

Comprehending the Intense of Trauma from Anuradha Roy's: the Folded Earth



S. Leena Devanesam, V. Manimozhi

Abstract: *Life is a mixture of happiness and sadness. As a day and night comprise for a better living of creatures; life is made up of joy and grief. No road is without ups and downs; similarly, life is shaped with peace and horror. Anything consumed beyond the limit makes the creature to fall sick immaterial of whether it's hygienic or less contaminated. Here, the author cites a young aged widow suffering out of trauma after her loveable husband's demise. She forgoes her caring parents, a luxurious comforting life for her love. She left behind all the worldly needs as she was entangled with a passion for love. She couldn't trace and get an answer about whether her husband loved her as much as she loved him. Her married life didn't last long. Even though she was at twenty-four, the deceased news of her husband put an end to her life. This paper aims to provide evidence of a widow's traumatic experiences. In general, widows majorly struggle out of various factors such as anxiety, depression and suicidal. In this paper, our protagonist suffers with anxiety and slight depression.*

Keywords: *love, mountaineering, trauma, husband, terror, fear, horror.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Anuradha Roy had won the Economist Crossword Prize for Fiction for her novel, *The Folded Earth*, which was nominated for several other prizes including the 2011 Man Asia. The story was narrated by Maya, a "sick-thin coffee-coffee-coloured" young Hindu woman disinherited by an industrialist father for marrying a Christian. Eventhough she was rich the passionate love which she had on her husband made her be firm, strong enough to step out of her house and tuned her mind to stand still to face the trials of life till the end.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Descriptive Method is adopted. India is a country with traditional customs where widowhood is unrespected. The sudden demise of their loved ones is very much unacceptable by them. They are troubled at regular intervals by memories. This paper clearly states how far a widow would suffer on the whole and entangled of past memories causing especially depression, anxiety, suicidality. Few measures are to be adopted by the respective individual to overcome the traumatic memories. Even Hopkins Symptom Checklist and the M.I.N.I. to assess the risk of traumatic symptoms are also used to know the protagonist traumatic status.

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III. MAYA - DIASPORA WOMAN

She was born to a wealthy family. During her childhood, she was the pet of her father. Instead of a son her father developed perverse pride in her for winning all the prizes in school and adored her as a devotee, returning from work despite his bad right leg, he scooped her up and swung in the air. Normally, he called her Princess and introduced to the visitors of the factory. "Introduced me to some visiting grown-ups with a flourish: Meet the Princess of Begumpet Pickles! One day she will become the first female industrial magnate of this country."pg63 Her father owned pickle factories inherited from her grandpa, a landowner who had grown rice, sugarcane along the Krishna river rented out tenements, sold arrack, owned a big stone-flagged house, surrounded with mango orchards, and trees of amla, tamarind, chikoo and guava. By the time, her father became young the mango trees fruited, hence her grandpa started out the pickle business. She could hardly remember that she worked in one of her factory for a small salary. Her father tried for business opportunities and established three factories across Andhra Pradesh in which mango, ginger, gongura, lime and bitter gourd pickles were made. Labelled with spices handed down the generations, the pickles became famous throughout the country. Being nineteen years old, she was not even permitted to go to college and informed that she suffered out of contagious chickenpox avoided all visitors. He submitted a medical certificate to the college Principal. She was not allowed to meet friends, outings, telephone calls etc. Even though she was his daughter his cold eyes gazed over her body as if he tried to gauge which parts of it Michael had touched. As he restricted her ruthlessly, she escaped within a fortnight from him. So, she was disowned by her caring father formally because she had married Michael, a Christian. Her father felt abhorrent since his son-in-law was of a different religion. She married the love of her life, crossing the boundaries set by society, religion, and caste. This definitely points out the system of patriarchy, racism and class discrimination is depicted in the novel. She detached herself from her birthplace and parents for the sake of her love for Michael. Father rejected the relationship with his only daughter to keep up the status and dignity in society. Her mother understood the feelings of her daughter and supported her to get married to her love as she wanted her daughter to lead a happy life of her choice. As a wife, she was under her husband and couldn't support her daughter outwardly. Maya's mother became helpless as she followed the patriarch family system.



