

Voice of the Voiceless: A Psychoanalytical Approach and Marital Discord in Nayantara Sahgal's 'Mistaken Identity'

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Abstract

Nayantara Sahgal, a political writer, focuses on the elite class, explores female issues, and strives for self-realization. From her early writings until the later portion of her writing career, her characters embody an intense desire for independence. Her primary concern appears to be man-woman relationships in a sociopolitical environment. Nonetheless, her stories provide a clear explanation of historical events. *Mistaken Identity* is an adequate example of historical occurrences, with unbridled patriotism. She paints a compelling picture of the patriots, showing how they were willing to give up all for the sake of the country's freedom, including enduring tortures. Violence against women is a pervasive problem in male dominated societies throughout history. This article is an effort to examine Sahgal's work where she gives a powerful voice to Indian women who have been oppressed by male. She is revered as a defender of Indian upper class women and explores the difficulties women face at home and in the wider world by focusing on the emotional and psychological toll it has on them.

Key Words: Patriotism, Independence, Self-realization, Violence, Elite

INTRODUCTION

"A woman with a voice is, by definition, a strong woman. But the search to find that voice can be remarkably difficult."

—Melinda Gates, philanthropist

Mistaken Identity is the most important contemporary novel, equally in terms of neatness and theme, and reveals the contemporary issue of an identity crisis. It is an exclusive novel in Indian English writing due to its theme. There is a distinctive blend of western wisdom with the chronological and cultural ambivalence of the Indian custom. It deals with the absurdity of discriminating people as Hindus or Muslims, forgetting the basic truth that they are human beings first. The protagonist of this story is different from Sahgal's earlier novels, as she has given a male protagonist a significant role. Women authors writing in English make a concerted effort to scheme females as the fundamental protagonist and appear to succeed most effectively in conveying women's plight. Their instinctual awareness of women's reaction and response, difficulties, and perplexities, and the intricate workings of their interior selves have been widely reflected in contemporary women. Women novelists investigate and analyse the emotional worlds of women with admirable depth and empathetic understanding.

For millennia, women have been subjugated by men in this male-dominated culture. All religious texts,

including the Bible, the Bagawath Gita, the Quran, and Manusmriti, acknowledge the role of women who live inside the "confines of the household." All religious writings state that females must be respected and decorated and that everywhere women are sacred to the gods' delight. According to the age, the modern woman cried out for liberation from orthodox tradition, aided by education, science, and social institutions. Men have assumed responsibility for women's economic, political, and social security. In India, women traditionally played the position of 'Abla Nari,' but they are now equal to men.

The novel skilfully weaves stunning, sensible, and compelling basics of man-woman relationships and the female protagonist's subtle struggle for liberation. The author emphasises the importance of a man's power on a woman's existence and subordinate. This authority affects how the individual's mentality functions. Bhushan Singh, the novel's speaker and Sahgal's representative meet numerous women during his days and undergo various experience before reaching adulthood at the novel's conclusion.

VOICE OF THE VOICELESS

Mistaken Identity (1988) is a novel on personal and public freedom. One of the most fashionable literary terms is a persona, the Latin word for the mask actors wore in the Greek and Roman theatre. The term suggests that the author's identity and his characters are the distinctions between them. . In a context rife with displacements, literature offers a singular lens through which to view the numerous ramifications of such circumstances.

Sahgal begins this work by recounting the 1920s Meerut Conspiracy case, which leads to her narrative of a wayward son Bhushan, a petty raja during British rule, charged and imprisoned. He spends a few years in prison reflecting on his existence and his nation's dutiful and community condition. Bhushan, the chap leading role, has some exceptional female connections that cause him to shift his mind and viewpoint. Bhushan refers to Razia as a "wild dream" and considers himself her "destiny," but Razia has no affection for him. Vijaygarh was rocked by horrific rioting as a result of their romance. Many people are killed or mutilated, but Bhushan remains unharmed. He is detained at home before being dispatched to Bombay and eventually to America. He can't get away from Razia's adoration, though. However, Razia forgets about her prior relationship with Bhushan and falls in love with and marries a Turkish diplomat.

Sahgal skillfully employs the technique of flashback and newspaper reports and shifting points of view, among others. The Prince of a small principality, Bhushan, falls in love with a Muslim girl Razia, a commoner. A Hindu prince falling in love with a Muslim girl leads to communal riots in the city of Vijaygarh. For this act, the Raja of Vijaygarh, Bhushan's father, decides to banish him from the country to pursue 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. Wilie May, the daughter of Bhushan's father's close friend, is a close friend of Bhushan. She helps him learn the nuances of dancing and acting, and they also develop a purely delightful sexual relationship. She is drawn to him due to his exotic appearance.

