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Resistance against Double Colonization in Nayantara Sahgal's *Mistaken Identity*

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Letter of Approval

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Abstract

In *Mistaken Identity*, Nayantara Sahgal presents the general predicaments of women under colonial patriarchy through the instances of Indian women. Since the colonized women suffer double colonization--political colonization and gender colonization, the patriarchal social norms that undermine women are represented as the main causes of women's marginality. Unless these dominating and gender-unequal norms of traditional societies are changed, women will not get equal position and opportunities in their own societies.

Likewise the imperial culture that dominates that both men and women of colonized nations and disregards their rights for freedom is subverted by means of solidarity of local men and women. For this solidarity to take place, local men should respect women's freedom-rights and provide equal opportunity to them, welcoming all sorts of positive changes in the dominating conservative and traditional patriarchal norms. Sahgal implies that through the empowerment of both men and women only, imperial domination can be resisted and before that, women should realize their potential and empower themselves to resist the dominations that marginalize their identity.

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I. Anti-colonial Ethos in Nayantara Sahgal's Novels

Nayantara Sahgal is one of the most prominent Indian novelists and a political commentator. She is probably the first Indian woman writer dealing with the political themes as a strong base. Until 2003 A.D., she has published nine novels and eight works of non-fiction. Since the beginning of her literary career in 1954, she has been writing about the socio-political situations of her era. Nayantara Sahgal is the winner of many awards in the field of literature. In 1985, she won the Sinclair fiction Prize for her novel *Rich Like Us*. In 1986, she won the Commonwealth Writer's Prize for another novel *Plans for Departure*. *Rich Like Us* again gave her Sahitya Akademi Award in 1986. The writer of brilliant political fictions like *Storm in Chandigarh* and *The Situation in New Delhi*, Sahgal deals with the political milieu around her including cultural and gender issues. Her latest novel is *Lesser Breed* published in 2003.

Sahgal's almost all novels are set in the political background, some in pre- and some in post-independent India, and deal with social, personal and political issues together. The daughter of Vijayalaxmi and Ranjit Pandit, Nayantara Sahgal had the privilege of an upbringing in which politics was inevitably an ambience. Born in the popular political family of India--the Nehrus --she has closely witnessed the independence movement, India's freedom, her maternal uncle Jawaharlal Nehru's political ideologies as well as her cousin Indira Gandhi's rise in politics. Such political associations have deeply affected her life as well as her writings.

In her novels, Sahgal is seen preoccupied with individual's search for freedom and self-realization. In this context, Susheela P. Rajendra comments:

Freedom of individual and freedom of India emerge as twin theme in the fictional world of Nayantara Sahgal. She deals with marital and political crisis alongside; crumbling politics and crumbling marriage take the center of her fictional matrix underlying occupations with the theme of

freedom. She explores freedom in all its varied manifestations in her work. (174)

The freedom of individual here is concerned more with the freedom of women who are suppressed and suffocated under the dominating patriarchy. Her women characters are mostly seen following the traditional roles in the beginning. But with the development of the plot, they realize about the domination. They come out of the traditional status and conventional definition of 'virtuous women' -- a kind of 'sati' -- "whose life ends in self-immolation" as Sahgal herself claims (Varalakshmi, An Interview 9). Sahgal, in the interview with Varalakshmi comments about her women characters that "[these] women from the beginning of [her] novels have walked out and the main thing that binds them to the status quo is their children. Very often the children act as a chain to keep them where they are. They have no option but to stay"(9). These traditional and conventional women are not very dynamic and revolutionary at the beginning. Sahgal views them as "extremely conformists": "[. . .] yet the point [she] is making is that at some stage even the worm turns. The most traditional, the most passive, the most conventional creature at some point will dig her toes in and say, thus far and no further. Likewise, each of these women, conventional though they are, at some point walk out" (9).

Nayantara Sahgal, along with her contemporaries Anita Desai and Shashi Despande, has contributed in the Indian Literature to achieve a more open-minded approach to women-related issues. Instead of merely describing the pathetic life-style of the Indian women, these writers have tried to understand these women to a deeper level. But what makes Sahgal different from others is the different style of portrait of women. Desai and Despande show 'alienation' at the root of the problems of their women characters while Sahgal's women:

though they too are subjected to various socio-personal pressures [. . .] do not draw into a cocoon. Instead every effort is made to belong to the mainstream of life. Even when the women do make a significant choice, they rarely make a statement about their motives or plans. There is no deep introspection that leads to their decision-making. Instead, it seems to be the only natural course of action, without any fuss or fanfare.

(Varalakshmi, *The Individual* 87-8)

Sahgal prioritizes freedom above all things and her concern has been showing the importance of freedom in man's life. Living under domination and its suffering are depicted in her novels and the most interesting of all is that she portrays political as well as patriarchal domination together so that the importance of freedom is seen even more crucial either it is the case with a man under single domination or a woman with double domination. Rajendra thus says, "Sahgal shows a deep faith in individual freedom and the single unifying theme that runs through her all novels is man's awareness of the implication of freedom" (Rajendra 183).

In *Mistaken Identity* too Nayantara Sahgal has come up with twin themes of freedom--freedom of individual and freedom of the nation. Since this novel is set in the pre-independent India, it shows how Indian natives are dominated and exploited by the colonizers, and how people are gradually revolting against it. Simultaneously, it also depicts the lives of individuals, and most lively of females who are subjected to double domination and double marginalization in colonial India. Depending upon the generation in which they belong, some of these women have already started living according to their own free will, discarding the traditional roles prescribed to them by the society. Some traditional women have gradually empowered themselves to resist the domination and have transformed themselves into rebellious ones by revolting against the oppression. The interesting thing in Sahgal's novel is that these women

characters are seen from the point of view of a male narrator-cum-character who is the only linking point of the different sub-plots in the novel. Bhushan Singh is the person with whom the plot moves forward and backward.

The Mother of Bhushan is the one who begins from domination, comes through realization, empowers herself gradually to revolt, resists the patriarchal domination by remaining indifferent towards her husband, and many times resists the British domination by spitting out her anger towards the British though only inside her walled-up room. She waits until she finds the opportunity to break the walls that separate her from the world. For a woman who is bound to live in a confined room since her marriage at the age of thirteen, it seems impossible to come out of that prison. But she is able to make this happen. With the help of her growing son, she learns books and gathers knowledge about the outside world, the history, the politics and many more. Later with the help of her grown-up son, she meets comrade Yusuf, a freedom-fighter and a prison-mate of Bhushan, who respects her desires of freedom, her desires of individuality and respects her womanhood. She discards her dominating husband, leaves the walled-up room to breathe freely in outside world. She is liberated from her husband's domination and imposition. She goes with Yusuf, a person who is fighting to achieve freedom from another domination.

Besides the Mother, there are other female characters who are making their efforts to resist against the marginalization. Razia is a Muslim girl who is tired of the Purdha system imposed upon her by her religion. She wants to walk freely without the suffocating *burkha*. She wants to come openly in public, talk like men, get freedom from the unequal treatment, but her religion doesn't allow her this freedom. As a movement towards freedom, she passes secret times with a Hindu boy Bhushan for which she becomes the cause of religious riot in Vijayagarh and many rumors are spread about her fallen status. Razia's determination doesn't stop here. She becomes

more bold and determined to come openly in public to show her modern self. Her discarding *burka* and walking boldly catches the attention of a Turkish diplomat who is impressed with her courage and her modern thoughts and marries her and helps her to achieve a free modern life, to liberate her. Razia is not worried even by the riots caused by her so-called immoral act because she takes it as an opportunity to break the chains of restrictions.

Likewise the Parsee girl, Sylla, is in love with Bhushan. She however believes in love that she may get somewhere else, which is a perfect and true love. Educated in Europe, this upper class girl is humanitarian and modern. She is surrounded mostly by English women. She doesn't like visiting the place like Vijaygarh where women are restricted in Purdha and confinement. Bhushan imagines what would be the reaction of the people in Vijaygarh if Sylla would go there in her transparent saree and half open back. He feels that he would like to see the scandal made by modern Sylla's presence in Vijaygarh. Sylla seems to be resisting the domination by rejecting the traditional male-dominated values and by assimilating the colonizer's culture and living in circle of the English women. She helps Bhushan while he is in prison by proving a lawyer, Nauzer Vocha. Later she realizes that she can't always get attached to an aimless Bhushan who most of the time is obsessed with his past love. She leaves him for a better and happy married life with Nauzer. She discards Bhushan because she can't sacrifice her life consoling Bhushan and witnessing his obsession with another girl who has already made her own way towards happy ending.

Nayantara Sahgal's women characters are thus resisting the domination and empowering themselves in the fight for their individual freedom and their position in mainstream. This research will focus on these colonized women resisting double suppression: colonial and local.

Nayantara Sahgal's *Mistaken Identity* depicts the colonial India in its varied forms. This novel portrays social life, politics of India, colonizer's oppression, religious differences as well as comparative life styles of women of different generations and different social background in pre-independent India. *Mistaken Identity* is "dotted with significant signposts of the Indian freedom movement" and having "slice of history which captures in the contours and character of the country at a crucial juncture" (Saxena 134,136). *Mistaken Identity* is a graphic document of the twilight years of the Raj in India and may well serve as a reference point to many events and actions of the freedom movement.

Many critics have analyzed this novel as a juncture of social and political issues of pre-independent India since it contains as its background the hegemonic and imposing British rules as well as the captivation of the freedom fighters in Mahatma Gandhi's time. Neena Arora's understanding of *Mistaken Identity* is that it is a "political novel imbued with socio-political events in India during the British regime in the year 1929 which [is] the time when the country [is] gradually awakening to nationalism and witnessing unrest, strikes, and mass arrest" (175). She views "[. . .] political concerns of the novel at the national level are the Gandhi Salt March and Lahore conspiracy case. The news of global happenings, like the civil war in Turkey, the rise of Mussolini, and the Russian revolution also penetrate the prison walls [where the freedom fighters comment about the news in terms of their own ideologies]" (176). Despite belonging to different political groups and of different political ideologies, the prime concern of all of them is independence from the colonization since they can't tolerate the oppression from the outsiders within their own motherland anymore. The freedom from colonization and colonial hegemony is their goal for which they have accepted the prison with pride.

The novel includes great details about different females who are making their individual efforts to resist the domination and marginalization both as females from males of their society and as the colonized subjects from the colonizers. Their concern for individual freedom obtains the form of resistance as well as rebel. Living under domination for a long time, these females have realized the need of freedom. They want to liberate themselves in any ways they can. For it, even the passive and quiet looking females develop the rebellion power within themselves. David Kerr sees the feminine power of rebel in Bhushan's Mother. "The rebellion of Bhushan's Mother, while fantastic in its apparent subtleness, nevertheless, symbolizes the way in which subterranean stress can erupt into unexpected action," says Kerr (146).

