

Turbulence in Cultural Identity: A Study on Jaishree Misra's *Ancient Promises* and *A Scandalous Secret*

P. Indhumathi

Assistant Professor, Department of English
Academy of Maritime Education and Training (AMET)
Deemed to be University,
135, ECR, Kanathur-603 112
indhumathi0491@gmail.com

Abstract

Multicultural and Intercultural interaction has become most common and gained a major importance in human history. Migration takes place due to various personal and professional motives. This paper analyses transculturalism – the process, turbulence and assimilation during migration, based on two selected novels written by Jaishree Misra: *Ancient Promises* and *A Scandalous Secret*.

Keywords: Jaishree Misra, *Ancient Promises*, *A Scandalous Secret*, Diaspora, Migration, Transculturalism, Cultural identity, Turbulence, assimilation

Migration is as old as human history. Nowadays the problem of migration is different from that of early times. Today people leave their countries willingly for the satisfaction of some personal motives. But in early days migration was a forced act, where people from third world were transported as labourers. Many people of early days were more or less illiterate, and their illiteracy was the reason behind their nostalgia. Today people are less nostalgic because of the increase in globalisation as a offshoot of intercultural and multicultural interaction. There is much of cultural mixing in post-colonial era that it has given birth to hybrid culture. Communication between countries and territories are made easier, people migrate from one place to another with a purpose. People often try their best to forge a workable synthesis between their native culture and their new set-up. This is not a flexible process as it is difficult to adapt the new culture.

Diaspora is a dislocation from a geographical location of origin and relocation in another country or territory. But it is also a question of identity, memory and home. According to Ashcroft in the book *Empire writes back* “diaspora does not simply refer to geographical dispersal but also to the vexed questions of identity, memory and home which such displacement produces” (217-18).

Transculturalism is defined by Fernando Ortiz, a South American scholar, Transculturalism is defined as “seeing oneself in other” (Cuccioletta). Transcultural is in turn described as extending

through all human cultures or involving, encompassing, or combining elements of more than one culture.

Jaishree Misra in her novels *Ancient Promises* and *A Scandalous Secret* writes about the diasporic sensibilities. The protagonists of the novel and various other characters migrate. In *Ancient Promises* Janaki's parents move from Kerala to Delhi because of her father's transfer in his job. Janaki moves from Delhi to Kerala after her marriage. Arjun Mehta Janaki's lover migrates from Delhi to England, Hull University for education later at the end Janaki also migrates to London for education. In *A Scandalous Secret* Neha also migrates to London for education. Sonya Neha's daughter visits India in search of her biological mother because both are separated. The characters in both the novels are portrayed as educated and most of them migrate for their own purpose. The characters are less nostalgic towards their past or own culture but suffer in finding oneself among the new culture they adopted. There is a continuous turbulence in identity in the characters of both the novels.

According to Stuart Hall in his essay *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*:

Cultural identities are the points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture. Not an essence but a positioning. Hence there is always a politics of identity, a politics of position, which has no absolute guarantee in an unproblematic, transcendental 'law of origin'. (Mongia 113)

Sense of belonging is substantive for an individual in a social set up, this belongingness bestow identity. The identity in society is in par with culture and cultural practices. Cultural identity is the identity or feeling of belonging to a group. It is part of a person's self-conception and self-perception and is related to nationality, ethnicity, religion, social class, generation, locality or any kind of social group that has its own distinct culture.

Various modern cultural studies and social theories have investigated cultural identity. Cultural identity uniquely points out particular aspects like location, gender, race, history, nationality, language, religious beliefs, and even food.

Culture is a historical reservoir and it is an important factor in shaping identity. Even though culture has historical connotations, in present scenario change and revision in culture are encouraged strongly. This is because of the increased migration and globalisation around the world.

The protagonist of the novel *Ancient Promises* is Janaki. To Janu identity crisis initially sprouts because of locality. Janu lives in one locality, but she and her generation belong to another. Janu is a Keralite brought up in Delhi. Janu is identified as one among the North Indians, though she is brought up by practicing South Indian culture at home. Janu visits Kerala every year and this makes her to love the place, but she does not have a sense of belonging towards Kerala. Even though

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 19:3 March 2019

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she is a Malayali, she is born and brought up in Delhi. Janu remembers her visits to Kerala where they usually take flight to Cochin and later to Thakazhy to visit her grandparents and later Thodupuram. Locality is also an important and basic element in deciding cultural identity, because of locality there is turbulence in identity for Janu.

