



RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Silent Scars: Child Sexual Abuse and the Burden of Memory in Anuradha Roy's *Sleeping on Jupiter*

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Abstract

Anuradha Roy's 2015 published *Sleeping on Jupiter* depicts the hollows of society and uncovers the horrors and trauma individuals and the marginalized community suffered in Postcolonial times. It also shows the amalgamation of Eastern and Western contexts and the vulnerability of children. Trauma and its associated memories have been identified as causative agents in the emergence of severe mental health disorders, including hallucinations. Trauma can extend beyond the context of armed conflict and may materialize within the domestic sphere, irrespective of external factors. The capacity of literature to portray comprehensive traumatic experiences is a crucial aspect. The adverse impact of emotional warfare on society is considered more severe than physical violence, making it the most critical conflict that requires attention. The occurrence of childhood trauma not only increases the likelihood of developing psychotic experiences in the future but also influences the specific shape that these experiences may take. Unlike physical wounds, those emotional wounds that have not healed are not visible, and we do not have a sure-fire simple band-aid for it. Nomita, the child protagonist in *Sleeping on Jupiter*, started living in survival mode after she departed from her mother, who abandoned her; her father was brutally murdered in front of her. The present study investigates the instances of violence encountered by the juvenile protagonist and her female counterparts, encompassing physical and psychological dimensions.

Keywords: Traumatic Memories, Trauma, Child Sexual Abuse, Hallucination, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, Vulnerability, Memory.

Introduction

Trauma, as depicted in literature, is predominantly psychological. The concept pertains to psychological distress that arises from a distressing occurrence, such as armed conflict, mistreatment, bodily, mental, or sexual maltreatment, intimidation, familial violence, environmental calamities, unforeseen bereavement, and, notably, early-life events. Undoubtedly, following years of professional experience, the academics who spearheaded the interdisciplinary field of trauma studies and literature embarked on a thorough investigation of the topic. The

examination of trauma remains a topic of debate within academic circles; however, numerous scholars have provided lucid definitions. Christa Schonfelder, in her book *Wounds and Word*, says, "Originally situated in the domain of medicine and then psychology, the study of trauma has, over the last few decades, become relevant in literary and cultural studies. Indeed, as trauma has become a prominent topos in life writing and fiction, trauma studies have emerged as a new field within the humanities" (Schonfelder, 2013, p.28). The representation of traumatic events is not only drawn from instances of military conflicts, such as world wars, the terrorist attack, the 9/11 attack, the Cold War, and other events of a similar kind. It is indisputable that the term 'trauma' denotes the result of an intangible injury or imperceptible human distress. The idea of 'trauma' is now being investigated in various academic fields and subfields across the board. This trend is expected to continue. The purpose of this research is to shed light on the psychological anguish that people suffer, with a particular emphasis on providing a voice to those whose voices have been repressed and providing a voice to those whose voices have been hushed.

Theoretical Framework

After the publication of *Unclaimed Experiences* in 1996 by Cathy Caruth, there was a discernible uptick in interest

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in what is known as 'trauma theory' in literary criticism. Trauma may express itself inside the boundaries of a family environment, regardless of the external forces present. Trauma is not limited to the context of war. The potential of different writing pieces to convey different kinds of pain gives literature its value as a medium. The interdisciplinary study of traumatic experiences and literature in contemporary times intrinsically involves psychoanalytic concepts, which results in a fusion of literary works and psychoanalytic points of view.

Trauma theory provides a strategy for analyzing and analyzing a particular text or literary work by considering various traumatic aspects, experiences, circumstances, and events. Psychologists developed this approach. Sigmund Freud's earlier psychoanalytic and psychological ideas were a foundation for creating the theory of trauma, which did not originate independently but instead built upon Freud's earlier work. These well-established ideas served as a source of motivation for its proponents and supporters as they attempted to adequately express the notion of trauma. Freud's study investigates the etiology of "Hysteria," which involves the memory of sexual abuse, the sense of dread and anxiety, the development of unsettling pictures that are suggestive of the implicit trauma memory, and the manifestation of intrusive thoughts. According to Freud, traumatic experiences don't become available to awareness until they reoccur in the form of recurring nightmares and actions that the survivor engages in repeatedly.