Most of the time, Sahgal has shown the mother behaving in socially approved manners. She goes on playing her role of a *rane* and a mother who is worried for her son's marriage and his inheritance of father's position. But, as Varalaxmi says, "[. . .] her free spirit, her strong will, submit[s] to the demands of neither her husband nor the world" (A Critical 154). Varalaxmi appreciates Sahgal for "deliberately set [ting] the Mother apart from the rest to emphasize the face [. . .] that the concept of the modern woman doesn't stem merely from the modern times in which she lives" (156). The expression of mother as a revolting devout and her bargain with the God that makes her "a truly liberated woman" than the ones who pray out of fear or for favor"(157). When the Mother wants to "turn into stone [. . .] she want[s] to defy the brick wall that ha[s] been built by Father around her quarters. Turned into stone, she [can] remain removed and independent of the confining walls of Vijaygarh" (155). At the beginning, the Mother is resisting by turning indifferent towards the domination. Jasbir Jain appreciates the Mother's character that, "She has always been a rebel. Her character has been one of the restless questioning. She is a stronger person than her husband and refuses to accept his continued pursuit of pleasure and new *ranees*"(Goodbye 263). Jain

further views, “The Mother, with hardly any exposure to the outside world, has a better link with reality than the Father. She understands the subtle difference between love and sex which her obtuse husband does not” (263). “[She is also in] sympathy with the political upheavals of her time and eager to know what is happening in the world around her”(264).

Through the Mother, Sahgal represents the situation of women in colonial India as well as their hidden as well as surfaced desires of freedom. The strong women characters in Sahgal’s novels:

[E]merge quite often as universal characters. Mother in *Mistaken Identity* is a middle-aged *rane* who leaves her *zenana* to live with her Muslim lover Yusuf. In portraying this spirited woman, Sahgal evidently wants to convey that conscious efforts to liberate themselves must be made by women. No one is going to make it easy for them--no male-dominated society in the world will ever free its women on its own volition. (Varalaxmi, *The Individual* 95)

The women of the colonized nations are suppressed and made twice marginalized by the colonial patriarchy. They are made dumb and quiet animals who don’t know about freedom. But one can’t always be kept in the darkness. When the realization occurs, even the passive and quiet women can stand to achieve their freedom and equal position. Some women of the colonized nations have realized and worked for it and some are still far away from the realization. Modern women want to be treated equal. They don’t want to stay as dumb and subordinated beings. “modern women like to stand on their own feet [. . .] modern man has not given up the traditional view of regarding women as an object of possession. But modern women, struggling for their freedom disregard it” (Mahajan 138). They don’t care for their family or the world when comes the matter of their womanhood and their freedom. The few female

characters of this novel have managed to disregard the dominating powers and they are on the way towards achieving freedom from all sorts of imposition by resisting the double colonization, both from the patriarchal or gendered colonization and from political colonization.

II. Postcolonialism and Feminism

Although the term 'postcolonial' was originally used by historians to denote the post-independent period, from late 1970s, the term 'postcolonialism' has been used by literary critics to discuss various effects of colonization in societies and cultures.

Postcolonialism is a broad term that includes literature, theories and criticisms that mainly studies the political, linguistic and cultural experiences of societies that were former European colonies. In its recent and diverse use, postcolonialism

[I]ncludes the study and analysis of European territorial conquest, the various institutions of European colonialism, the discursive operations of empire, the subtleties of subject construction in colonial discourse and the resistance of those subjects, and, most importantly perhaps, the differing responses to such incursions and their contemporary colonial legacies in both pre- and post- independence nations and communities.

(Ashcroft et al 187)

Postcolonialism in literary field analyses literature produced by cultures that developed in response to colonial domination, from the first point of colonial contact to the present. Some of this literature was written by the colonizers and most of it was written, and is being written by the colonized and formerly colonized people. The postcolonial literary analysis seeks to understand the operations -- politically, socially, culturally, and psychologically -- of colonialist and anti-colonialist ideologies. Postcolonialism analyses "[those] ideological forces that pressed the colonized to internalize the colonizers' values [as well as those that] promoted the resistance of colonized people against their oppressors, a resistance that is as old as the colonialism itself" (Tyson 365).

Post-colonial theory focuses particularly on the way in which literature by the colonizing culture distorts the experience and realities, and inscribes the inferiority, of the colonized people on literature by colonized peoples which attempts to articulate their identity and reclaim their past in the face of that past's inevitable otherness. It can also deal with the way in which literature in colonizing countries appropriates the language, images, scenes, traditions and so forth of colonized. Postcolonial theory is built largely around the concept of otherness. The colonial discourses of western scholars depicted the non-west or the colonized as other, creating the binary in which the non-west or the Orient was always subsidiary. Those discourses represented and constructed non-west as 'they', feminine, weak, patient, exotic, savage etc. while implicitly as well as explicitly depicting themselves as 'us', masculine, strong, doctor, civilized etc. Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) studies and criticizes such colonial (or imperial) hegemonic depiction of the Orient by the Occident. Said defines Orientalism as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient, "dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it; in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (3). Said argues that the Orientalist or colonial discourses are typical of discursive activity whenever they claim the right to speak for the mute and uncomprehending Orient and, in so doing, relentlessly represent it as the negative, underground image or impoverished 'Other' of Western rationality. In Homi Bhabha's words, "[Orientalist] stereotyping is not only the setting up of a false image which becomes the scapegoat of discriminatory practices. It is a much more ambivalent text of projection and introjection, metaphoric and metonymic strategies, displacement, guilt, aggressivity; the masking and splitting of 'official' and fantastic knowledge"

(167). Said's work along with Spivak and Homi Bhabha's postcolonial criticisms studies and criticizes the effect of colonial representation in societies and cultures.

In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said corrects his limited views about the resistance of the non-Western world to the material and discursive attack of colonialism. He argues, "Never was it the cast that the imperial encounter pitted an active Western intruder against a supine or inert non-western native; there was always some form of active resistance and, in the overwhelming majority of cases, the resistance finally won out" (xii). However, Said refuses to elevate anti-colonial resistance to the status of anti-colonial critique and argues that the culture of resistance finds its theoretical and political limit in the chauvinist and authoritarian boundaries of the prison-house which reverses, and so merely replicates, the old colonial division of racial consciousness. In its exclusive focus on anti-Western issues, anti-colonial nationalism deflects attention away from internal orthodoxies and injustices—"the nation can become a panacea for not dealing with economic disparities, social injustices, and the capture of the newly independent state by a nationalist elite" (262). So Said offers that the intellectual stirrings of anti-colonialism can only be properly realized when nationalism becomes more "critical of itself" and when it can prove itself capable of directing attention "to abused rights of all oppressed classes" (264). Leela Gahdhi suggests that Said's intervention in postcolonialism urges it to reconsider the "significance of all those other liberationist activities in the colonized world--such as those of Women's movement--which forcefully interrupt the triumphant and complacent rhetoric of the anti-colonial nation-state" (Gandhi 82). Despite Said's lamentation that the followers of postcolonial politics have not considered enough the ideas that minimize orthodoxy and authoritarian or patriarchal thought that take severe view of the coercive nature of identity politics, it is difficult for postcolonialism to entirely withdraw its loyalties from

anti-colonial nationalism. Along with it, it has always been in trouble with the conflicting claims of nationalism and feminism.

The patriarchal social system has always considered women as subordinate and subsidiary human beings. Women are never included in power politics nor are they involved in decision making. Being kept in the home confinements, women are rarely seen as 'political animal' which should have been taken as their inborn quality like that of the men. Even today, in most places of the globe, the issue of women, the inequality existing between men and women are considered practically unimportant and theoretically uninteresting. Women are exploited and treated like mute animals. In order to change such derogatory concepts, women in the past were making their individual efforts. Those individual efforts gradually took the form of movement of women's liberation which was later named as 'feminism'. Feminism is a historical movement that includes feminist thoughts, theories and literary texts and criticisms which studies the oppression against women and tries to erase the inequality existing between sexes. The name 'feminism' was given to the movement during 1880s when the feminist political theory started to develop. The feminist political theory deals with the hierarchical binaries between male and female and it sees the women and their situation as central to political analysis and it "asks questions such as why it is that in virtually all known societies men appear to have power over women, and how this can be changed" (Bryson 1). The concern of feminist theory is to understand society in order to challenge and change its inequality on the basis of sexual differences. It is not an abstract theory rather it is an implied political theory.

Feminism is a broad concept that has occupied the socio-politico- literary fields. It is a movement that includes ideologies of women's liberation and identity. Feminism sees the oppression and subordination of women in patriarchal society as a political problem and not a consequence of natural law. In modern times, feminism has found

different ideologies related to the women's issues depending upon the social structures. Feminism has been classified into many varieties, with all working for the construction of female identity.

The liberal feminists claim that since women too are rational beings like men, they should be given the same legal and political rights. Liberal feminists have argued and campaigned over a few centuries for women's right to education, employment, political participation and full legal equality. Supported by Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication on the Rights of Women* (1792) to Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929), liberal feminism "concentrates on rights in the public sphere [. . .] it assumes that the justice of its cause will ensure its success and that men will have no reason to oppose it" (2).

The group of Marxist feminists however argues that in capitalistic societies, such rights as claimed by the liberal feminists can benefit only a few middle-class women. Most women, like men, will remain oppressed until the capitalist economic system is replaced by communism. The Marxist feminists believe that the key to women's liberation is their entry into the paid labor market and their participation in the class struggle. These feminists view that economic dependency is the main cause of women's oppression and only in communist societies, this dependency will be removed allowing women to participate fully in production system. Thus Marxist feminists believe that "only demanding justice doesn't change sexual hierarchy, for changes are the product of a particular stage of economic development and can be achieved only in specific historical circumstances" (3).

Radical feminism contains varieties of views and arguments. Some of them see men's patriarchal power as the primary power relationship in human society, and that this power is not confined to the public worlds of economic and political activity rather it characterizes all relationships between sexes, including the most intimate. Some

others view that the differences in behavior and attributes between men and women are biologically determined rather than socially acquired, and in this term women embody superior qualities and that all men should be considered the enemy. These feminists found lesbian separatism as the only viable feminist option. But others rejected this option though they agreed that men as a group oppress women in all areas of life and feminist politics should centrally focus on these issues.

Some feminists question why women must adopt certain roles based on their biology and men on theirs. Such feminists attempted to draw lines between biologically determined behaviors and culturally determined behaviors in order to free both men and women from their previous narrow gender roles. They oppose the gender based discrimination in patriarchal societies. The patriarchal social structure itself considers female sex as the 'second sex'. On the basis of biological differences, it constructs social hierarchical differences of male as masculine and female as feminine. Simone de Beauvoir says in *The Second Sex*, "One is not born woman, one becomes one [. . .] she is a cultural construct rather than the biological one" (5-6). Feminists oppose such hierarchy of male as superior sex and female as inferior sex.

Feminism argues against the 'othering' of women by men. Beauvoir argues that the male-centered social system makes women the other, not the nature of her sex because "[w]oman is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her. He is the subject, he is the absolute -- she is the Other"(4-5). Beauvoir argues that men centered point of view always depicts women as 'mysterious' because men are "unable to penetrate her special experience through any working of sympathy; they are condemned to ignorance of the quality of women's erotic pleasure, the discomfort of menstruation, and the pains of childbirth" (Myth 977). She further claims that though both men and women are unable to penetrate each other's experiences and are thus mysterious to each other. But the discourses by men only depict women as

mysterious because it is established through men's point of view. Beauvoir thus argues that "to say that woman is mysterious is to say, not that she is silent, but that her language is not understood" (998). Feminists like Beauvoir argue against the patriarchal differences of men as subject and women as object or the other.