Janu is identified as an individual with hybridity. The interaction of culture creates blended ones. A mixture of native and other is a process called hybridity. Janu is a hybrid individual because of the mixture of her native culture and the culture of Delhi. Janu being a hybrid individual creates conflict in patriarchal society. Janu's parents are first generation immigrants and Janu a second-generation immigrant who finds no difficulty in adapting the second culture. Her parents didn't suffer mixed up priorities as they are deep rooted in the age-old traditions of their ancestral soil. Janu's world is confusing for her parents because small children adapt the new culture and its practices easily than the elders.

Janu's journey is towards self-realisation and identity. Her identity is tossed between two cultures. The culture practised at home is not the same what she encounters in her in-laws' house in Kerala. The languages of the two cultures are completely different. Language is also one among the essentials in cultural identity. Janu learns Hindi, Malayalam and English, but her Family and in-laws speaks only Malayalam. Janu's friends in Delhi speak Hindi. Janu Speaking Malayalam in Delhi among friends and speaking Hindi with relatives in Kerala creates turbulence. She could not completely converse in language of the region purely. Her language is also mixed; she differs from the mass group. This difference constitutes uncertainty in identity.

Home, for virtually all my life, had been Delhi. Big, busy bustling New Delhi. . . That these two places ran together in my blood, their different languages and different customs never quite mixing, never really coming together as one. And when, as a Malayali girl growing up in Delhi with Malayali parents but Delhi friends, and Malayali thoughts but Delhi ways. (AP 18)

Janu lives in the in-between position as a migrant. Homi Bhabha refers Sense of belonging to neither, of culturally displaced as unhomeliness. Janu attempts to restore the world of childhood and life at Delhi distanced in both time and space to the present. Even there she is considered as mixed and incomplete but virtually she feels Delhi as her home. Though Janu has a physical alienation from there, she has a psychological belongingness.

Cultural identity may be defined by the social network of people imitating and following the social norms as projected, rather than representing an individual's interaction within a certain group. People in Kerala and Delhi mimic certain practices and social norms in regard to their region. Janu differs from that, she couldn't completely imitate the regional cultural practices of Kerala as the other culture seems to dominate than her own culture.

Turbulence in cultural identity occurs even when there is confrontation between tradition and modernity. Young people possess and cherish modernity and the old generation upholds tradition. Misra brings out the conflict between traditions versus modernity through her characters. In *Ancient Promises* Janu and Arjun represent modernity. The Marrars and Janu's parents represent tradition. In *A Scandalous Secret* Neha stands for traditional and Sonya represents modernity.

In Delhi Janu falls in love, her parents considering Janu's love with Arjun Mehta, who belongs to different cultural background as an unorthodox behaviour. Since they wanted their daughter to have a traditional arranged marriage according to the culture of Kerala, but Janu is grown up with modern thought which is completely contrary to their parent's wishes. Her parents takes her to Kerala and arranges a sudden marriage with Suresh Marrar a groom from the wealthy Marrar family, considering it as the best after discussing many other proposals. Janu sacrifices her love and resigns to her fate as she feels ashamed of hurting her parents by transgressing the limits and by daring to fall in love with a non-Keralite. She accepts it for the sake of her family's happiness. Arranged marriages are concerned with rituals and family reputation more than the desire of the bride and the groom.

This traditional view to have arranged marriage for the sake of reputation and modern view of youngster to have a marriage on love is contrasted because of the changing nature of the culture and belief among the people and even migration and interaction with people from different backgrounds. These make one to be doubtful about his/her own identity and belongingness.

Old beliefs and tradition torment her. Because of this she is unfortunate as she could not complete her studies. Janu is given assurance that she could pursue her BA degree even after the marriage. Though she is not happy with the marriage arrangements initially, she later believes that her lovable parents will not push her into something which would be wrong for her. Janu thought she will have reincarnation of life.

Marrars family could not accept Janu whole heartedly. The reasons are difficult to pinpoint, one among the reason is she is considered as Delhi brought up with broken Malayalam and modern ways of living against their tradition. Even using the words like thank you and sorry is considered as fashion and a Delhi usage in the Marrar family.

Look, you're not in Delhi any more. Like it or not, you now live in Kerala, so I suggest you drop all these fashionable please and thank yours. Here we don't believe in unnecessary style. She accompanied this with a short laugh, perhaps attempting to take the edge off it. But the edge was clearly there. It tore a tiny little scratch inside me somewhere, and suddenly the many times that I'd been told off for forgetting a little kindness or gratitude seemed so falsely, so pretentiously Delhi (AP 80).

