

Psychological and Physical Dislocation in

Anuradha Roy's *Sleeping On Jupiter*

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Abstract

Woman passed through many problems, obstacles and barriers to become an important member in the society. In the past, woman did not have any kinds of rights, she was isolated, neglected and mistreated by man. By the coming of Feminism, the profile and the image woman have changed completely and from being a poppet in the hands of man she becomes a queen, president, artist and teacher etc, and started to prove their talents, visions in various places. Anuradha Roy is an award-winning Indian novelist, journalist and editor. She was born in Calcutta, India, in 1967. She has written three novels, which have been widely translated in Europe and Asia, including into Dutch, Spanish, Arabic, French, and Italian. Her third novel, *Sleeping on Jupiter*, was longlisted for the Man Booker Prize, and won the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature. She lives in Ranikhet, India. In this third novel, Anuradha Roy explores the lingering trauma of childhood sexual abuse in the psyche of a young Nomi. Nomi, a child victim of civil strife in an unspecified north-eastern state in India, is orphaned, rescued, and then abused by a god man, "Guruji," in an ashram. She escapes and is adopted into a Norwegian family, who returns to contemporary India to make a documentary about temple festivals, and Nomi is able to make peace with her past. It is also the story of a young temple priest, Badal, secretly in unrequited love with Raghu, an errand boy in a tea stall in the seaside temple town of Jarmuli in India's hilly and coastal northeast. Roy in her novel brings the ultimate metaphor sea; which indicates the lost and found. The title is intriguing-quest of the protagonist for alternative universe. A haunting, vibrant novel and, is a brilliantly told story of contemporary India from an internationally acclaimed writer.

"The Indian diaspora is a wonderful place to write from, and I am lucky to be part of it"

- Kiran Desai

The word diaspora, as explained on Oxford Dictionaries Online, is most closely associated with the dispersion or spread of any people from their original homeland. For two thousand years the term diaspora was almost exclusively linked with Jewish history (1). The perfect origin of the word is the Septuagint version of Deuteronomy 28.25, where Jews are addressed with the following verse. "thou shalt be dispersion in all kingdoms of the earth"(2). In the twentieth century, many other globally scattered groups began to use diaspora to describe themselves. Since the World War II, the idea of diaspora has proliferated to an extraordinary extent. Another reason for the increased popularity of diaspora is the international recognition of refugees.

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‘Diaspora’ is derived from the Greek word, ‘Diaspeirian’, which means ‘dia’= ‘through’ and ‘speirian’ = ‘to scatter’. It has its unique history all over the world. Diaspora speaks about the multiple journeys and variant faces of each and every individual. By using diaspora as a device these journeys must be historicized. Diaspora is used to refer to people or ethnic population who are forced or stimulated to leave their traditional motherlands. Issues related to loss of identity is a large area in the world of diaspora. The search for identity is mentioned as pathetic, painful, dilemma and sometimes rewarding.

Dislocation caused drastic problems to the Diasporic people, and it made great impact in diasporic literature. If any individual or more members in the family migrates to another new land, they feel secluded. The vast atmosphere makes them scarier and the loss of their own self there. Their sufferings and loss of mental stability lead them to lack their own identity. In some circumstances the characters face either force or voluntary dislocation, this further makes them hidden. They started to surround within their isolated world, In the case of women the dislocation occurs for various reasons such as loss of her family, marriage, harassment by her in-laws and her husband and so on.

Woman suffers a lot in all the circumstances, she also sacrifices huge things due to her family or society. Basically, woman tries to make a deep root about her identity but it is vanished like a dream because of many abuses both physically, sexually and suppressed by the dominated society. This was the case in the character made by the Man Booker Prize author Anuradha Roy. She makes a newspaper headline into the theatrical performance. *Sleeping on Jupiter* is a powerful novel with curious things. The novel moves with the sequence of past and the present situations in which the protagonist Nomita Frederiksen suffers.

Diasporic writers of the past and the present generation such as Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri, Anuradha Roy and Dina Mehta; dealt with the issues related to the women’s sufferings and longing and highlighted the patriarchal and biased characters. Recently there arose many incidents related to sexual assault, that is the cases related to rape were and are started to appear instantly in the news channels.

Anuradha Roy in her novel gives a brave outcome about these horrific moments through the life journey of Nomita. Throughout the novel Nomita loses her own self and identity and this is evident in the beginning of the novel where she lacks her family love at the age of seven. Roy’s beginning and the journey of the novel gives an urge to know about mixed conditions of each characters in the novel.

We can see the trace of rejection, survival, pain loss of identity, displacement and lost innocence in this novel. *Sleeping on Jupiter* took place in a fictional place called Jarmuli. Initially the book started as a long short story, then later the characters in it made her to extend it further towards a novel. Roy has adopted a great narrative technique. The scenes are so vivid, the first murder, the loss-of-innocence, the sea temple visit, the violence pinpointing a real event and Nomi, the girl who is

made a refugee to be an Everywoman horribly affected from wars and violence.

Nomita Frederiksen, from Oslo, is travelling to Jarmuli to make a documentary on the temple town. During her journey she was very silent and didn't notice any things that moves around her. But she has a reason behind silence. Sufferings and displacement had tied her mouth with clutches. The author introduces so many characters in the train journey in order to give us the feel and the situation which was faced by Nomita. Vidya, Latika, Gouri, they three were the senior citizens in the A2 compartment, they noticed the activities of Nomi and never tried to help her even if she was found to be disturbed by anyone. At one instant Nomi gets off from the train. The senior citizens just watched that incident like a scenery, this shows the solitary features of Nomi. During her travel to Jarmuli she recalls the traumas of the past.