There are some linguistic feminists who hold the opinion that women are facing discriminations because of the language structure of patriarchy. They argue that the language we use is itself male-dominated hence it keeps the female subordinated. Helen Cixous argues that "social language depends on gendered binary oppositions. The feminine is always the other or the negative in any hierarchies which society constitute" (39). Cixous believes that women's difference from men is not only social but also linguistic. Elaine Showalter proposed to construct a feminist poetics that will fight against the dominating male-centered linguistics. She called this as 'gynocriticism'. She defines a gynocritic as the one who "begins at the point when we free ourselves from the linear absolutes of male literary history, stop trying to fit women between the lines of the male tradition, and focus instead on the newly visible world of female culture" (1227). She argues that only by constructing the literature, criticism and poetics of their own, females can liberate themselves from gender discriminations. Her gynocriticism or feminist poetics will do "feminist research in history, anthropology, psychology, and sociology, all of which have developed hypotheses of a female subculture including not only the ascribed status, and the internalized constructs of femininity, but also the occupations, interactions, and consciousness of women" (1227).

Most feminists have attacked the traditional political theory for excluding or marginalizing women. They have always demanded equality and liberation from domination and subordination. They have fought for the end of discriminations imposed on them on the basis of their sexual differences. Their main task is to fight against the patriarchal dominations and gender inequality. They regard all the women

of the globe regardless of class, race or location as sisters in the struggle, a homogeneous group sharing same subordinations. But recently, feminism itself has been accused of universalizing the assumptions and needs of white women in Europe and America and largely ignoring the very different perspectives of black, ethnic and third world women. They criticize the making of white western women as norm for all women throughout the world concealing the vast differences among women of different parts of the world. They argue that the feminists should keep the issues of the more marginalized at the center.

Black / Ethnic / Third world Feminism

The feminists working on the issues of race/ ethnicity / imperialism find that the western feminism has become 'white feminism' that defines the concept of power relation as that of men and women i.e. gender/ sexual difference, and the concept of women as a group experiencing a shared subordination. The black/ third world feminists argue that the "only focus upon gendered power and viewing women as a homogeneous group" shadows the "difference between women" (Beasley 76). The white feminism doesn't share the double subordination of black women in America and women in third world. The black women in America and the white women in America do not share similar level of subordination. The white women suffer only from gendered discriminations and inequality from white men, but the black women suffer not only from the black men's gender-based discriminations but also from the white men and women's racial oppression. The white race discriminates and associates the entire black race with ugliness, despair, savage, evil and death while associating their own whiteness with beauty, goodness, civilization, virtue and innocence. The black women are even more discriminated, given derogatory remarks, used in pornographic displays, regarded as immoral and sluts, exploited in labor and education and made devoid of basic human rights. The black women are hated by white women and are

given derogatory remarks. Black women suffer from injustices and exploitations -- physical, sexual, psychological--both from black men and white men and women. The racial injustices and exploitations against black women never gets place in white feminists' theories. At a parallel level, third world women and their double subjugation resulted from the patriarchal oppression and imperial domination also do not find place in white women's feminism. Third world women are considered unimportant and invisible by the imperialists. They look at the third world women only as a reproductive machine for bearing child. Third world women's sexuality has become the side of hegemonic discourses of west. The third world or colonized women are even more exploited by the imperialists than the colonized men. The colonizers neglect the existence of colonized women subjugating their status. The third world men never consider these women of any importance in their struggle for liberation, neither in the task of nation-building nor consider them deserving to get any political stand after decolonization. These women are treated only as mute domestic animals who are to be saved, limited within the home and children, who in turn would give birth to children, cook food, do household works, and remain ignorant, innocent, and obedient. On the other hand, colonizers look at the colonized women as fantasy, something imaginary, rare and unimportant in material world. A colonized woman does not even get basic social and humanitarian treatments. Such types of double subordination can not find commonality in western feminism which is concerned only with gendered discriminations, fight for sexual equality and control over own sexuality.

White feminists draw a norm for universal category of 'women' and those who don't share those norms are excluded as 'other', quiet, ignorant, unable to represent themselves so that somebody else has to represent them. Black/ third world feminists note that "the notion of commonality among women is not just complicit in power in that it enables comparatively privileged women to evade acknowledgement of their

positioning but also enables such women to speak for all with impunity” (Beasley 76). Through the presumption of shared subordination, ironically, the white feminists experience the power over the women of black race, ethnic groups and third world in the name of speaking for them.

For the women belonging to black community and third world, there are more significant differences than gender differences to address such as racial and ethnic differences and national origin. In the cases of racial oppression and colonial oppression, there is “the strategic necessity for solidarity between men and women of culturally marginalized groups. [Here] the power divide is no longer simply located between the sexes” (76). In such cases the gender difference doesn’t become the crucial emphasis for women of minority groups. In Jonnae Hollow’s words:

[White] Feminism’s insistence on ‘sisterhood’ and a sexual politics as the fundamental form of politics, fails to take account of the realities of racism which links black women to black men. Once the cultural differences between women are taken into account, it becomes even more problematic to talk about an authentic female voice. [105]

Hallow views that many women belonging to white feminism “generalize from their own experience to the experience of all women who don’t see gender as the central side of their oppression” (105).

Depending upon the race, class, ethnicity and location, there are many cultural differences and accordingly there are differences in priorities and emphasis. Most often the struggle for nationalism and identity are considered crucial before gender cases. Black / ethnic/ third world women’s preferences, their level of subordination, their struggle process and their experiences all differ from the more privileged white women. In the struggle for liberation since 1960s and 70s, Black women are struggling together with black men against racial oppression and they are also struggling with black men

about gender and sexual oppression. On the other hand, third world women, too, struggle together with third world men against imperialism or colonization and they struggle with third world men about patriarchal oppression and gender inequality. These feminists believe that they have necessity to have this solidarity for the race and nationalism which the white separatist feminists do not need or understand. The race for the blacks and the nation for colonized/ third world is much more crucial than any other issues since the root of one's cultural heritage and identity can not be separated from one in order to achieve true liberation and true identity.

During 1980s, many feminist critics from third world like Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Sara Suleri began to argue that "Western feminism, which had assumed that gender overrode cultural differences to create a universal category of the womanly or the feminine, was operating from hidden, universalist assumption with a middle-class, Euro-centric bias" (qtd. In Ashcroft et al. 102). They charged western feminism that it failed to account adequately with the experience of third world women. The western feminist assumption that all of us of the same gender across classes and cultures are socially constituted as a homogeneous group is criticized by these third world feminists. They argue that this homogeneity is produced not on the basis of biological essentials but rather on the basis of secondary sociological essentials. Here, women are characterized as a singular group binding them with the sociological notion of the 'sameness' of their oppression. It is at this point that the third world feminists find an elision between 'women' as a discursively constructed group and 'women' as material subject of their own history. Mohanty argues that "the discursively consensual homogeneity of 'women' as a group is mistaken for the historically specific material reality of groups of women" (262).

When western feminism establishes a norm for homogeneity based on shared oppression, the 'third world women' are made the others who have to follow these

norms. The western feminist texts depict such third world 'other' women as singular, monolithic subject often depicting the western women as primary referent and codifying the other as non-western. Mohanty argues that the assumption of women as an already constituted coherent group with identical interests and desires, regardless of class, ethnic or racial location and a homogeneous notion of the oppression of women as a group "produces the image of an average third world woman" (261). In her views:

This average third world woman [re-presented by the western feminism] leads an essentially truncated life based on her feminine gender (read: sexually constrained) and being 'third world' (read: ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family-oriented, victimized etc.) [. . .] in contrast to the (implicit) self-representation of western women as educated, modern, as having control over their own bodies and sexualities, and the freedom to make their own decisions. (261)

The third world woman is required to exhibit her 'difference' from the primary referent of western feminism and "[this] consciousness of difference [. . .] sets up an implicit cultural hierarchy wherein almost inevitably the 'native woman' suffers in contrast to her western sibling" (Gandhi 85). Thus the western feminist claim of homogeneity or sisterhood is criticized by third world feminists as a medium to disguise their hidden, unpleasant ideology of 'separatism'. Similarly, the concept of 'third world woman' is regarded as discursively constructed, a hegemonic discourse of west -- a form of orientalism, a hierarchical way of western women to look at the non-western women.

Mohanty claims that when western feminist writings situate third world woman as an oppressed group, western feminist alone becomes the subject of the counter-history, leaving third world women in the situation from where they can never rise above the "debilitating generality of their 'object' status" (qtd. in Bhari 212). And by claiming that they are privileged of "preparing the way for [their] unfortunate sisters [of

third world], the western feminists create an insuperable division between ‘I-Who-Have-Made-It and You-Who-Can not-Make-It’” (Gandhi 85). Thus, power is exercised in western feminist discourses by implicitly creating binary of first and third world in the “process of homogenization and systematization of the oppression of women in the third world” (Mohanty 260).

Western feminist texts re-present women of third world as a homogeneous sociological group characterized by common dependencies or powerlessness. In the global framework of western feminism, “the third world women are typically seen as an undifferentiated group uncomplicated by the heterogeneity that characterize their conceptual counterpart in the more developed [first] world” (Bhari 212). The western feminists implicitly construct their superiority and heterogeneity by constructing the third world women’s inferiority and powerlessness in their binary opposition. The supposed homogeneity of the third world women on the basis of “sexual difference” in the form of a cross-culturally singular, monolithic notion of patriarchy or male-dominance leads to the construction of a “similarly reductive and homogeneous notion of ‘Third World Difference’ and with the construction of this ‘third world difference’ that “western feminism appropriate and ‘colonize’ the fundamental complexities and conflicts which characterize the lives of women of the different class, religion, cultures, races and castes in these countries”(Mohanty 260).

Hence, insisting on the heterogeneity of the lives of third world women, third world feminists demand for the need of an inter-relational analysis that does not limit the definition of the female subject to gender and does not bypass the social, racial, class, and ethnic co-ordinates of those analyzed.

Feminism in / and Postcolonialism

Feminist emphasis has always been the significance of gender issues in history, politics, and culture. ”Inherently interdisciplinary, feminism examines the relationships

between men and women and the consequences of power differentials for the economic, social and cultural status of women in different locations and periods of history” (Bhari 200). Hence, feminist perspectives have been central to postcolonial studies from the beginning, sharing many of the broad concerns of postcolonialism, but also revising, interrogating, and supplementing them. Interlinking feminism and postcolonialism, Ashcroft et al. write:

Both feminism and postcolonialism have often concerned with the ways and extent to which representation and language are crucial to identity formation and to the construction of ‘subjectivity’. For both groups, language has been a vehicle for subverting patriarchy and imperial power [. . .]. Both discourses share a sense of disarticulation from an inherited language and have thus attempted to recover a linguistic authenticity via a pre-colonial language or a primal feminine tongue. However, both feminists and colonized people, like other subordinate groups, have also used appropriation to subvert and adapt dominant languages and signifying practices. (Ashcroft et al. 102)

The feminist and postcolonial studies get involved into a mutually investigative and interactive relation with each other in such cases. But when feminist perspectives are blind to issues related to colonialism and the international division of labor and when postcolonial studies fails to include gender in its analysis, then both theories fail to correlate with each other to address the lives of women under colonization. Feminists “[. . .] complain that analyses of colonial or postcolonial texts fail to consider gender issues adequately, bracketing them in favor of attention to supposedly more significant issues, such as empire building, decolonization, and the liberation struggle [. . .]” (Bhari 201).

