



Research Paper

Life and Existence of Janaki in the Novel *Ancient Promises* by JaishreeMisra

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ABSTRACT: JaishreeMisra's novel *Ancient Promises* is one of the finest novels that show the struggle and hardships of a woman to prosper in her life. It signifies the worries and solutions facing by an Indian woman in her life. This novel also shows the reader how an Indian girl is limited from expressing her own opinions and forced to marry a man by forcefully leaving her lover Arjun. But destiny played a crucial role in her life through her daughter Riya who is mentally handicapped. But Janaki is not giving up her dreams and thoughts, instead, she works hard to fulfill her dream and the life she wants.

KEYWORDS: Love, Existence, Education, Mother, Patriarchal norms

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I. INTRODUCTION

Ancient Promises is one of the finest works of JaishreeMisra. JaishreeMisra is an Indian author who presents her thoughts and ideas in a different way to the readers. *Ancient Promises* is her debut novel. The novel *Ancient Promises* is even used as a prescribed text in many universities. It is a semi-autobiographical novel. It portrays the various stages and problems that a woman named Janaki faces. The novel begins with suspense exposing to the readers that 'My Marriage ended today.' So it was on her eighteenth birthday she got married to Suresh Maraar. Without any delay, the author goes back to her good old school days and there Janu introduces her friend Leena and also her lover Arjun. She also exposes the various restrictions that a 'Malayali' girl faced from her parents when they were living in Delhi. Her parents wanted her to be a normal girl who follows the customs and traditions of her homeland. Even when they came to know about her relationship with Arjun, they were so worried about her future. Leena plays a crucial role throughout the story because it is through her Janu meets her lover Arjun again. The novel depicts the thoughts and emotions in the mind of Janaki.

One of the major aspects that touch the minds of the readers is the best decisions that Janaki is making in the novel. This helps the readers to accept the truth that nothing is impossible and how we could also be a good example to others. Even though during the problems she is not denying herself from doing what she wishes to do in her life. The struggle of women in developing their careers and life is an important thing in this living world. The idea of marriage sometimes limits a woman from expanding her dreams and desires. Janu's journey through long and tough conditions makes her stronger and eventually brings peace to her life. Women living in Indian society are mostly asked to marry and have children but women who try to come out of this barrier are always blamed as false and bad. But during these problems, women are trying to get out of the established instructions created by society. Then also lives like Janu is trying to move forward with the inner strength and courage along with her daughter Riya. From the beginning to the end, JaishreeMisra depicts how she could be a powerful woman who could withstand all her life problems.

Another important aspect is the care and love which she expected to get from her loved ones. Throughout the novel, the readers could understand how she relies on her lover so much emotionally because she found him as the one major person who loved her so intensely and at the same time Janu also loved and admired him so much. Maybe this is what leads to their love again even though it took a few years. Another major aspect is the depiction of beautiful motherhood. Riya came to Janu's life as a big hope and love in the middle of all the Maraar issues in her life. But later on, Janaki started to realize the fact that it will not be there for a long time.

The novel exposes the realistic elements that still exist in a living society. Even though women's empowerment is supported worldwide by people, it is still the same for so many women across the world. Through her work, JaishreeMisra points out the agony and worries that made a woman's soul suppress and endure the pain all her life. Then also she is not leaving her hope, but she tries to make the best out of the harmful people around her. Changing life and changing decisions are well portrayed in the novel. Because of this, it is widely accepted as a good novel that exposes the patriarchal norms that still exist in society. Readers sometimes get surprised due to the realistic elements which have made use throughout the novel. That is what makes this novel different from the other novels.

