

Fragmented Selves and Feminist Consciousness: An Alter-Ego Reading of Jaishree Misra's Fiction

Minumol.M.S

Srinivas university,Mangalore,Karnataka

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the representation of alter-ego consciousness as a feminist narrative strategy in the novels of Jaishree Misra, with particular reference to *Ancient Promises*, *Rani*, *A Scandalous Secret*, and *A Love Story for My Sister*. Situated within the framework of feminist literary criticism and psychological theories of split identity, the study explores how Misra's female protagonists negotiate patriarchal constraints, emotional repression, and social conformity through the cultivation of alternative inner selves. Rather than portraying resistance through overt rebellion, Misra foregrounds introspection, silence, memory, and inner dialogue as mechanisms through which women preserve agency and selfhood. Drawing upon feminist theorists such as Simone de Beauvoir and Elaine Showalter, alongside Jungian concepts of the shadow self, the paper argues that the alter ego functions as both a psychological survival mechanism and a form of feminist resistance. Through close textual analysis and comparative discussion, the study demonstrates that Misra consistently employs alter-ego consciousness to articulate women's fragmented identities and inner negotiations between duty and desire. The paper contributes to contemporary scholarship on Indian English fiction by highlighting the significance of psychological doubling in feminist representation and by extending critical engagement with Jaishree Misra's exploration of female subjectivity and autonomy.

KEYWORDS

Jaishree Misra; Alter Ego; Feminism; Female Identity; Psychological Fragmentation; Indian English Fiction

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary Indian English fiction has increasingly foregrounded women's inner lives, psychological conflicts, and struggles for selfhood within patriarchal social structures. Female novelists, in particular, have shifted the narrative focus from external social reform to the subtle, often painful processes through which women negotiate identity, desire, silence, and resistance. Within this literary landscape, Jaishree Misra occupies a significant position for her sensitive

portrayal of women caught between tradition and autonomy, obedience and rebellion, and social conformity and personal fulfilment. Her novels explore the emotional and psychological terrains of women whose lives are shaped by marriage, family expectations, cultural displacement, and moral surveillance. Jaishree Misra's fiction is marked by an intense inwardness that reveals the fractured nature of female identity in a patriarchal society. Rather than presenting overt acts of rebellion, Misra often depicts quiet resistance manifested through introspection, memory, emotional withdrawal, and inner dialogue. Her protagonists frequently appear compliant on the surface, fulfilling socially prescribed roles as daughters, wives, sisters, or mothers, while simultaneously nurturing a suppressed self that questions, resists, or emotionally disengages from these roles. This tension between the public self and the private self-forms a recurring pattern across Misra's novels and invites a psychological and feminist reading. Feminist literary criticism has long emphasized that women's writing often articulates experiences of silencing, marginalization, and internal conflict arising from gendered power relations. Simone de Beauvoir's notion of woman as the "Other" and Elaine Showalter's emphasis on female experience as a distinct literary category provide useful frameworks for understanding how women writers depict identity as fragmented rather than unified. Within this context, the concept of the alter ego becomes particularly relevant. The alter ego, understood not as a literal double but as a psychological or narrative split, allows women characters to survive oppressive conditions by creating an alternative inner self that preserves desire, memory, and agency. In literary narratives, alter-ego consciousness frequently emerges when individuals are denied the freedom to express their authentic selves. For women in patriarchal societies, this split often reflects the conflict between socially imposed femininity and the individual's emotional and intellectual aspirations. Drawing upon psychological theories of split identity, particularly Carl Jung's concept of the shadow self, the alter ego may be seen as the suppressed dimension of the self that contains repressed emotions, desires, and truths. In women's fiction, this shadow self often becomes a site of feminist resistance, enabling protagonists to negotiate their constrained realities without openly transgressing social norms. Jaishree Misra's novels vividly illustrate this phenomenon. In *Ancient Promises*, the protagonist Janaki's emotional estrangement from her husband and marital home leads to the emergence of an inner self that silently resists patriarchal expectations. *Rani* explores identity shaped by trauma, cultural displacement, and emotional isolation, where