Feminist theorists believe that the male nationalists or postcolonialist theorists often subjugate the issues of women prioritizing anti-colonial struggle as crucial and try

to merge the feminist power in their struggle. In the name of subverting the western women's imperialism, "many anti-colonial struggles for nationalism [. . .] used the figure of women to symbolize the nation, and exerted themselves to articulate a significant role for women in the nation-building and decolonization processes" (Bhari 201). In this context, Anne McClintock argues that "male nationalists frequently argue that colonialism or capitalism has been women's ruin, with patriarchy merely a nasty second cousin destined to wither away when the real villain expires [. . .] Nowhere [. . .] has feminism in its own right been allowed to be more than the maidservant to [male]nationalism" (386).

Feminist critics complain that condemning imperialism or colonialism without critiquing patriarchy is a tactic that seeks to minimize the particular ways gender determines the specific forms of oppression that may take within a specific group. Some postcolonial theorists have convincingly claimed that the blinkered focus on the racial politics inevitably elides the 'double colonization' of women under imperial conditions. Leela Gandhi views that such theory "postulates third world women as victim *par excellence* --the forgotten causality of both imperial ideology, and native and foreign patriarchies" (83). Hence most of the feminist postcolonial theorists oppose such focus on racial politics only and refuse "to surrender the third world women to the sentimental and often opportunistic enamourment with 'marginality'" (Gandhi 84). Spivak views that 'marginality' is a buzzword in the cultural critique, and consistent invocation of the marginal has helped reform the canonicity of high Western culture. Spivak finds that "the metropolitan demand for marginality is also troublingly a command which consolidates and names the non-west as interminably marginal" (Gandhi 84). Margin is always at the service of the center and "when a cultural identity is thrust upon one because the center wants an identifiable margin, claims for marginality assure validation from the center" (Spivak 1993, 55). The third world

woman is arguably housed in an 'identifiable margin' and, these critics insist, this accommodation is ultimately unsatisfactory.

Some feminists have been concerned with the postcolonial agenda that the categories like gender may sometimes be ignored within the larger formation of the colonial, and that post-colonial theory has tended to elide gender differences in constructing a single category of colonized. Critics like Spivak, Mohanty, Suleri have argued that "colonialism operated very differently for women and for men, and the 'double colonization' that resulted when women were subject both to general discrimination as colonial subjects and specific discrimination as women needs to be taken into account in any analysis of colonial oppression"(Ashcroft et al. 103-4). Anne McClintock also opposes the ignorance of gender issues in the postcolonial struggle for nationalism. She observes, "Nationalism is [. . .] constituted from the very beginning as a gendered discourse and cannot be understood without a theory of gender power" (355). The postcolonial feminists claim that gender issues are inseparable from the project of postcolonial criticism.

The recent postcolonial feminists have developed postcolonial feminism as a dynamic discursive field that address the issues of race, gender, economic status etc as well as the address double marginalized women's oppressions, critique their false representation made by the western feminism and address their resistance movements and identity struggle. The postcolonial feminism "interrogates the premises of postcolonialism as much as those of feminism, supplementing them with its own particular concerns and perspectives, while in turn being subject to criticism and revision by them" (Bhari 202). Postcolonial feminism is thus characterized by debates, dialogue and diversity and besides looking at the issues of imperialism, anti-colonial nationalism, decolonization and nation building, it is concerned with "the various ways of reading gender: in the world, the word, and the text "(200).

Question of Representation

Talking in Dipika Bhari's words, representation is a term with multiple and sometimes confusing connotations. It can mean presence, reproduction, likeness, the formation of an idea in the mind, or even proxy presence in the sense of a political 'speaking for'. Ella Sohat says in her essay "The Struggle over Representation: Casting, Coalition, and the Politics of Identification" that "What all these instances share is the semiotic principle that something is 'standing for' something else, or that some person or group is speaking on behalf of some other person or group" (qtd. in Bhari 204). Gayatri Spivak suggests that there are two principle ways of representing. The first is "to tread in someone's shoes" [it is] closest in connotation to "political representation." The other mode of representation, Spivak suggests, is "placing there" (qtd. in Bhari 204). Representing is thus done in two ways: by proxy and portrait. The relation between these two modes of representation is the ground of much contestation in postcolonial debates.

Fields such as women's studies and postcolonial studies have arisen in response to the absence or unavailability of the perspectives of women, racial minorities and marginalized cultures or communities in historical account or literary annals. "This lack of representation is paralleled in the political, economic, and legal spheres. Those "other" to the dominant discourse have no voice or say in their portrayal; they are consigned to be "spoken for" by those who command the authority and means to speak"(Bhari 204). When minorities and others are represented, "the representation may effectively exist instead of rather than in correspondence to any "real' thing" (Bhari 204). Spivak suggests that "speaking for women does not always entail speaking for the marginalized or silenced in general" (Bhari 205). Even within the feminist project, then, there is no guarantee that the perspective of the 'Third World woman' will be represented or honored. There is even the danger that "the mechanism

of ‘othering’ that characterizes colonial hegemonic discourse will become instrumental in the project of producing the individual and individualist feminist self against its other” (205).

Western /liberal feminist discourse is seen as ‘neo-Orientalism’ by many postcolonial theorists mainly because it claims to represent the ‘third world woman’ paradoxically silencing her in the ‘pious’ attempt to represent or speak for her. In her essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, Spivak famously elaborates some contexts wherein contesting representational systems violently displaces or silences the figure of the ‘gendered subaltern’. She writes, “Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the ‘third-world woman’ caught between tradition and modernization” (1988, 306).

Spivak first talks about the subaltern in general, and then the gendered subaltern. ‘Subaltern’--to denote inferior rank--is a term adopted by Antonio Gramsci to refer those groups in societies who are subjected to hegemony of ruling class, that includes peasants, workers, women or other dominated groups. The term ‘subaltern’ has been adapted to post-colonial studies from the work of the Subaltern Studies group of historians who aimed to promote the systematic discussion of subaltern themes in South Asian Studies. Made famous by Ranjit Guha’s series of Subaltern Studies, the term denotes “the general attribute of subordination in South Asian society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way” (Guha 1982, vii) Ranjit Guha argues that Subaltern studies aims to study subordination by understanding the binary relationship with dominance, and to examine the subaltern “as an objective assessment of the role of the elite and as a critique of elitist interpretations of that role” (vii). The concept of the subaltern in general is meant to resist the elite domination, to cut across several kinds of political and cultural binaries, such as

colonialism vs. nationalism, or imperialism vs. indigenous cultural expression, in favor of a more general distinction between subaltern and elite since, Guha argues, the subaltern group is invariably overlooked in studies of political and cultural change.

Gayatri Spivak made the term famous by asking the question “Can the Subaltern Speak?” Here, she critiqued the assumptions of Subaltern Studies group that the concept of autonomy of subaltern group in the diversity, heterogeneity, and overlapping nature of subaltern group is fundamentally an essentialist premise, and Guha’s attempt to guard against essentialism by specifying the range of subaltern groups serves only to problematize the idea of the subaltern still further. For her, “the task of the research is to investigate, identify and measure the specific nature of the degree of deviation of [the dominant indigenous groups at the regional and local level] from the ideal [the subaltern] and situate it historically,” but she then questions “what taxonomy can fix such a space?” (1988, 27). Spivak observes:

[T]he true subaltern group whose identity is its difference, there is no unrepresentable subaltern subject that can know and speak itself; the intellectual solution is not to abstain from representation. The problem is that the subject’s itinerary has not been traced so as to offer an object of seduction to the representing intellectual [. . .]. How can we touch the consciousness of the people, even as we investigate their politics? With what voice-consciousness can the subaltern speak? (27)

One cannot construct a category of the subaltern that has an effective voice clearly and unproblematically identifiable as such, a voice that doesn’t at the same time occupy many other possible speaking positions.

Spivak further discusses the problems of the category of the subaltern by studying the case of gendered subjects and Indian women in particular and says that the track of sexual difference is doubly effected, since “both as object of colonialist

historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant” and she concludes that “if, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow [. . .]”(28). Spivak doesn't however mean that there is no way in which oppressed or politically marginalized groups can voice their resistance, or that the subaltern only has a dominant language or a dominant voice in which to be heard. Her target is the concept of an unproblematically constituted subaltern identity, rather than the subaltern subject's ability to give voice to political concerns. She wants to argue that no act of dissent or resistance occurs on behalf of an essential subaltern subject entirely separate from the dominant discourse that provides the language and the conceptual categories with which the subaltern voice speaks. In most cases, the dominant language or mode of representation is *appropriated* so that the marginal voice can be heard as seen in the cases of postcolonial discourses.

III. Resisting the Double Marginalization of Women in *Mistaken Identity*

In her novel *Mistaken Identity*, Nayantara Sahgal has depicted colonial India in its varied forms ranging from the personal experiences of the characters to the general situation of people including the freedom movement and imprisonment of the fighters. In this novel, Sahgal has shown the situation of Indian women belonging to different place and period during colonization through the eyes of the male narrator-cum-character who sometimes reflects the patriarchal thoughts and most of the time reflects the personality of the writer herself. As discussed in the theoretical discussion, the women in colonial-patriarchy and their subjugation and domination can be studied here. In *Mistaken Identity*, Sahgal shows that the women in colonized nations are twice marginalized. The male-dominated society always marginalizes and treats women as inferior to men from time immemorial and considers that the women should serve them, obey them and stay within the home circle. Women can't voice their disapproval and even if they voice, nobody cares or listens. Their voice is suppressed so that it will not be heard. Such marginalized creatures are again oppressed and marginalized as colonized subjects in the colonial rule. They are dictated and ruled within their own nation by some outsiders who came with the power of guns and so-called civilized cultures. The already subordinated females of colonized nations are now double subordinated and double marginalized.

Women of colonized nations are mistakenly defined as quiet and subordinate whose roles are to serve the family, do household works, rear child and remain away from outside affairs like decision making, understanding politics, getting education, working for earning and many more. The dominant discourses characterize them as 'feminine' who are shy and introvert and who are ignorant and secondary human beings. The dominant groups or discourses keep the women dominated and rob them of their freedom to speak and show their capabilities. The women are away from the

discursive power and the hegemonic power makes them suppress their feelings and desires. If these subordinated females get opportunity to empower themselves and realize the hegemonic exploitations, they can resist the oppression in any way they can, either through silence, indifference, or through direct revolt. For the colonized women to get liberation from dominations and get their identity, they have to resist two giant forces-- patriarchal domination, and colonial domination.