II. SUMMARY OF THE NOVEL

JaishreeMisra's *Ancient Promises* begins with the divorce of Janaki with Suresh Maraar. Janu was a little girl who had good dreams for her future, but circumstances acted as a villain in her life. She was like a normal girl who fallen in love with a young boy Arjun during her school days and it is what made all the differences in her life. Being a traditional Malayali family her parents were not at all interested in the way their daughter used to see the world. Her friendship with Leena played a crucial role in Janaki's life. Like every normal Indian family, Janu's parents thought that her marriage with Suresh Maraar will be a great success. After their marriage, she started to forget everything and started to love him. But later on, she came to realize the truth that Suresh is so far from her and she won't be able to win his heart for her. So Janaki decided to have a child which will bring happiness in her life and she also thought that everyone in the Maraar family will accept her. But when Riya was born she didn't find any change in the family. Even her Mother-in-law gave more love and care to her other grandchildren. This made her so sad, but she was happy at the same time because she got a daughter with whom she could share all her worries and love. But fate played a cruel role again in her life. She later came to know that Riya is different from other children. This made Janu so much broken like she couldn't even believe the truth. Everyone in the Maraar family mocked her, even Suresh didn't give any attention to the condition of her daughter. But Janu didn't give up her hope and decided to move forward. She wanted her daughter to study among other children. So she sends her to school and waited for her in the evenings until she comes back from school. But Riya was asked to leave school because she was unable to figure out the many things in the exam. Again Janu found her life as a big game fully covered with failure. So she decided to not give up again and instead she decided to send Riya to a special school to learn and explore more. Nobody in the Maraar didn't even care about the existence of Janu and Riya. They only wanted a daughter-in-law who could maintain the status of their family. But later on, Janu started to think more and more about her future and also about Riya. She also started to work in Riya's school. So that she could pay attention to Riya and at the same time she could detach herself from the sad surroundings of the Maraar family. From there both Janaki's and Riya's life started to change. From there, Janu came to know about taking a degree that could benefit Riya and children like her. So she decided to apply to America for her further education. She didn't reveal anything until she got admission. But to pay the fees she needs a scholarship to be balanced. So she searched and found the right place. After all this, she revealed the matter in front of Suresh, at first he was surprised to hear this. But later on, he discussed it with his father, and finally, Janu got permission to go. When she approached the matter to her mother she was not very much happy because she didn't want to leave her daughter without her husband to abroad. Finally, she decided to attend the interview in Delhi for her scholarship approval. When she went back to Delhi she felt the same feeling and happiness once she enjoyed during her school days. There when she reached the interview place she was surprised to see many aspirants for the scholarship. But she decided to attempt. During her interview session, she openly said her reasons for this scholarship and admission. After the interview, they asked all the aspirants to wait till evening. By that time Janaki visits Leena. Janu was really happy to see her after a long time as a mother. There Janaki surprisingly met Arjun and both of them were shocked to see each other again. After spending a good amount of time together they both realized that still they have feelings for each other. So they both made their love together and Arjun asked Janaki to come to England. He didn't want to lose her again. But she was really upset as she is married and is a mother of a child. So Janaki decided to go to England. Later in the evening, she came to hear good news regarding her selection for the scholarship. This made her much happier. After her most beautiful time with Arjun, she returned to Kerala and went to her own house. After doing all the religious offerings for her father, Suresh came to pick Riya and Janu back to Maraar's house. On the way, she said to Suresh that she wants a divorce from him. At first, he thought it's not serious, but later he asked her to stop thinking like that. But Janu openly said everything about Arjun. So Suresh said yes to her. But Suresh later convinced his parents and said that Janu is not well and that is the reason why she is saying something about her abroad studies and going. So everyone took Janu to hospital and she was given a lot of medicines that would make her sleep all time. But her mother asked Maraar to allow her to take Janu to her house so that she will be fine. But they didn't allow her to take her. So one day Janaki's mother decided to stop giving her the medicines as she didn't find any changes in her. That changed the whole matter and Janaki came back as a normal person. With that her mother realized the pain she was undergoing there in

the Maraar family and Janaki decided to proceed with the divorce procedures. So she went back to her own house and Suresh tried to take her back. But nothing worked. So one day Suresh came to her house and took Riya to the Maraar's house as she belonged to that house. Janu was not able to stop it But she has to reach England soon otherwise she may lose the chance of her admission. So she decided to go back to England alone. And there she met Arjun and both of them lived happily. But later on, she came to realize the truth that without Riya she is nothing. So she came back and got a divorce from Suresh. Finally, she got her daughter back.