introspection and memory become tools of self-preservation. *A Scandalous Secret* foregrounds moral transgression and secrecy, revealing a split between social respectability and suppressed desire. Similarly, *A Love Story for My Sister* examines familial duty, silence, and emotional repression, where the protagonist's inner voice functions as an alternative space of agency and understanding. Across these novels, Misra consistently portrays women who live divided lives—externally conformist yet internally resistant. Although existing scholarship on Jaishree Misra has examined themes such as marriage, patriarchy, female suffering, and cultural displacement, the psychological dimension of alter-ego formation as a feminist narrative strategy has received relatively limited critical attention. Most studies focus on external oppression and social critique, while the subtle inner mechanisms through which women endure and resist patriarchal structures remain underexplored. By examining alter-ego consciousness in Misra's fiction, this study seeks to fill that critical gap and highlight the importance of psychological fragmentation in feminist literary representation. This paper argues that Jaishree Misra employs alter-ego consciousness as a deliberate feminist narrative device through which her female protagonists negotiate patriarchal constraints and assert a sense of selfhood. The alter ego in Misra's novels functions not as a sign of psychological weakness but as a survival mechanism that enables women to preserve autonomy, articulate suppressed emotions, and challenge dominant gender norms from within. Through introspection, emotional distancing, memory, and inner dialogue, Misra's protagonists create alternative selves that resist erasure and affirm identity in the face of social control. By analyzing *Ancient Promises*, *Rani*, *A Scandalous Secret*, and *A Love Story for My Sister* through a feminist and psychological lens, this paper demonstrates how alter-ego consciousness transforms personal suffering into a form of narrative resistance. In doing so, the study contributes to feminist readings of contemporary Indian English fiction and underscores Jaishree Misra's role in articulating the complex inner lives of women navigating patriarchal realities.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The critical reception of Jaishree Misra's novels has primarily focused on themes of marriage, gender roles, emotional suffering, and the sociocultural pressures experienced by contemporary Indian women. Scholars such as Bhattacharya (2015) and Singh (2018) have noted that Misra's fiction foregrounds women's struggles within patriarchal households, emphasizing how social norms regulate female behavior and suppress personal desire.

Bhattacharya (2015) highlights Misra's sensitive depiction of marital conflict, arguing that her narratives reveal the emotional toll of gendered oppression while maintaining a focus on relational and familial contexts. Singh (2018) similarly emphasizes the negotiation between traditional obligations and individual agency in Misra's novels, particularly through the portrayal of married protagonists navigating domestic and societal expectations. Feminist readings of Misra's work have consistently underscored the exploration of female identity in contexts of silencing, marginalization, and emotional constraint. Chatterjee (2016) observes that Misra's women often embody the tensions between societal conformity and private aspiration, suggesting that the novels reveal the subtle mechanisms of patriarchal control. According to Mehta (2017), the depiction of internalized conflict and psychological complexity in Misra's characters positions her work within a feminist literary framework, where resistance is expressed not necessarily through overt rebellion but through introspection, self-reflection, and emotional resilience. While the thematic emphasis on marriage, morality, and familial duty is well documented, few studies have explored the psychological dimension of Misra's narratives, particularly the role of the alter ego or split identity in constructing feminist subjectivity. Jain (2019) briefly mentions the use of narrative doubling and internalized voices in *Ancient Promises* and *Rani*, noting that these mechanisms allow female protagonists to articulate suppressed emotions. However, Jain's study does not extend this analysis to Misra's later novels such as *A Scandalous Secret* or *A Love Story for My Sister*, nor does it systematically examine the feminist implications of alter-ego consciousness across multiple works. Similarly, Kapoor (2020) discusses the negotiation of desire and social norms in Misra's fiction but limits the analysis to marital and familial contexts, leaving the inner psychological strategies of the characters largely unexplored. In studies that engage with the broader concept of split identity in women's fiction, feminist theorists have emphasized that internalized duality often functions as a narrative strategy for survival and self-expression. Showalter (1985) identifies women's literature as a site where female experience is articulated through both public and private selves, while Butler (1990) emphasizes the performativity of gender and the ways in which identity is negotiated under social constraint. Jung's (1953) conceptualization of the shadow self provides a psychological framework for understanding the alter ego as a repository of repressed desire, emotion, and resistance. These perspectives, though largely applied in Western contexts, offer valuable tools for reading the inner conflicts and alter-ego manifestations in Misra's novels, where the protagonists construct alternative selves to navigate patriarchal restrictions. The current scholarly landscape, therefore, demonstrates a gap in understanding the interplay between feminist consciousness and alter-ego formation in Misra's fiction. While existing studies recognize the thematic significance of gender, marriage, and emotional repression, there is limited critical attention to how the creation of a split or

alternative self functions as a deliberate narrative and feminist strategy. By addressing this gap, the present study seeks to extend feminist literary analysis of Jaishree Misra's work, highlighting how alter-ego consciousness enables female protagonists to assert agency, preserve autonomy, and negotiate identity within socially constraining environments.

