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**Female friendship and Family Relationships in Meera Syal's
*Life Isn't All Ha Ha Hee Hee***

SWALEHA M ATTAR

Asst. Prof. English Dept., Dr.J.J. Magdum College of Engg, Jaysingpur



ABSTRACT

India is recognized as a country with civilization. Indian culture and traditions are famous in the world. Different religions and regions have diverse culture. It reflects in the people of that society. It varies in culture, language, food, standard of living, thinking etc. Familial function has active part. People give importance to social system. They are bind with family structure. Even though the standard of living is very modern, the people values culture, respect religion. Sometimes it leads to disturbances. Cultural difference is prime issue, especially in western country and Eastern country. The issue in this research paper is about friendship and married life of three women. The paper is based on *Female friendship and Family Relationships in Meera Syal's Life Isn't All Ha Ha Hee Hee*. The novel revolves round three women of near about thirties named Chila, Tania and Sunita. All three are from Indian origin but staying in London. So the novel focuses on the difference between Asian-British culture.

In all over the world, Indian culture is the oldest culture. India is recognized as a country with civilization. Indian culture and traditions are famous in the world. Many rulers like British, Turks, Moghuls and Persians ruled over here. They built the varieties of monuments which are the best examples of Indian architecture. These rulers left behind their mores and ethnicity in India. Still, there is attraction of India to the tourist of the entire world due to its strong cultural heritage. Many religions are staying under one roof. Different religions and regions have diverse culture. It reflects in the people of that society. It varies in culture, language, food, standard of living, thinking etc. This is the speciality of Indian culture.

In this vivid and primeval culture, factors like religion, caste, and family plays very important role for survival. Religion plays imperative role in Indian families. Familial function has active part. People give importance to social system. They are bind with family structure. Even though the

standard of living is very modern, the people values culture, respect religion. Sometimes it leads to disturbances. Cultural difference is prime issue, especially in western country and Eastern country. The present world is changing very rapidly and everything reaches very fast in each corner of the world. Due to globalization human beings are familiar with every culture. Different writers from various countries are putting forward the problems related to culture. The problems like-familial struggle, gender wise discrimination, teenage problems, problems of particular community etc. are studied with different perspectives. Every writers style, views, presentations, approach is different.

The existing issue in this research paper is about friendship and married life of three women. The paper is based on *Female friendship and Family Relationships in Meera Syal's Life Isn't All Ha Ha Hee Hee*. Many writers have written on various issues related to woman. Famous Indian authors like

Arundhati Roy, Anita Desai, Namita Gokhale, Kashmira Shah, Jhumpa Lahiri, Rohinton Mistry, Mitra Phukan's, Sunetra Gupta's, Nayantara Sahgal, Geeta Hariharan in their works have highlighted the woman's problems like identity, social awareness and cultural status of women in society, mental disturbance, ill-treatment by people and family to her etc.. Woman as a sufferer is not a new issue. In Indian culture, Woman is considered as secondary, having no importance, with no rights in family. These writers show woman's inner mind struggle. Some feminist writers revolted against that and such type of literary contribution related to women in Indian English Literature gives awareness and liberality to woman.

Meera Syal is a British born Indian writer, who is residing in London. She is born with Indian Punjabi parents. She is recognized as playwright, comedian, singer and actor. She is famous for her comedy Show on BBC channel *Goodness Gracious Me*. She is born, brings and brought up in London. The life which she spent in London is reflected in her novels. Her novels are focused on mostly female characters. She is attached with Indian culture and the status of females in Indian society. Her First novel *Anita and Me* received Betty Trask Award is based on her own experiences in London villages which. Her other works includes *The House of Hidden Mothers*, *Bhaji on the Beach*, *My Sister Wife*, stage shows-*Goodness Gracious Me*, *One of Us*, *Bombay Dreams* etc. She is awarded as Media Personality for the year 2000.

The present research paper is a study of three women's married life with different views. The novel *Life Isn't All Ha Ha Hee Hee* is published in the year 1999 and also translated in German language in 2003 with title *Sari, Jeans, and Chilischoten*. The novel revolves round three women of near about thirties named Chila, Tania and Sunita. All three are from Indian origin but staying in London. So the novel focuses on the difference between Asian-British culture. These three ladies are married and having different issues of their married life sharing to each other. They belong to Indian Punjabi background. These three women united with each other as they belong to same Asian culture and they know the importance of married life, family relations

and its bonding. They know the value of motherhood. While staying in London, they face many crises in their lives due to their Asian culture. Many times they are rejected due to their brown complexion and materialistic view of British people. They stood jointly and helped each other in the new surroundings of British culture. As everyone knows the culture of East and West is varied. West is considered as modern, materialistic, and with boundless family culture whereas East is considered as full of emotions, feelings and family bindings. The three girls are childhood friends and they stood middle between Asian and British culture.

