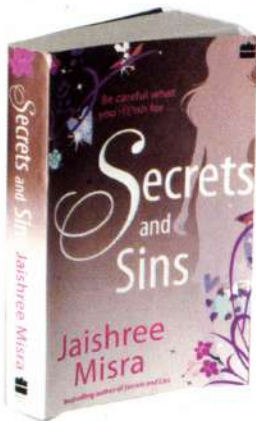


Painful decisions

An old affair is re-kindled spectacularly and then, abandoned



Secrets And Sins
Jaishree Misra

The author of *Secrets & Lies* is back with a similar-sounding title, *Secrets And Sins*. Jaishree Misra, who has written five novels in all. A MA in English Literature from Kerala University, she worked with the Board of Film Classification in London till recently. Misra divides her time between India and England – just like the protagonists in her latest work. London college students Riva Singh

and Aman Khan have a passionate love affair – his first. Despite their attraction, Singh rejects Khan for reliable Britisher Ben, the man who becomes her husband. Now, 15 years later, Singh is a bestselling London novelist, while Khan is a Bollywood superstar (shades of SRK here). Both have watched each other from afar but have stayed apart since their painful split.

But they are thrown together at the Cannes film festival where both are members of the jury. Khan is torn between his desire for Singh and his young family – not to mention the havoc an affair would have on his golden boy public image. Beset by guilt, Singh knows that their love could destroy everything that they hold dear. There is much at stake and the star-crossed lovers have to decide whether to follow their heart or head.

The book has a smooth narrative and an interesting, fast-paced plot. There are fine details too – of characters, places, food, etc. But sometimes you feel that Misra

overdoes in the detailing bit, especially the wide varieties of cuisine the lead pair partakes of during their European sojourn. The book also seems caricaturish in places – especially in the treatments meted out to Khan's wife and Singh's domineering PR professional sister Kaaya.

Yet, it is Kaaya's character that plays a pivotal role in resolving the conflict within her sister. Kaaya has an affair with Singh's best friend Susan's husband. When Singh learns about it, she berates her younger sister, pointing out that from a very young age she had always been attracted to things that did not belong to her. But when she finds herself being drawn to Khan again in London, she recalls her admonishment to her sister and this works as the speed-breaker that saves her own marriage.

All in all, Misra's book is full of clever and thought-provoking contrasts – east and west, loyalty and betrayal, ambition and acceptance, passion and practicality.

- Harper Collins, Rs 299



The Pleasure Seekers
Tishani Doshi

Before she wrote this, her first novel, Chennai-based Tishani Doshi's first collection of poetry, *Countries of the Body*, won the Forward Poetry Prize for best first collection. That perhaps explains the lyrical quality that permeates most of *The Pleasure Seekers*, a delightful family saga inhabited by engaging characters. The story spans from 1968 to 2001 and starts with Babo becoming the first member of the Patel family to leave from Madras to London for further education. He ends up marrying Sian Jones, a cream-skinned girl from Wales and the two set up home in Madras. The story then explores the lives of the two and their two daughters who follow, Mayuri and Bean.

There are colourful descriptions like the family staying in a little house with orange and black gates next door to the Punjab Women's Association. As the 20th century tumbles along, the four navigate their way through the uncharted territory of a 'hybrid' family. There is the hustle and bustle of Babo's relatives, long-distance calls to Sian's family in Wales, eternal wisdom of the great-grandmother Ba as well as the perils of first love, lost innocence and old age.

The novel is seductive and it will not be surprising if readers end up falling in love with some of the quaint characters. In the end, the book is about pleasure sought and, more importantly, pleasure found. The writing is easy and charming. The story of an entire generation is rounded off in under 300 pages – and that is no mean achievement.

- Hachette, Rs 250



An Endless Winter's Night
Ira Raja

The emotional tangles of the mother-daughter relationship are

beautifully explored in this collection of 21 contemporary short stories and poems. On display are the works of eminent writers like Nisha Da Cunha, Sujata Bhatt, Shashi Deshpande and Kamala Das. Even though the mother-daughter relationship tends to get overshadowed by other family configurations, the relationship now occupies a central place in women's writing. This collection is a laudable effort to throw more light on the relationship.

- Women Unlimited, Rs 375



Life An Odyssey
Dr Manish Maladkar

A M.D. and M.C.C.P (USA), Dr Manish Maladkar holds a senior

position in a leading pharmaceutical company and is also on the editorial advisory board of several publications. A prolific writer whose articles have appeared in international as well as Indian journals and newspapers, his new book is a compilation of 35 incisive essays. They cover a vast canvas for all serious seekers of the truth. Each of them is packed with enlightening anecdotes and succeeds in providing answers to some of life's complex problems.

- Unicorn Books, Rs 150



Zero Dial
J. Dey

The writing is newspaperish, a hangover of author J. Dey lifelong vocation as a crime reporter. The editing could have been crisper. But the book still manages to grip the reader's interest – in parts. A major attraction is the subject matter – *khbris* or police informers who play a major role in how the crime scene pans out in a major city like Mumbai. With the chase for India's most wanted terrorist, Riyaz Bhatkal, forming a perfect backdrop, Dey explores the precarious lives of three police informers.

- Jaico, Rs 250