Janu's culture is mocked and ridiculed. Janu has an arranged marriage with the consent of both the families. Later the Marrars being indifferent towards her and considering her as an outsider

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because she has no proper knowledge of Malayalam and she is unaware of the culture of Kerala. Janu feels alienated, yearns for love and care, adding up to the crisis, Suresh Marrar, Janaki's husband is not lovable and caring. He is much interested and focussed about his business and profits made through it. The personal time spent between the couple is much lesser. She feels much desperate. "It was clear I was going to have to spend more time with my mother-in-law and sister-in-law than with Suresh anyway" (AP 94). She has a sense of being uprooted, replanted, and alienated and belonging nowhere. . . Janu lacks intimacy or warmth with her in-laws.

Initially she had expectations to be loved by her in-laws family as the time moves she realizes that it is impossible. "That was what I thought happened after all weddings, a gradual wiping away of tears and more people to love and be loved by" (AP 39). Marriage and marital life is completely different and painful to her because of mixed identity. Being in Kerala and taking up the traditions of it, she feels alien to herself. Many diasporic individuals who have experienced this unhomeliness and destructed subjectivity tries to deal with it to regain subjectivity by constructing new sense of home by themselves.

Janaki for this purpose to gain the sense belonging, she herself decides to put her studies aside and start a family life in order to gain the affection of Marrars and to be considered one among them. She completely starts to adjust. Her priorities changes after marriage, she creates interest in learning cooking and pleasing the in-laws. Later decides having a child would put an end to her crisis and would gain recognition among the Marrars. Janu prepares herself to assimilate to the new culture.

Perhaps, just perhaps having a child would solve my problems more easily than a BA and a job. That's what I'd do, I'd have a child! She, as their grandchild, would be loved. Especially if she turned out to be much- longed-for first grandson. And, as his mother, I'd receive a sort of double-promotion, so to speak. Be elevated to the position of good mother and good daughter-in-law. And spin out the rest of my days basking in a kind of reflected glory and blissful motherhood. (AP 113)

The first attempt any Diaspora would make is to assimilate to the second culture. The dominant culture is assimilated by the diasporic individual. Cultural assimilation may be a quick or gradual change depending on the situation that prevails in the group or society. At times even assimilation becomes tedious and impossible.

The feeling of being miserable and desperate makes her to attempt to gain recognition through a child, even though unborn. Through this Misra brings out the desperate situation of Janaki who strives for attention and longs for love. But even the news of being pregnant does not change the relationship with Suresh, his completely indifferent nature and Suresh's escapism from his marital relationship annoys Janaki. The relationship between Suresh and Janaki can be identified with the word companionship. Janu has expectations that her husband's attitude will change towards her at least after his fatherhood. But what she receives is only disappointment.

My homesickness, my complaints about his family, my loneliness at his ever-lengthening trips away. Perhaps, saddled with a teenager many years his junior, it had been easiest for him to adopt an avuncular, half –amused and half-irritated attitude to marriage. ‘Companionship’ was probably the last word either of us would have chosen to describe our relationship. Would fatherhood change that? Make him want to spend more time with me, perhaps? (AP 114)

Janu is an adult grown up in Delhi who has experienced enough of it, has memories of home. The memory of Delhi and much-loved Arjun Mehta stays in her memory. Delhi gives her a sense that she has a place of belonging and the memory of Arjun is a reminder that she is capable of loving and being loved. The diasporic individual remembers the past to subside the present uneasiness. Memories soothe her, in the miserable present where everything seems alien and alienated. “Arjun was my most precious memory, without a doubt. The thing that I came back to every time I felt unloved, which was frequently! A reminder that I was capable of loving and being loved” (AP 115). The memories may be personal or a cultural memory on whole.

Janu’s crisis reaches the culmination when it is discovered that the baby girl delivered by her is mentally challenged. Janu’s belief and hope is again broken. She could never expect to gain recognition or power in the family through the child anymore. She decides to be the voice of the voiceless child. “She was my hope for the future” (AP 117). Complete assimilation occurs when new member of a society becomes indistinguishable from the members of the other group. The desire of the immigrant to assimilate is often disputed either by the members of the group or those of the dominant society.