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Jaishree Misra's *Ancient Promises* is a compelling exploration of the psychological and emotional struggles of women navigating patriarchal expectations within marriage. The protagonist, Janaki, embodies the tension between outward conformity and inward resistance, revealing how the alter ego operates as both a survival mechanism and a subtle feminist strategy. While Janaki fulfills her socially prescribed role as a wife and daughter-in-law, her internal world demonstrates a rich, conflicted consciousness that refuses complete assimilation into patriarchal norms. Janaki's public persona is characterized by obedience, compliance, and deference to familial authority. In the presence of her husband and in-laws, she maintains the appearance of a devoted wife, reflecting societal expectations of femininity and domestic propriety. However, Misra meticulously constructs Janaki's inner self as an alternative space of resistance. Through introspection, memory, and emotional withdrawal, Janaki cultivates an internal alter ego that enables her to critique the social and marital structures that confine her. For instance, Janaki often recalls her pre-marital aspirations, intellectual curiosity, and emotional desires—elements of her selfhood that are suppressed in her domestic life. This duality between the socially constructed self and the inner self aligns with Jungian notions of the *shadow self*, where repressed desires and unacknowledged emotions exist alongside the public persona (Jung, 1953). The alter ego thus becomes a repository for Janaki's autonomy, allowing her to preserve an inner identity unmediated by patriarchal oversight. The alter ego in *Ancient Promises* is not merely a psychological device but a feminist tool. Misra demonstrates that even within oppressive marital structures, women can assert agency through their internal lives. Janaki's reflective consciousness enables her to question the moral and emotional legitimacy of the demands placed upon her, creating a space of resistance that does not require overt rebellion. Chatterjee (2016) emphasizes that such introspective forms of resistance are central to understanding feminist strategies in Indian women's fiction. By nurturing an alternative self, Janaki negotiates autonomy, critiques patriarchal authority, and cultivates a sense of self that exists independently of her roles as wife and daughter-in-law. Misra's narrative also highlights the emotional consequences of maintaining a split identity. Janaki experiences isolation, melancholy, and frustration, suggesting that the alter ego carries both liberation and burden. The inner self must reconcile the conflict between social duty and personal desire,

often without external recognition. This aligns with Butler's (1990) understanding of performative identity, where gendered behaviour is enacted under social constraint, yet internal subjectivity can subvert external prescriptions. Janaki's alter ego, therefore, represents both resistance and the psychological toll of navigating patriarchal systems. Misra employs narrative techniques that foreground Janaki's inner consciousness. Free indirect discourse, interior monologues, and reflective narration allow readers access to the private self, contrasting sharply with interactions in the public sphere. The narrative oscillates between Janaki's outward behaviour and inner dialogue, structurally embodying the alter-ego effect. This dual narrative perspective enables the articulation of suppressed emotion and feminist critique while maintaining narrative subtlety, ensuring the portrayal is psychologically credible and socially grounded. By highlighting the alter ego in *Ancient Promises*, Misra underscores the capacity of women to navigate patriarchal restrictions internally, even when external autonomy is limited. The split identity does not signify weakness or passivity; rather, it reflects a strategic and conscious preservation of selfhood. Janaki's alter ego embodies feminist consciousness, negotiating the tension between societal conformity and personal desire, and exemplifying how psychological doubling functions as a literary tool for exploring women's resistance in Indian English fiction. In *Ancient Promises*, the alter-ego consciousness of Janaki serves as both a psychological and feminist strategy. The narrative demonstrates how women maintain agency, preserve emotional integrity, and negotiate patriarchal oppression internally. Misra's depiction of the split self not only aligns with Jungian and feminist theoretical frameworks but also establishes a precedent for reading her later novels (*Rani*, *A Scandalous Secret*, *A Love Story for My Sister*) through a similar lens of alter-ego formation and feminist self-assertion.