Maya's struggle started with her love marriage with Michael, a Christian which was not accepted by her father, society, religion, and custom. But Maya's mother playing the role of a submissive mother couldn't overcome her husband's order; she was split between the orderly words of the husband and her love for her daughter. She had to meet her secretly without the knowledge of her husband "My mother was too intimidated by him to do more than steal out for occasional trysts with me at a temple."(Pg 11) Both families stayed away during her wedding only his two young rebellious cousins accompanied them. The mad love on Michael made her overlook all the materialistic things. She was joyous to see the happy light in Michael's eyes. "In all, our wedding cost us under five hundred rupees. but I had cared only for the happy light in Michael's eyes, the scent of the flowers in the garlands he had brought for my hair and my neck, and the way he had pressed against me in the cramped seat of the rickshaw on our way to our newly-rented rooms."(Pg13) She came to know after her marriage that her husband was crazy in mountaineering expeditions and made it as his profession out of passion. "My rival in love was not a woman but a mountain range."(Pg6). "I knew from our student days together that Michael trekked and climbed. What I had not known was that his need for me" (Pg7). "It would be impossible for me to understand why until I experienced it, Michael told me, and one day I would." (Pg7). Once he decided to trek to Roopkund, a lake in the Himalaya at about 16000 feet which could be reached by climbing towards the Trishul, a snow peak that was more than 22,000 feet high. Michael knew the risk of climbing Roopkund that a park ranger stumbled, more than six hundred people died there in the ninth century and their bones, skulls float each time when the lake melts during monsoon. He had tried once and failed in it due to bad weather. Next time he prepared well for the trek with better types of equipment. He died on in his mountaineering expeditions to Roopkund for the second time. She got the death news through her Landlord.

IV. TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES OF MAYA

The night when she heard the death of her husband she didn't know why she entered the bathroom and flung handfuls of water at her as though there were fire and drought in her body veins and muscles. She felt as if her face had been ravaged, burned away. "Water was trickling off my face that day. There were no tears. I did not know why I was in the bathroom or why I had flung handfuls of water at myself, if my body had been turned inside out at that moment, there would have been fire and drought in place of veins and muscles. My face should have been ravaged, burned away."(Pg46) It was informed to her that Michael's body was found near to the lake, after the three days search. He was separated from his troop due to landslides, rain, and snowstorms. As his ankle was broken he was unable to move to a less exposed place. When found his face was burned black by heavy cold and became unrecognisable. It was told her that they cremated him down the foothills in a small village. The mountaineering institute sent a ghee tin full of his ashes, belongings which they found his dead body beside. Since she wanted to know

about her husband's death details, she started to write in a sheet of paper where she saw frozen black faces due to cold and heard the sound crack of the ankle bone. "Faces frozen black with cold appeared before me. I heard the crack of bone as Michael's ankle snapped."(Pg10) Later she became terrible restless so neither wrote the letter nor telephoned to the institute. Her father would have accepted her if she could have pleaded, sought an excuse for the wrongdoings and pardon for following the misguidance. Her mother passed away two years after Michael's death. Mother had accused her in the letters for not forgiving her parents and rejecting home. Her mother passed away two years after Michael's death. Mother had accused her in the letters for not forgiving her parents and rejecting home. Being shattered in life at a young age of twenty-four felt that life was totally completed; hence she could hardly even remember how many times she wandered down the streets. The death news of Michael made her to behave insanely "I had been out all day on scorching streets, walking at random, getting into buses without looking where they were going, pausing at parks, shops, then walking on, until shops shut and traffic thinned"(Pg10-11) which depicted the pathetic status of a young widow and her restless condition. She is left in solitude to face the terrible truth of her loneliness. The heroine Maya was attacked by mental trauma after the death of her young loveable husband. As she was much craze on Michael, her husband, soon after her husband's death she started to feel horror, terror. Once while she was nearing Michael's priest father Joseph's office staircase which was situated next to a pool, crossing that pavement her eyes got blurred and saw human skeletons and bones at the edges of the pool, on the green tiles: skulls, clavicles, fibulas, tibia and femurs. Still, there were Mandibles and ribs, foot and hand phalanges with ancient silver toe rings and gold finger rings on them. Necklaces of gold beads intertwined with vertebrae, skulls at the bottom of the pool, turning their blind gaze this way in the clear water, being magnified. Next, to her feet, she saw Michael's face streaming away in dissolving ribbons and being raised from the water asked her in a French accent whether she was alright. As in the dream, she began to fall dizzily from a crumbled seat. Later she realised that her face was wet with tears and running nose, hair had been dishevelled and hurried up to meet Michael's Priest. Roy points out clearly the working of trauma in Maya, "My eyes blurred and I began to see human skeletons and bones at the edges of the pool, on the green tiles: skulls, clavicles, fibulas, tibia, and femurs. Mandibles and ribs, foot and hand phalanges with ancient silver toe ring on them still. Necklaces of gold beads intertwined with vertebrae. I saw skulls at the bottom of the pool, turning their blind gaze this way and that in the clear water, magnified by it. They bobbed to the surface. One of them splashed to the edge of the pool, next to my feet, and the face streaming away from it in dissolving ribbons was Michael's. The step I was sitting on crumbled and I began to fall dizzily through a vast sky, as you do in dreams. It was only when a face rose from the water close to my feet and in a French accent said, "Are you alright?"