Janu’s life in *Ancient Promises* can be compared with the life of Sudha in sister of my heart written by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, like Janu, Sudha also leaves her love life for happiness and future of Anju, she too has a miserable life and longs for love. Sudha though educated and brought up with modern way she completely tries her best to adopt her in-laws. She changes her nature for the happiness of the family. Sudha’s decision to take up motherhood can be compared with that of Janu’s. The situation gets worse when the foetus is detected to be a girl and must be aborted as her mother-in-law doesn’t want a female heir to the family.

Sudha’s seeking for support and care results in vain as her husband is indifferent like Suresh Marrar in *Ancient Promises*. So, in order to live a life for her unborn child, Sudha leaves her married life. Here assimilation to the cultural practices fails because she does not find any worth in accepting or practicing it. Sudha is considered as the other in her native culture.

Cultural difference does not take place when people migrate and interact with new culture, it happens when people have different perception on similar matters. This is based on traditional and modern perception and because of the people who belong to different ages. Sudha moves to England, for the sake of her daughter with hope to provide her the life of fulfilment and liberation. Since the society she lives in does not afford to treat her respectably.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 19:3 March 2019

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In *Miss New India* by Bharati Mukherjee the protagonist Anjali, She aspired to be an independent woman working in call centers, but like Janu's parents Anjali's parents have a view in which marriage is important than empowerment of a woman. But Anjali has a different view. Anjali's parents view can be well understood through this: "it is not a question of happiness, yours or ours. It's about our name our family reputation" (MNI 7). They are much concerned about the society and social prestige than the individual. On the other side Anjali's intention is focussed on herself. This difference in opinion creates identity crisis as like Janu's in *Ancient promises*.

Anjali's decision to take up her own stand to lead her life makes her to move to Bangalore in search of job. She faces turbulence in cultural identity in the alien land. She could not completely live with her own culture and could not even completely adopt the new culture. Turbulence and striving for identity persist throughout the work.

In all three novels the protagonists, Janaki, Anjali, and Sudha aspires to be an educated independent working woman but the traditional and patriarchal society they live in does not recognise them and gets them into arranged marriages considering it as a family reputation. Their fate and desire are twisted and turned after marriage, this makes them silent sufferers. Those arranged marriages in the traditional society are not based on the desire of the Bride and the Bride-groom but as a ritual based on family wealth to gain family reputation and other criteria which is completely absurd. Relationship becomes and accepted like a business contract where making profit is only concerned. When people take initiatives for their empowerment and move to alien land, they are caught up in identity crises and suffer. And their opinion is contrast to that of a dominant social group.

Suresh's criteria for the bride-to-be proves his attitude toward women and identifies himself as one among the men, with patriarchal intentions and no desire to love a woman wholeheartedly but to have her as means for social reputation and a companion for business progress.

I was also starting to discover that Suresh had said four things before leaving his parents to choose his wife.

1. She had to be pretty.
2. She had to be young so that she would 'adjust'.
3. She had to be able to speak English well, so that could take her to Bombay in the hope for expansion of his motel business.
4. Nothing else was too important. (AP 96)

Women change their priorities after marriage they do everything that her husband and family wants, they selflessly care for the family. Her desires and ambitions become like a meagre thing that is wished for. The importance of ambition degrades to just a mere wish when she becomes a married

woman. “It was amazing how my priorities had turned upside down in so short a period of time” (AP 100).

Janu is psychologically depressed because of her husband’s attitude and cultural difference. He does not even care to lend his ears to hear her speaking, “All I did know was that he had never been there when, as a young bride, I had needed his friendship and guidance” (AP 248). He does not consider it as important but Janu much needs it. He is not concerned towards her needs since he has his father to discuss about money and mother to discuss about household and his sister to share the leisure time. Janu is not considered and cared even for her economical needs. The cultural society does not even allow women to be economically independent.

I took the occasional bits of money that came my way, trying not to seem too interested. 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. (AP 101)

She is a silent sufferer as she thinks that her marriage is not only unbearable but also not worth living. Misra brings out the psyche of a women and the uncertain cultural identity among the people effectively through the character of Janu.

In psychological assumptions and investigations based on it. Identity crises takes place when there is loss of one’s own self and due to confusion based on cultural context. When their self-possession is broken, identity becomes issue to be sort out. Psychological analysis of an individual in diaporic community leads to a better understanding of their turbulence.