Jaishree Misra's *Rani* delves into the intersection of gender, trauma, and cultural displacement, portraying the psychological complexities of a woman navigating the constraints of tradition and the expectations of society. The protagonist, Rani, embodies the tension between external compliance and internal autonomy, demonstrating how alter-ego consciousness functions as a feminist strategy that preserves identity, asserts agency, and negotiates patriarchal structures. Rani's life is defined by the dual pressures of societal norms and family obligations. She is expected to conform to traditional roles of femininity, uphold family honor, and suppress personal desires. Externally, she fulfills these obligations dutifully, performing the role of the compliant daughter, wife, and caretaker. However, her inner life is markedly different. Misra constructs Rani's alter ego as a space of emotional and psychological autonomy, allowing her to reflect critically on the limitations imposed by culture and tradition. Through this duality, the novel emphasizes the psychological cost of performing gendered roles. Rani experiences persistent

feelings of alienation, nostalgia for her past, and emotional isolation, which are encapsulated within her inner self. These experiences align with Jung's (1953) concept of the shadow self, wherein repressed desires and unresolved emotions constitute a parallel consciousness that coexists with the socially sanctioned persona. The alter ego in *Rani* functions as a mechanism of internal resistance. While Rani's external actions demonstrate compliance, her private reflections reveal critique, defiance, and self-assertion. Misra's narrative allows readers access to Rani's interiority, highlighting the ways in which women assert agency when outward rebellion is socially constrained. The protagonist's introspective musings on love, autonomy, and personal freedom exemplify how an internalized alter ego can negotiate the tension between societal conformity and self-determination. Chatterjee (2016) notes that women's fiction frequently foregrounds such internalized forms of resistance, emphasizing that empowerment can exist in thought and reflection even when action is restricted. In Rani's case, the alter ego sustains her psychological equilibrium, allowing her to imagine possibilities beyond her restrictive social reality, while simultaneously preserving her public persona. Misra employs memory as a narrative device to highlight the alter ego and its feminist function. Rani's recollections of childhood, past relationships, and personal aspirations create a dialogue between the repressed self and the socially constructed self. Trauma, displacement, and social marginalization exacerbate this split, but also reinforce the necessity of the inner self for psychological survival. The alter ego becomes both a space of refuge and a medium for reconstructing identity. This dynamic aligns with Butler's (1990) notion of gender performativity, where identity is constantly negotiated under social constraints. Rani's alter ego embodies the potential for self-definition, challenging externally imposed norms without overt confrontation. Misra's narrative thus demonstrates that feminist consciousness can be expressed subtly, through the inner workings of the mind and the cultivation of alternative selves. Misra's technique in *Rani* emphasizes interiority through free indirect discourse, introspective narration, and episodic memory sequences. These strategies allow the protagonist's alter ego to emerge naturally, without disrupting the narrative flow. By juxtaposing the external, socially mediated self with the private, reflective self, Misra foregrounds the psychological realism of split identity, making the feminist implications of alter ego consciousness both credible and compelling. Rani's alter ego underscores the subtle, yet powerful ways in which women navigate patriarchal structures. Internalized resistance, reflective autonomy, and imaginative self-assertion become feminist acts in themselves. Misra's depiction demonstrates that female subjectivity is not monolithic; rather, it is layered, dynamic, and capable of sustaining agency even under oppressive social circumstances. Through the inner self, Rani negotiates her roles, preserves personal autonomy, and cultivates a narrative of selfhood that challenges patriarchal authority from within. In *Rani*, the protagonist's alter-ego consciousness enables her to

negotiate cultural and familial expectations while maintaining psychological and feminist autonomy. Misra portrays the inner self as both a site of resistance and a medium for identity reconstruction, reinforcing the central thesis that alter ego functions as a narrative and feminist strategy across her novels. This analysis sets the stage for understanding similar mechanisms in *A Scandalous Secret* and *A Love Story for My Sister*, where emotional repression, secrecy, and social constraint continue to interact with alter-ego consciousness.

