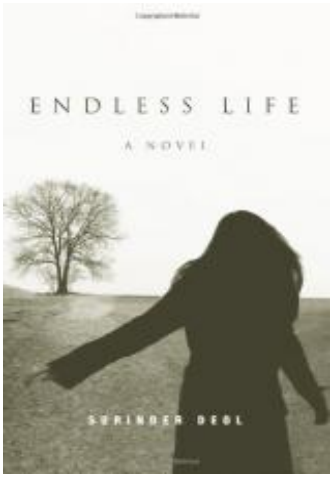
Endless Life

by Surinder Deol



About the Book

Clad in a decorative red sari, Malti, a dreamer and a somewhat spoiled daughter of a wealthy Indian family, sat with Rakesh, an Indian physician living and working in New York, on the ground in front of a sacred fire. ?We are asking you to sit on the ground,? the priest explained, ?because you?re forging a new connection to live the rest of your lives as a husband and wife. The mother earth is going to be a witness to this union. I want you to feel strong, drawing energy from the center of the earth. You will always need this strength because life brings new challenges every day.?

This marriage brought Malti to New York but the love she dreamed of eluded her. The passage of time brought new challenges and a heart wrenching loss. Malti moves back to India in search of someone who could unlock the mystery that was causing her immense distress. She accomplishes this mission with help from Harish, a newly minted real estate billionaire, whose love for Malti went back to their time together in college.

Malti realizes her dream of having the unconditional love of a man on a New Year Eve at a sea-side mansion in Goa. She remembers the words that her grandmother had once spoken to her. "It will take a long time for you to get there, but the day you arrive, you will have become the person you always wanted to be.?

Endless Life portrays a woman's search for love and meaning in an increasingly complex world.

"Life is a flow; it?s a continuum. Nothing really goes away. We continue to live despite all the hardships and tragedies. We plan new things, always expecting to see better days in the future. We never stop dreaming." It is this act of not stopping to dream that makes life ENDLESS.

Discussion Guide

1. Malti spent relatively short time with her grandmother, Sona Dadi, when she was very young but they created a long-lasting bond. What explains the depth of this relationship? What lesson or lessons did Malti carry from this relationship that informed the path she followed many years later?

2. ?I was too compliant; I was hesitant to try new ideas; my personal identity was suppressed. I was always struggling to make decisions, and in the end I allowed others to decide for me. How could I change or develop myself?? and ?But in the end, this feeling of not being loved or desired by anyone created a longing that lived with me like an open wound.? Are these thoughts typical of young girls in cultures where parents tend to completely control the life and choices of a female child?

3. ?Have you been in a romantic relationship before?? This is how Rakesh answered Malti?s question: ?Malti, I live and work in America. Men-women relationships are viewed differently because of cultural differences. I?ll not say anything more about this.? It was clear that he was avoiding a straight answer or even refusing to answer Malti?s question. He was taking shelter under the umbrella of ?cultural differences.? What kind of follow-up question Malti could have asked to obtain the information she needed? What made her not to probe this further?

4. ?I do realize that the future is unknown and unknowable. People do change, and it is sad when people change for worse. That?s not a good change.? Malti?s father, Appu, expresses some doubts about Malti?s marital future, though it was parent arranged marriage. What in your view are arguments for and against an arranged marriage?

5. ?Be brave, Malti. Being a woman is never easy.? This is what Deepti tells Malti when the latter was facing a crisis because Rakesh wasn?t happy about her pregnancy. Think about this statement in a larger context. Why being a woman is never easy? What factors make it really difficult?physiological, emotional, societal or cultural?

6. ?If my heart was a piece of meat for someone?s consumption it was well done by now.? How well this statement reflects the inner sadness and a sense of rejection of a woman who just found out that her husband was having an affair?

7. ?Malti, you?re not going back. That is what Indian women have done over the centuries. Once they fell out of favor with the man they were married to, they ran home to their parents, crying and sobbing, brokenhearted and damaged to their core. Where else could they go? Malti, you?re not going to repeat this history. You?re going to create and live your dream.? How did this idea shaped Malti?s personality and attitude from this point onward in the story?

8. Malti talks to Ghafoor Mian about the value of education: ?It is the greatest gift that parents can give children, male or female. I travel to many countries, including Muslim ones, and often hear this debate. People in the middle and upper classes are already convinced about the value of education. They benefit by maintaining their social and economic status one generation after another. People who are not well off and who should pay attention to their kids? education are the ones who are caught up in these old conundrums. Ghafoor Mian, you have to look at the world through Husna?s eyes. What future is she going to inherit? If she is not educated, she will have fewer opportunities to do the things she would want to do.? Do you think Malti is making a convincing argument for girls? education? What other factors in your experience makes it difficult for girls? to attend schools in poor countries?

