



# ASSERTION OF FEMINISM IN THE NOVELS OF JAISHREE MISRA

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## ABSTRACT :

Many women authors found their voice and established their identities inside the realm of fiction. They focused on the experiences of women living in patriarchal societies and brought to light the societal ills that were inflicted upon the female world in a manner that was both flamboyantly original and transparent to an extraordinary degree. The mistreatment of women that had been going on for a long time was brought to light. We live in a globalised society that has made astounding achievements and presented challenging opportunities, but one may wonder what progress the global society has made in promoting human dignity in the daily lives of people. Misra discusses the complexity of marital relationships, especially the man-woman relationship, and the impact of tradition and culture on women. She portrays the lives of educated urban women seeking self-identity in a patriarchal society. This paper aims to presents her preoccupations.

**Keywords: Feminism, patriarchal culture, assertion, resistance**

## INTRODUCTION

The worldwide society of the twenty-first century registers many advancements made by mankind; yet, it also registers the unsustainable patriarchal standards and the distressing enforcement of those laws on society as a whole and women in particular. It is a fact that the cultural superstructure that has been constructed by men has been harmed by the thoughtless confinement and insurmountable constraints that men have imposed on women. This is due to the fact that men have historically held positions of power. Women were considered to have had the same capabilities as men throughout ancient history. However, this cannot be said definitively when women are oppressed and forced into subordinate positions. Even in our highly developed culture, it can be difficult for women to maintain their sense of self and originality. There is still, to a different degree and in a variety of manifestations, discrimination.

Regarding the problem that women face in general the woman herself realises that the cosmos as a whole is masculine; it is men who built it, ruled it, and who still today dominate it. Simone de Beauvoir in her internationally acclaimed novel *The Second Sex* avers.

“The women recognize that the universe as a whole is masculine; it is men who shaped it, ruled it and who still today dominates it...in her home, she grasps herself as a passive opposite to these human-faced gods who set goals and standards” (P.654). 1

Simon de Beauvoir makes the observation that women perceive laws in men and are willing to submit themselves to the authority of the conqueror. A woman is not taught the technology that gives her the ability to dominate the situation, and the world does not appear to a woman as a set of laws that she must follow. Women are adrift in the centre of this universe, and they are ensnared in the throng of people who are extremely confused.

In the Bible, Eve was the one who received the more severe punishment, despite the fact that both Adam and Eve disobeyed God by eating the forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden.

God tells Eve,

“I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.” 2

And God followed through on his threat by causing her to give birth to many children. According to St. Paul, women should occupy a subordinate role. He emphasises that women shouldn't speak in the church and that if they want to learn anything, they should ask their husbands. In his epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul says

“Women are to be silent in the churches. They are not permitted to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. If they wish to inquire about something, they are to ask their own husbands at home; for it is dishonourable for a woman to speak in the church.” 3

He also says that women shouldn't have authority over their husbands. A woman should never strive for independence because, according to the religious laws of Hinduism, she is meant to be dependent on a man for the entirety of her existence and should never try to become independent.

The Quran, Al-Baqarah, Chapter 2, verse 2:282 provides “a basis for the rule that two women are the equivalent of one man in providing a witness testimony in financial situations.” The testimony of two women must be considered to have the same weight as the evidence of one man.

*“But if the debtor is of poor understanding, or weak, or is unable himself to dictate, then let his guardian dictate in justice. And get two witnesses out of your own men. And if there are not two men available, then a man and two women, such as you agree for witnesses, so that if one of them (two women) errs, the other can remind her.” 4*

The patriarchal culture loads women with the notion of motherhood and restricts women's mobility. Women are yoked by various duties, and patriarchal society restrains women's movement. The biological act of having children brings with it a host of additional household and social obligations, including that of nurturing, teaching, and raising children to the point where they are suitable citizens. It is important to remember that the biological or anatomical differences between men and women are the basis for all social and political differences between the sexes. According to what Sigmund Freud said, "anatomy is destiny" for women, and the biological aspect of a woman defines her psychology and, as a result, her capabilities and responsibilities in life.

The first wave of feminism was characterised by a strong hostility to chattel marriage and the notion that women and their children were the property of their husbands. This opposition manifested itself in the form of an emphasis on the promotion of equality and property rights. The authors, who identified themselves as feminists, brought to light the shackles that women were forced to wear in the name of orthodoxy, religion, and culture.