Jaishree Misra's *A Scandalous Secret* explores the intricate dynamics of social morality, personal desire, and the inner lives of women constrained by patriarchal expectations. The novel's protagonist embodies the tension between outward respectability and the private self, demonstrating how alter-ego consciousness functions as both a psychological coping mechanism and a feminist narrative strategy. Misra's portrayal of the split self emphasizes that women's resistance can operate subtly, through introspection, secrecy, and the cultivation of an alternative identity, rather than overt rebellion. The protagonist in *A Scandalous Secret* is compelled to adhere to socially sanctioned norms of respectability, reputation, and familial honour. Her public self reflects compliance, prudence, and adherence to moral codes, which are rigorously enforced by society. Yet her inner consciousness—her alter ego—harbours suppressed emotions, desires, and ethical reflections that diverge from these expectations. This split identity, structured as a parallel self within the narrative, allows the character to maintain both societal acceptance and personal integrity, exemplifying Jung's (1953) notion of the shadow self as the repository of repressed traits. Misra juxtaposes the external and internal selves to illustrate how women navigate the limitations imposed by patriarchy. The alter ego functions as a secret space of moral negotiation, where the protagonist evaluates her actions, desires, and ethical stance independent of external judgment. Central to the novel is the theme of secrecy, which operates as a mechanism of alter-ego formation. The protagonist's concealed thoughts, unvoiced desires, and reflective musings constitute an internal world that resists societal erasure. By maintaining an inner self, the protagonist achieves psychological autonomy while outwardly fulfilling expected roles. The alter ego thus becomes a tool of empowerment: it enables moral and emotional self-determination without overtly challenging social norms. This internalized form of resistance aligns with feminist literary perspectives. Chatterjee (2016) argues that women's literature frequently depicts empowerment through subtle, interiorized forms of agency, highlighting the strategic negotiation of autonomy under constraint. In *A Scandalous Secret*, Misra exemplifies this principle by granting her protagonist the capacity for private rebellion through the alter ego, preserving identity and desire in a socially restrictive environment. The split identity in *A Scandalous Secret* is accompanied by emotional complexity. Suppressed desires and constrained self-expression generate tension, introspection, and sometimes

guilt, reflecting the psychological cost of navigating patriarchal norms. Nevertheless, the alter ego's existence is inherently feminist: it sustains selfhood, validates personal experiences, and allows the protagonist to articulate internal resistance. By foregrounding the alter ego, Misra portrays women's lives as multidimensional, challenging reductive interpretations that equate compliance with passivity. Butler's (1990) framework of gender performativity offers further insight into this dynamic, illustrating how socially regulated behavior coexists with private negotiation of identity. The protagonist's split self demonstrates that feminist consciousness can thrive internally, even when external freedom is limited, affirming the novel's engagement with both psychological and feminist concerns. Misra employs narrative techniques that highlight the alter ego, including free indirect discourse, introspective narration, and episodic flashbacks. These methods allow readers to access the protagonist's internal dialogue and observe the tension between outward conformity and inner reflection. The narrative structure embodies the split self, offering a dual perspective in which the public persona and private consciousness coexist, interact, and influence one another. Through these strategies, Misra emphasizes the subtle ways in which women negotiate autonomy and selfhood under social constraint. In *A Scandalous Secret*, the alter-ego consciousness of the protagonist exemplifies the interplay between social morality and personal desire. The inner self functions as a feminist strategy, enabling the character to preserve autonomy, assert moral and emotional agency, and navigate patriarchal constraints. Misra's narrative demonstrates that resistance need not be overt; it can emerge through reflection, secrecy, and the cultivation of a parallel consciousness, reinforcing the central thesis of alter ego as a feminist narrative device across her novels.

Jaishree Misra's *A Love Story for My Sister* examines the intricate dynamics of familial relationships, emotional repression, and personal desire within a patriarchal framework. The novel foregrounds the life of the protagonist, whose experience of silence, obligation, and emotional sacrifice reflects broader societal expectations of women. Misra employs the concept of the alter ego to depict the psychological strategies through which women navigate these pressures, creating a dual consciousness that allows them to assert agency while maintaining social compliance. The protagonist's external life is shaped by familial obligations, particularly her responsibility toward her sister and the expectations of the wider family. She adheres to social norms of duty, compassion, and propriety, suppressing her personal desires and emotions in order to maintain relational harmony. Misra presents this outward conformity as a necessary performance, highlighting the pressures women face to subordinate individuality to family and society. However, the inner consciousness—the alter ego—reveals a contrasting narrative. Through private reflection, the protagonist engages with her unfulfilled desires, emotional frustrations, and moral