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

She gives herself to him to fill the void created by Razia. She very explicitly declares her love for him. She scolds him for his obsession with 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). The novel vibrantly describes how a woman is subjugated even during modern times. They have been exploited both by society and individuals in disrupting relationships.

Professor of history at Northern Kentucky University, Tripta Desai, in her book *Women in India: A Brief Historical Survey: From the Vedic Period to the Present*, analyses the situation of women in ancient Indian society:

Wife and husband were referred to as humid or joint owners of the house in the Vedic era, particularly Rig Veda. This mentality was responsible for women's excellent social status at the time (11).

The birth of a daughter is celebrated in Vedic literature, which emphasizes the importance of providing the girl with a decent education, effort, care, and attention. The characters Razia, Sylla, and Rancee in 'Mistaken

Identity' wish to shed light on the changes in relationships before and following marriage. They desired to progress with the times and should not have made any concessions on the question of their liberties in our male-dominated culture. Sahgal's feminists have always argued for women's equality with men. The novelist has a soft spot for women and views them as victims, whereas bears responsibility for their degradation. Women are injured by men and are frequently mentally harmed and crippled by their pride, pessimism, and indifference.

Problems like sexual discrimination, denial of equality, and restrictions on self-expression are some of the issues dealt with so far. During the last two decades, more serious thinking has been done regarding these and many other issues. . The researcher has also observed while analyzing the individual character how a woman gains autonomy - the power of being one's person when she is pitched against man in a grim battle of life. The women characters are also made powerful by both women and men writers by endowing them with various qualities of head and heart to influence the individuals around them and react gainfully to the circumstances of which they are the products.

Some other female characters are forced to submit to certain arbitrary laws governing the world where they have the fortune or misfortune to live. Most of the female characters of *Nayantara* Sahgal meekly accept their roles. Sahgal's feminine sensibility helps the reader to appreciate the fact that women are representative of their class and the turbulent time they lived in; they have a strong will that is uncontrolled and untainted by their society. The Ranee and Raja of Vijaygarh are another notable pair in the novel. Raja, Bhushan's father, has been married three times. Ranee, Bhushan's mother, is abused and scorned by her husband. She is a passionate, illiterate, yet clever individual. Through their friendship, the novelist aims at patriarchal society's parochial and discriminating laws and regulations.

On the one hand, society restricts females like the Ranee from remaining solitary in their "Zenana." Still, on the extra offer, it promotes the Raja to marry for the sake of having offspring. The wife is blamed for her failure to bear children, not the husband. It's perplexing that a female is exposed to many limits and torments, yet a male is allowed to do whatever he wants. Ranee disregards all boundaries and establishes her own. At the age of five, she married at thirteen, was transported to her husband's family, and had to wait nine hard years for a son.

Shashi Deshpande's 1980 novel "The Dark Holds No Terror" tells the life of Saritha, a successful doctor. The author attempts to depict feminine sensitivity and refinement in her story. Generally, women desire emancipation from control and task and liberation in all of its manifestations, now as males comprise the authority and precise to take steps, say, and assume as they like. Women, too, desire their human rights and sense of self-identity. In general, Shashi Deshpande's novel is about pursuing female identity. For ages, Indian women have been the silent victims of male oppression. While she has a variety of roles to play as a spouse, protect, sister, and daughter, she has never been able to establish their own individuality.

Deshpande's work of fiction explores the subject of female illiteracy, conventional instruction into the patriarchal social structure, dowry, the caste system's hurdles, and socioeconomic position as Ranee does in 'The Day in a Shadow', who lives entirely secluded in her family estate. She is subjected to manipulation that is extremely subtle and horrible. She is ignorant, illiterate, and married to an uncaring man. As an uneducated and separated from the outside world, she risks ending the marriage. When her husband marries for the third or fourth time, the female behind the veil sever all ties with him; Bhushan's mother's behaviour was observed that is socially acceptable in various contexts. She was practicing the character of "ranee." Indeed, her independent spirit and strong will never be yielded to the pressures of her spouse or the world. Jasbir Jain correctly observes:

She has been a stubborn individual. Her demeanor has become one of persistent inquisition. She is more physically than her spouse and will not allow him to pursue delight and new ranees actively. (Jasbir Jain 263).