In her book, "Feminism: A Very Short Introduction," Margaret Waters states that

“...for a married woman, her home becomes a prison-house. The house itself, as well as everything in it, belongs to the husband, and of all fixtures the most abject is his breeding machine, the wife. Married women are in fact slaves, their situation no better than that of Negroes in the West Indies” (p.44). 5

Mary Wollstonecraft is often referred to as the "mother of feminism" or the "first feminist." She wrote a work under the title *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, which acts as a touchstone for generations of women committed to equality and rights based on social, political, and economic issues. Her work was titled "A Vindication of the Rights of Women." Mary Wollstonecraft held the view that women could not be evaluated by

the criteria developed for men. Mary Wollstonecraft is credited with posing the question of what women's rights are in the event that they are not the same as those of men. She maintained that although women were designed for men in one sense, in a more profound and elevated sense, they were also made for themselves. 6

Mary Wollstonecraft's feminist viewpoints had a significant impact on Virginia Woolf. Wollstonecraft is considered the founder of the feminist tradition since she brought the concerns of women to the forefront of discussion and debate in order to effect social change. Even though women must contend with male resistance and the stranglehold of tradition and myth on their way to emancipation, there has been some improvement in the status of women in recent times. However, there is still a great deal of ground to be covered before women can enjoy the same level of political, social, and economic equality as men. Both the East and the West have their own distinct interpretations of what feminism means.

In the Western world, feminism is a social movement that promotes the idea of women having a space of their own in which they can exercise autonomy and privacy. Feminism in the Western world has evolved into a call for the recognition of the woman as an individual. It also maintains that the role of women should not be restricted but rather made equivalent to that of men. When viewed in this light, feminism can be understood as an economic and political struggle for equal rights as well as the rejection of tradition-bound feminine norms.

Abhijeeth and Indu in their article Journey of Revelation: Quest Motif in Jaishree Misra's Ancient Promises state that

“In the decades since the country's declaration of independence, women have taken on significantly different responsibilities in society. She is not quite emancipated despite all of the progress she has made. Women are expected to conduct themselves in a specific manner in accordance with the laws and codes of behaviour that have been established by society. The arrival of a son, rather than a daughter, is celebrated with joy in the typical Indian household. He is seen as a valuable asset, whereas she is regarded as a risky liability. This is the root of the patriarchal social order that we see today. A representation of the so-called ideal lady, as built by society, is presented here. In order for a woman to achieve this rank, she must first suppress her voice, wear only the saree and other clothing that is sanctioned by society, limit her range of motion, and, as a final step, lower her identity to that of a subaltern.” 7

Writings by women not only shed light on the author's real-life experiences but also reveal the many facets of human nature as seen through the perspective of female authors. Women's authors' books investigate female experiences as the foundation for original artistic expression.

There is no single figure credited with the founding of feminism in India; however, this ideology is intrinsically linked to nationalism. In Indian history, there are accounts of women who fought alongside men for their independence. However, after India gained its independence, the topic of empowering women faded from the public discourse. India had the distinct impression that, as time went on, the historical and ideological components of women's roles, as well as debates on the issue of women, became less prominent. During the period of independence, women who worked in the public sector were not allowed to work in any other sector except the domestic. The question arose for Indian women as to whether or not they should leave behind their victimisation of the past, which had caused them to deny who they were in order to please patriarchy.

Achieving equality in terms of recognition and space has emerged as a primary objective for feminist writers. A large number of feminist groups have been established in order to fight for a society that is just and equitable, not just for women but also for the parts of society who are oppressed. With the passage of time, the term "feminist" came to mean the protection of human rights for all disadvantaged and discriminatory groups in society, but with a particular emphasis on the rights of women. Women's rights were the primary focus of this protection.

The twenty-first century has seen a surge in the production of women's literature, which draws inspiration from the diverse range of lived experiences among women. The works of contemporary Indian female authors have left an indelible imprint on the canon of English literary production. Their works are the result of their becoming aware of the tension that exists between the concept of who they are as human beings and the concept that society has of who they are as women.