Domination from Patriarchy

In the patriarchal social system, the status of women is no more than that of a mute animal. The women are dictated to follow the hierarchical norms of the society where they can't find their respectable positions. The patriarchal society regards female-sex as secondary to male-sex. Regardless of caste, class or religion women are subjected to gender discriminations and are differentiated as secondary objects. The society keeps them aloof from social matters like decision making, participating in political matters, problem solving, social and familial discussions and in financial issues. Such situatedness of women of colonial India during 1920s is depicted by Nayantara Sahgal in *Mistaken Identity*.

The narrator Bhushan's Mother in *Mistaken Identity* is a traditional figure, an example of how patriarchal societies treat women and how they are separated from the world outside. Through Bhushan's narration, we come to know that the Mother is made to live under the domination of her husband and the society since the day of her marriage. She is married to Bhushan's Father, the *talukdar* turn *raja* of Vijaygarh at the age of thirteen. She was engaged at the age of five and is sent to her husband's home at the time of marriage. Though before her marriage she used to read and write a little, this comes to an end with her marriage. It is as if getting married is the main task in a woman's life and she requires no further knowledge. No one asks about her views regarding marriage. She is not even of the right age to know what marriage means. The

narrator informs that “The child had been pledged at the age of five. Her fingers had to be pried loose from her mother’s neck when it was time to say goodbye” (27). At the age of thirteen, the Mother is sent to her husband’s home to be confined and her rest of the life is meant to remain separated from the outside world. All through the years of marriage she has to remain hidden inside the curtained house with no outside contacts.

The Mother’s marriage is imprisonment for her because she has to live in a confined and walled up room called *zenana*, especially made for married women, which would separate her from the rest of the world. Her window glasses are painted green so that no sunlight would enter her room. The Mother can go out only in a carriage with curtains. The entire world for her is the view seen “through the slit between her carriage curtains” (26). This is not only the plight of the Mother. Regardless of religion, culture or economic status, every women of Vijaygarh live separately in confinement. Their rooms are specially made with high walls that would separate them. “High walls block it off from the rest of the sprawling mansion, and every house all over the estate, Hindu or Muslim, mud or marble, was subdivided like it into male and female. There were two sexes, no doubt about it.”(25) The whole male-dominated society seems to have imprisoned the female sex as their tamed pets. Neither the women are considered human beings nor are their desires to face the outside world fulfilled. They are so exploited that throughout their lives, they have to see only the four walls and serve their family. The patriarchal impositions of norms and rules for women are highly oppressive and hegemonic.

Sahgal shows the practice of female infanticide in Indian society during 1900s which is another example of injustice against women. In the wish of having a son, infant daughters were disposed off at the time of birth. Bhushan recalls his teacher telling him about this criminal practice that these infants were either given a pill of *Bhang* or strangled with umbilical cord or buried alive with milk filling the hole of the

ditch. At that period, giving birth to a female infant was “a stunning shock” (63). Bhushan guesses that his two sisters before him were perhaps killed in a similar way in order to fulfill the Father’s desire of having a son who would carry on his lineage. Bhushan also guesses rightly that his Mother who was unwilling partner in this crime has had to live with the guilt of the deaths of her two infant daughters who were disposed off because of their female sex and perhaps it is the cause that she is “so determined to turn herself into stone” and remain indifferent towards many of the activities of the Father (64). It is not the Mother who demands for a son rather it is the Father’s mind shaped by male-dominated society that needs a son for which he doesn’t even hesitate to murder two infant daughters. The Father feels proud to have a son and doesn’t care whatever tensions and troubles the Mother has to go through. He doesn’t consider female infants as human beings and kill them without mercy. Life is less important to him than property and prestige. The social construction in the patriarchal mind in such societies is so rigid that it doesn’t think other than what the conservative norms dictate. The father represents the rigid and blind follower of conservative male-dominated norms and an oppressive male who feels superior while dominating the opposite sex.

The Mother has to make difficult and rigorous pilgrimages into many shrines in the hills, barefoot and alone, to seek the blessings for a son while her husband accompanies her only as a passive observer; eating, drinking and enjoying in the camp far below. In following the superstition also, men don’t have to suffer any pains. The women have to observe all the superstitious rituals going through the series of pains. Only after nine years of her marriage and making many pilgrimages, she gives birth to a son. She goes through the rigors of labor and gives birth to a son only to make room for the second and third wives that the Father brings later. The Mother comes to know about the Father’s third marriage when the bricks are piled up near the mansion. For

“she must have known at once bricks mean[s] wall” (32). She understands that it is being made for a new woman to be confined. It is the patriarchal negligence towards a woman’s rights and feelings that the society supports and celebrates the Father’s second and third marriages and participates in it not even thinking once about the rights and feelings of the Mother. The simplest excuse of the Father to the Mother about the later marriages that he was insisted is ridiculous. The marriages take place with grand ceremonies with the whole society appreciating its grandeur. The Father’s excuses are that the second marriage took place “to please his friend Raja Wali Khan who recommended it” and the third marriage took place because his brother “had insisted on it” (32-3). These marriages get society’s consent because in male-centric traditional societies, the males feel superior to have more wives. The more wives one has, the more ‘masculinist’ one is considered. Such traditional, conservative, dominating and narrow-minded social thinking promotes female exploitations in societies. The whole society approves and congratulates the Father for these marriages without a single thought or sympathy for the Mother. This is the example of how patriarchal societies marginalize and neglect women’s status and use women as their objects of possession that increase their prestige if collected more.

The novel depicts the restricted women’s psyche. Bhushan describes when the maid servants of the Mother gather in her room, “[. . .] their voices had the suffocated squawk of captive geese who have been fed and tranquilized into docility” (25). These exploited women loaded with suffocation and torture of being isolated; seem to have lost their voices. They are kept ignorant and illiterate. Since they don’t get chance to expand and exercise their minds, their knowledge is very limited. Their world is narrowed into the home circle. Being women, their feelings and desires do not count in the narrow world they live in. The Mother might have some privilege of being free from domestic labor since she is the wife of a landlord, but her maids belonging to

lower class are even more miserable. They can't understand anything about the outside world. That's why they just "giggle dutifully" when the Mother talks about the Russian Tsar and Tsarina and about the British exploitation on their own native land (27). The maids of the Mother can giggle and talk freely only in the Mother's room. Once they tread out of the room, the veil hides not only their faces but also voices. Bhushan narrates that when he was a child, he followed Mother's maid Bitten from *zenana* to outside veranda to witness "her change colour" (26).

Mistaken Identity shows the discrimination against women in general during the period of 1920's India. The narrator recalls the Mother's maid Bitten going to market with her face covered low with the end of her sari so that no strangers would see her face. These women are strictly recommended to hide their faces, and showing their face to outsiders is regarded a great immoral act. Bhushan narrates that in Vijaygarh market, "a man had killed his wife because he had seen her through an open door" (66). Such domestic violence and murderous crime is common in the rigid patriarchal societies of colonial India.

Sahgal has included the stories of women belonging to different religion, different status and different age in order to show the different ways of dominations these women are made to endure. Razia, a Muslim girl of Vijaygarh with whom Bhushan is obsessed with is the product of *purdah* (the veil) and *namaz* system. She represents the entire Muslim women of early twenties who are made to hide within the *burkha* and remain separated from the outside world. Razia wants freedom from the veil and wants to live as a modern Muslim woman, daring and liberated. She wants to observe the world and exercise her potentials. But her religion doesn't allow her the freedom she desires. Her desire for freedom takes her near a strange boy Bhushan who is a Hindu. Orthodox people find issue for Hindu-Muslim riot in Vijaygarh because of her secret relationship with Bhushan. She is damned and called a "fallen woman" and a

“sluttish” girl (59). In this crisis caused by the mutual relationship between Razia and Bhushan, it is only Razia who is blamed, cursed, scolded, and called “ruined” (60). People regard her deserving to be sent to the brothels or get married as a second wife to some “imbecile” (60). She becomes the target of criticism only because she is a female and Bhushan comes out of the crisis safe without any charges of being immoral; he is only a “little escapade”, not a fallen man, because he is a male, privileged of belonging to so-called superior sex (59). This shows how wide gap exists between male and female in the traditional societies. It is ironical and hypocritical that Bhushan’s Father gets furious to hear Bhushan declaring his love only for Razia. The Father calls him idiot to want only one woman and no other, since the father himself is polygamous and has exploited many women.

The Muslim girls have to hide themselves under the *burka* wherever they go in order to veil themselves from the males. On the one hand there is Razia, unwilling to hide under *burka*, for which she raises the hood of her veil to see the world freely whenever she gets a chance. On the other hand are her two sisters who “quarrelled, snivelled, obeyed, did what the ordinary mortals would do” unlike their brothers and cousins who “were not housebound like their sisters “(50). The only place outside home these girls are allowed to go is the Female College for Domestic Arts where they learn threading, embroidery and the handicrafts. These girls are limited to learn only such household things and no books or alphabets. Besides the female college, “there was nowhere else [. . .] for the girl in *purdah* to go” (51). Reading and writing stuffs are separated from the village girls whose only task is domestic labor. Somewhat available education in the village is aimed for the selected boys of high classes who would work for the British officers on their colonial task in India. Education and economic status of rural women of colonial India is unthinkable. People do not even dream to educate their daughters since they think it unproductive and unconventional.

Sylla, modern Parsee girl, lives in English style and with English companions. Even after knowing about Bhushan's love for Razia, she loves him. Sylla wants Bhushan to get free from the obsession of unattainable love of Razia about whose whereabouts, Bhushan doesn't know anything. Hearing about the imbecile's story that he sold a ruined Muslim girl to a brothel, Bhushan searches Razia in the brothels. He is in relationship with Sylla and in obsession with Razia at the same time. His male ego demands Sylla to endure his obsession and continue to be with him to witness his madness about Razia. Sylla is a modern city girl of Bombay. She wants to cure Bhushan from his obsession and wants him to be "her kind of normal person" (121). But for Bhushan, Sylla is only a scab over the wound of Razia's love. Sylla doesn't want to be a scab and warns Bhushan that he "can't make a profession of being in love" (121). Bhushan wants Sylla only when he comes to Bombay, other times he even doesn't think about her and doesn't want to know more about her. He uses Sylla as a refuge to get peace, a "haven from the furies of Hinduism and Islam" since "she [is] a Parsee" (121). Sylla is brought up by her grandmother since her parents handed her over to her grandmother. Her grandmother wants Sylla to be modern, English styled and humanitarian and to make a successful marriage. The grandmother observes that with an aimless man Bhushan, Sylla wouldn't make a successful marriage. Being a modern and western-educated, Bhushan gets physically involved with Sylla but doesn't take her love seriously. Here too, male ego and superiority feeling is evident in Bhushan. His narration at some places mocks Sylla's modern thoughts and behaviors and her extrovert qualities reflecting male-superiority while most of the time reflects the author's thoughts and appreciates Sylla's intelligence and qualities.