The mother's determination towards her life is so strong that she can cope with all the ups and downs at "Zenana," in which she confines herself in a restricted world of her husband. Mother had been immediately a dependent observer when Bhushan's father took a following and a third spouse. She could not voice her disapproval, which meant that she forgave him for his later marriages. Ranee had forgiven her husband once when he took a second wife. But still has to face the same situation again when he married the third time. Bhushan says, "She has another ambition. She wants to turn into stone." (32). The Ranee, who was formerly reliant, a quiet bearer, and a copy of her husband, no longer requires the permission of a dysfunctional society or anyone, including her husband, to make her choice. She inevitably causes a sensation in early twentieth-century orthodox

culture by eloping with her communist boyfriend. As Bhushan expresses it:

She stepped out of the family estate early one morning...she walked out to appear in the generation's most dramatic scandal. Humanity has not forgotten this affair between being an ignorant Ranees and her communist boyfriend, nor has it forgiven their vulgar public display of it..(238)

Rita Sood, a famous feminist who has written about the terrible plight of women in society, has written about it in her book, *Changing Status and Adjustment of Women: A Feminist Perspective* :

When the British came to India, the condition of an Indian woman was deplorable... Several serious backward social institutions and practices are prevalent in Indian society like sati, perpetual widowhood, purdah, dowry system, early marriage, polygamy, polyandry, devadasi system, illiteracy, and female infanticide. (41)

The writer herself believes that tradition has strong control over its live components. The women cannot disobey the dictates of customs and traditions. The moral remains in their novels that concession in a wife leads to happiness for all - husband, father, and that upsetting the domestic order may disrupt social and cosmic order. The woman in her place is the corner stone of society. In today's society, the woman dies metaphorically with a messy, distorted, and inappropriate relation 'social script'. Every woman character of Nayantara Sahgal tries to revolt against male domination by having an extramarital affair which brings her a tragic sense of having done something 'forbidden,' at the cost of a part of her being dead.

The Rig Veda bestowed women of the time the highest status by allowing them to accompany their husbands during the performance of sacrificial rites. In her article "Women in Ancient India," critic Radha K. Mookerji highlights an essential point about women's status:

In ancient India, wives shared full religious rights with their husbands and frequently took part in religious events alongside him. Indeed, such ceremonies would be null and invalid if the wife did not join her husband as a full partner. (2)

Marital Conflict

All the three heroines of Sahgal in *Mistaken Identity* revolve around the protagonist Bhushan. They are in deep love with Bhushan throughout the novel. He had a good companionship with Razia, Sylla, and Willie May. Still, he was unable to stick to any one of these women and was not in the position to marry them. Razia being a Muslim girl unable to withstand her love since society does not allow the Hindus and Muslims to be united. Because of the cultural aspects, the women in this novel remain silent and want to live independent life because of the cultural aspects. They are in search of identity and freedom in themselves and want to struggle to cope with the emotions. 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 destined to study Geography or Mathematics. This was my vocation. She and I have been so inextricably linked that I felt as if a critical artery had been severed when she failed to appear in the window. (62)

Sylla was another friend and lover of Bhushan. She had a genuine relationship and interest in him, but his irresponsible ways made her ignore Bhushan and look for another partner. Women long for men's care and comfort to lead their lives. She sacrifices her whole life for the sake of their partner, but men fail to keep their words and find faults in every action of women. Sylla makes every effort to make Bhushan forget Razia and start life afresh. She did not consult him when she rearranged programs and his feeling went like this: "*I was snuggling up to a chastely, slender, green-eyed Army Commander in the high heel*" (5).

An interesting character in this novel is Sylla. She is very bold, confident, and modern with cultural values. She was raised by her grandmother, who was educated in France as well as Dublin and Swiss. Sylla had been raised solely by her grandmother to be a self-sufficient woman. She is a straight forward woman. She has a definite opinion on all subjects. Though she is very close to Bhushan, yet unwilling to marry him because she has

never adjusted to a “walled up” (24) existence at Vijagarh.

Sylla is not merely a typical Parsi but a modern Parsi girl. She wore frocks and bathing suit, and moved with ease in a fast growing city like Mumbai. She is more specifically a typically inhabitant of upper class Bombay. As Bhushan admits, “*Sylla's Bombay is not Bombay*”.(41) Bhushan being moved in her charmed circle had totally unaware of the textile worker’ strike that had gone on for six months. This Sylla's world is the same kind of life Sahgal had once she resided in Bombay after her marriage.

Razia, the Muslim girl another interesting character of *Mistaken Identity* by Nayantara Shagal. She is sixteen years old, a blind product of the ‘purdha’ and the ‘namaz.’ She is drawn to the strange boy-man Bhushan's fleeting moments of freedom. There is no fruitful relationship between them. Razia maintained the momentum of their relationship, as she arranged their meetings and carefully kept track of the time. She did not want to like Bhushan's mother who keeps herself always in ‘burkha’ as it signified: a protective shield. It is clear that she yearned to be rid of it. Razia longs for the independence rather under the strict rituals and customs. She feels suffocated in the rigid confines that her faith imposed on her. Bhushan correctly gauges that Razia and Islam were inseparable. Razia has no special feelings for Bhushan. I believe he is a part of her experiment with freedom. “She was not in adore with Bhushan Singh,” Sahgal confirms. This is self-evident from the start. She is eager to return to her lesson. She takes pleasure in oneself, but she is not smitten. He is smitten”.