As a result of their writing, women writers have given birth to a new method of creative literature, which can also be understood as a method of reading literature from a unique perspective. Women writers look at the world from the perspective of a woman and come up with novel solutions to the problem of gender inequality in the

workplace. Women writers have a strong grasp on how to tackle the hardships of being a woman in a patriarchal society. In their writings, they make use of two different motivations that are in direct opposition to one another. The first option is to be a rebel within the traditional and constrained realms, while the second option is to make concessions to political, social, and historical considerations. A woman writer possesses the intestinal fortitude to challenge the preconceptions that women have about themselves and their relationship to a culture that represses the psychology of women. When written by women, literature reveals the development of a distinctively feminine aesthetic.

Richa Pandey and Aprajita Sharma say that only feminists can reveal the power of womanhood and establish its standing in a society dominated by men

"Because only feminists can unearth the power of womanhood and establish its significance in a society dominated by men, women have chosen to rebel and struggle against the society's age-old traditional values. Only feminists can uncover the power of womanhood and establish its importance in a society dominated by men. To a large extent, gender is the result of cultural construction. The intricate system of norms and expectations that determines a person's gender is passed down to us as a result of sociocultural experiences that leave an imprint on the subconscious mind of humans. The writers have put in a great deal of effort to produce a definition of femininity that is accepted by the majority." 8

Women writers are making an effort to unearth the voice of women, which has, up until this point, been stifled in an unending hush. They make effective use of literature as a potent instrument in order to identify those who are disenfranchised and to bring their repressed issues to light. It is fascinating to take note of the flourish that is present in women's writing, which is consistent. The ideas expressed in the writings of women have their origins in the distant past, and their meaning is derived from the indigenous worldview. They do not rely on theories or other outside elements to make their writing sound more interesting. Instead, they study the day-to-day lives of women in the culture and draw conclusions from those observations. The experiences that are unique to being a woman are frequently highlighted in the works of female authors. They write on gender relations, with women at the centre of the discussion. A fresh approach is taken in the presentation of the intellectual pursuits of women. Women writers uphold a multi-disciplinary approach by requiring readers to add their own experiences and levels of comprehension. They have assumed the social responsibility of creating places for their gender in order to alter the hierarchical position in society, and they have done so through the establishment of these spaces.

The significant contributions made by diasporic writers have helped diasporic Indian English literature earn a lot of praise in recent years. Diasporic literature emerged alongside the development of postcolonial literature. Diasporic writers explore topics that are relevant to the actual experiences and mentalities of diaspora communities in their work. The fact that diasporic literature is not founded on any particular theory or philosophy but rather on the experiences of migrants is the most notable aspect of this type of writing. The writers of the diaspora establish a safe refuge for themselves by expressing the physical and emotional struggles they face. The literature of diaspora addresses a wide range of topics, including discrimination, cultural shock (both forward and backward), difficulties in adjusting to new environments and assimilating new ways of life, orientalism, identity crises, alienation and displacement, dilemmas, depression, and hybridity.

Jaishree Misra is now recognised as one of the numerous Indian women writers who reside in the diaspora and who focus their work on the tormented yet unyielding female protagonists who eventually shatter preconceived notions of gender roles. The topics and issues that pertain to the home are frequently tackled by female authors. By contrast, Jaishree Misra distinguishes herself from other contemporary women writers by demonstrating originality in her thought processes. The struggles and problems that women face are Misra's primary area of interest and concern. Characters written by Jaishree Misra that appear in her books take up the cause of women and their fight for survival on multiple fronts, including the intellectual, the social, the moral, and the spiritual. She places a greater emphasis on the inside lives of women than she does on their appearance to the outside world. The most interesting thing that Misra has contributed is the way that she has portrayed the female characters. According to Misra, Simone de Beauvoir has accurately observed the situation that women find themselves in today.

According to Misra, the biological difference between men and women is the root of the problem that results in women being exploited and subjugated. Jaishree Misra is a writer who belongs to the second generation of Indians who were born outside of India. Through the stories she tells in her novels, Jaishree Misra positions herself as the spokesman for women living in the modern world.