The study of trauma unveils a realm previously unexplored by the observer, presenting a tragic opportunity to perceive what would otherwise remain concealed. From a theoretical standpoint, it can be argued that the experience of trauma at the individual level resembles the occurrence of crisis at the societal level. Ron Eyerman's article "Social Theory and Trauma" examines the various symptoms exhibited by individuals who have experienced a traumatic event, including an inability to recollect or acknowledge the incident. The term "period of latency" was coined by Freud to formulate a dynamic model of trauma to account for the phenomenon of forgetting. The concept in question is commonly attributed to Freud as its originator. The temporal boundaries of the latency phase, characterized by the persistence of effects from an initial experience despite their inactivity, remain elusive and indeterminate, spanning a variable duration that may extend from a few days to multiple years. During this phase, individuals who have experienced trauma may exhibit a normative demeanor while engaging in their customary routines. The consequences of the initial experience will ultimately manifest themselves and become evident through the manifestation of nightmares or other forms of abnormal behavior that defy explanation. This hypothetical scenario could occur at a future time.

Methodology

The methodology for the study will encompass a literary analysis framed within the context of trauma theory, focusing on the intersection of traumatic experiences and their representation in literature. Also, a thorough conduct of existing literature on trauma theory since the publication of Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experiences* in 1996. The text selection was done on the basis of their ability to illustrate various aspects of trauma especially childhood trauma. The use of interdisciplinary insights, particularly referencing Ron Eyerman's work on trauma, to understand the broader implications of individual traumatic experiences within societal contexts.

Results

The selected literary work vividly illustrates the multifaceted nature of trauma, showcasing its impact on children. The thematic exploration demonstrates how characters in the chosen text exhibit symptoms of trauma. This study will contribute to the evolving field of trauma theory by confirming the interdisciplinary nature of trauma studies, bridging literature and psychology, and emphasizing the importance of understanding trauma as a complex, multifaceted phenomenon.

Discussion

According to Joshua Pederson's publication titled "Speak, Trauma: Towards a Revised Understanding of Literary Trauma Theory," he quotes Caruth defines trauma as an exceedingly distressing occurrence, causing the mind to be incapable of processing it in a typical manner. Cathy Caruth says that trauma "is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that it is very unassimilated nature- the way it was precisely not known in the first instance - returns to haunt the survivor later on" (*Unclaimed Experiences*, 1996, 4). Following the incident, the individual affected may experience a complete loss of memory regarding the occurrence. When recollections of the traumatic event resurface, they frequently manifest in a non-linguistic manner, rendering the sufferer incapable of articulating them through language. According to Pederson (2017), Caruth argues that imaginative literature, which employs figural language instead of literal language, can articulate trauma in ways that conventional, discursive language cannot. Caruth further contends that fiction serves as a means of empowering traumatized individuals and communities by providing them with a voice.

Anuradha Roy has a total of five books published under her name. At the beginning of her academic career, she attended Presidency College in Kolkata, India, where she majored in literature. Subsequently, she attended Cambridge University in the United Kingdom. Most of Anuradha Roy's published works focus on the appearance of mental health