The transformation of women characters that undergoes the change from submissive to a challenging and strong character in the novels of Sahgal. Nayantara Sahgal has emerged as one of the most important voices in Indian English fiction. The main focus is on how the women characters of Nayantara Sahgal overcome the challenges to be identified in the family and society. Indian women have played various roles from the ancient era to the modern era. This chapter highlights the conviction and challenges required in every man at every stage of life.

The women characters in this novel have marked their sincere love and compassionate towards Bhushan. The pain and the agony of Razia, Sylla and Willie-May have turned them to survive with determination in society. Though they were very much struggled and realized about their identity for their future life. The art creates a delicate, realistic, and captivating texture of man-woman relationships. Sahgal's work discusses the significance of a man's influence on a woman's life and vice versa. Bhushan Singh, the story's narrator and Sahgal's conduit, meets a variety of women throughout his life and goes through a variety of experiences before entering maturity near the end of the narrative. All of Sahgal's younger female characters want to be free of male rule. Rashmi in *This Time of Morning* (1965), Saroj in *Storm in Chandigarh* (1969), Simrit in *The Day in Shadow* (1971), and Mother in *Mistaken Identity* (1988) all walk out on their marriages due to the restrictions that marriage imposes on women in India, while Sonali in *Rich Like Us* (1985) chooses to remain single. Rane, Sylla, and Razia are the reasonable modern women who develop as a result of their interpersonal ties. Once women find the appropriate companion for their lives, they find a beam of light and optimism in their otherwise bleak existence. Their lives will blossom like the petals of flowers, with an aroma that will keep them pleased for the rest of their days. *Mistaken Identity* is a novel that concentrates only on the issue of women in a globalized society. Every individual's mentality and perception undergo changes from time to time.

If females are supposed to pass on traditional life for children in Sahgal's novels, this process is usually depicted as failing, frequently since this protagonist's views differ from those prevalent in their cultural subcultures. Mothers can occasionally have a subversive effect by striving to instil other values in their children. Sahgal's fictional portrayals of Indian spousal power arrangements at times resemble morality plays, with husbands as wicked tyrants and wives as helpless victims.

Rane and Raja of Vijaygarh are the important characters in this novel. Raja, Bhushan's father, has been married three times. Rane, Bhushan's mother, is abused and scorned by her husband. She is a passionate, illiterate, yet clever individual. Through their friendship, the novelist takes aim at patriarchal society's parochial and discriminating laws and regulations. The younger female protagonists in Sahgal's work all yearn to be free of male dominance. Due to the restrictions that marriage imposes on women in India, Rashmi in *This Time of Morning* (1965), Saroj in *Storm in Chandigarh* (1969), Simrit in *The Day in Shadow* (1971), and Mother in *Mistaken Identity* (1988) all walk out on their marriages, while Sonali in *Rich Like Us* (1985) chooses to remain single.

Anita Desai depicts Maya as the mutinous female who battles three conventional stereotypes in her life: male power exerted by her spouse; womanly companions who play stereotypically subservient wife roles; and her

spiritual attitude in karmic and involvement. Maya's contact with her husband Gautama does not include the conventional Indian values associated with sons, and as a result, she has difficulties reconciling Gautama's devaluation of her with her possess emotions of self-esteem instilled by her member of the clergy. Maya's feminist perspective is an indictment of humanity that devalues females and expects them to recognize that their indoctrination was not delegate. Maya is striving to validate her personal ideals and sense of worth, all the while pondering the bigger question of what constitutes a balanced environment that respects her values. It reveals a woman's inner conflict during a period of extreme struggle by addressing the issue of nuptial discord and the accompanying estrangement that happens in the existence of a mistreated wife.

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CONCLUSION

The researcher wants to analyze the present situations of every woman in the society who urges and struggles for their identity and transformation towards life and matters and showcase how women emerge slowly realizing their strength and become assertive individuals, thereby rejecting limited space reserved. She becomes vital and ace towards a better understanding of self and society. Nayantara Sahgal is an Indian English woman novelist interested in portraying women and their roles in her novels. She assigns mostly traditional roles to her characters and later makes those women voice their expectations and frustrations in life. All her women are seen docile in their lives but later made to be rebels against their husbands or patriarchal domination. They are not able to adjust themselves to the society's expectations when their needs and aspirations are nullified and as a result they are muted and their voice is castrated. Finally this article analyze the problems and causes for failure in marital life and how they should adapt themselves with a new vision and new human situation to make their marriage a success and this paves the way for a healthier generation. In marriage there should be a reciprocal

involvement, trust, shedding all hypocrisies and pretences. There should be no moral lapse in the marital life which would sully their marital relationship and become the beginning of a nagging suspicion leading to disintegration of the marriage. Therefore, marital life is a joint venture of husband and wife in laying the foundation for creating the next healthier generation and thereby they become the role model to their children.

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