A deep impression was left on Jaishree Misra by the sight of oppressed women who were driven to push back against the norms that had long been accepted in their society. The protagonists in Misra's novels are personifications of modern-day women who might be able to deal with the burden of inhibition that they have inherited from one generation to the next. Her books depict the typical structure of a patriarchal household. The author, Misra, discusses her concept of the "New Woman," who is retracing her steps through different stages of her life. Through her novels, Misra depicts situations that depict broken relationships that may occur in the lives of men and women.

Misra is the author of eight novels as well as a book of poetry that she prefers to refer to as "snippets" rather than "poems." She has also released a book. Her writing explores the tormented mind of a woman who is limited by the institution of marriage in a way that is quite relatable. Her writings show how women are held in subservient positions by adhering to strict norms and taboos that have been established for the specific purpose of oppressing women. Through the eyes of her protagonists, Misra paints a picture of the intricacy of the relationship that exists between men and women when genuine love is absent and infidelity is there. Misra believes that the search for one's identity in an Indian lady has become dormant. The most significant aspect that Jaishree Misra deftly addresses is the situation that women find themselves in today.

*Ancient Promises* is Misra's first novel, and it is inspired by her time spent in Kerala, where the story takes place. The other novels written by Misra are titled *Afterwards*, *Rani*, *Secrets and Lies*, *Secrets and Sins*, *A Scandalous Secret*, and *A Love Story for My Sister*. *Accidents Like Love and Marriage* is another one of Misra's books.

The novels deal with a variety of heart-breaking topics, including love, marriage, and the pain of loss. Misra has fulfilled a long-held ambition of hers by completing her work of fiction, *Rani*, which is a historical book. Misra, who identifies as a feminist, has conducted research into the mind of a woman, and she weaves her works around a wide range of themes, including uprooting, rejection, incompatibility, diaspora, alienation, belittling, and urban musings.

Through contrasting the cultures of the Orient and the Occident, Misra has painted a picture of an expansive social landscape. The books written by Misra paint a skillful image of the double-edged sword that is the existence of women in authoritative societies. The author paints a picture of the female mind as it vacillates between the roles they have been assigned and their search for who they are as individuals. Jaishree Misra demonstrates a remarkable level of acumen. As a criticism of Indian culture, Misra maintains that the role of women should be to facilitate relocation over both place and time.

Misra is able to comprehend the never-ending fortitude of women thanks to the psychological perspective of a woman that she has. Misra draws attention to the latent inner strength that women possess, and she endows her characters with robust uniqueness in a way that enables them to escape the unseen intellectual and emotional captivity that they face. Misra demonstrates that family dynamics always make for interesting subject matter for creative works because of the diversity and complexity of human relationships. Another significant issue that is explored in Misra's work is the tension that exists between modernity and tradition. Her protagonists are representative of women in society who are forced to conform to societal norms. The emptiness and disappointment that women feel as a result of being obliged to submit to phallogocentrism in society is articulated through Misra's female characters.

By coming to terms with who they are, certain heroes are able to control their own destinies and express a wish to be liberated from the shackles of patriarchal conventions. The protagonists of Misra are single-minded in their pursuit of their goal, and they are willing to violate even the most sacred oaths in order to do what it takes to succeed. The events of a domestic life that has been shattered are shown in a very careful manner. The author gives a platform to the voice of women who are confined, marginalised, and underprivileged and makes it audible to the entire world. She gives the oppressed women of the community words of encouragement as they fight against modernity and tradition. Misra does a good job of imbuing her characters with religious conviction. In spite of the fact that the women in her stories are disjointed and isolated, they muster the strength to forge their own identities as they fight against the dominance of men.

When Misra writes about the lives of melancholy women whose attempts at independence are hindered by their cruel fates, she never leaves out the part that fate plays in these women's lives. The female characters in the story insist that every woman has her own distinct rights, including the freedom to live a life that brings her joy. Other

topics that are discussed in Misra's work include marriage and the institution of the family. Women's inevitable dependence on men causes them to become submissive and robs them of the joys and pleasures that life has to offer. Misra approaches her topics with such caution that the nuances and significance of the social system are not lost in the process. The protagonists work hard to cultivate a sense of attachment and belongingness in an effort to rid themselves of feelings of estrangement and rootlessness. Misra explores the depths of a woman's psyche, dissecting every murky corner of it in the process. Misra does not damage any of the layers of the female psyche while she is examining it from the inside out.