The three women from different religions, different social and economic status, different age groups and places are subjected to male-domination in different ways. Either it is the illiterate, aged, Hindu mother of the narrator whose name is also

unknown throughout the novel, or it is sixteen years old Muslim girl Razia or modern Parsee Sylla of twenty nine, all are exploited and subjugated by dominating males. Their existence is disregarded and they are used only as sex-commodities by males. Besides that, there is no other meaningful existence expected or desired from them. They are not given any space in any other fields and their potential to equalize themselves with the males is suppressed so that it would remain unseen and non-existent.

Domination from the Colonizers

In *Mistaken Identity*, the colonial rule in India and the exploitations made by the British on the native Indians can be observed. Besides colonial policy of isolating the Indian locals from basic rights like education, politics, information and governance, Nayantara Sahgal has shown other specific hidden policies of British during colonization. Creating religious riots, promoting local *talukdars* i.e. the feudal lords, making them serve the British rulers, suspecting and imprisoning the natives with the charge of conspiracy and so on are the policies of the British government in India. Under imperial policy, the natives are suppressed and isolated from empowering activities like education and economic practices. The cultural as well as political imperialism is so rooted in colonial India that it has made the ignorant natives think the British as more civilized and superior to them. The political as well as cultural imperialism reflects from the British officers' treatments towards the natives.

The British rule lures the local landlords by distributing the title of *rajahood* to the rich and 'deserving' candidates. The local landlords would serve the British commissioners by making feasts, going in hunting tigers and other animals in the forests of their possession, letting the British to exploit the natural resources and bowing to them. In return, they would get strong support from the political and military power of British to exercise their power over the innocent and ignorant local people.

Bhushan recalls the time when the Father heard that Commissioner was drawing up a list of candidates who might be eligible for *rajahood* if they passed all the tests, and that he was on it. The Father had to get prepared to show his wealth as well as his loyalty towards the British when the district officers would come to check up. For this, the Father started planning “to get organized about his campaign and start building a temple of Shiva before the Commissioner examined the evidence” (28). The Father also put a grain market around his village for profitable measure, and gave away cash, cows and elephants the day the commissioner came to observe. The Father later decided to build an Anglo-Vernacular Female College of Domestic Arts by way of a social service” in order to prove his eligibility for the title (28). The hypocrisy of the British officers parallels with the hypocrisy of the local feudal lords. The former want to exercise their power to the ignorant natives by supporting and distributing some power to the chosen few elite natives--the local lords; while the latter show off their social service by planting the works of social services overnight with the power of their wealth while in fact oppressing and exploiting the labor and wealth of local ignorant people. Bhushan’s Father, besides establishing a grain market overnight, building a Shiva temple and throwing money around for good impression, marries a third wife in order to increase his eligibility, an added qualification. It proves that the British imperialism has promoted polygamy and considered the colonized women merely object of possession. The colonizers, who claim themselves to be more civilized and humanitarian, have promoted the local oppressors to exploit the ignorant native people as well as disregard the women’s existence as human beings. The British are happy with the female college that would teach the girls domestic arts which is not harmful to their colonial rule. Even the so-called modern and civilized British have considered the Indian women deserving to confine within domesticity. The colonized women are

subjugated in two ways where they are segregated and discriminated and where their identity itself is lost.

Bhushan remembers the mother talking about the British *raj* that had taken the Father's closest friend and neighbor Raja Wali Khan's family a quarter century to get their title of *rajahood* made hereditary. "The Commissioner had made Wali Khan's father hang around like a cook's mate and then he only got it extended for his son's lifetime. It wasn't till ten years that he finally made it. And his only slightly less rich cousin's family had waited six insulted generations for theirs" (29). The status of the rich landlords for the British is only the "rent-receivers" who endure insults from the British officers in the greed of getting the title of *rajahood* so that they can exercise their domination and exploitation freely upon the local people (26).

Another hidden policy of the British colonizers in India, analyzed by Sahgal, is the religious riots between Hindu and Muslim. Bhushan's relationship with a Muslim girl Razia becomes the cause of big religious riot in Vijaygarh. Many people are killed in that violent riot. The Mother analyses it as the policy of British government not to allow the people to unite against imperialism. The British rule planted such riots to divide the natives so that they could rule the country without problems. The divide and rule policy of the colonizers in India is the way to continue their *raj*. According to the Mother, when Bhushan's affair had once created a riot, the commissioner on purpose delayed Bhushan's passport to go abroad, "hoping [his] presence would create another riot in Vijaygarh, since her theory is that "the British needs a Hindu-Muslim riot now and then. No riot, no *raj*"(92).

When the Mother is worried about Bhushan's inheritance of the title since he had become the cause of riot and death of many people, the Mother writes a letter to the commissioner for her son's right. But the British commissioner doesn't consider her worth discussing the matter of power and sends her a verbal and jumbled reply. He is

surprised to get the unexpected letter from a landlord's 'illiterate' wife talking about the matter of power. His surprise and shallow interest towards the letter from the Mother directs towards the colonizer's psyche of undermining the potential of colonized women. For whom even the literacy and talking about rights by colonized men is undesirable, the direct interference by a woman in the matter of power is unthinkable. May be because of this, a sarcastic smile crosses the Commissioner's face and he sends superficial and jumbled verbal answer as a formality.

Sahgal links her novel with the historical incident of 1920's and 30s when people were gradually uprising against the British rule throughout India. Mahatma Gandhi and other revolutionists were resisting the imperial government through 'civil disobedience'. In this period, the worried British government started suspecting and imprisoning the natives with the charge of "conspiracy against the King" (14). Bhushan is also captured and imprisoned with the same charge. He is charged that while returning from abroad, he brought a book titled *The Revolt of the Angels*, he wrote a political poem with the title "The Bridge" which was appreciated by Communists, he extended his living in Bombay while he was supposed to return Vijaygarh, he attended the political meeting in Bombay, and the main cause of suspicion that on the hall where he participated in a play with suspicious title *The Scarlet letter*, he left the hall "immediately [after] the national anthem began instead of standing to attention" (17). Only on such minor and baseless causes, innocent Indians are suspected of conspiracy. The ones who serve the British king Emperor are regarded loyal and those who, intentionally or unintentionally, don't follow the rules of British in India are dumped into prison with the charge of being conspirators trying to replace the British king with Bolsheviks. The colonizers' fear of losing the imperial domination makes them suspect and arrest the native people and keep them in long trial. Bhushan passes three long years in jail just waiting for the trial with the judge.

The other nine prison-mates of Bhushan belong to different political backgrounds and from labor classes but with the same cause, i.e. the fight for independence. These freedom fighters are kept in a filthy and inhumane prison. Sahgal has brought the historical details about Indian freedom movement to link with the freedom fighters, among whom are Bhaiji, the Gandhian follower with his two assistances, some communist trade unionists like comrade Yusuf, comrade Dey, comrade Iyre, comrade Pillai and a nineteen year boy Sen who doesn't know where he belongs. Through the conversation of these prisoners, Sahgal gives the historical information about the Gandhi's civil disobedience movement, Lahore conspiracy case, execution of Indian freedom fighters like Bhagat Singh and Chandra Shekhar Azad by the British government. Describing the case of the prison in which the narrator witnesses the inhumane treatment of the colonizers towards the prisoners, Sahgal shows how the colonizers try to oppress the voices that come rising for the independence of their own mother land from the outsiders. Inside the prison, the young boy Sen and an elderly Bhaiji die for lack of any medical treatment because the jailor wouldn't listen to the plea of the prisoners to provide treatment to these ill people. About the mass arrest and imprisonment happening at the time, Bhaiji once tells that "[s]ome bureaucrat went berserk and slammed people into various jails after a *chota peg*. Drink is the cause. Drink is responsible for evil on earth, from wife-beating to imperialism" (37).

The English way of education of Bhushan doesn't see what the lower class workers of the prison can see. They realize that whichever party they belong, they shouldn't look divided in front of the British. But the man who is from Vihaygarh where Hindu-Muslim are divided and always get involved in riots, Bhushan says he "prefer[s] the sovereign power" of British, which he believes is more humanitarian, than a free country where the two religious sects would kill each other(38). Bhushan's western education and privileged elite position doesn't see the subjugated and

oppressed lower class people's loss of self-respect, dignity and identity because of living under colonial domination. His intermediate position in colonization and British influence gives him the impression that the sovereign power of British is much more humanitarian, civilized and developed. He doesn't understand the labor exploitation, poverty and backwardness of lower class people resulting from the colonizers' policy of lengthening their rule in far Eastern country with their hegemonic power. Bhushan sometimes reflects his western influence which has hegemonized his mind to believe the western culture and system as superior and modern.

During the trial, Bhushan's first lawyer tries to depict Bhushan as a "hopeless failure" in "blood sport" i.e. use of weapons "besides being temperamentally incapable of violence" (16). By showing Bhushan as coward and hopeless, the lawyer tries to save him since the British judge would be impressed if the colonized are weak to revolt, servile to them and dumb in the matter of revolution. The hegemonic British theory is that the aimless luxurious life of the native people is a fearful thing for the British government. The enemy lawyer of Bhushan accuses him for his luxurious and wanderer's life since, he says, "It is exactly what is expected from an anarchist" (136). The oppressors never want the oppressed group or individuals to live easy and luxurious life. The sign of envy is reflected in the lawyer's accusation. After three long years' trial, Bhushan is released from the jail because of the lack of evidence against him. The colonizers are not considerate towards the rights of the natives or to provide them justice in the matter of law and order. The law and order system in the colonized nations are also manipulative that benefits only the colonizers.

The local lords are promoted by the British colonization in India to oppress the ignorant villagers, attempted to suppress the revolution through mass imprisonments, executed some daring revolutionists in order to frighten the others, tried to maintain caste system, religious divisions, gender divisions and so on. The colonized as a group

are always subjugated, made devoid of good education, good livelihood and decent economic practices. Only a few who are close to English people live a modern and western luxurious life while others like the trade unionists and most of the native labors are limited to insufficient wage. The Gandhian follower Bhaiji and his assistants are arrested with the “charge of setting up shops to sell *khaddar*” in Bombay (143). Producing native clothes and wearing it is a crime for British because they want to spread western products and along with it the western culture throughout the world and it is easy for them to impose cultural hegemony upon the colonized. Bhaiji and his assistants are arrested for resisting the cultural hegemony and supporting Gandhi’s *Swodeshi* movement.

