



# PATRIARCHY AND RESISTANCE IN THE NOVEL AFTERWARDS BY JAISHREE MISRA

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**Abstract**-Jaishree Misra's novel *Afterwards* throws light on the women in the Indian society and how they are treated badly under the eyes of patriarchy. It is also given that how the women resist this mindset. The main character, Maya has to face violence in her husband's house. She leads the life of a slave there. She finally decides to raise the voice against the old ideas and finally separates from her husband. It is the voice of new women that they are not ready to be like a dumb cow and bear the violence of men being mute and deaf. They have been learning to fight against patriarchy for their rights.

**Key words**-Empowerment, Patriarchy, Obstacles, sacrificed, dominating, protagonist, exaggeration, discrimination, captivate, cramped, Interference.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the age of women empowerment, the patriarchy is one of the obstacles in the way of development for our world. The patriarchal ideas do not let the women freedom to go out of the houses to get education and make their own identity in the societies. We can see the people, in little pockets with this idea even in the developed societies. It is why the women do not get all the rights like the men in different parts of the country. Patriarchy is such an idea that put women into cages where she is kept inside the houses under the control of father, brother, husband and son. Here, her desires and dreams are crushed. The idea has been controlling over the fate of women since the ages.

In the context of India, Most women are trapped into the houses and they do not get the equality in rights to education, expression etc. They are educationless, voiceless, powerless and jobless here. In some departments, they are not seen in the high posts.

One of the reasons here is the patriarchal ideas of the people. Whenever the women try to raise voices for their rights and a suitable place in the societies, the people of this idea mow them down with the strong legs of oppression. The men, here sometimes become violent towards them. The male group has been dominating with a traditional idea that the women are weak and inferior. The group has a belief that the males are born to dominate and control the women. Since the starting of the women's life/ they have to face these ideas so their struggle starts at an early age. They try to prove that they are not made only for houses and can go out to do what the others have been doing.

In the time of medieval India, We have seen some women rulers who have proved that the women are not the birds of the houses but they can do more if they go out. The rulers like Razia Sultana, Rani Lakshmi Bai, Begum Hazrat Mahal etc have objected the patriarchal ideas and became the rulers of their states. In the freedom movements against the British, these women took part in different states of our country. They fought and sacrificed like the male freedom fighters during the time. In the Independent India, the women have been struggling with their courage against the patriarchal mindset to establish themselves in educational institutions, working places, political houses and so on. Now, we see them in large numbers to work in almost every field. In many fields, they have been surpassing the men to deny the old mindset of the people. They are making a new world where the women would be as important as the men.

In the novels of Jaishree Misra, Women's resistance against the patriarchy is given. The third novel is *Afterwards*. Here the protagonist, Maya objects the old mindset of her husband and his family. She decides to be separated from him. After this, she takes a job and becomes a bread earner and her role of a trapped wife in a traditional family is ended. Maya is married to a traditional family in Kerala. Her husband is Govind. In the house of her husband, she is controlled by him. She is not free to go out of the house, meet the neighbours or even to her parents. He becomes angry if he sees her talking to any neighbour or a stranger. The patriarchal ideas in Govind become a reason for his suspicion. It is why he always stops her from doing what she likes to do. Rahul, a young boy comes to live in her neighbourhood says about her condition that she is like a caged bird. He says,

“I had found her restless and caged, iridescently beautiful, terrified suddenly at her own freedom. But alive—and as happy as she could be under the circumstances.”

(Misra, Jaishree, *Afterwards*, p-4)

The husband of Maya is suspicious towards her. He has always been keeping a sharp eye on her that to whom she meets and where she goes. When Rahul meets Maya and their friendship starts, she fears that if her husband knows, it would be harmful for her. She is always in fear whenever she meets Rahul. She does not want that anyone would know about it. The society will see her as a woman of bad character. The societies in the modern India have a patriarchal mindset and a woman is not allowed to do freely whatever she likes. Rahul understands this condition of Maya that why she hides the relationship as she will have to face the violence by her husband, Govind. He says about it,

“The whole damn thing was dangerous. Dangerous, I was sure it was not an exaggeration to describe it as that. If ... when her husband did discover our new found friendship there was surely going to be a heavy price to pay. I was not know, of course, exactly how heavy that would be.” (p 47 )

Maya does not want to tolerate the patriarchal mindset and she decides to be separated from her husband. She has not any other option in such a condition and decides to take the help from Rahul. She tells him everything that how she has been treated in the family and desires to leave her husband. The condition is common with many women in our country. Most of the women in our country does not take decisions like her and lead such life till the last breath in the patriarchal family. Maya is another type of women who can show her anger and decides something for her own and does not hesitate to separate.

She says to Rahul angrily,

“well, he cannot control me forever,

He has to learn that.” (p 48)

She decides to run away from the patriarchal boundaries. When she finds a suitable time, she tells Rahul that she has a desire to run away with her daughter, Anjali. She says to Rahul,

“Just run away, I suppose, she said bleakly, with Anjali,  
somewhere, anywhere, far away.” (p 54)

She is fed up with her husband as he has a suspicious nature and he always puts a restriction on her actions. She says,

“He is just... just suspicious... she whispered the  
word as though the very mention of it could conjure  
up the misery accompanying that ghastly burden.” (p- 54)

Govind suspects her when she wants to go to meet friends or even to her parents.