symptoms that may be attributed to traumatic situations. These symptoms can include but are not limited to anxiety, despair, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). It is generally agreed that emotional warfare is more destructive to society than acts of physical violence. As a result, this kind of conflict is the most crucial one that must be resolved. During India's partition and subsequent independence, the country struggled with several concerns, including mass murders, sectarian violence, economic downturns, and other associated problems. There is an immediate and compelling need present within contemporary Indian culture to have a conversation about issues pertaining to one's mental health. This is expressed in the book by Anuradha Roy, in which she covers sensitive topics such as the sexual abuse of children and the trauma they experience. Anuradha Roy's *Sleeping on Jupiter* (2015) denounces how violence against children in India is structured systematically. Johan Galtung is credited with having coined the term 'structural violence'. Galtung, in the article "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research," posited that the adverse influence of communal organizations and their structures on marginalized communities could be attributed to structural violence. The concept of structural violence facilitates a more detailed examination of the multifaceted societal, cultural, governmental, financial, and historical factors that contribute to disparities and distress. The statement above provides an opportunity to reflect upon the substantial influence of diverse types of marginalization, including but not limited to poverty, sexism, ableism, racism, ageism, and homophobia, in shaping disparate lived experiences. The notion of structural violence explicates the multifaceted and often interconnected elements that generate and maintain inequalities across a range of levels, including both singular entities and groups. The concept of structural violence underscores the historical underpinnings of contemporary disparities. The prevailing differences and afflictions of modern society frequently transpire into a broader chronicle of exclusion, and this paradigm furnishes a crucial backdrop for comprehending the current situation concerning its historical antecedents.

The present era is an age of trauma. The public has developed a heightened awareness of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) due to its prevalence, leading to the recognition of trauma as a significant public health concern. According to J. Roger Kurtz, "If trauma has become a conceptual touchstone in the culture at large, this is also true in literary studies" (Kurtz, 2018, 1). Roger raises fundamental inquiries regarding the contemporary emphasis on trauma, the correlation between trauma and literature, and its implementation in literary works. Roger responded to all these inquiries, stating, "These wounds, like words, require interpretation. What trauma means in the lives of individuals and communities, and how to promote the healing of this type of wound, are the principal concerns of the capacious

field of trauma studies" (Kurtz, 2018, 2). Literature serves as an appropriate medium for representing suffering and the resulting trauma, enabling the interpretation of pain and anguish.

Violence against women and children is as ancient as the inception of human civilization because of its vulnerability. In "Sleeping on Jupiter by Anuradha Roy, a review – lays bare the treacherous hypocrisies of Indian society" Meena Kandasamy observes that "the story of entrenched evil, an evil against women and children that cannot be challenged, only escaped." Roy herself admits in her acknowledgment of the novel that "there are countless horrific cases of child abuse and sexual violence in India." While writing the text, she had "drawn on the legal and investigative history of many such incidents" (Roy). The protagonist in Roy's work endures physical, emotional, and sexual abuse and childhood sexual assault. This experience reflects a significant portion of the Indian population, particularly children, who are victims of violence during their formative years but cannot communicate or disclose their experiences to others. Thus, the main character Nomi establishes a nuanced correlation between shared and individual encounters with traumatic instances. The occurrence of abuse is not limited to any specific demographic; however, empirical studies indicate that certain traits are commonly shared among children who have undergone abuse. This implies that they could potentially be at a higher risk. The presence of one or more of these attributes does not necessarily imply that a child will encounter maltreatment or disregard. Conversely, the absence of these traits does not ensure that a child will be immune to harm.

When there is work by a woman writer, especially in an Indian context, the area of concern is shifted towards feminism. The problem and scope of research expanded towards Partition, Ecocriticism, and Gender roles and gradually moved towards psychological trauma. The article "Getting Through the Cognisant Minds of the Characters in Anuradha Roy's *Sleeping on Jupiter*" shows how Nomi tried to suppress her past with the help of different defense mechanisms of Freud. "To escape from this crucial anxiety, Nomi represses all her past harassments; this is how she manages to lead her day-to-day life. This defense mechanism, repression, makes the life of Nomi to escape from her bitter past" (Jerina and Chithra, 2020, p. 596).

