



THE COMPLEXITIES OF HUMAN RELATIONSHIP IN JAISHREE MISRA'S *AFTERWARDS*

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ABSTRACT

Jaishree Misra is an Indian contemporary author born in 1961. Her literary career took off with the hugely popular novel Ancient Promises that was published in 2000. The author's main focus is on the struggles of women. She projects herself as the representative and perfect spokesperson of the women folk of the present time. Women's in her novels seem to be a personification of modern women who can be able to face the burden of inhibition they have carried from generation to generation. The family setup of all heroines of Misra is purely patriarchal. Domestic violence is portrayed very well in the novel Afterwards, where Maya with some of her dialogues explicit that how much she is afraid with her husband and arguments with him. Her husband is over possessive and loves her so much but doesn't give her freedom to talk or to meet with other men. She is not allowed to be social and Misra shows that how women face violence in normal everyday life through the character of Maya and the other heroines of all her novels.

Keywords: *Feminism, Patriarchy, Human relationship, Domestic violence, Women psyche.*

INTRODUCTION

Jaishree Misra is an Indian contemporary author born in 1961 to a Malayali family in New Delhi. She started her writing career in 2000. Misra's life is as dramatic as her books. As a Keralite, growing up in an army family in Delhi, Misra lived an apparently western lifestyle. She managed to get an MA degree in Kerala University and two post-graduate diplomas from the University of London, the first in Special Education and the second in Broadcast Journalism.



Her literary career took off with the hugely popular novel *Ancient Promises* that was published in 2000. Since then, she has written three novels – *Accidents like Love and Marriage* (2001), *Afterwards* (2004) and *Rani* (2007) her fourth novel, *Rani* is historical fiction based on the life of Rani Lakshmi bai. This was published by Penguin in December 2007 and banned soon after by the Uttar Pradesh state government in India. In 2009, Misra signed a three-book deal with Avon, The first of these books, called *Secrets and Lies*, was published in June 2009 while the next in the series, *Secrets and Sins* was released in July 2010. *Secrets and Lies* appeared on the Heat seekers list in Britain's Book seller magazine's best-seller lists in the summer of 2009. The third book, *A Scandalous Secret*, was released in May 2011 and above all there is something special to her credit, Jaishree Misra is the great-niece of the late Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai, a famous Malayalam Writer Jnanpith awardee.

Jaishree Misra an Indian novelist has joined the growing number of women writers from India, on whom the image of the suffering woman eventually breaking the traditional boundaries has had a significant impact. The author's main focus is on the struggles of women. She projects herself as the representative and perfect spokesperson of the women folk of the present time. Women's in her novels seem to be a personification of modern women who can be able to face the burden of inhibition they have carried from generation to generation.

Misra speaks about the various instances that lead ruptures in relationships. She pictures the complexity of relationships, when the elements of love and loyalty are missing. She believes in the quest for the self, which merge in the psyche of the Indian women. She takes efforts to make her readers understand the full spectrum of emotions, from the heights of total delight to the depths of grief, like the various stages in life. She brings about the predicaments and problems, faced by women in the intricate web of relationships. In her novels like

Ancient Promises, Accidents like Love and Marriage, Afterwards, Rani, Secrets and Lies, Secrets and Sins, A Scandalous Secret and A Love Story for My Sister she weaves around the axes of love, marriage and loss.

When we take the novel "Afterwards " it is mainly around the characters Maya, Ragul Tiwari and Govind Warrior and Anjali.

Maya, simple and beautiful wife of Govind lives in a luxurious house without any happiness. Her house contains "three bed rooms, three attached bathrooms, and stainless sink in a fully tiled kitchen but there is not even a single percent happiness in his mind and heart.

Maya, the heroine gets used to the loveless life and she declares that she had easily given up her own right to be loved. Though she has tried to be the best wife and expects Govind to treat her properly with out any suspicion, her efforts do not yield fruit. Govind treats his wife



more like an option. Maya is not allowed to interfere in her husband's business matters. When she enquires anything about his job, he starts using odd terms and he does this quite often so that Maya is not able to comprehend anything. She keeps her mouth shut and avoids further questions. She is kept from all his business dealings and he never discusses his day at the office with his wife. He feels his sharing would not help much or it would be in no way useful to Maya.

"Patriarchy requires violence or the subliminal threat of violence in order to maintain itself... The most dangerous situation for a woman is not an unknown man in the street, or even the enemy in wartime, but a husband or lover in the isolation of their own home." -- Gloria Steinem

Domestic violence is portrayed very well in the novel "Afterwards", where Maya with some of her dialogues explicit that how much she is afraid with her husband and arguments with him. Her husband is over possessive and loves her so much but doesn't give her freedom to talk or to meet with other men. She is not allowed to be social. There is a scene in the first part of the novel that there is argument and quarrel between Maya and her husband. This scene is a very clear example and shows that how women face domestic violence in normal everyday life.