She says that her husband does not allow for studies too. She lives a restricted life under his suspicious eyes. She says,

“or the shops, or to make friends, anywhere...  
except to see my parents. And even then  
he prefers that they come here,” (p 55)

Maya is in the golden cage. She tells the house of Govind a cage where you can find all the facilities but not freedom for a woman. It is why she compares the house with a cage. In that house, there is no one who can understand her condition and problems. We can see such a condition with many women in societies. When she meets Rahul, she tells him to arrange a job in Delhi or in any other place where she can earn money and bring up her daughter and also go far from this patriarchal family. She says,

“you must admit it a nice cage, though. Three bedrooms, three attached  
bathrooms, stainless steel sink in a fully tiled kitchen... her sing song  
tone was half mocking and half sorrowful again.” (p. 56-57)

She also says,

“Please help me to get a job in Delhi or somewhere. Any job please!” (p 57)

Maya finally leaves her husband and goes to England with Rahul and Anjali. She does not think about the criticism of the world that what the people will say about her decision. The people will say about her that she is a woman of bad character because she decides to leave her husband and goes with another man. People think that the women are the slave of patriarchal ideas. It is also a fact that there are a few women who dare to do so and think to lead a life to leave their husbands. They have not courage to go against this patriarchal society.

They also know that they will not get a new partner in life easily because most of the men would think evil for them. A divorcee or an alone woman has to live a hard life in the societies. Maya is lucky that she gets a partner like Rahul who is ready to stand with her in each and every condition and supports her in the decisions. It is another thing that her parents do not support her. It is an irony in the story. They stop talking with her when they know about her decision and her friend Rahul. The parents are of patriarchal mindset like her husband and breaks all the relation with her. They are not ready to talk to her.

Here, we see another irony that her parents organise death rites for her when she is alive. We can understand the hate of her parents that they do such rites when the daughter is not a dead person and only because she goes against them. This is the height of hatred for Maya. Rahul says about it,

“Maya’s parents conducted her death rites.As is sometimes done when a person has brought great shame and dishonour on the name of old and noble family.Red rice and gingili seeds are placed on banana leaves as incarnation for death are chanted. When it is done for the dead,it is meant to bring peace to the soul.But when it is done for the living,it is to do

the very opposite,I believe.” (p-70)

When Rahul takes Mays to his family and tells all the story to the parents,the mother thinks that Maya is not a woman of good character.She thinks that Maya is witch who cast spells and captures the men.Now she has captured her son and he will do according to her will.In our country ,we have seen that many women are alleged to be a witch and the people misbehave with them.In many times,the people throw stones on them and kill the women.Here ,the mother of Rahul sees Maya with a hateful and suspicious eyes.Rahul says about her mother,

“When she first found out that Maya had run away from her husband and parents,she was genuinely horrified, asking me how much I knew about her, suspicious whether she had cast some sort of spell on me. (p-114 )

These patriarchal ideas of the parents of Maya and Rahul tell us about the condition of women in society.We know that the parents of Maya decide to break the relationship with her.They tell her that she can do whatever she likes to do in her life and they donot care about it.They will not talk to her from now on.Maya is dead for them.When Maya decides to leave her husband,she needs her parents very much and they consider her dead.Maya also has to become far from her parents in this state.In a letter,her parents says,

“Go and live your life in the way you have to,You do not exist for us any more,we will forget you ever existed just as you will have to forget about us (p 242)

Maya does not care such things and finally decides to start a new life where she tries to forget everything.She begins to work for an NGO there.She will earn money and give a good future to her daughter.She can lead a free and happy life in a new place where noone would be able to put her in the boundaries of patriarchy.

Here ,the novelist compares the mindset of people in two places.When Maya is in India and when she begins to live in a foreign country. There she does not find such type of people who blame her for leaving her husband. They are not patriarchal and they are ready to accept the new member of the country.It is why she decidesto go there as she knows that she will not get a place to breath freely in her own country.The patriarchal mindset has controlled our ideas that we only think about tradition of a family in the society and we are not ready to listen the sorrowful voice of a cramped woman in the prison of patriarchy.Maya decides to take breath in the air of freedom and goes to an unknown country to leave her native land.

In the last,Maya’s mother feels the mind of her daughter that why she decides to be separated from the husband,how she is oppressed in Govind’s house.Her mother says that the decision of their marriage was not right.This was not a place of happiness and freedom for her daughter.The mother says to Rahul,

“We made so many mistakes...her marriage....Her voice faltered before she took a breath and started speaking again.Govind was not the perfect

man for her .”(p 260)

The novelist has shown the women as a servant in a patriarchal family. She does not get a free place to lead a happy life and finally decides to come out of the hell. It is the condition of many women in our country but the irony here is that most of the women cannot take a decision about the life because the condition is unfavourable for them. We see the change but the process of changing is very slow.

The people who raise voices against the patriarchy, should try to make a favourable place for women. The women should be free to take decisions for their education and marriages. They should not be treated as the slaves and should be free from any patriarchal boundaries where they can get equality,

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