

Privacy Settings

We use cookies to optimize our website and our service.

- Functional
- Statistics
- Marketing

Save

Functional only

Accept all

Jaishree Misra | United Kingdom



[caption id="attachment_36528" align="alignright" width="336"]

832 250 163 1 1256

f Share t Tweet in Share g +1 < Share

Jaishree Misra's short story received 1,256

votes. This image was captured 1 September 2013 at 11:59 pm (Singapore SGT).[/caption]

[caption id="attachment_35670" align="alignnone" width="240"]

 Jaishree Misra, United Kingdom Jaishree Misra, United Kingdom[/caption]

When Mother Went to Vienna

A short story by Jaishree Misra

Whenever Mother came to visit me from India, a jaunt to somewhere in Europe had become de rigueur. Not that it was compulsory or anything. Quite the reverse, in fact, as it was real warm-glow stuff, lavishing a bit of attention on my mother whom I only saw once a year. Besides, I never forgot how Mother had battled Father when I had wanted to go to abroad for university and I reckoned this was the sort of reward that would have made that fight worthwhile to her, especially now that I had a good job and poor Father was dead.

Anyway, Mother was due to come, as she did every other year, so she could escape Delhi as the June temperatures climbed into the forties.

Our customary phone conversation took place:

‘So Mother, where to this time?’

‘Oho, beti, you don’t need to take me anywhere. I am actually quite happy to sit in your flat in London.’

‘But you said you’ve done everything in London and are bored with it now.’

‘Hanh, now that is true. Lion King and London Eye and the Towers and all ... I am so lucky to have seen everything there. But I am happy to be in your flat. Really.’

‘Nonsense, Mother. Why should you come all the way here just to sit at home while I’m at work? C’mon, choose a destination and I’ll book the hotel and tickets this weekend.’

‘What a nice daughter I have really. Your father would be *so* proud of you, looking after your mother and taking her all over these Europe places he never got to see ...’ Mother paused at this point and I wondered if her chin was crumpling as it often did at mention of my father’s early demise. Then, typically, she cheered up. ‘Destination ... let’s see now ... hanh, I know, beti. I was just thinking the other day that I have never seen Vienna. I would love to see Vienna. Is that a very expensive place? If it is very expensive, then I don’t want to go, okay?’

‘Don’t worry about expense, Mother. I’ll find us a nice, modest hotel in town.’

Vienna seemed a curious choice, especially for a staunch vegetarian like my mother, but I recalled that we had watched the dvd of ‘Amadeus’ the last time she was in England. Mother had got

inordinately interested in Mozart after that, playing my Mozart Collection endlessly for a few days. Perhaps that explained this interest in Vienna.

I did the bookings well in advance of Mother's arrival in London. As I ran off the tickets on my office printer, I felt a small frisson of excitement as I too had never visited Austria before and knew very little about it. A Google search revealed that a world food fair would be on in July too; apparently, the only time to be a vegetarian in Vienna. I breathed a sigh of relief. Finding Indian food was always the hardest part of travelling around Europe with Mother, although locating toilets on the hour and teaching her to use those coin-operated ones came pretty close.

Europe was, however, clearly growing on Mother. Last year I had taken her for a weekend in Paris on Eurostar and, the year before that, to Zurich when I had a work assignment and both times – despite knowing next to nothing about the local languages or culture – my mother had taken on these foreign cities without a trace of nervousness, talking loudly to the locals in a mish-mash of Hindi and English and preening like a model if anyone admired her sari.

Well, if she had taken on the French and the Swiss with such verve, we would hopefully manage on this occasion too. I pictured my irrepressible mother cheerily bumbling her way through Teutonic discipline and correctness and hastily pushed the images that materialised to the back of my mind. She had not even bothered to glance at the Rough Guide to Vienna that I had found in the library, by now almost cocky about her ability to charm her way around a strange city.

We would *manage*, I repeated in my head like a mantra.

Vienna was glowing with soft sunshine when we landed. From the window of our taxi, Mother gazed in satisfaction at the grand baroque architecture that looked like intricate stage sets. Then she turned to me, her eyes shining.

'You know, beti, I have always, *always* wanted to come to Vienna. It has been a dream, ever since Meenu told me about how beautiful the canals are, and how handsome the men who row those boats ... what do you call them here in Italy ... hahn, gondolas, na?'

Loved the twist at the end! And don't forget Austria is not Australia ;)

<http://t.co/Xcec97yDrN> via @culture360_asef #shortstory

– Pinch (@iampinch) August 19, 2013

The shortlisted stories have been selected by a panel of judges appointed by the Ubud Writers & Readers Festival. The views expressed in the shortlisted stories are strictly those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF). The copyright of this story remains with the author.

[RETURN TO SHORT STORY CONTEST HOMEPAGE](#) ▶

SIMILAR CONTENT

POSTED ON
18 AUG 2013

Short Story: Smile | Pimpan Nuallak | United Kingdom

#ASEFCulture

NEWS
UNITED KINGDOM

BY CLAIRE WILSON
25 AUG 2015

A foot in each place: Managing the jet set life between Asia and Europe

FEATURES
AUSTRIA CHINA JAPAN UNITED KINGDOM

POSTED ON
19 AUG 2013

NEWS
MALAYSIA

BY MAGALI AN BERTHON
01 OCT 2014

Between two-cultures : Euro-Asian creative personalities (part I)



FEATURES
FRANCE PHILIPPINES UNITED KINGDOM VIET NAM

BY NAIMA MORELLI
13 JUN 2018

Kartika Affandi: 9 Ways of Seeing | Interview with videomaker Christopher Basile



INSIGHTS

POSTED ON
19 AUG 2013

Short Story: In My Own Country | Rajith Savanadasa | Australia

#ASEFCulture

NEWS
AUSTRALIA

COUNTRY
UNITED KINGDOM

DISCIPLINE
LITERATURE

ABOUT ASEF CULTURE360

culture360.asef.org brings Asia and Europe closer by providing information, facilitating dialogue and stimulating reflection on the arts and culture of the two regions.

[MORE ABOUT ASEF CULTURE360](#) | [FAQ](#) | [f](#) [X](#) [@](#)

This website was created and maintained with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.



About us
Team
Partners
FAQ
Brand guidelines

[How to partner with us](#)

[Contact us](#)

[#ASEFCulture](#)

ASIA-EUROPE FOUNDATION (ASEF) 2017 | [TERMS OF SERVICE & PRIVACY POLICY](#) | [CREATIVE COMMONS
ATTRIBUTION - NON COMMERCIAL SHARE](#)