9. ?There are few things to which you ultimately surrender, like it or not. This morning I woke up and realized that something had wrapped itself like a vine around my heart. I couldn?t even get out of bed. I was burning up, like I had a fever ? Then I understood what had happened. All of a sudden, I believed you. I trusted everything you had ever said. I was ready. At that moment, when the sun was rising, the whole world looked new, as if making a fresh start. At that moment I fell in love with you.? This is how Zeena describes to Amit how she fell in love with him. While there is no rational way to explain the act of falling in love, what factors do you think might have influenced Zeena unconsciously to change the nature of their relationship to lovers.

10. ?For an Indian mother, a child is never old enough to fully take care of himself.? (Malti) Discuss the mother-child dynamic keeping in view the cultural dimension.

11. ?I heard the chime of an imaginary clock. It was making a ticking sound. My time was coming. I was leaving the age of innocence. Becoming an ordinary man was not enough. I had to be a heroic figure tonight, born for the majesty of this moment.? These are the thoughts of a young man (Amit) who is about to experience physical love for the first time. What do you think was going on in Zeena?s mind at that time?

12. ?Life doesn?t end when a relationship ends. We have to find new meaning in what we do and how we live.? (Deepti) Discuss the practical implications of ?finding new meaning.?

13. ?I was trying to resolve a dilemma that was incomprehensible from whatever angle I looked at it: The purpose of religion is to make people better human beings. When religion itself becomes the tool for justifying immoral acts, where is the limit to human beastliness? If each horrible act of human destruction can be justified in the name of one?s faith, what is the value of faith itself?? Analyze and discuss the questions posed by Malti in this quote.

14. ?Please don?t take this as rudeness or indifference. I haven?t experienced a man?s love after my marriage dissolved many years ago, but I haven?t ceased to be a woman. I?m afraid that any continuous contact would make that dangerous wave that you talked about raise its head. If that happened, it wouldn?t be a simple wave. It would be a deluge. It could drown the two of us. I would like to act and decide with a reasoned mind, not when I?m floating in the muddy waters of irrepressible passions. For that one reason alone I need some quiet time.? Do you agree with Malti?s restrained approach in her relationship with Harish?

15. ?When I hear people talk about love, it sounds rather cheap because people have made it look that way, or today?s consumer culture has turned it into another commodity. I can tell you love is brutish. It demands every drop of blood in your body. You turn yourself over to forces that you neither understand nor control. I lived through all of this ? the hellfire and the ecstasy. I don?t regret any of it because you can?t choose. It?s a package deal.? (Zeena) Do you agree?

16. ?You?re free to fly, Zeena. I want you to find your bliss.? ?Are you ready to fly too, Malti?? I was taken aback by the question. ?My situation is different.? ?How different? Amit talked to me about the choice you made. He would have been happier if you had chosen your own happiness before anything else.? ?I?m very happy when I see you and Asheem around me. What more I could wish for?? Zeena did not pursue the point, but it made me think. I lay awake tossing her question around: why was I not ready to fly? What was holding me on the ground? (Malti?s thoughts) How would you answer the question that Malti is asking: ?What was holding me on the ground??

17. ?When a woman establishes boundaries, they are creative challenges for the man who really wants her. When a woman says: ?Don?t touch me? it doesn?t mean ?Don?t touch me, ever.? It means: ?Be someone special for me so that your touch is meaningful.? When a woman says that we are going to be friends but not lovers, it doesn?t mean that love and friendship are mutually exclusive. Deep friendship is also the path of deep love. It?s something that flows in both directions. Isn?t Harish making the same mistake that he had made before when he was writing letters and not mailing them? Hidden longing in one?s heart is meaningless if it is not shared with the one you love.? Do you agree with Malti?s assessment?

Author Bio

Surinder Deol is author and co-author of several works of nonfiction. He published his collection of poems **A Moment in the Universe** in 2006. **Endless Life** is his first novel. He lives in Potomac, Maryland.

Endless Life

by Surinder Deol

Publication Date: November 16, 2012

Genres: Fiction, Romance

Paperback: 238 pages

Publisher: Decent Hill

ISBN-10: 1936085658

ISBN-13: 9781936085651