The lawyer Nauzer Vocha enquires of Bhushan whether he has visited the Bombay tenements looking for the conditions of working-class people and their poor livelihood which is to tread “on the wrong foot” in the eyes of the colonial government (41). English styled and westernized Sylla and Bhushan are far away from the living conditions of Bombay workers and unaware about the six months long strike by fifteen thousand textile workers against the labor exploitation. Bhushan tells Vocha that he has just “driven past” the area of these poor workers, a “wasteland in front of a tenement” which is:

[. . .] littered with rubbish and excrement. Vulture pick a hairless cur clean of flesh, hop off the carcass and waddle a few yard, dragged groundward by their bellies till they can waddle faster, run and take off into the air. Naked children aeroplane over the dogs remains with joyous abandon. Behind them shrouded women move in single file against the tenement wall. They are indistinguishable as black bundles strung on a pole. (41)

The colonial rule only understands how to exploit the natives. Their poverty, ignorance, pathetic livelihood caused by the exploitation doesn't get sympathy of wealthy rulers and few rich locals. The colonial domination keeps the dominated natives away from progress, education, knowledge and from the rights they deserve. The colonizers manipulate knowledge and display their culture, their language, their color, their religion, their education and their ruling system as superior, humanitarian, pious, modern and progressive. They create a situation in which the colonized are restricted through manipulative knowledge as well as economic and military power to remain ignorant, powerless, poor and backward so that they can portray the colonized 'non-western' people as characteristically subordinate and inferior.

Resisting colonial patriarchy

The women of the colonized nations suffer from double subjugation. The male-domination is highly present in every traditional patriarchal society. In Sahgal's novel too, the women characters are doubly marginalized. Besides being treated as inferior by the males of their own society, they are treated inferior as colonized subjects by colonizers. The colonizers too treat them inferior to colonized males. If the colonized men are subsidiary and sub-human to the colonized, then the colonized women are domestic creatures, mute and tamed. The female identity is mistaken to be quiet and subordinate, almost non-existent and the duty of the women is to reproduce children, provide sexual pleasure to their husbands and serve the household. *Mistaken Identity* also shows such subordination of women of colonial India.

The major women characters in *Mistaken Identity* don't however surrender to the dominations imposed upon them. They try to resist the subordination in their own ways. Some of which are implicit actions and some are explicit revolt. The illiterate Mother, who has been living in confinement in her husband's house, has realized the domination both from the patriarchy and the colonizers. Although she is separated from

the world outside, the Mother is not completely unaware of the outside affairs. Even being limited to her confined room, she is “remarkably well informed” (30). Her desire of knowledge doesn’t get buried inside the female quarters. When Bhushan learns to read and write, he becomes her informant. Both study “from nursery rhymes to history lessons together, supplemented by the books [he] found in a moldering library of the house” (30). With the help of her child, she somewhat fulfills her desire to study. The Mother shows a good knowledge about what is going on around the world. Hence she hates the British rule in India because of the insults the British are imposing on the natives. The Mother recalls her own ancestors and “the glorious history of how Moguls had taken brides from *Rajput* clans and produced half-Hindu emperors and shared glory, not like in the British rule” (26). She is proud of her heritage and worried for the clan’s dignity. She complains that the *talukdars* have become “nothing but the rent receivers for the British [who] spend [their] lives pocketing their insults” (26).

The Mother has realized the domination of the colonizers despite being inside the walled-up room. Since she can’t talk to the outside world about her dissatisfaction, she keeps talking about the political issues with her illiterate maids who don’t understand any of these things. So it seems that she is talking to the walls and the walls talking to her. The mother spits her disgust for the British commissioner who has made “the martial caste deprived of arms and ammunitions,” and made the *Rajput* clans serve him for the title of *rajahood* that should have come to them “without any bootlicking” and without “waiting on his veranda” for the service (26). In her rage, she even calls the commissioner “an insufferable” and “arrogant bastard” (26). She believes that her clan of ruling martial class shouldn’t be restricted from using arms and shouldn’t bow in front of white outsiders. It is the Mother who understands the British policy to create religious riots and divide native people. The Mother also realizes that the British are insulting and making the rich landlords servile to them by making them

“waiting on [their] veranda” (26). The realization that the ruling class of the natives are made to serve the British outsiders makes the Mother furious with the British. She even hates the local landlords for bowing in front of the British officers. She views that the richest landlords wouldn't be big by “making donkeys of themselves” (26). Her understanding of a colonizer's psyche is more real than her greedy and servile husband who tries to please the British Commissioner in order to get the title of *rajahood* and its inheritance. The Mother analyses and rejects the British superiority over the Indians. She doesn't accept her clan and people inferior to British rather she hates British for dominating the territory that doesn't belong to them. The Mother contains the revolutionary attitude that her western son and her arrogant dominating husband lack.

The Mother, whose two newly born daughters had been disposed off in the male-dominated society, decides to “turn into a stone” and turn indifferent towards her husband. (32). It is as if she wants to defy the brick walls that had been built by the Father around her room. By remaining silent, she could remain removed and independent of the confining walls of Vijaygarh. But the Father's third marriage makes her furious. She can't accept the excuse that he has to increase his eligibility for *rajahood* by marrying many wives and he did it because his brother insisted. She had already excused him for his second marriage. When Bitten advises her to ignore the Father's absence and his activities “as a man goes from flower to flower,” she performs fabulous display to the horror of the superstitious maids. Getting extremely angry, she tears “the tapestry of a prancing Hanuman from the wall and sent her water pitcher crashing”(29). She displays her resisting power and energy and expresses her anger for being treated as inferior. The religion for the Mother is not a faith or superstition. It is a bargain. She is spiritual but not servile to fate. She goes to the shrine not as a devout but as a bargainer to the ‘potter’--the God--who “makes and breaks [the fate of] women on his wheel” 25). The Mother makes pilgrimages to many shrines for the blessing of a

son not on her own will. She is made to do it by her husband who demands a son for inheriting the property to continue the lineage. This is why she keeps complaining about the pain of labor she had to endure while giving birth to the son, and in return she had to face the callous neglect of her husband who kept himself busy with the new wife. The mother's intellectuality is reflected when she argues with God that women do not deserve such broken fate, isolated, dominated and excluded. The Mother can not accept her husband's neglect and domination towards her as fate. She is not ready to endure it as her poor fate. She is aggressive towards her oppressive husband, and she is resisting him through her anger.

The Mother whose hidden energy of free spirit is seen when she dances every year in "Shiva Puja" looking like "a mistress of three universe to hear her" and dancing frenziedly and ferociously like "a drunk, a woman possessed, hair flying, sari slipping, a woman in flames, even not conscious to see her infant son who is snatched just before he would come in the path of [her] frenzied feet" (27). She is displaying her energy and giving her psychological upheavals an outlet through the religious dance where she shows her rage of being kept aloof from observing and participating in the vast world outside.

The Mother is in sympathy with the political upheavals of her time and eager to know what is happening in the world around her. Her husband's third marriage insults her, and at the same time her favorite Russian Tsar and Tsarina's dethronement by the British alliance saddens her. She hates the British even more for the fate of the Russian rulers. The Mother is interested in political movements and the happening around her country. Being a Hindu, she doesn't worship "like a humble suppliant for divine or human favor" (23). She is unlike other devout Hindus who pray out of fear or favor. It is rather she is in a battle with the God who determines the poor fate of women. She is a modern woman living in traditional period, her ideas are modern, and her thoughts are

modern. She rejects the traditionally determined dominating roles for women although she can't come outside in the street to revolt like the freedom fighters.

Besides following the tradition since she is the product of the traditional society, time and again she displays her modern attitudes. She keeps playing the role of traditional mother and a wife until she gets the way to break it. The Mother stays in the palace of Vijaygarh despite her husband's callous neglect and despite the confined life detached from the outside world until her son is settled. Her Motherhood doesn't permit her to discard her son when he is not well-established in his social life. She is worried for her imprisoned son and does what she can to help him. When he comes out of the jail and gets settled by marrying his prison-mate comrade Yusuf's daughter, the Mother gets free from her traditional duty that had chained her to walk-out and gets involved in her determination towards freedom. In Indian societies, a mother is chained by her children to protest and discard her dominating husband since a mother is emotionally attached to her children with love. So after being sure about her son's settled life, she gets chance to materialize her ambition. Through Bhushan, she gets acquainted with comrade Yusuf, in whom she finds a person who can really make her happy, that will respect her womanhood, that will respect her desire of freedom and that can be the one to help her come out of the confinement to step out of that conservative world to live in open air. She finds comrade Yusuf, a freedom fighter, fighting in the mission against the British colonization to free the whole nation, a person with whom she can share her ideas and views, with whom she can live a restriction-free life and give a chance to flourish her individual identity and her female self. She uses comrade Yusuf as a means of liberation from the three decade long imprisonment in her husband's house. One starry night, she leaves her husband's palace to start a new life with Yusuf, abandoning that "greenish light of unfulfilled desire" without caring for the social recriminations against the "liaison between an illiterate

raanee and her communist lover.” (194) She doesn’t care for the society’s reactions against her move because the society had never sympathized with her when her husband had married two more wives and ignored her and left her to suffocate inside a single walled-up room completely detached from the experience of outside world. The society which had celebrated her husband’s polygamous activities grandly is pointing their finger against the Mother and why would she care for it and regret? Even Bhushan, reflecting the author’s thought, seems to support her. He has seen her since she was twenty-one and seen her sentenced to the confinement for no fault. So he appreciates her for managing to escape that impossible-looking imprisonment. The Mother has managed to liberate herself from the extreme domination of her arrogant and negligent husband and her move denotes that she can even join hands with Yusuf in the fight against British colonization which would lead them towards liberation from colonial domination.

Razia’s struggle for the individual freedom is worth praising. At the age of sixteen, she is bored of being trapped in her religious and cultural confinement. She is seeking moments of freedom and doesn’t want to let go any chance that comes on her way. A girl of a remote area Vijaygarh, she is surprisingly smart and daring. In front of a strange boy Bhushan, she dares to raise her hood and attracts his attention. She experiments with him the moments of freedom for which she arranges the meeting and keeps the track of time to return to her class at Female College. The moment they exchange their names they realize that no fruitful relation would be ensued between them since their Hindu-Muslim difference comes as obstacle. Even though Razia is “not the worrying kind” (54). Having relationship with Bhushan is an “adventure” for her (53). She is not in love with Bhushan. What she is doing is breaking the conservative traditional norms to open up a way toward freedom. When this Hindu-Muslim affair is caught, there is a big riot between two sects and many religion-blinded

people kill each other. Razia is called a “sluttish” girl whom no one would marry (59). Her father, the school inspector, begs Bhushan’s father to get him transferred out of Vijaygarh to hide his face out of disgrace. But Razia is not disgraced. She takes it as an opportunity to get her destiny. Bhushan’s mother relates that with this new found freedom, Razia raised her veil at a gathering and “moved around talking to people like a man” (181). A Turkish diplomat who came to India with a delegation got impressed with her boldness and modern thoughts stayed to marry her. Razia then gets what she wanted out of life, an opportunity to be her own self, an independent, modern Muslim woman who is not anymore trapped inside the veil and rigid Muslim norms.

Razia has achieved appreciable progress. In such a conservative and traditional time, a Muslim girl discarding the *burka* and experiencing the freedom that many women would not even dream of is really a great individual success.

