
On being questioned, Bhushan accepts that his religion is Hindu–Muslim and his mother tongue is poetry. His mother is a traditional Hindu woman for whom every great neem is saintly; she can read only the Hindi script. His father has no knowledge of Hindi, he writes Urdu. In this family background, Bhushan develops a composite culture and religion which is not accepted by the common people, whether British or Indian.

Sylla was a scab to Bhushan's emotional wound. She could neither heal up the wound nor cure Bhushan. Sylla is the real mistress and Bhushan waited at home for her. He loved to perform small services for her comfort and pleasure. Once he says: "I am a natural follower. And Sylla was a natural leader" (126). The situation here may be said to have changed, in comparison with earlier novels of Nayantara Sahgal. Sylla is not Simrit or Saroj. She is not even Sonali. She is one who is capable of making men wait for her approval and decision.

Bhushan finds release from the furies of Hinduism and Islam in Sylla. Sylla is a Parsee, who believed in a God of light and good. After his release from jail Bhushan comes to Vijaygarh. He plans to go to Bombay to marry Sylla and live a carefree modern life at Bombay. Sylla plans to marry Nauzer, a Parsee young rising star. She finds better prospects in marrying the lawyer rather than the aimless Bhushan. Her grandmother also approves her decision. Rejection of Sylla brings Bhushan to reality from romance. He returns to Vijaygarh in a state of awakened reality. Bhushan actually finds Sylla as a shelter from all the torments of life. He feels that if such a bold woman
becomes his better half, he can lead a happy life. He describes their relationship, saying: "We took turns being aggressor or pacifier, flirting with the idea of marriage, not wanting it, wanting it. We never simultaneously wanted anything" (151).

Bhushan's imprisonment helps her to understand that he could never be the love of her life. He is lost in himself. She calls him a "Narcissist" (MI 156). She is a modern girl who cannot adjust to a "walled up" (30) existence at Vijaygarh. When she decides to get married, she opts for the lawyer, Nauzer Vacha, not Bhushan Singh, perhaps because Nauzer can give her what her grandmother has hoped for her -- a future. Nauzer, as contrasted to aimless Bhushan, looks ahead in life and is a man with ambition. Nauzer is gifted with intellectual brilliance and legal acumen which indeed impresses Sylla.

The baseless allegation of being a conspirator, being rejected by Razia, his girlfriend whom he most needed like life breathe, and the aftermath of Hindu-Muslim riots, were all too much for a person who has provided everything even before asking for it. All these sudden jolts were too much for a man who had only the maturity of a boy, brought up in a very protective environment. Right from his childhood Bhushan never had the opportunity to take charge of things. He was always under the shade of somebody who would do things for him. There was always Bittan and mother to care of all his needs. This pampering has a negative impact on him. Moreover, he did not have a male as his role model. The things he knew about his father was that he was interested in women and showing interest in women only makes a man complete. Other than this, his father also did not exhibit valour, love or courage. Hence, Bhushan very quickly follows his father’s track to find somebody to love. The lack of understanding between the parents also makes the
son a person lacking the comprehension of life. The son lacks identity, he never identifies him with the Rajput clan, and he only follows the religion of love. He is ready to do Namaaz with Razia just because he loves her. This intense love which he has for her is not reciprocated. He did not receive true love even from his parents, as they were engrossed in their own problems. Father was discontent with mother; mother was isolated by the father. This unhealthy atmosphere in the family actually makes Bhushan a person with a poor comprehension of life. He is not able to decipher facts in life. He grows up into an aimless adult living only for Razia, who never realizes that she had not taken him very seriously.

He plans to kill the imbecile who is going to marry Razia, so that he can get her back. But Razia agrees to marry the imbecile and very soon finds a Turkish Diplomat as a fitting partner and settles for life. But Bhushan continues his hunt for her in the red light areas of Mumbai to Vijay-garh, hopeful that he would find her one day. Though the deceit of Razia is a hard blow to him, the exposure to various trials and tribulations in life actually make him evolve into an emotionally intelligent person at the end of the novel.