It is vivid that the family setup of all heroines of Misra is purely patriarchal. Women are totally under the dominance of male especially in the marriage life. Not only Maya in *Afterwards* but also Janu in *Ancient Promises*, Neena in *Accidents like Love and Marriage* Bubbles in *Secret and Lies* cannot look forward to any peace or solace as they lack the freedom to put their ideas of an activated and fruitful life into action. Their husbands feel themselves superior by subjugating and suppressing their women physically, mentally and financially.

Even when Maya's parents know of her suffering, they do not wish to know about it fully. All that makes them happy is that their daughter is living in a nice house has a nice car and a husband who gives everything so Maya comes to the best conclusion that Rahul Tiwari an NRI who comes to Trivandrum to learn mirudhangum and hires out the house next door of her is a token for her freedom because Ragul is stunned at her beauty at the very first sight and she also comes to know through her servant that Ragul was a very kind hearted fellow so she continues her friendship with him and during the right time she pleads him into taking her and her daughter Anjali with him to UK. Rahul also gets a clear picture of Maya's situation because he understands that Maya is dominated by Govind. In spite of little understanding of Malayalam, he studies the circumstances of Maya. He wonders at the state of marriage in which Maya is trapped and says, "What was going on there? It was obviously an unhappy marriage or something. But why? She looked so pretty and she had that cute kid ... for the tenth time I could hear that voice in my head reminding me that I wanted no part of



it” (*Afterwards* 27). Rahul judges her in the right manner as, “The door was shut and she was indoors, closed in with her secrets again” (*Afterwards* 45).

After thousands of feelings and thoughts Ragul accepted her and her daughter and took them to Delhi first where his parents lived and then to UK, there they lived three years, unfortunately on one black day Maya died in an accident. Anjali is given for foster care. The novel_ exposes the battle between the loved and the lost.

The novel starts with the death rites of Maya while she alive and it was performed by her parents in their native house because they felt that her daughter is eloped with some one and bring them bad name in the midst of the society so they want to perform the death rites with the help of eleyathu,

“Sticky rice would have been moulded into globules by chubby young hands wearing a palm leaf ring. A pinch of black gingili seeds would have been placed carefully on top, some sticking stubbornly to fingertips despite small hands shaken vigorously. Incantations of a hawk faced elayathu, repeated in a high pitched unbroken boys voice, would have rent the peace of the early morning sky, and hands would have been clapped loudly together to summon the crows to peck at the rice...the belief being that they carried the souls of the dead who could not be physically present.....”

This denotes that their daughter was died and there is no more Maya in their life. Here author beautifully describes how the women were disappointed both by the blood relationship, marital relationship and by the society. Maya wants nothing than a real love and affection but it is not given by her parents directly, her husband’s over possessiveness and love leads to suspicious nature and the love given by Ragul was not accepted in the traditional and culture based Indian society where this society shows interest in what happens to the lives of others, rather than themselves. It finds pleasure in analyzing the life of a woman, the ups and downs in her life, the way she steers her life, the manner of living etc. this constant watching by the society has led women to think of what others would think, when she decides every aspect.

The prime reason behind the fact that the women fail to frame their individuality is that a woman is constantly subjected to fear and mental illness. Marriage and motherhood are the primary status roles for women. In the setting of mental illness many of the social values take their ugly forms in the form of domestic violence, dowry harassment, abuse of dowry law, dowry death, separation, and divorce.

When Maya met Ragul Tiwari as a neighbour she is afraid and gets tense at the unexpected arrival of white Esteem which belongs to Govind warrior. Next when we analyze the fear and suffering of Maya with her parents is whether they accept or object her friendship with Ragul



Tiwari or they come to the conclusion like normal public without knowing the suspicious nature of their son in law.

“Maya had attempted to call her mother .But her father had answered the telephone and slammed it down the minute he heard her voice. ‘My mother will talk to me, I know’ she said and tried again. But on that occasion, all she got was silence before the phone went dead again. She did not know, of course that they had made the same assumptions about her hasty departure as everyone else had.”

The most important thing is Anjali, if Anjali could not admit Ragul as in the place of Govind, the total effort made by Maya will become useless. So this way also she could turn her mind and take the decision. She is afraid about what her daughters view because the only blood relation who had real affection with her is Anjali only so without given chance to raise any hesitation from her thoughts both Maya and Ragul approach her.

‘Anjali’! I said, looking at the little girl, trying to break the tension.

By the constant support of Ragul both mother and daughter lived a comfortable life ,but again fate plays a vital role and Maya died in an accident this leads to Anjali in the foster care, her love for mother and searching for her presence portrays in really a fantastic description. The child from the foster care to Govind hands is also described well by the author with the narration of how the mind of Ragul was after the separation of Maya and Anjali.

These things clearly picture the more recent women writers themes related to women and society or more specifically the man-women relationship in their novels. They give importance in visualizing the cultural scenario from a locus of isolation, oppression, depression, frustration and amalgamation.

The woman (Maya) who thirsts for real love went to abroad with some more dreams and finally returned to her native as ashes and it was collected by her mother symbolizes the motherhood feelings runs in the novel and in the mind of the author is really a heart touching end given by Jaishree Misra.



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