
**FROM SUFFERING TO SUCCESS: A STUDY OF JAISHREE MISRA'S
ANCIENT PROMISES**

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Abstract:

Since the dawn of human civilization, the cultural institution of marriage has not only contributed to grow the depth of life of humanity but also undergone a great deal of changes. However hard women attempt to solidify their position in the system of marriages, they are unable to make headway. Most often, women get caught between two forces- societal conventions and fulfillment of desires. Life of humanity is generally considered to be the bedrock of literature. Man's ups and downs, highs and lows, success and failure and joys and sorrows find expression in literature. Wherever literature comes from, it speaks about mankind and hence it leads to the proposition "one humanity and one literature". In this article, an attempt is made to portray the efforts and endeavours of Janaki, the protagonist of Jaishree Misra's Ancient Promises to come out of the forced entrapment of wedding. The manner in which she battles against the hardships and its result are discussed in this article.

Keywords: *Entrapment, Cross-Culture, Sufferings Solace, Struggle and Hardships.*

Before this article delves into the central theme of initial struggle of women and their resultant and success through the protagonist Janaki, it novel sheds some light on the personal life and career of Jaishree Misra. During the time of the British rule, the Indian Writing in English seed was spread in India. At present the seed has bloomed into an ever-green tree with perfumed blossoms and ripe fruits. Such fruits are not only eaten by the native people, but also by the foreigners. Gardeners' like Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, R.K.Narayan, Raja Rao to name only a few, looked after the tender plant night and day. In this modern period, it is preserved by a number of writers who are getting rewards and tributes all over the domain.

In the modern world, Indian English literature has achieved an independent status. Different types of themes are discussed in Indian Writing in English. English has gained a rare advantage and popularity in India especially among the upper and the middle classes. It is progressively getting used by writers to give shape to the contrasting dilemmas and problems that confront the human mind. It becomes a convenient language to the writers to express their own intrinsic thoughts and imaginations.

Jaishree Misra was born in New Delhi to a Malayali family in 1961. All her novels give awareness to the people, particularly women.. In 2000 she started her writing career. Her first novel is *Ancient Promises*. It is a semi-autobiographical of her life. Her daughter was born with special needs, led her to the realm of Special Education in 1990. At that time, she left for England to do a post graduate diploma at the institute of Education in London. Jaishree Misra, a prominent writer in English literature is the great niece of the late ThakazhiSivasankaraPillai, who is the famous Malayalam writer. She has worked for several years in the Child Care Department of Social Services in Buckinghamshire. She has also worked as a film classifier at the British Board of Film Classification in London, England. So far, she has written seven novels including *Ancient Promises*, *A Scandalous Secret* and *Afterwards*. Most of her novels portray the struggle, disappointment and humiliation traditional Indian women suffer in their lives.

Jaishree Misra offers real life situations and her characters are real human beings with soul. Naturally, their path to achieve deliverance is not a flower bed to walk on but a thorny path filled with obstruction, mind break-down and ruins. Only by overcoming clogs and hindrance, Jaishree Misra's women achieve freedom in the real sense. She does not wish to be the obedient mouthpiece of male writers. Though Jaishree Misra does not give any alternatives to the problems that are faced by Indian women, the final decision of her novel presents some hope to the readers. Misra is trying to grant some awareness to women through her novel to free them from this society, which treats them as slaves. She is well known for her realistic exposure of the problems faced by the highbrow urban women of Kerala, Delhi and London.

In *Ancient Promises*, the predicament of Janu is illustrated vividly. Like many traditional women, she is unable to find any delight in marital life. However, unlike them she dares to come out of the frustrated institution of marriage and find new life by entering into wedlock with Arjun whom she meets in Delhi and whose qualities drive her to fall in love with him. Janu is portrayed as being courageous enough to break the shackles of unhappy wedding and to settle with Arjun whose temperament fascinates her so much. Thus, her life moves from despair to delight. Despair was thrust upon by her by the arranged marriage but she manages to transfer it to delight by her confidence.

Janaki's parents had big dreams about her future. They were keen on giving quality education to her. Hence they arranged her education in an English Convent which is very renowned and sophisticated and where usually students from upper class study mostly. In the beginning, when she found herself admitted into this reputed institution, she was very glad about it. The following words Janaki illustrate her quantum of happiness: "I'd been enrolled in the Irish convent school, because my parents wanted me to speak English well and get a head-start in sophisticated Delhi society." (18). But Janaki could not take forward the momentum she built in the initial days. Her attention is distracted towards her classmate Arjun and she falls in love with him.

Orthodox Indian parents say that love before marriage is a great sin and it destroys the younger generation. Janu's parents also have the same impression and predominantly her father is completely against the thought of love marriage. In the earlier stage, Janu and Arjun do not speak freely with each other but they see each other with interest. Janu is scared of her love for Arjun. She knows very well that her strict parents do not like her love. They expect her daughter to behave as a good Malayali girl.

Janu's Delhi life is the happiest one, when she was nourished and nurtured by her parents. Her school days also are completely happy with her friends, specifically with Leena and Arjun, her lover later. In her childhood days, she visits her grandparents in vacation. But at the beginning she hated the departure to Kerala because she does not want to leave Arjun alone. But, she requests him to write letters to her by getting the address from her friend Leena. When she receives letters from Arjun by the names of girls, her father notices it and suspects her daughter.

