

**TRANSCENDENCE TO PERSONHOOD THROUGH WOMAN BONDING IN
JAISHRE MISRA'S *SECRETS AND LIES***

Molly M.A.

Assistant professor, Department of English, Pavanatma College, Murickassery.

Abstract

Woman bonding is regarded by feminists as a refuge from and a challenge to the oppressive facts of society. It is strongly advocated alternatives to patriarchal oppression and dominant social norms. Jaihree Misra, an Indian author deals with such women who counter the male oppression with the help of sympathetic women. Women conceive of their mutual friendship as a political weapon against a heavily subjugating andocentric value system. The study gives an insight in to *Secrets and Lies* Misra which portrays the tenderest and deepest relationships among women for repudiating the male oppression.

The figure of a female friend or encounters with other women plays a symbolically important role in women's writing. When the woman is able to find a reflection of herself as a woman in the other person, she is able to relate and bond with the other woman. Woman bonding is regarded by feminists as a refuge from and a challenge to the oppressive facts of society. It is strongly advocated alternatives to patriarchal oppression and dominant social norms. In Mary Daly's words: "The 'bonding' phenomenon among women, expressed by the word 'sisterhood', is essential to the battle against false consciousness. Only women hearing each other can create a counter world to the prevailing sense of reality" (189). Jaihree Misra also deals with such women who counter the male oppression with the help of sympathetic women. Women conceive of their mutual friendship as a political weapon against a heavily subjugating andocentric value system. Their sisterhood perceives woman's bonding as one of the inevitable solutions to their innate urge for human dignity

In *Secrets and Lies* Misra portrays the tenderest and deepest relationships among women for repudiating the male oppression. She is conscious about the crucial importance of woman bonding in defining the contours of individual and collective identity. The bonding forged among her female characters forbids the fracturing of identity and enacts a womanist subjectivity in which each woman is the agent and arbiter of her individual female destiny within the framework of her community. In *Secrets and Lies* when the four friends Anita, Zeba, Bubble and Sam reach mid-thirties, their friendship blooms into intimate bonds. Gradually their love develops into a deeper love and a stronger bond, which derives its impetus from mutual understanding.

In this novel, Misra delineates pictures of bored and lonely house wives Bubble and Sam - for them married life signifies trivialities, lack of communication, loneliness, hollowness, futility and incompatibility. Their yearning is for normal married life which, when unfulfilled, generates loneliness and purposelessness. Bubble is a richman's wife but behind the glittering jewels, there is the ugly painful truth of denials. Her husband Binkie has gay relationship with James, his old schoolmate from Eton, whom he had employed as his personal assistant. He responds profusely with warmth and romantic feelings to his male friends and parents but appears withdrawn in Bubble's company. She knows that her husband does not allow her to find an opening in his

business. Communication is completely missing between them and she is also intimidated by her in-laws. Thus she faces matrimonial boredom and monotony of life's dailiness. Like Bubble, Sam's family life is at stake, as her husband Akbar falls in love with Sarah who works under him. She realizes that love has slipped away in the tiniest and seemingly insignificant ways and "she had long ceased to be important in his scheme of things" (270). She painfully admits that she has just shrunk into the fringes of Akbar's life and "finally becoming someone who turned on the lights of evening and arranged the flowers and drew the curtains" (266).

The seething and disenchanting wives Bubble and Sam, able to confront loneliness and burden of memories and they discover their own speculated way out of it. Even though they are neglected wives, they sublimate their sorrow through their involvement with their close friends. The bonding endows them the ability to resist the temptation to wallow in self-pity and to examine personal suffering objectively. They provide each other emotional anchor with their undemanding, unconditional love when their life becomes turbulent. They understand each other and care for each other and this empathy enables them to resolve their disappointments and frustrations. For instance, after fifteen years, Bubble is the pampered wife of a billionaire, but unable to find happiness, she becomes discontented. In fact, Bubble embarks on a journey to liberate herself from the suffocating ambience. She finds that though her husband Binkie and his family do not need her, her friends will be with her forever and she realizes that friendship is more profound than blood relationship. The intimacy that she enjoys within the circle of friends cannot be found anywhere else. She has also taken the decision to live a life of her own as a reminiscent of the past memories. In Bubble one can see the woman who actualises her potential and challenges the system within. Similarly, the emotional support of Anita, Bubble and Zeba empowers Sam to face the harrowing experiences in her family life and to keep the embers of spirit alive. She develops an intense love for her daughter Heer and she comes back to emotional stability and sense of security by making her feel that she has someone and something to live for. Thus, a novel sense of personhood dawns on her. Sam proves that love can make a mother strong enough to question marginality.

The novel *Secrets and Lies* demonstrates effectively how close to the ideas of woman bonding and sharing of woman's experiences and how strategically such bondings are used in the narratives of self-discovery. The feminine bond clarifying, consoling, empowering the struggling self, receives its most intense depiction in it. The woman bonding performs various therapeutic and motivating functions and it provides the necessary moral boost to extricate Bubble and Sam from their familial impose, encourages them to reconstruct their life to seek self-reliance and grow a will to survive. In *Secrets and Lies* Misra thus establishes the primacy of amicable, empowering relationships over lonely singularity.

References:

1. Misra, Jaishree. *Secrets and Lies*. London: Harper Collines Publishers, 2009.
2. Daly, Mary. *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1985.