Bhushan’s vain search for Razia, entraps him in a legal tangle. But Sylla wakes him from slumber, empowers him and makes him look at life from a proper perspective. Sylla becomes the life force for Bhushan. Her emotional strength not only helps her to make wise decisions in her life but also proves to be a guiding light for people in dismal darkness. She thereby proves to be an Emotionally Intelligent person.

At Vijaygarh, Bhushan meets Yusuf, his cell-mate in jail and a communist social reformer. Bhushan immediately feels: "He had descended on me like a compass. I knew where north was again" (MI 201). He feels the purpose of his life
with the arrival of Yusuf. To Bhushan, his mother and Yusuf seem to suffer from madness in love. She, an illiterate Ranee, knows nothing about communism but she knows a man when she embraces one. Before this union of lovers, Bhushan meets the young daughter of Yusuf and marries her. Here, Hindu Muslim unity is finally achieved. His wound finally heals. The final realization comes to Bhushan: "Great love is a serious, whole time business" (160). Bhushan’s love for his father and mother is the cause behind his inspiration to unite their religions. The lack of love at home is sought in women, but never finds a fulfilling one. All these complications take their root from the deprival of love and affection he faces as a child; there are lots of people around him to take care of his needs but none to give an iota of love. Hence we find him in the pursuit of the lost love almost till the end of the novel. Only when he finds a person to shower undivided love and affection on him, he becomes a normal person. When his emotional needs are met, all his idiosyncrasies are healed and he fulfills his goal of Hindu–Muslim unity through the twin marriages at the end of the novel.

In Mistaken Identity the story moves forward and backward in the stream of consciousness method. The major women characters are seen through the eyes of the male narrator. It does not distract the narrative. For example, Bhushan's mother, a conservative and a tradition bound woman, comes alive when Bhushan is in prison reminiscing about her. Sylla is a typical Parsi girl from Bombay.

Sensitive touches in the novel stun the reader. The male narrator, with his effective assessment of women characters who enter his life, astonishes the readers.
Here, the novelist's subtle presence with the male narrator is felt. She enters the world of conspirators, jailors and explores the lives of men. Since the world is visualized through the narration of Bhushan, the women who make a difference in his life come alive. Sahgal's feminine sensibility helps the reader to appreciate the fact that although the women are representatives of their class and live in turbulent times, they have a strong will which is uncontrolled and untainted by their society.

On various occasions, through Bhushan's flashback, we see his mother living in a way that is approved by society. Sahgal wants to convey, during those moments, that his mother was playing the role of 'Ranee'. Her free spirit and strong will neither submit to the demands of her husband or the world. As Jasbir Jain says, "She has always been a rebel. Her character has been one of restless questioning. She is a stronger person than her husband and refuses to accept his continued pursuit of pleasure and new "Ranees". (Indian Writers 34)

Bhushan recalls that mother had been just a helpless spectator when his father married for the second and third time. But this does not mean that she accepted his later marriages. His mother, having forgiven him once, was not about to do so the second time. There was a brick wall built around her quarters. She would remain removed and independent in the confining walls. She sees the world through curtains and the painted windows. Yet, her intelligence helps her to discern the people according to their moral values.

She comments on the present roles of the talukdars. They are "nothing but rent receivers for the British" (28). She mocks at those who are obedient to the "arrogant
"bastard" (the Commissioner), 'who kept the landlords waiting on the Veranda' (26). On another occasion, he deliberately delayed the passport for Bhushan so that a major Hindu–Muslim riot will break.

The free spirit in her is seen in the recount of Pujas when she "danced like drunk, a woman possessed, hair flying, saree slipping and a woman in flames" (MI 27). Her attitude towards God and fate is different from the stereo-typed women around her. Sahgal has deliberately set her apart from the rest to show the fact that the concept of modern woman does not stem merely from 'modern' times in which she lives. She refuses to accept her husband's deed as the will of God.

It may seem ironic that the mother, with hardly any exposure to the outside world, has better link with reality than the father. As Jasbir Jain says, "She understands the subtle difference between love and sex which her husband does not" (Realism 92). Though he is well travelled, he chose to live in a shell of his own making. Sahgal evidently focuses on the fact that genuine socio-political awareness does not necessarily stem from education or from overt social interaction.