Chila is a simple, shy girl and devoted to her household works without giving importance to the question of identity either in family or in society. She is happy as housewife and performing her duty well. Sunita was revolutionary at the time of student and now dull, heavy-weight mother, gives up her career for her two kids and family. Tania is ambitious career oriented girl, acts as a feminist forgetting the duties of home. She left back her family for her career. She performs active role at the time of her father's funeral. In this way she performs as responsible fellow. Tania makes a documentary on Urban Indian life in which she took her friends Sunita and Chila as leading roles. This documentary becomes turning point in the lives of these three women's.

Syal shows the struggle of three friends for womanhood. These female characters come across various difficulties in their community. They here represent Asian woman but rejecting their roles of Asian woman. They struggle with duality of mind about home country and host country. Their roles seem to be sympathetic caught between two communities. They find it difficult to survive in London with insensitive people. Each woman has a suffering issue. All three are struggling for their identity. Everyone has predicament and the storyline relate to one another. The story is filled with funny moment as well as sad situations. Each friends married life is portrayed with Punjabi background. The complications of marital life between husbands and wives are shown here. The importance of family life is nicely revealed here. In Indian culture, marriage plays important role in

society. Couple binds with each other till end. When they compare Indian culture with Western, Sunita recalls:

"Divorce was one of the English diseases my mum was afraid we would catch if we hung around Willis' Fish Bar too much, along with short skirts, bad skin and bland food" (79)

As their married life is disturbed, they forcibly bind the relationships with their husbands. Chila, before marriage was happy go lucky girl but after marrying Deepak, she is forcibly doing the things as a part of responsibility. Do they really love each other is a big confusion. On the other hand Sunita's life is not so different. She is busy in her family showing good housewife and a caring mother but the affection between husband and wife is no more remains. Tania is a feminist, working as a filmmaker. When Tania's boss demand real story of Asian woman, who are housewives, she discloses the truth about Sunita and Chila's married life and their families in the documentary. When it released, the secrets of their lives revealed which disturbs their relationships. This period is very tough for her. It arouses clashes in their lives. The title appropriately suits to these three women that life is not all ha ha hee hee. Life is not so simple but it is filled with sufferings, clashes, understanding, responsibilities, and true friendship. The portrayals of these three characters are very apt one. They feel it real. Their dilemma seems real. They really want to save their married life. There is struggle to live between two cultures. In Indian culture, a woman is secondary. Her identity is calculated by her husband's position whereas in British culture, woman has her own choices and freedom. She has her self-respect and can choose her career. Tania prepares a bold documentary on relationships. This cultural clash creates spark in three's lives.

When the documentary reveals their happy married life, it generates the challenge to their long lasting friendship. It shows that they are not ready to accept the facts. Syal hear presents the life of modern Indian family life in urban society. The article published in *Library Journal* reviewed:

This second novel from Syal (Anita and Me), a successful writer for film and television, is

a humor-filled yet startling account of a trio of South Asian women in London, childhood friends who continue to depend upon one another in adulthood. A documentary featuring their "happy" marriages reveals truths that they are not prepared to face, challenging the foundation of their long friendships. Syal's comedic talent is obvious, as is her capacity (as a British-born Indian) to look honestly at urban Indian life and comment on how second-generation Indians in London cope with the challenge of dual cultures. Her novel is refreshing in that it does not exoticize Indian life or present stereotypes of Indian women. (Web article)

Coming to the last concluding point, Female in Indian society is abused by family members. She is the only responsible fellow for the breakup of her relations. Husbands are always on safe zone. They never highlighted for their mistakes. It is the woman who is wrong every time. Indian society gives the education to their daughters to live with husband forgetting his mistakes, because divorce is bad for women. Everyone blames a woman for her divorce. It is not in Indian culture to stay separate with husband. This Indian tradition forced many women to stay in families unwillingly for the sake of society. They accept and neglect the mistakes of their husband. A woman is abused by her family and husband if she wants her identity. Still the choices are limited to a woman. So the title *Life Isn't All Ha Ha Hee Hee* is appropriate in every angle. Many women living in society are facing the same problems like the trio of this novel. They struggle, they compromise, and they tolerate everything. The characters of Sunita, Chila and Tania is depicts the same features of suffering women. All the characters have touch of real people. The novel endowed with modern family life with dual culture in London.

Works Cited

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