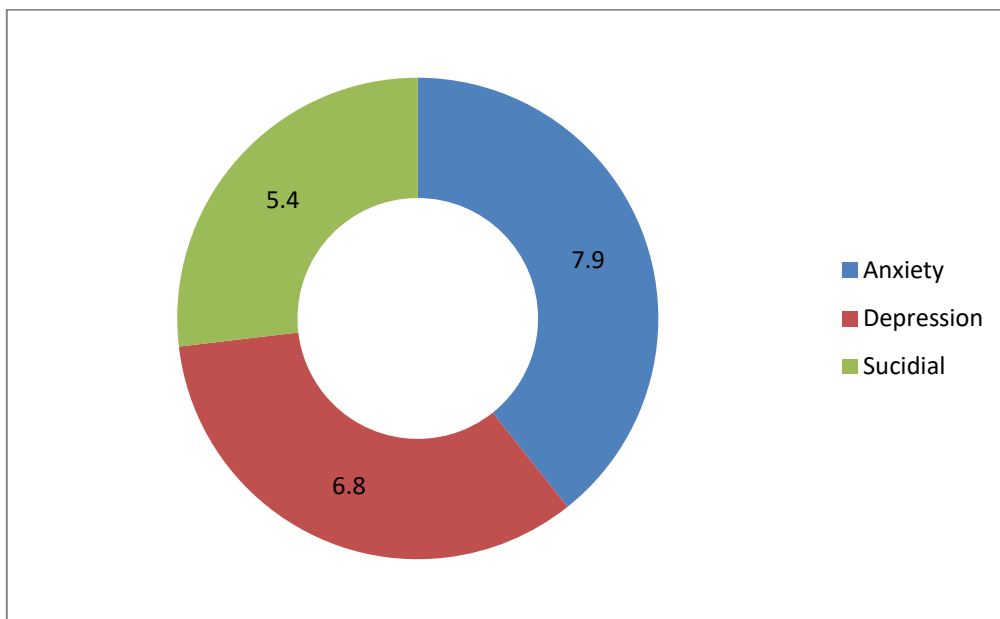
That I realised my face was wet with tears, my nose was running, my hair was dishevelled, and I was late for Michael’s priest.”(Pg14&15) In horror, she ran the stairs of Father Joseph’s room and seated on a chair. There she saw a photo of a house the picture of Trishul, and at its base Roopkund, the Phantom-Lake. She remembered the dream of Michael which he had described a long time ago. In the dream, he had seen a similar house where both resided looking at the Trishul emboss on the sky as the sunshine on its three one after the other. “A house with a trident-shaped peak framed in its window, Michael had said: a house that looked out at the Trishul, and at its base Roopkund, the phantom-like. He had seen such a house once, he had told me where it was. He had dreamed we would live there and wake each morning looking at the Trishul emboss itself on the sky as the sunlit its three tips one by one.”(Pg15) Every day sounded heavy for her. She had kept two toothbrushes which Michael had left behind, the soap dish; even the steel tap, utilitarian objects and two of his shirts were made to hang in the cupboard so that she would bury her face in it and feel the smell of him until his adventurous return. She viewed the new camera bag offered for him from his office and lost her interest in adventures.