Even when she had earlier gone on pilgrimage with his father, there had been a touch of defiance in her attitude. She did not beg the Lord for a son. In fact it had been more like a battle between mother and the Lord. Though she knows nothing about women's liberation, she becomes a strong practitioner of the same, because, whatever measures she takes to insulate her self –respect from tyrannical forces, she does so without the support of anyone else. It is because of her inherent courage, her
strength and will power, this woman does not need support even from her son Bhushan. She walks her own proud way even when there is no comrade in her life.

Sylla’s character, her thoughts and her style of living is an absolute contrast to the other women characters in the novel. She is the ‘new woman’ in the novel. Sylla is a typical modern woman both in her appearance as well as her thoughts. A woman educated in England and Switzerland, she was brought up by her grandmother who is educated in France. This lady had single handedly raised Sylla to be a spiritually independent woman. As a result of her upbringing, Sylla is a straightforward woman. She has definite opinion on all subjects. She tries to understand Bhushan's fascination for love. She is philosophic and analytical in her efforts. She tries to bring sense into Bhushan. "You are obsessed with your obsession and not with her" (121). Sylla's appearance and her English ways set her apart from the common Indian woman.

It is quite natural that Sylla would never adjust to the life of Vijaygarh. In fact she declares she would go, "stark staring mad" (24) if she had to live there. Though she found satisfaction in his company, she admits that every woman wants a man with an ambition in life. A man obsessed with his past and with no dreams of a future was not for her. On the surface, Sylla's decision may seem disheartening, but her shrewdness and intelligence in selecting a man is revealed in her action. In contrast, Simrit in *The Day in Shadow* selects Som. What she wants is a husband and not a dreamer who lives in the past. In fact rejection has done more good to Simrit. In the case of Bhushan he leaves behind his romance and comes to reality.
Sylla is a typical Parsi and she represents the upper class Bombay society. Moving in her charmed circle, Bhushan was unaware of the textile workers' strike that had gone on for six months. This world of Sylla was the kind experienced by Sahgal when she lived in Bombay after her marriage. Sylla sprang from the experiences the novelist had in Bombay. In one of her interviews, Sahgal said: "Sylla, like any Parsi I have met, is a confident, modern person fully rooted ... in her cultural values" (Women Novelists 104). Sylla is portrayed as a guiding light for people who travel along with her in the journey of life. She looks at life with a very clear vision. She knows her own wishes and desires very well, and suggests what is good for others. This insight also helps Bhushan to come out of his trance and take life seriously.

Bhushan learns a lot when he leaves the palace and starts confronting the realities of life. This again conveys a very strong message from the author that, problems in life actually make people emerge as stronger individuals. This is proven in the case of Bhushan who faces deceit and desertion by Razia, rejection by Sylla and brief courtship with Willie May. All these hard blows awaken Bhushan from his slumber. He realises that rejection and deceit are all part and parcel of life. But life will not come to a standstill because of such experiences; he finds ways and means to keep life going. He never accepts defeat or loses heart. He could have decided to end his life as he did not get Razia back. Suicide is usually the last resort of people who face failure in love. But Bhushan never resorts to such extreme measures. He does not become a chauvinist like his father who only believes in hiring women for pleasure.
Bhushan proves himself to be a jewel, as his mother named him. He is seen to be a rare and precious ornament which brings joy to all. He only needed a little chiselling and polishing. This truthful and faithful nature is a reflection of the mother’s integrity and the values she has instilled in him. The agony of a wife, when her man deserts her, is well understood by him and he does not want to deceive any woman. He wants to marry Razia. When this is not possible he wants to marry Sylla, but when she rejects him, he never turns a womaniser but looks out for a woman on whom he can shower his love.