Sayan Chattopadhyay, in "Planting the weathervane: Neo-liberalism, an international charity, and the premodern in Anuradha Roy's *Sleeping on Jupiter*," investigated the concerns that are prevalent in the text, such as "neo-liberal regime, capitalism, and international charity." Exploring them by "Drawing upon Spivak's (1996b) concept of the 'premodern' (Roy, 2015, p. 215). In this article, Chattopadhyay analyzed the spaces of trauma Nomi remembered, the challenging relationship of memory and space, and how

the Ashram acts as a site of violence, patriarchy, and charity. The perspective of commodity production was labeled, "As the brutalities of regular abuse mark the bodies of Nomi and the other girls with scars, welts, and marks of burning, they are "produced" as meek and docile representatives of destitution who can evoke sufficient sympathy from the international charity givers associated with the Jarmuli ashram" (Roy, 2015, p. 219). All the concerned situation leads to trauma, which came up during the close analysis of the text *Sleeping on Jupiter*—environments in which confidentiality is commonly authorized or promoted. Like Guru Ji told the girls, "This is what we were taught at the ashram: that we were never to go outside. Outside the line was danger. Outside we would be killed or locked up in jail" (Roy, 2015, pp. 40–41). "Whenever you are frightened, think of my face. I will keep you safe. You have come to my Ashram now. This is your refuge. Nobody will harm you. There is food and clothes, and you have friends to play with, and you will go to school" (Roy, 2015, p. 37).

The novel *Sleeping on Jupiter* centers around the recollections of Nomita, who recounts her childhood experiences and past traumas while returning to her hometown to film a documentary. A seven-year-old girl abandoned by her mother witnessed the murder of her father and lost her brother in a short time is how the story begins. After being adopted by a Norwegian couple, she relocated to Norway with her new family. The recollections of the individual's experience of sexual assault within the confines of a secure structure by an authoritative figure during their residency at the Ashram persistently linger in their psyche:

Bare-bodied priests who make a fuss about women's clothing; tourism that celebrates erotic carvings on temple walls while remaining in denial about the sexual abuse of children; holidaying old women tired of domestic drudgery who jump at the first opportunity to pass harsh judgment on each other and everyone else; the "progressive" man who can share a cigarette and whisky with a woman but is still ready to hit her when an argument gets out of hand (Kandasamy, 2015).

The former lines depict the concealed reality of Indian society or the hypocrisies from every aspect, especially women and children. Kandasamy further states, "*Sleeping on Jupiter* is the story of entrenched evil, an evil against women and children that cannot be challenged, only escaped." The question that may hover in our minds is, what if Nomi was not adopted? What if her fortunate escape to the West could not have taken place? With its universal and specific capacity, the novel form is the most effective tool a writer can employ to address these concerns. Roy uses it to bravely expose the covert nature of Indian mysticism and the pervasive sexual abuse that occurs inside its evil bounds.

The present analysis extracted significant events from the

novel, including when a group of masked militants entered Nomi's residence and perpetrated the ruthless murder of her father, subsequently setting the entire village ablaze. Furthermore, when Nomi was abandoned by her mother, she and other orphaned girls were subjected to sexual assault by a paternal figure known as the "guru" at the Ashram. Depiction of rape inside the safest walls indicates how violence is structured in society.

The story is about Nomi Fredriksen, a "Female, age twenty-five" (Roy, 2015, p. 28), and her journey back to the place where she was both physically and spiritually abused in the safest four walls called 'ashram', "It refers to a space, generally isolated, where a community of seekers builds a physical and moral constituency around a spiritual master (yogi or guru) to learn from her teachings" (Gianolla, 2023, p. 1). This Ashram is in Jarmuli, the "unexpected walls" (Balakrishnan, 2015), where violence was infected upon Nomi at both physical and emotional levels is a place in coastal West Bengal where Nomi visits to shoot a documentary on its temples, or maybe she arrived to address her past traumas, achieve personal healing, and disentangle herself from the struggles of her previous experiences. "Guru is Brahma; guru is Vishnu, guru is Maheshwara, is a verse not only familiar to most Hindus but one that evokes complex cultural longings that resonate with what is felt to be the best part of their selves and of the Hindu tradition" (Kakar, 2011, p. 214). The traditional notion of the Guru as an ideal figure in Indian culture is called into question by specific texts that seek to reveal the concealed realities of societal structures and religious figures who, under the guise of religion, have exploited the innocent lives of girls such as Nomi and other accompanying individuals. The trauma of violence confines and controls Nomi's body, mind, and space. However, regardless of her trauma, she revisits Jarmuli to uncover what Kandasamy says, "treacherous hypocrisies of Indian society."