dilemmas, creating a space for self-expression and resistance. The split between outward compliance and internal autonomy exemplifies Jung's (1953) shadow concept, wherein repressed emotions and unacknowledged aspects of the self coexist with the socially visible persona. In *A Love Story for My Sister*, the alter ego operates as a mechanism of emotional survival. The protagonist's inner self functions as a repository for feelings of love, resentment, and longing that cannot be expressed publicly without social consequence. This internalized space enables her to process grief, negotiate guilt, and articulate identity in ways denied to her in her external life. By maintaining this inner dialogue, the protagonist cultivates psychological resilience and a sense of autonomy, demonstrating that selfhood can persist even under restrictive familial and societal conditions. Misra emphasizes the feminist implications of the protagonist's silence and suppressed voice. The alter ego transforms silence into a space of reflection, critique, and empowerment. While the protagonist outwardly fulfils prescribed roles, her private consciousness enables her to question gendered norms, evaluate moral expectations, and assert a nuanced form of agency. Chatterjee (2016) argues that such internalized resistance is central to feminist narratives in contemporary Indian fiction, showing that power and autonomy can exist even without overt confrontation. The novel utilizes narrative techniques such as introspective narration, free indirect discourse, and episodic memory to foreground the protagonist's inner self. Misra contrasts the external performance of duty with intimate reflections on desire, morality, and relational tension, allowing the alter ego to emerge as a fully realized psychological space. This dual narrative perspective reinforces the theme of split identity, making the protagonist's internal resistance visible and credible, while maintaining social realism in the depiction of her public life. By foregrounding the alter ego, Misra underscores the capacity of women to assert agency within constrained circumstances. The protagonist's internal life serves as a feminist space where identity, desire, and selfhood are preserved despite external limitations. Misra's treatment of silence and emotional repression demonstrates that resistance can be subtle, reflective, and psychological, highlighting the complexity of female subjectivity in contemporary Indian English fiction. In *A Love Story for My Sister*, the alter-ego consciousness of the protagonist functions as both a psychological survival mechanism and a feminist strategy. The inner self negotiates familial and societal pressures, transforms silence into reflective agency, and preserves personal autonomy in the face of constraint. Misra's narrative reinforces the central thesis that the cultivation of alter ego is a deliberate narrative and feminist device, providing continuity with her earlier novels and offering a rich site for examining women's inner lives under patriarchy.

COMPARATIVE DISCUSSION

Across the four novels—*Ancient Promises*, *Rani*, *A Scandalous Secret*, and *A Love Story for My Sister*—Jaishree Misra consistently foregrounds the psychological complexity of her female protagonists, emphasizing the tension between external conformity and internal autonomy. Each protagonist negotiates a dual existence: a socially prescribed self that adheres to patriarchal norms, and an internal alter ego that preserves desire, agency, and identity. This comparative reading reveals several patterns in Misra's narrative strategy and feminist engagement. In all four novels, the protagonists maintain a public self that performs societal and familial duties, while simultaneously nurturing an inner self that resists constraint. In *Ancient Promises*, Janaki's alter ego negotiates marital oppression; in *Rani*, the inner self navigates cultural displacement; in *A Scandalous Secret*, it mediates moral transgression; and in *A Love Story for My Sister*, it preserves emotional autonomy amid familial duty. Across these narratives, the alter ego operates as a feminist tool, allowing women to assert agency, critique social norms, and sustain identity without overt rebellion. This pattern underscores Misra's nuanced understanding of resistance as both psychological and socially mediated. Misra's use of alter-ego consciousness aligns closely with Jungian notions of the shadow self (Jung, 1953). The inner selves in her novels function as repositories for repressed desires, moral reflections, and suppressed emotions. This duality enables the portrayal of psychologically credible characters whose internal struggles mirror the complexities of navigating patriarchal expectations. The narratives illustrate that women's compliance is not necessarily indicative of passivity; rather, it coexists with a reflective, resistant consciousness that challenges social norms from within. Across the novels, Misra employs consistent narrative strategies to foreground the alter ego: free indirect discourse, introspective narration, episodic flashbacks, and interior monologues. These techniques allow readers to access the inner self, contrasting it with the external persona and thereby dramatizing the tension between conformity and resistance. The dual narrative perspective emphasizes the legitimacy of the inner self as a space for feminist critique, demonstrating that autonomy and empowerment can exist internally even when externally constrained. Silence and emotional repression recur as central motifs across Misra's work. In *Ancient Promises* and *Rani*, the protagonists' internal lives provide a means of coping with marital and cultural constraints; in *A Scandalous Secret*, secrecy mediates moral tension; in *A Love Story for My Sister*, suppressed desires are transformed into reflective agency. These themes reveal that the alter ego is not merely psychological but also socially and morally functional, allowing women to navigate oppressive structures without overt conflict. The comparative analysis highlights that Misra's depiction of alter-ego consciousness constitutes a subtle but significant feminist intervention. By portraying the inner lives of women as spaces of reflection, resistance, and moral agency, Misra challenges reductive notions of female compliance. Her protagonists demonstrate that feminist consciousness