The character of Bhushan is constructed in the bildungsroman style. He is a playboy in the beginning of the story. But circumstances and people mould him to evolve as an emotionally intelligent person at the end of the novel. There are several characters in the novel who actually help him in this evolution. The major role in this novel is played by his prison mates Bhaji, Sen, Yusuf and others. They are good listeners to his tales, but actually when Bhushan is retelling his story, he does a lot of introspection. At certain places he conceals the truth and gives a glossy picture of his parents. Several incidents reveal his own folly, and at times the comrades give him advice which helps him in mending the abnormalities in his character. Another trait and the most meritorious aspect of his character is his loyalty with which he bonds for life. This is seen already in the case of his first love. Again, his friendship in the prison is converted into a lasting bond by marrying his comrade’s daughter. The bond is made doubly strong by his mother marrying his comrade himself.
Bhushan displays characteristics that favour emancipation of women. He helps his mother to become literate. When he comes to know about his mother’s decision to live with Yusuf, divorcing Bhushan’s father, he does not chide her or express his disgust. He is happy to set her free from her bonds. This understanding is due to the empathy he has for his mother. He knew very well that his mother was an intelligent, capable woman and not an equal match for his father. But her birth into the Rajput clan had marred her destiny. She was not allowed to grow as an individual; moreover, there was a lot of work done to cram her liberal spirits. She again did not bend before the oppressing forces and like a warrior she wages her battle and succeeds in the end.

Sahgal’s creative concern is as much with the present as with the past. In this novel too, like in Sahgal’s earlier novels, the public and private issues are subtly integrated and resolved. In Sahgal’s fiction, individuals in the end become so refined as to make readjustments of positions and attitudes. They understand their circumstances better. This indeed is a trait of emotional intelligence. Sahgal’s protagonist, whether conservative or liberal, young or old becomes chastened in the end and comes to terms with life. Bhushan Singh in the end of the novel understands his 'love madness' and comes back to reality. Henry James describes the common task of the historian and novelist is to represent, and illustrate the past actions of men. The historical novels have the formal concern for the fidelity of facts, without compromise on its own autonomy. T.S.Eliot in his "Tradition and Individual Talent" say that the historical novel involves the perception not only of the pastness of the past but its presence. This literally means that any work of art should relate itself to the past as
well as the present. Sahgal, in this novel, has fulfilled this condition and secured a special place in the realm of literature. Even in this modern world we can find characters similar to Bhushan and Ranee.

Mother’s decision to leave the palace to live with Yusuf is not an impulsive one. It is the result of the suppressed emotions and cumulative effect of neglect which finds a vent. Coming out of the veil and the curtain through which she saw the world, is symbolic of the false cover she has on her. The tradition, society and morality as curtains are thrown aside.

Ill-treated and despised by her husband, she leaves the family mansion. Hesitating for a second at the entrance and holding her breath before she walks out to be a star in the most sensational scandal of her generation, i.e. the elopement with Yusuf, her communist lover. (123)

The Ranee is not a rebel raising cudgels against established norms of society; she is only a helpless woman who breaks the shackles in order to get life’s breath. She comes out as a free, independent woman. As a butterfly, she comes out of her cocoon, and flies to new pastures.

The novel *Mistaken Identity* is a deft portrayal of the evolution of various characters. The character like Bhushan, who in the beginning of the novel appears disillusioned gradually discovers his own self and looks at life with more clarity. Similarly, the Ranee of Vijaygarh fights against the injustices meted out to her by husband, the Raja of Vijaygarh by living in isolation. But during this bitter phase, she understands her emotions as well as her husband’s emotions from a better
perspective. When her husband marries a third time she cuts all ties with him. But he is unaffected by her decision and leads a happy life with his new wife but she is immersed in the agony of an unfaithful marital relationship. Gradually she understands that she also has every right to lead a happy life and starts living life on her own terms. This understanding itself is a major trait of emotional intelligence.

Bhushan’s characterisation in *Mistaken Identity* is a major breakthrough in Sahgal’s panorama of characters. This is the first novel were an attempt has been made to understand a male psyche. The stream of consciousness technique is employed to trace out Bhushan’s emotions. His craving for Hindu - Muslim unity is basically a craving right from his childhood which is fulfilled through the marriage at the end of the novel. The emotions of Bhushan which cause turbulence in his life are calmed down by his own introspective efforts and of course with the help and support of Sylla who helps him in his self-discovery.