The quest and searching of the self by the protagonist is very aptly pictured by Roy. Seven-year-old Nomita witnesses the murder of her father by armed men, loses her brother and is abandoned by her mother- all in the course of a couple of days. She recalls all such brutal experience at her adult age. Shorn of her family, the young girl ends up in an orphanage run by an internationally renowned 'Guruji', he wore yellow robes and had glossy black hair to his shoulders.

She was transported with other refugee girls in the ashram to the coastal Jarmuli to pursue spiritual home, but all such things were not gathered by Nomi, she always maintains vacant surroundings. Nomi had dreamt many things about that orphanage, but when she enters into the place she can't able to note any glimpse of it. She notices his face was clean and smooth like a woman.

In the beginning Nomi admires about Guruji, because he consoles her by telling that he is Nomi's father and mother. This shows us the good-hearted face of Guruji but later it turns into to an unexpected evil. Nomi says that her first school is at the ashram, and there were both boys and girls studied there. She also knew that punishments at the ashram were terrible, sometimes the girls could not walk for days after a beating.

Nomi and her friends were kicking the dust somewhere near Guruji's cottage where they noticed the pomegranate trees. Nomi had never eaten a pomegranate and she had never seen what it looked like inside. Nomi decided to pluck that fruit without the knowledge of Guruji. But she was caught by the Guruji, she crashed through the rest of the tree, down among the seeds of the broken fruit, at Guruji's feet. This incident makes Nomi know some qualities about her Guru, and he advises Nomi in many ways. She was very innocent, and she felt very much isolated.

Even at the age of seven Nomi was allotted with duties in the ashram, her work was to help in the garden, and she always keeps the place neat and tidy but she didn't know anything about plants. In the garden she saw a new man Jugnu, and he shares all his life to Nomi when he was a refugee. Nomi has to work in the garden after the school was over, she has to do her work for two hours. The students were being told never to leave the ashram, if anyone tries to go out of the ashram they were punished severely by the Guruji even if he is his favorite student.

When she and her friends stood near the fence at the ashram, they were caught by Bhola. Due to this incident it turned that they tried to cross the fence, but they originally did not want to do that. Nomi was physically tortured by the Guru, she felt very dislocated herself. Even though she lost her family in the beginning, she also loses her own self at present in the ashram. Nomi and her friends entered into the cottage; he drew the curtains. The room is filled with painting and sculpture, she was admired by all those atmospheres. Later she was harassed by the Guru, this made her face many inner sufferings deep inside her heart. She was broken and she felt unfriendly.

The story is told in flashback, in which the sufferings of Nomi from her childhood is evident. We can also get a view that how six years she spent living in an ashram, a holy place which was occupied by priests, guides, and sadhus etc, and it was headed by Guruji. He was publicly praised by everyone but made physical and sexual abuse on Nomi and her friends. Displacement of Nomi to the ashram made her face all the disturbance from that holy person. For such creatures in the world, acting as a spiritualist to the outer world but behaves like an animal inward. In the end Nomi falls into the trap of the Guru with unawareness in her.

Sleeping on Jupiter moves with the tenet and artistic makeup of Lost- and found concept. Roy scatters ‘losses’ all throughout the novel, it begins with the death of Nomi’s biological family. When Nomi arrives in India from Norway, to collect what has been lost, she gets lost herself. The little Nomi says about her move from Jarmuli to Norway that she was parceled from one country to another. The psyche of Nomi is clearly portrayed by Roy, her writings is wonderful. She uses beautifully descriptive and very thoughtful ideas.

The reader inhabits the diverse worlds of Nomi. Her consequent transportation to the Guru’s ashram is the first “lost” trope and then it continues till the end of the story. She was marked with the ‘lost’ rubberstamp.

“Looser” is now a psycho- capitalist term, used for people who have not been able to bait worldly success. But it could also be used for those who lose things and people. In that particular sense, every single character in Roy’s third novel has lost something; Nomi, her parents and childhood; Suraj, the photographer accompanying her on this filming assignment to Jarmuli, has only recently lost his wife to his best friend; Badal, the guide, loses his scooter, a lover, and almost his sanity; Johnny Tepo, the chaiwala on the beach, singing songs from a previous life, has happily lost his life as Jugnu in the ashram; of the three women travelling from Calcutta on a holiday away from their family, one lost her husband to a secretary once, another a Konkani lover, and the third, a victim of dementia, her memory.

One of the saddest losses is when Gouri, the woman loses a few lines from a poem, Roy later tells us the lines are from Jibananda Das’s poem, Bonolata Sen. Roy places her novel by the sea, that ultimate metaphor for lost and found. The sound of it brought back so many old things and forgotten memories. This novel successfully traces all the incidents which is beautifully mapped by

Roy.

The novel is that nearly utopian beast- a literary page-turner. Roy confesses that writing this book was not easy, because its subject matter disturbed her and she found it hard to face the work. The blend of characters and the way the author connected their stories is refined. The way in which different storylines were weaved together and the past and present were blended skillfully.

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