

## The Score

### AN AFTERNOON WITH JYO

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# AN AFTERNOON WITH JYO

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She is so not what I expect from an engineer turned HR who has a passion for words! Dressed in crisp formals, she has an easy manner and apologises for being 5 minutes late. Articulate and disarming! This afternoon chat could prove to be interesting indeed! I'm already bowled over by her frank smile; I quickly get my notepad to cover how truly surprised I am.

Jyothi Menon, Jyo to friends is the VP-HR shared services. What's that? She quickly condenses it to "back office operations for over 90,000 employees of Standard Chartered Bank". A vice president who has stellar time management skills such that she can successfully run a family, author four non-fiction books and research and write another one 'The Angel of God'? My eyebrows shoot up!

We begin at the beginning. She talks candidly about her engineering background. "Being the only child, naturally all my parents' energies were focused on me being 'professionally' educated. But I was clear from the start I wasn't going to be a geek." She clearly isn't one. Not envisaging herself sitting in front of the computer and writing visual basic programs, she quickly moved to HR and used her education and her background to become a proficient recruiter. One day a chance meeting with the Pearson Publishing head made her foray into writing possible. "He mentioned I should write a book but how was I going to compete with all the IIM and XLRI educated professionals?" she wondered

What she was going to write about was never an issue. Through her work spanning fiction and non-fiction, the motif that springs at you is the easy conversational style and the mentor-protégé relationships that crop up stealthily. "I can only write what I'm familiar with right?

I am in HR, subconsciously I suppose all the mantras I believe in manifests in my writing too." The thing to successful book writing, she later understood, was not the content per se but how she was going to incorporate her own personal experiences and her interpretation of human relations.

The conversation between the grandfather, the managing director of a software company and his grandson is how she expresses her ideas in her first book. "It was a success." She seems surprised by it and she says, "Soon the second book was on its way but that was pure chance."

Our ex-president, Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam was in office when the book released and upon reading it, he sent her a personal note commenting on a specific page in the book which talks about branding and thus 'Brandwise' was born. On an aside, is there no end to the number of people Dr. Kalam has inspired?

Using the same conversational style, Jyo expanded on branding. Instead of talking about products, she focused on the branding of people.

"Consciously I used the grandfather speaking to his grandson motif. In Indian mythology, grandfather symbolises wisdom and so it was easy to have him teach his younger generation some of the concepts." Quickly another book followed 'Me, a Winner' and surprise surprise, the public lapped it up!

Though just about to launch, The Angel of God is her oldest work chronologically speaking. "We're all children of circumstance and I've been fascinated by that fact that we all have what we call an Angel or a devil lurking inside us and what we unleash is dictated purely by what we give more importance to." So what is the novel about? Her eyes light up and she talks animatedly about how the canvas spans Dharavi Slums in Bombay, The Libyan Desert, Saudi Arabia and the Villages of Kerala. All these are places she has frequented. It is a story about a crime organisation but it is not about crime. It is a tale of redemption and inspiration. "Each person has a defining moment in life, and in Moosa Bhai's life, his turning point is actually depicted on the cover of the novel and pushes his life and the story forward."

With eyes twinkling she mentions that she draws parallels between the criminal organisation and other commercial organisations. She laughs good naturedly about the nil attrition rates in a crime organisation and how hierarchy is established and loyalty rewarded mirrors any law-abiding organisation. She has the first copy of the book in her bag. Guarding it zealously, she gives it to me almost hesitantly and the riot of colours and sketching on the front cover dazzle me. Modernist, almost cubist in form, the turning point in Moosa Bhai's life seems a mystery to these untrained eyes. Her parting words – "In these troubled times, we all need to look towards one another to find inspiration, to hear the message each person is sending out; Moosa finally stops and listens and his life changes forever."

Here's hoping this book inspires you and makes you change lives, maybe even your own!