The protagonist of the novel "*Sleeping on Jupiter*," Nomi, experiences sexual abuse during childhood. The protagonist was abandoned by her mother and experienced the loss of her father amidst an unnamed conflict, which is referenced in the quote, "For our motherland, this is for our mother tongue" (Roy, 2015, p. 14). Nomi serves as a representative figure for the children who underwent similar traumatic experiences during that time in India. Nomi demonstrates the correlation between instances of sexual assault or childhood trauma and the development of personality rigidity, ultimately shaping the future conduct of an individual. The text above pertains to a war that Indian society must fight, and that war is not a war of violence, a physical war, but a mental war.

The initial traumatic instance Nomi faced was witnessing her father's murder: "They shoved my brother outside... flung my father at a wall. They slammed his face at the wall

again and again. The whitewashed wall streamed red.... One of the men lifted an axe and brought it down on my father's forehead" (Roy, 2015, p. 10). Later that night, following the traumatic experience of observing the violent demise of her father, Nomi dreams, "In my sleep, I hear the sound of pigs at slaughter, the sound my father made." In the last lines, Nomi reexperiences that trauma in her dream and compares her father's brutal murder with the pigs at slaughter. The delayed effect of trauma is not the aftereffect but the actual trauma itself.

It is common for individuals to attribute a child's inappropriate behaviors. Nomi's foster mother begins to inquire about the underlying cause of her behavior rather than delving into an investigation of Nomi's current persona. However, individuals often make minimal efforts to delve deeply into the underlying causes of a child's behavior. Nomi engaged in artistic expression by "drawing books with dead birds, broken weathervanes and barbed wire," and she also "went to kickboxing classes" (Roy, 2015, p. 44) at school. "Childhood trauma was associated with emotional reactivity, consistent with prior studies. This relationship between trauma and emotional reactivity may be linked to deficiencies in the caregiving environment, i.e., a decreased availability of responsive caregiving and secure attachments in childhood" (A.C. Wright et al., 2020, p. 7). Nomi lacked both caregiving and secure attachments during her childhood days. When Guru Ji raped her, no one looked after her changing behavior and showed empathy towards her and the other girls whom Guru Ji was raping.

Childhood trauma is distressing and endangers a child's life or physical well-being. It is estimated that approximately one-third of the overall population is affected by childhood trauma. This can encompass a variety of severe negative experiences, including physical, sexual, and emotional abuse or neglect, parental loss, and bullying. PTSD is known to cause hallucinations, which can be classified into distinct categories such as auditory, olfactory, tactile, gustatory, visual, and somatic. "Trauma may lead to hallucinations, and the interpretation of these hallucinations may subsequently give rise to delusional ideation" (A.C. Wright et al., 2020, p. 1). There are a couple of episodes where the juvenile protagonist Nomi experiences visual hallucination; for instance, she narrates:

"When I opened my eyes, it was raining in the room; I could not see through the sheets of falling blood. I thought I was going blind; I thought I was losing my mind... when I opened my eyes again, everything was covered in a film of oil; rainbows shifted and melted and changed, and my head felt undone, rearranged...the red had gone" (Roy, 2015, p. 119).

Here, the red symbolizes the bloodshed when her father was murdered by some men whose faces were covered with cloth. She hallucinates that the same covered face men are peeping into her room, and Nomi reassures herself "ran her

hands through the red curtains. Flung open the bathroom door for a look. No intruders. She fell back into bed" (Roy, 2015, 116).