III. LIFE AND EXISTENCE OF JANAKI IN THE NOVEL ANCIENT PROMISES BY JAISHREE MISRA

The existence of Janaki in the novel can be analysed based on different stages such as a daughter, lover, wife, and mother. Janaki in the novel portrays a different character who has a lot of dreams and ideas that every woman living in a patriarchal society possesses. As a daughter, she tries to avoid all the odd things in her life for her parents. By forgetting her dreams and visions she tried to make her existence a better one during her school days. Even her relationship with Arjun created problems and she finally agreed to the conditions offered by her family when Suresh Maraar's marriage proposal came to her. The existence of Janaki as a daughter is depicted through the novel *Ancient Promises*. Another important part played by Janaki is the role of a lover to Arjun. Even though her parents disapproved of her relationship with Arjun she didn't give up and loved Arjun very much. They both shared their love and care for each other. This is what made their relationship a better and strong one. Here Janaki exists as a lover, but later in some instances, she was unable to withstand the problems that came in front of her. Towards the end of the novel Janaki by removing all the barriers in front of her runs towards the love and care of Arjun which still existed in both hearts. Another important part that contributes to Janaki's existence is as a wife. Every woman enters a family with great hope and love in their mind. But Janaki was shocked by seeing the approach and behaviour of the Maraar family. She tried to even leave all the manners which she has learned while she was in Delhi. But then also Janaki found her existence in the Maraar family so hard. To make her space and a better existence she decided to give birth to a child, but it also disappointed her. Then also she didn't want to fail in front of the Maraar family members. So she tried to show her power as a woman by taking some crucial decisions in life. One of the major aspects which JaishreeMisra shown in this is the problems that arise in a family when a woman starts to change her life. The patriarchal norms and attitudes are well portrayed in the novel perfectly. When Janaki asked for a divorce she is portrayed as a madwoman and even the Maraar family members removed the important papers which are needed for her admission. There JaishreeMisra portrays how badly sometimes a woman is questioned in front of her existence. It clearly utters the need for freedom that each woman aspires to. But sometimes even a woman is not allowed to live properly because society views it as a burden. Janaki also finds it hard for the Maraar family to accept her eagerness for her education. She was asked to take Suresh with her so that she will not be blamed as a woman who went for education on herself. But Janaki overcomes all these issues with her inner courage and because of that, she can follow her own life and passion. Another important aspect is her role as a mother. The arrival of Riya provided Janaki with immense happiness and confidence. As a mother she wanted her daughter to be strong and intelligent. But fate played a bad role in their lives. She was shocked to hear from the Maraar family that Riya is born with some difficulties. This realization destroyed all her hopes and dreams. Janaki even doubted her existence during this time. But she didn't give up and decided to send Riya to a normal school to adjust and learn among other children. Throughout the novel, the readers could see that Janaki is the only kind person who bothered about Riya's life and future. After understanding Riya's need much deeper, she decides to send her to a special school where Janu also took work. So that she will be able to look after Riya and at the same time she could understand how other children learn and develop in their lives. The care and love of a mother are clearly understood through this novel. The existence of Janaki through all these stages is well portrayed in this novel. Amidst all the problems Janaki tries to live up with new thoughts and ideas in her mind which will further help her to accomplish her dreams and hope to a new level. Through the novel, JaishreeMisra is giving the readers the idea that hardships sometimes lead us to the right path. Even when Janaki was limited in the hospital walls her inner self was trying to talk with her mother to rescue her from the evil eyes of the Maraar family. Maybe that must be the reason which leads Janaki's mother to think and rescue her daughter from the harsh hands of her husband's family. The institution of marriage is very well portrayed and the role it plays in society is well explained in the novel. Another important factor that is presented in the novel is that how a girl wished her life to be and how the patriarchal arms pull her away from the real world in which she is supposed to live. But people tend to hide it from women because they don't want the women to question their rights. But through her novel, *Ancient Promises* JaishreeMisra removes all those limitations from the life of Janaki and she wants her character to be a strong woman who could make and stand in her own decisions. With the usage of different writing techniques, JaishreeMisra presents the views and curiosity in the life of an Indian woman named Janaki. The novel also points out the value of human relationships which have to be preserved and maintained in one's life. Every person will face some different problems in their life, but every person has to overcome all those

problems with a happy heart. The novel also asserts the thought that be what you are and also be a person who could do good to other people. Thus, JaishreeMisra is able to present all her ideas and views through her debut novel *Ancient Promises*.

IV. CONCLUSION

JaishreeMisra presented a wide variety of themes and ideas through her novel *Ancient Promises*. It evokes and creates a sense of self-love and self-motivation in the mind of women readers. By presenting the relevant issues of marriage, ideas existing in the patriarchal society, and motherhood, JaishreeMisra gained the hearts of her readers. A sense of self-satisfaction is created and it will make the readers do think and lead a beautiful life in society. Many of the characters of JaishreeMisra addresses women's perspectives and related themes. Due to this reason, most of her works are considered beneficial to the reading folk. Such that *Ancient Promises* also pointed out the harsh realities that still exist in a patriarchal society. Janu whose actual name Janaki being the protagonist explains all the different conditions which she gave undergone. So the readers could compare their lives to that of Janaki because it contains all the patriarchal aspects existing in contemporary society. The novel clearly shows how a woman battles with her life in each stage. This is what popularised the book and still creates a remarkable impact in the mind of JaishreeMisra's readers.

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