In the novel *Scandalous Secret*, Neha is the protagonist, a dropout from the Oxford University happily married to a business man Sharat. They lead a happy and blissful life with all material comforts and happily organises lavish parties and people love to attend their parties. Assimilation occurs all over the world, people look up to the centres of the country which is abundant with all sorts of growth in various fields. London is centre where all sorts of growth in education and other areas are evident. Because of the reputed oxford being located there, Neha migration to London is for education. She senses cultural difference and assimilates later. Parties organised by her in India is what she learnt from London. But her assimilation is not complete and it’s a partial assimilation.

Both are supportive and concerned with each other carrier and reputation. Sharat aspires to be a politician ambition to become an MP. Neha has her own private space to do what she desires. Sharat was different from the stereotypes. He loves his wife for her good-natured behaviour. “She was exactly as she seemed. With Neha, what you saw was what you got. There was no hidden agenda, no gossip, and never any secret deal-making, nothing underhand at all” (SS 6).

Sharat believes Neha does not have anything to hide from him, no gossips or not a secret deal-making. When he met Neha for the first time before marriage, Sharat finds that both their characters are alike and that both have an urge to help the needy. He feels Neha is a perfect companion for him and hopes to set up a lovable home with family and friends.

You and I are of same type, Neha darling. Thank god we both enjoy people and have the same genuine urge to help humanity...together we should make a beautiful home where our friends and family and, in fact, all kinds of needy people will always find an open door...I feel so grateful that you have agreed to marry me. Not only do I love you but you are my perfect companion... (SS 30-31)

Though Sharat and Neha are happily married for many years they do not have a child. "Not having any children of their own, the scandal of a secret child would rock Neha and Sharat's world and destroy Sharat's political ambitions and, surely, their marriage too. It was too terrifying to bear thinking about" (SS 26-27).

Neha had a dream and ambition to graduate from Oxford University. Neha return to India without completing the course, with the reason that she was not treated well by her classmates in Oxford. The betrayal of her professor, she becoming pregnant before marriage, and that she could not reveal about her pregnancy before marriage. The situation is worsened because of the cultural difference. Her culture is different from that of the professor's. Her inability to understand the intention of the professor is because of the difference in cultural practice. All this make her to drop education and to stay at her friend's place till the delivery and soon after delivery abandons the child by leaving the child in orphanage. Because of her fear about future and identity in the society.

And so, it was that, with all the charmed events that had gradually come after her return from England, Neha had eventually given her parents little cause for complaint, they now probably barely even remembered that oxford dream they all once shared. The topic hardly ever came up. It would be ridiculous indeed to harp on about that, given how Neha's life had eventually turned out. Oh yes, today, seeing Neha return to Prithviraj Road home in a gleaming Mercedes car, even Mama would be forced to admit that-apart from not having to borne a child so far- her daughter's life was pretty immaculate too. (SS 72)

Neha's journey to India is with the hope to get rid of the turbulence she faced in London. The event that happens after her return from England makes herself and her parents to forget about Oxford. Neha is blessed to marry a lovable person like Sharat. Neha lives with comforts and love where her parents feel proud and happy thinking about her marital life. But the secret about the trauma in England is hidden from her parents too. It is not only the family and luxury that comforts her it is the culture in India that gives her a sense of security. She could relate herself with the community in India, but not with the society which is alien to her in London.

Neha's daughter Sonya who is separated from her is adopted by Richard Shaw and Laura in Orpington. She urges to find her biological mother somehow manages to find that her mother is an Indian but could not find any further details. Though she is well brought up, loved and treated like a princess by the adopted parents. She is always inquisitive to know about her original origin. But had no idea about her father, some has an opinion that he may be a Scottish or English man.

Her biological mother was of Indian origin and her biological father Anglo-Saxon. Although she knew very little further detail, Sonya had always imagined that her biological mother was the sort who lived somewhere like Southall or tooting, a woman suppressed and cowed-down and forced into giving up her illegitimate but adored love child by a cruelly conservative family who hated the idea of a cross-cultural and mixed-race union. (SS 57)

Her turbulence in identity irritates her often. She plans to have a trip to India to find her birth mother. She is already warned by the social worker at adoption centre in England, that her feeling would be a rollercoaster in search of birth parents and identity. But Sonya believes India would her 'Home' since her mother belongs, and her looks are alike Indians. Every migrant is not in a same position. Sonya's first impression about India is favourable but later both Estella and Sonya has fear and uncertainty for being in foreign soil. It is not a mere holiday trip for Sonya but it is her mission in search of identity. "She needed to have some answers before she embarked on the next chapter of her life. For some reason, she felt it imperative to know where she had come from before she set off for university to seek her own identity" (SS 112).