This research covers the question of vulnerability, especially sexual abuse among youngsters, with a particular emphasis on the female gender as the population of interest. Even if the kid is not the one who started the abuse, several things might hinder a child's ability to protect themselves from it and get the help they need, even though the child is not the one who started it. There is not always a parent there to provide guidance or direction for the person, and the reasons for that might vary. In the instance of Nomi, she was voiceless since she did not have a home and she did not have any agency. Her spiritual leader, or Guru, was venerated as a god-like figure even though he exploited her and other young women's victim fault causes while providing her with a haven and an education. The behavior or decisions of the offender, and not any inherent quality of the victim, are to blame for sexual abuse; it is not the fault of the victim that they were abused sexually. If, however, we can appreciate the reasons why confident children may have a greater vulnerability to sexual abuse, then we will be able to develop measures that will give them extra precautions proactively.

One noteworthy aspect of Roy's novels is the portrayal of protagonists who experience trauma and actively strive to overcome and recuperate from it. The protagonist in the novel *Sleeping on Jupiter* endeavors to bring about a resolution to various situations: "But I wrote. Half the evening I wrote" (Roy, 2015, p. 239). Nomi journaled everything that happened in Ashram—the individual endeavors to gain familiarity with her past by revisiting where she experienced sexual assault. The individual was presented with a decision between two locations, yet deliberately to overcome her experience, and years later, she "found a picture of Guruji on the... internet and glued it on a wall. Stuck pins into his face. He will not scare me again" (Roy, 2015, p. 240). Nomi opted for the same site where the guruji had previously subjected them to sexual abuse while residing in an orphanage. Nonetheless, the author also illustrates the individual's efforts towards recovery and overcoming the traumatic experience.

"Do you know the taste of betrayal? How would you know it? It is as if your clothes are full of sand, so full of sand that the grain bites you and pierces you and scratches you. You shake out your clothes, you wash them, you wash, but even then, days later, years later, in the crevices of your toes, in the lining of the pockets, the grains pierce you. They are unbearable, those grains that don't go away whatever you do. You no longer know the real from the nightmare. Your heart, mind, mouth, everything is filled with sand." (Roy, 2015, 239)

The juvenile protagonist speaks the dialogue above upon experiencing a turn in adulting. What happened to her in

the past now shows its effect on her mind and senses. The protagonist employs a metaphorical approach to describe the lasting impact of trauma, associating wounds and scars with sand that persistently adheres to one's being despite attempts to remove it. This symbolism underscores the enduring residue of mental wounds and trauma. Alternatively, she may be referring to her traumatic childhood experiences of being sexually abused by a religious leader. The physical manifestations of injury, such as wounds and scars, may diminish over time. However, the psychological and emotional effects of trauma can persist indefinitely.

Conclusion

- The writing highlighted the harsh reality and turbulent childhood that Nomi and the other female inhabitants of the orphanage or Ashram went through during their formative years.
- Consequently, many children were orphaned, leading to their eventual placement in institutions run by the government and charitable organizations.
- The book describes an orphanage that lacked essential materials like books, toys, and other resources that may have contributed to the children's intellectual growth and development.
- Despite this, the institution's inmates, notably Nomita, spent her formative years deeply impacted by the pervasive aggressiveness and poor care.
- Under these conditions, a significant number of youngsters have a propensity to look up at the plain ceilings while they wait for their next meal.
- Insufficient levels of care and human interaction may lead to the manifestation of moderate to severe psychological issues among children.
- Certain adolescents acquire the ability to participate in actions that offer them a unique form of sensory input, such as swaying rhythmically.
- Cognitive neglect frequently leads to below-average IQ scores, delayed language skill development, and diminished capacity for creative thinking.
- The absence of diverse and stimulating experiences during the early years of life, when the brain undergoes rapid growth, can impede the development of fundamental skills necessary for optimal future learning in children.
- The individuals in question are empty of existence and the developmental stage of their adolescence, both of which hold significant value.
- The sole reminiscences they possess pertain to

untroubled periods of their childhood, during which they were bereft of any form of safeguarding.

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