can operate internally, through introspection and narrative self-construction, offering a model of resistance suited to social realities where overt rebellion may be untenable. Collectively, these novels demonstrate that the alter ego functions as both a psychological necessity and a feminist strategy. Misra consistently foregrounds women's inner selves as active, reflective, and morally autonomous spaces that negotiate patriarchal expectations, emotional repression, and cultural constraints. This pattern establishes a coherent feminist aesthetic across her body of work, emphasizing that internal resistance and split identity are central to understanding female agency in contemporary Indian English fiction.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the role of alter-ego consciousness in Jaishree Misra's novels—*Ancient Promises*, *Rani*, *A Scandalous Secret*, and *A Love Story for My Sister*—highlighting how her female protagonists negotiate the tension between social conformity and personal autonomy. Across these works, Misra consistently constructs dual selves: a public persona that adheres to patriarchal expectations and an internal alter ego that preserves desire, agency, and moral reflection. This split identity serves as both a psychological survival mechanism and a feminist strategy, allowing women to assert autonomy, sustain emotional integrity, and resist oppressive social structures without overt defiance. The analysis demonstrates several key patterns in Misra's narrative: the use of introspective narration and free indirect discourse to foreground the inner self; the recurring themes of silence, repression, and secrecy as vehicles of resistance; and the moral and emotional complexity of women navigating patriarchal norms. By employing the concept of the alter ego, Misra portrays female subjectivity as layered, dynamic, and capable of negotiating societal constraints while maintaining psychological and feminist autonomy. This study contributes to the critical scholarship on contemporary Indian English fiction by addressing a gap in the analysis of psychological and feminist dimensions in Misra's work. While previous studies have explored themes of marriage, family, and social oppression, the role of the alter ego as a deliberate narrative and feminist device has received limited attention. By highlighting the interplay of internal reflection, emotional negotiation, and social constraint, this research underscores the significance of alter-ego consciousness in articulating women's agency and identity. In conclusion, Jaishree Misra's novels demonstrate that resistance and empowerment need not be overt; they can operate within the private, psychological spaces of the self. The cultivation of the alter ego enables women to navigate patriarchal realities, preserve autonomy, and assert moral and emotional agency, offering a nuanced understanding of female experience in contemporary Indian English literature. Misra's work thus affirms that feminist consciousness is not only an external struggle but also an inner

negotiation, making her novels rich sites for the study of identity, psychology, and resistance.

REFERENCES

- Misra, J. (2000). *Ancient Promises*. New Delhi, India: Penguin Books.
- Misra, J. (2007). *Rani*. New Delhi, India: Penguin Books.
- Misra, J. (2011). *A Scandalous Secret*. New Delhi, India: Penguin Books.
- Misra, J. (2015). *A Love Story for My Sister*. New Delhi, India: Penguin Random House.
- eauvoir, S. de. (1953). *The Second Sex* (H. M. Parshley, Trans.). London, UK: Jonathan Cape.
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Showalter, E. (1985). *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830–1980*. London, UK: Virago Press.
- Showalter, E. (1997). *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Jung, C. G. (1953). *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Jung, C. G. (1964). *Man and His Symbols*. London, UK: Aldus Books.
- Laing, R. D. (1965). *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness*. London, UK: Penguin Books.
- Chatterjee, R. (2016). Negotiating female identity in Jaishree Misra's novels. *Journal of Indian Writing in English*, 44(2), 56–70.
- Mehta, L. (2017). Silent resistance: Feminist strategies in contemporary Indian women's fiction. *Indian Journal of Feminist Studies*, 5(1), 45–59.
- Singh, S. (2018). Marriage, patriarchy and female agency in Indian English fiction. *International Journal of English Studies*, 10(3), 89–102.
- Jain, P. (2019). Narrative doubling and the inner self in contemporary Indian women's writing. *Journal of Literary Studies*, 12(3), 101–115.
- Kapoor, A. (2020). *Desire, duty and domesticity: Feminist perspectives in Indian English novels*. Jaipur, India: Rawat Publications.

Abrams, M. H. (2012). *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (10th ed.). Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.

Barry, P. (2017). *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* (4th ed.). Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press.

Nayar, P. K. (2015). *Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory*. New Delhi, India: Pearson India.