Sonya's admission in Oxford University is much adequate for her reputation but she longs to know her identity by finding her mother who cruelly abandoned her and never came back once to know how she is.

Sonya is with mixed look of Indian and foreign. Her look adds up to crisis as she cannot be completely considered as Indian or a foreigner. "You could even be Indian with your long black-black hair and tanned skin. Only your big blue eyes make you look like a foreigner" (SS 116). Because of the look that is different from her adoptive parents it was assured that she is adopted. This creates uncertainty in belongingness; Sonya was not in the priority list of the adoptive parents because of her mixed identity, people do not consider it as ideal to adopt a child with mixed race. But Laura and Richard comes forward to adopt her. They feel broken when their much-adored child is embarking in search of woman who heartlessly abandoned her. They initially restricted Sonya in finding her birth mother, because of the fear that they would lose their identity as a mother and father. Sonya loves Richard and Laura but her inquisitiveness about her birth makes her to take up a tedious journey. Sonya's various attempts to find Neha's address includes pretending like Oxford friend to send her Christmas card. Finally, she succeeds in that.

Sonya takes up a painful process of self-discovery. Sonya is desperate for identity, when she understands that her mother is not desperate or poor or uneducated, Sonya is raged to anger. Which

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 19:3 March 2019

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she thought would be the reasons for abandoning her. Sonya becomes vulnerable psychologically when she sees a woman, who is reason for all her suffering and insecurity leading a life with all comforts and warmth. “It was just that this whole trip was turning out to be nothing like she imagined, and she couldn’t contain her frustration any more” (SS 200). She mourns on someone’s happiness and welfare because of her frustration.

Neha also have to undergo a painful process where she was initially cheated by a man in foreign land and later the painful delivery and much more painful thought to abandon her baby. Also have to forsake her friends and much more, the Oxford dream which she has from the age of six “I was weeping for myself and the mess I had got myself into; my heartbreak over Alastair and the end of not just my Oxford dream, but of youth and hope itself” (SS 249).

Keshav the person, whom Sonya met in India, is curious to know whether Sonya is from Italy or Turkish origin as she does not look like English. To Estella and others this ambiguousness looks funny and seems like a joke, but Sonya feels insulted. Being so desperate in a situation with frustration and the feeling being alienated she believes Keshav and love to get along with him, she feels herself reaching for Keshav’s arm whenever the opportunity rises. Despite of being half Indian Sonya never felt terrible or saddened when she heard about the brutal killing of Indians by the British but being physically present in India, she realises that and feels close to the soil. Physically present in an alien land makes her to realise the pain and sufferings of the people. Keshav acts as an agent for her happiness in a situation which torments her. She is also in need of something to help distract her from everything which brought her to India. She believes a person who is completely different from her world. “For being so wonderful to me through this emotional mess I’ve got myself into. For making me forget my problems. For being the most-gentle, and generous friend . . .” (SS 246).

Keshav acts as if he wants to help Sonya and learns everything about Neha and her wealth. Later blackmails Neha and Sharat threatening them about the past. Keshav’s indifferent behaviour adds on Sonya’s misery in an unfamiliar land.

In a land where Neha does not belong it was possible for her to abandon the child. But in land where he belongs, Sharat was not able to break up his marriage thinking about all the emotional ties he has with his parents. This emotional tie and belongingness saves the marital relationship of Neha and Sharat.

He really did need some quiet time to reassess his marriage and his life before he could deal with the supplications of people like Neha, or his parents for that matter. Sharat imagined the pain his parents would go through if he and Neha broke up, They were fond of her and, even if they wanted to stand by his decision, broken marriages did not belong anywhere in their orderly and conservative world. (SS 314)

Neha also has crisis in identity initially, but she feels belonging to her culture in India since she is able to exert control over the environment. Sonya though has a lovable family and education in

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a reputed University, familiar culture and friends. She wants to find her true identity because of her inner self which is inquisitive for her birth mother. As like Neha, Janu could not exert power in a culture of her own, so she has a sense of being rootless. Janaki undergoes otherness within herself.

Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking identity as an already accomplished fact, which new cultural practices then represent we should think instead, of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation. (Mongia 110).

Thus, belongingness does not necessarily depend on being within the familiarity of one's cultural fold. It is the extent of control one wrests over one's environment that determines the extent of one's rootedness or lack of it.

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