She came to know Diwan Sahib’s nephew Veer as a professional climber taking other people on climbs and treks, now had planned to start a new trekking company. One day, Veer arranged a slideshow using the projector about the trekked snowy areas in which she misrecognised

the place as Roopkund which was full of brown rock and white snow rising from the sheets of ice. Seeing the slides she recollected the last minutes of Michael’s death at Roopkund. By trembling, she felt the icy winds curl around fingertips, toes, face and in the heart. She was merely in the state of crying out of fear and buried her ears inside the shawl with a tight knot in her throat. She was reminded of his date and the closeness of them during the last trip of Michael by train. The same night she woke in sweat due to a fearful dream in which skulls rolled down the water, and a woman hooded in an anorak, clawing herself up in a snow slope, Veer was photographing her; suddenly the woman’s face turned into Michael’s and was falling, toppling over the edge of the slope, fell through the white space towards the water. “Then the woman’s face turned into Michael’s and suddenly he was falling, toppling over the edge of the slope, and as he fell through the white space towards the water.”(Pg88)

To know the protagonist Traumatic Status as per Statistical data, Hopkins Symptom Checklist is selected. As per the below figure Maya ranges under **Anxiety**.

Hopkins Symptom Checklist has been taken to assess Widow’s traumatic events like depression and anxiety symptoms, and the M.I.N.I. to assess risk of suicidality with a mean (n=194)



V. RESULT

Every man has worries. When it exceeds it becomes trauma causing drastic disturbing experiences in life. Normally speaking in the case of losing a beloved spouse a widow is half - dead, and they wouldn’t have anticipated the changes in their life. When they are entangled with extreme grief and bereavement; automatically become traumatized. None is an exception and cannot escape. The remedies from such traumatic experiences couldn’t be attained in a short span, but still, it is possible in the long run depending upon the person. The recovery from the past traumatic memories depends on the

affected person’s physical health, status of mental illness, network of friends etc. Even the usage of antidepressant would be helpful. Above all, the goal which he/she has to attain must reckon in their thoughts continuously, aiming the proposed target, would possibly drive out or much lessen the remembrance of past memories.

VI. CONCLUSION

Every human is occupied with worries immaterial of rich or poor. Each individual is stressed and worried according to their needs, the environment they're surrounded with. No man is free from worries. When worries are not getting resolved and it's continued with deep disturbance it is termed as trauma. The main protagonist Maya, the pampered child of a wealthy, caring family sacrificed the well-being of becoming a female industrialist. The blind love on Michael made her leave the caring, loving parents. Her love didn't last for long years. Her husband was deceased in a mountaineering trek because the death was sudden, unexpected and graphics, it was too difficult for her to assimilate the feelings and images all at once; hence she was traumatized by the loss of her husband. The in-depth love on her husband disturbed her throughout all days. The crazy love of her on him was the main cause for her traumatisation. Though she was experiencing trauma out of horror, terror, fear; she recollected the memories of Michael now and then. Even though her life ended with six years of marriage, a very short span of time the mad love which she had on him constantly became the root cause of her trauma which triggered not only terror, a sense of loss, of overwhelming helplessness, and loss of safety.

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Author's Introduction

Ms. Leena Devanesam pursued her Master of Philosophy at Madurai Kamaraj University. She is serving the student community for past 24 years. At present she is the Head of English Department at Sri Durgadevi Polytechnic College and pursuing her Ph. D. research studies in English Language and Literature. She has co-authored the books entitled *Communication English*, *Communication and Life Skills* and *Life and Employability Skills* for Polytechnic Colleges since 2011. She has published four research papers in UGC approved International Journals and two Scopus index Journals.