However modern she wants to be, Razia doesn’t want to discard her religion though she feels suffocated in the rigid confinements her faith imposes on her. She doesn’t want to give up her religion, a way of life that had reached her through the journey of centuries. She is proud of her Islamic heritage. The thing she wants to change is the unnecessary restrictions endowed to females by patriarchal society and culture. She wants to modernize Islam. She calls her *burka* a “hideous thingamajig” and says she wouldn’t be cloaked in it while she goes to the Mecca, the great shrine of Muslims. Bhushan narrates that after the religious riot caused by his and Razia’s relationship, he hears that some imbecile married Razia as his second wife and she is sold to brothels. Many stories about Razia’s fall are planted in Vijaygarh to disgrace her. But only after a few years, it is revealed to Bhushan that Razia has come out of this crisis untouched with the strength of her will. Any other woman who had been the cause of Hindu-Muslim riots would have been shamed into meekly following the dictates of her family and society and would have been either married as “second” wife

to some “imbecile” or sent to brothels(60). Razia’s determination to get her destination and her self-confidence makes her daring and smart and she attends big meetings and even marries a Turkish diplomat.

Razia is later seen as Turkish diplomat’s wife and a mother of two children, looking very cheerful and confidently a modern Muslim woman. Bhushan describes her appearance that “she wore narrow high-heeled shoes. Her frock was of a fabric that had the delicate transparency of glass and swirled about her knees “(167). Bhushan is at loss for words when he sees Razia in that grandeur, but Razia speaks to him with natural ease. She politely enquires about him and says “How I wish I could ask you to stay but I have to go out. My husband is waiting down stairs [. . .]. You must have lunch with us tomorrow” (168). The past incidents and the stories of her damnation have not remotely affected her. She has become modern and elegant, but not western. The colonial culture has not influenced her and she has not adopted colonial culture. In that sense she is able to resist the imperial hegemony and valorizes her Islamic heritage.

Sylla is a typical Parsee and more specifically a typical inhabitant of upper class Bombay. “Sylla’s Bombay is not Bombay,” admits Bhushan since he himself had been totally unaware of the textile workers strike that had gone on for six months when he was in her charmed circle (41). Sylla lives an affluent, cosmopolitan life. She is educated in Europe by her grandmother. With her grandmother, Sylla campaigns in Bombay’s affluent circle in support of “*Khilaphat* cause” of “Ottoman Caliph” in far Turkey (115). Being Zoroastrian, she says they should support the Sultan-Caliph in Turkey and reject British imposition there. Her grandmother, a humanitarian and supporting Parsee widows and women, is incensed because of “British treatment of the imperial Ottoman dynasty” (116). These Parsee ladies oppose the British interference in Sultan-Caliph’s Turkey which is implicit opposition towards the British imposition in India.

Sylla's way of life is totally English. By adopting English way of life she is resisting the English imperialism since her English lifestyle and circle would equalize her with the colonizers and the hierarchical binary wouldn't occur between her and the imperialists. By adopting privileged culture, she is individually liberating herself from the direct domination of British. Sylla's grandmother has raised her to be free spirited and independent woman. Her English appearance makes her different from other Indian women. "Being a Parsee, she wears frocks, swims in a bathing costume, and has bobbed hair" (75). Her circle is full of "many short-haired, dog-owning women" who are as English as the resident English people (75). Sylla's occasional wearing Saree with a "transparent wisp of a blouse [. . .] would have scandalized Vijaygarh" and Bhushan playfully admits that he would love to scandalize his place by introducing Sylla to them (75). His mother's maid would "squawk in amazement while bare expanses of Sylla's skin turned [. . .]" (75). But for modern and English Sylla, the idea of visiting Vijaygarh is impossible. She could never adjust herself to a "walled-up" existence of Vijaygarh (24). She says she would go "stark staring mad" if she had to live there (24). After experiencing modernity, getting habituated to freedom of life, she can't imagine a life in confined rooms or under veil. Sylla has adopted modern habits and appearance. Her liberal sense of outlook reflects her boldness and rejection of traditional norms of clothing to hide from outsiders. She is experiencing the joy of getting herself in the privileged circle.

Sylla writes and directs plays with modern open-ended theme. Her re-arranging the popular play *The Scarlet Letter* in favor of woman character proves her self-realization of gender equality and women's rights. She wouldn't allow the hierarchy of man-woman relationship to enter her life. Unlike Bhushan's mother whose parents got her married at the age of thirteen, Sylla being a self-standing lady is unmarried until thirty. She loves Bhushan but she also believes that there is a Sublime Love which is

“perfect, omnipotent and omnipresent” (125). She is not ready to compromise with life. She is in search of perfect Love and doesn’t want to settle for a “fudged copy of the one” (125). She knows Bhushan is obsessed with Razia and she logically observes that Bhushan’s search and obsession is futile. She asks Bhushan to come out of this obsession and be normal person because she says him, “You are obsessed with your obsession, not with her” (121). However modern and carefree Sylla is, she can’t spend her life aimlessly as Bhushan’s. Her grandmother has educated her in Europe “[t]o be a success, and to make a brilliant marriage [and most importantly] to be happy” (141). Her grandmother and her idea match that she can’t be happy with aimless Bhushan. When Bhushan is in prison, she gets time to reason that he, a “narcissist can never be the love of her life” (128). In contrast she finds in Nauzer Vocah, the lawyer of Bhushan and her friend, a man who earnestly looks ahead, a man with an ambition. Like Sylla, he is concerned about the people around him, and helps them. Sylla exploits her freedom to choose the person to her desire and marries Nauzer discarding Bhushan for she doesn’t want to be a “scab” on Bhushan’s obsession with Razia (122).

If compared, these three women characters are resisting the domination the society and culture wants to impose on them. They are modern women but do not discard their rootedness and cultural heritage. They want to modernize their culture and correct the inequality in it. They want to be happy in life and experience what their life offers them. They want their meaningful existence, a female identity, independent and indiscriminate from both patriarchy and colonization. Valorizing cultural heritage is resisting imperialism, and these females are doing exactly the same. They don’t believe in discarding men in order to discard the patriarchal oppression. They believe in marriage institution and in harmonious man-woman relationship. They know that they need to join hands with each other in order to resist the colonial dominations. All the three main women characters have discarded dominating men who disregard their

individual existence and their identity. They have joined hands with the men who respect their modern thoughts, ideas and most importantly who respect their 'womanhood'.

However these women's success is individual success resulting from individual struggle. These struggles do not represent the entire subordinated females of colonized nation. These women characters have somehow found the means to empower them and resist the dominations and impositions upon them. But a large number of women belonging to different class, caste and culture are far away from the realization of the oppression. They do not even know that they deserve to come out to explore their potential and that they can win the whole world to claim their equal rights and position. The two-way domination on women subjugates them and in order to resist it they have to self-realize the importance of liberation; empower themselves and subvert the imposition. Only then the women of colonial patriarchy can be liberated from double colonization.

IV. Conclusion

Nayantara Sahgal's resistance against the double subjugation under colonial regime finds an adequate expression in the novel *Mistaken Identity*. Different women characters seek to subvert the colonial regime and local patriarchy supported by it in order to attain freedom and happiness in their lives. Both patriarchy and colonization manipulate the knowledge and hegemonize women to believe that they are unable to know and do anything the men would do. The circulation of the manipulated knowledge makes women believe that they are really weak and characteristically domestic folks. The dominant power and discourses never provide women access to critical thinking about the other fields of possibilities. Some women who get privilege to exercise their minds and innate qualities of critical thinking question and resist the dominations and marginalization claiming their position in the center. The main female characters of Sahgal's novel, especially the one under study, are in somewhat privileged position and have realized the domination imposed upon women. They have resisted and liberated themselves from the double oppression through whatever means they have access to.

Sahgal has realized the undermining of female potentials by males, whether in the patriarchal or colonial context. Through the deliberate narration of the male protagonist about the women, Sahgal is trying to imply that men of patriarchal social system consider women unable to speak for themselves and unable to represent their sex so that somebody else has to represent these mute creatures. But the author has made it quite visible time and again that the male narrator is most of the time mistaken about the potentiality of the women. He is mistaken when he feels sorry for Razia and obsessed about her damnation for so many years. He even searches red light areas with the intention to rescue her if he finds her. But Razia is not damned neither has she surrendered to be sent to brothels. Rather she has struggled and made her fate in her favor, being untouched by any of the planted stories

about her damnation. The male narrator is mistaken about Sylla when he expected her to wait for him to endure his obsession about another girl and be his scab on the wound of Razia's love. Being aimless and irresponsible in the matter of love, he expects Sylla to marry him when he gets out of the prison. But Sylla is intelligent enough to understand that she can't rely upon Bhushan's shallow love for her. She marries the lawyer and settles into a happy married life. Bhushan is mistaken even about his mother. Time and again he sympathizes with his mother and presents her as a poor creature imprisoned for life time by her oppressive husband. He doesn't realize her potentials and feels that she is miserable person who doesn't have any power to revolt. To his great surprise and out of his expectation, his mother gets out of the 'life-imprisonment' discarding her negligent husband and the four walls of confinement. Her potentials get materialized when she collects all her courage to break the traditional norm about the marriage institution that a woman has to be faithful to her husband and live in his house until her death. She breaks the walls of restrictions imposed upon her and liberates herself from that extreme subordination from the conservative society. Though the society, which celebrated her husband's second and third marriages, doesn't accept her act and calls her 'eloping' with her lover comrade Yusuf as an illicit and immoral act, she doesn't care about such social recriminations.

Sahgal has explored the lives of women belonging to rural as well as city areas, of different age groups, social status and religion in order to study heterogeneity of their problems and various types of discriminations imposed upon them with respect to heterogeneity of their lifestyle. The double oppression is present in all of them living under colonial patriarchy but the degree of subordination and ways of marginalization varies according to the different social and cultural environment they live in. An aged wife of a landlord is kept behind high brick walls separating her from the entire world outside, given few maids to talk with and her husband neglects her running after beautiful ladies. A young

Muslim girl is expected to hide inside uncomfortable hideous cloak called *burkha* which is suffocating even to breathe. The male protagonist gets suffocated and feels blindfolded to wear it for a few minutes but the male-centric society makes it compulsory for the women to get suffocated inside it all the time. The *burkha* doesn't only hide them but also suppresses their desires to perceive the real world and to observe it in its entirety. The modern, educated, city girl is also not entirely free from the dominations. Her sexuality is exploited by the protagonist. Her intelligence is not appreciated and her campaigning against the British interference in Sultan-Caliph's Turkey is mocked. Despite being educated in Europe, she is not involved in economic practices neither has she been offered a good position in government offices by the British government. Sahgal has implicitly expressed that even educated women's qualifications are undermined by the British colonizers.

The three female characters' resistance against double colonization shows that women can not get liberation until they realize the domination and empower themselves to resist it. The struggle becomes more complicated when they have to negotiate with patriarchal and colonial oppression simultaneously. The colonized men should also understand that they need to address gender issues and consider gender equality in order to fight against imperialism. For the national solidarity to fight against imperialism, male-female hierarchy should be abolished. A nation can progress and get true liberation from imperial hegemony only when male-female hierarchy is erased and women are given equal rights and opportunity. The most important thing is that the rigid cultural and traditional norms should be changed and remodeled in order to make it appropriate for the modern time. Unless and until the hierarchical, dominating and male-chauvinist cultural norms exist in the society and the social imprint of women as inferior is not erased from the mind, the society will not progress.

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