The concept of womanhood in Indian civilization is presented in a very nuanced manner. According to Indian civilization beliefs, men have authority and maintain cultural hegemony in society. Men uphold the concept of maleness and believe that women lack manliness, which is not fundamentally human. The man, either as a father or a son, was the most important member of the family.

The dark recesses of the female brain are illuminated by Misra. The way in which a person lives with their family has a significant impact not only on their social character but also on their unique personality. Misra's work is infused with the universal feelings that are experienced by both men and women. The reader is able to empathise with the story's protagonist, Misra, and the variety of feelings that he or she experiences. Misra believes that women should have true equality, the freedom to make their own financial decisions, and the ability to exercise agency. Misra drew inspiration for the people in her stories from real people living in modern society. She illustrates the circumstances under which women in difficult times seek the help of other members of their families. Misra is of the opinion that life provides the inspiration for the most compelling works of fiction. The novels written by Jaishree Misra deal with important topics such as the search for one's identity, tensions between different cultures, and the results of marriages that aren't a good match for each other.

Culture is a contested concept that can be interpreted in a variety of ways depending on the group to which one is speaking. The organised manifestation of human learning, convictions, and behaviour is referred to as "culture." Dialects, thoughts, convictions, customs, taboos, codes, foundations, and processes are all elements that are representative of culture. Culture is made up of characteristics, convictions, skills, and practises that are held in common by members of a social group at a particular point in time. These things support the behaviour of individuals within the group. To a large extent, it is accepted that culture exemplifies the manner in which people coexist with and behave toward one another, as well as how they bring about change in their environments and react to those changes.

The lives of women are restricted by male-dominated societies because these societies construct belief systems that are rooted in culture and tradition. A woman is led to assume, by society's construct of the family, that this is the means by which she will be safeguarded. Society and the organisation of families are the foundations upon which culture is built. When it comes to dealing with life's challenges, a woman's primary responsibility is to her family. An important component of an individual's experience in a social setting is the feeling of belonging, and it is this sense of belonging that confers identity. Culture and the activities that are considered part of a culture are equally important to a society's sense of identity. There is no question that a person's nationality, religion, ethnicity, and generation all play a role in their cultural identity. Cultural identity is also an element of an individual's self-conception and self-perception. As a result of the increasing level of globalisation that is taking place all over the world, the current situation strongly encourages the modification and revision of cultures.

A feminist book for India is not a novel that a woman writes; rather, it is a novel written by a woman simply because that woman is a woman and is able to write. It is written by someone who has comprehended a woman both as a woman and as a person who is under pressure from many different kinds of visible and invisible, external and internal pressures. This person is not someone who is carried by feminism. In Jaishree Misra's opinion, writing enables one to cross over from the private to the public sphere more easily than other methods. Misra makes an effort, through the medium of her writing, to subvert conventional notions of gender and disability in contemporary Kerala.

When Jaishree Misra first started writing, her intention was to compose her life experiences in the form of a memoir. When the thought occurred to her that she should publish her memoir, she made the decision to turn it into a work of fiction while preserving the core of the story. Because of this, her first novel, titled *Ancient Promises*, was finally released to the public. Misra violates the traditional norms of silencing and subjugating women in this work that has autobiographical elements, and she has done so intentionally. The novel is based on

her own life. The autobiographical autobiography written by Misra is recognised as her successful vocal battle against patriarchy. Misra defiantly declares her opposition to the patriarchal hegemony of the society to which she has been subjected all of her life. She claims that the process of writing itself may be a lonely and private activity, but that the resulting text is a public record, despite the fact that writing may be a private and solitary activity.

## CONCLUSION

Although she feels that books do not necessarily need to contain agendas and social messages, Jaishree Misra has addressed gender issues in her novels. Jaishree Misra is an author. Jaishree Misra was of the opinion that the most powerful tool for the advancement of women would be literature, provided that women were shown accurate depictions of powerful women in it. In the work by Misra, the main character is a contemporary woman who lives in these modern times and develops a pattern of her own thinking process. She does not defer to or play second fiddle to members of the male-dominated society. Misra encourages a sense of feminist awakening among women, and the most important aspect of feminism to her is that women should be able to express their unique selves.

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