Now the problem starts to Janu through her grandma by the arrival of marriage proposal at the age of eighteen. Janu gets a groom from The Maraar Family through her grandma. In Kerala, the Maraar is a very rich family. Janu knows very well that if she marries him she would suffer a lot but she remains silent. Her father strictly ordered her not to touch anything at home, to give up the thoughts of her higher studies before marriage and advises her to obey her parents' wish of marrying Suresh. So finally she is pushed to say 'yes' to marry The Maraar groom Suresh. With heavy heart she accepts this marriage for her parents.

As her grand parents' aspiration, her wedlock takes place at Guruvayur temple in Kerala. She is distressed about the pains of parting from her lover Arjun. She is married to a man Suresh, who is an escaping character. He is neither good nor bad. Both the couples are not having a good communication that is uttered by her "Suresh didn't need to discuss money or his business with me for that he had his father. We didn't need to discuss the household for that there was his mother. Leisure time was shared with his sisters. As the knick-knack on his mantelpiece, I was still looking pretty but getting very dusty indeed(101)".

Janu takes effort very hard to mingle with her new marital life but all her efforts are unsuccessful.

Janu thinks that if she gets a baby, she could fill the gap between herself and her in-laws. Her plight becomes obvious from the following lines in *Ancient Promises*:

I got pregnant soon after and told Suresh about it tremulously. He looked confused and I hoped a little pleased. But all he said was, 'Amma and Sathi will know what to do. I'll ask them to take you to see Dr.Gomathy.' It was decided that I could go to Delhi to have the baby, as is the usual custom. Girls go 'home' two months before they are due to give birth, to rest and have oil baths and to turn to their mothers when they are in pain. And so it was that I returned to Delhi finally, two and a half years after I had left it with my small blue vacation suitcase. (113)

But that is also futile, because her baby is a 'mentally handicapped'. She thinks that she is the correct person who spends time with her disabled baby and takes care of her well. She needs to bring up her baby like other normal children. She gets the admission in St. Thomas's nursery but after some weeks her kid is sent out from the school by declaring that she is not fit to study in this institution among the normal pupils. So, she admits her Riya in the special school runs by Sheela Kuriakose, where she is given admission already.

Now she plans to go abroad to get the special course in M.A with scholarship to train her own child and she is called for an interview in Delhi. She does not know her life will get a turning point in Delhi where she meets again Arjun unfortunately in her Friend Leena's house. In Delhi, she meets Arjun, at that time she does not open her mouth in ecstasy. She is very happy in Delhi after a long time with her friends. Now Arjun insists on her divorce from her husband Suresh and he is ready to take care of Janu and her daughter Riya because he is not ready to miss her again in his life.

Janu returns to Kerala after the successful interview from Delhi, she dreams a lot that everything will be fine for the sake of her new life. She reveals her plan to her mother and grandma of getting divorce from Suresh and her adultery with Arjun. They are stunned of her decision. In the name of honesty, she opens her plan of divorce to her husband Suresh by revealing the truth what was happened in Delhi. It is very disgusting and shocking to Suresh but he agrees to give her divorce.

But Suresh really does not want to give divorce to his wife. For the sake of his family members and to save his family name, he strains to have her with him forever. So Suresh has a conspiracy with his family members, to tell everyone that his wife is mad. Besides, he blames his wife that she does not know how to live in the wealthy and comfortable family and she fails to feel the richness of the family. So, Suresh and his family members are surrounded by Janu to admit her in a mental hospital with the help of Suresh's brother-in-law Dr.Sasi. Nobody is there to preserve Janu from her problematic situation.

Now she is treated as an insane. Whenever she tries to get up from the bed and speak, she is injected with some medicine. She is helpless in the hospital. But by the God's grace, Janu is liberated from the insane hospital by her mother. She is brought to Kerala and is taken care very well by her grandma and mother. After her mother's preservation she is alright. She recovers the same spirit. Again she tries to go abroad and she denies going with her husband to her in-laws house, so her husband Suresh takes Riya with him.

At the moment, Janu's mother is worried very much that her daughter's marriage has been ruined by her own fault and she begs and pleads God: "Guruvayurappa, please don't drag my daughter's name through the mud (251)". Janu's mother considers her daughter's decision to be right. So she helps her to go abroad for her higher studies. She inspires Janu to come up in her life and indirectly she agrees her daughter's love with Arjun.

Now Janu starts to England where she feels very happy in her life. After some days she returns to Kerala. There she is welcomed with surprises of her divorce from Suresh and Riya also has given back to her. She starts to have dream of life with her lover Arjun who takes care a lot for her and Riya forever.

Most of the people in the society do not lead a life for them. Society blocks the growth of an

individual by criticizing his every movement. To satisfy the thoughts of other persons (Janu's parents and her husband), she fails to understand her feelings and emotions, due to which she suffers a lot. At one point, when they realise the reality, there comes a change, which changes the life of Janu from despair to happiness.

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