



The life- Changing Shift of Luke's Life: A Psychological Perspective of Posttraumatic Growth Theory in Karen Kingsbury and Gray Smalley's novel *Return*

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Abstract: The experiences of traumatic events bestow some of the good lessons and create a way not to repeat the same mistakes again to lead a life happily. This research illustrates the life-changing story of Luke who lived a life by annihilating all the cultural and traditional bondage, faced so many dreadful experiences alone and restored his life by learning the significance of interconnection human, spiritual, moral and tradition beliefs. To prove reformation of Luke's life this research is analyzed by Posttraumatic growth theory to elicit the importance of relationships that is bounded with cultural.

This paper focuses on the restoration of spirit and soul— a life-changing story of Luke's life, the son of the Baxter family. He wished to live a life of his own way, annihilating all the cultural and religious bondages. However the awful experiences that were faced by him alone without the help of his family and friends, created a great transformation with a handful of learning spirits rewarded as a way to return to the traditional life. This paper gives a detailed study of the significance of relationships - bonded with the traditional values and religious beliefs which a paid a way for cultural bondage create a community to lead a happy life. To bring out the significance of restoration in Luke's life, the paper is analysed by the theory of posttraumatic growth theory.

The novel *Return* (2013) is a third series of the *Redemption Series* which portrayed the different stages of Luke's life to fetch out the magnitude and interconnection between human, spiritual, morals, and traditional beliefs. The life-changing story of Luke is analyzed by the posttraumatic growth theory to elicit the connotation of family bonding and implication to a certain relationship that is being encircled by traditional beliefs. As PTG theory developed with six stages including five domains of PTG theory outcomes such as 1. A person pre-trauma 2. Seismic traumatic events 3. Challenges 4. Rumination 5. Coping success 6. Social support and a. Personal strength b. Relationship with others c. New possibilities of life d. Appreciation of life e. Spiritual growth, the life of Luke was analyzed with these stages to bring out the significance transformation one's life that connected with traditional bound and culture beliefs .

Luke was a very admirable boy in the family who was awfully dedicated to the truth and spiritual matters, his family had faith that he always makes the right choices for his future. "He was so strong and intelligent, dedicated to truth and making right choices." (RMR 157) However his life was not stable and was completely deviated from his tradition and religious beliefs after the great attack of the Twin towers. Luke led an unadulterated life, since he was very spiritual and religious he never dated any girls in his teenage. Although he was under temptation when he met Reagan and spends time with her alone during college days. He never missed to meet his dear love Reagan. The continuous visit of Luke made to fall on temptation. They exchanged their love in Reagan's apartment circumventing even the phone calls of Reagan's father Mr. Tom Decker. "They were breaking their own rule. As a way of avoiding temptation, he and Reagan had decided never to be alone in her apartment for more than a few minutes at a time- and definitely not at night." (RMR 161)

PTG theory illustrated that pre-existing events may effortlessly impinge on the life of an individual. Similarly, the imminence of Luke and Reagan ended with the break-up. When they were sharing their love alone, Reagan's father ringed her to speak. She voluntarily neglected the phone call. "The answering machine picked up, and Tom Decker's voice came on the line. "Reagan? Honey, You home?" There was a pause. "Tomorrow. . ." Reagan kissed Luke again. She was breathless, trapped in the moment. "I'll call him tomorrow.'" (RMR 165)

Reagan didn't comprehend that was Tom Decker- her loving father's last call. Tom Decker was a great business man and his office was in the second floor of twin tower. Every next day the twin tower was totally collapsed and Tom Decker was no more.

“We have unconfirmed reports that approximately ten minutes ago an American Airlines jet crashed into the World Trade Center north tower.” This is a building where thousands of people work and visit everyday...”

Reagan’s father worked in one of those towers. (RMR 175)

The news was reached to Luke and Reagan too. The news absolutely made her mad and she was almost malformed.

The pre-trauma events directed Luke and Reagan to Seismic problems. As PTG theory illustrated that negative circumstances caused great distress in cognitive process and ended with depression, a sense of susceptibility, changeability of what happening, created horror of losing one other and lost their self-control because of making a terrible mistake. Similarly the guilty conscience of both Luke and Reagan has killed them severely. Because of their self-pleasure she ignored the last call of her dad. She would conjecture by analysing what he would have loved to talk about for last, what was in his mind? How did he feel when she didn’t take her call? Many questions were raised in her cognitive and had reached out of control.

Luke had gone to Reagan’s apartment to apologize for paying his temptation on her. He was withered and became spellbound. But the situation was not same with Reagan she felt it was her fault because of her inducement she had ignored her father’s last call. “Reagan cried out again and gave way to a battering series of sobs that shook her body until she could barely draw a breath. “It’s my . . . my fault, Luke. If I would have taken his call . . .” (RMR 196)

The guilty conscious of Reagan never allowed her to talk with Luke. The great tragedy ended with a sorrowful event. The call from her mother made Reagan to pack up all her things including Luke’s memories and move towards New York. Luke had tried several times to console her. But there was no use. She hesitated Luke to come closer “Don’t!” Her tone was loud and sharp. She slid over on the sofa, tightening her grip on the phone. “I need to call my mother.” Luke felt like he’d been slapped.” (RMR 192) All the emotions and feelings were broken out. Luke panic for his future. The separation was unbearable.

As Luke was a college student, he was motionless and don’t know what to do further to calm her. “Luke wanted to scream. He didn’t know what to do either. He was just a college kid, too far away to help even

if he could. Instead, he stared at his girlfriend, still sitting motionless across from him, and forced himself to be calm.” (RMR 193)

Luke became insane and his life was dark. He lost his persistence and since he was trapped by the sorrow. On one side he lost his girlfriend and, on another side, he was embryonic by the blameworthy cognition because of last night’s temptation. For the first time, he didn’t experience the sense of praying, unfaithfulness filled his heart. “He worked the muscles in his jaw. No, for the first time in his life he didn’t feel like praying. He had nothing to say to God. Nothing at all. (RMR 197) He was covered by the memories of the Reagan and raised many questions about the world and God. He found himself hopeless. He searched for a new approach to gain his happiness and to come out from his grievances.

The peak echelon of confusion, hopelessness of tragic traumas reciprocated Luke’s life. As he planned, first left his house and family members and stayed in another apartment alone. Then he tied in a class of “Freethinking doctrines” in which Professor Hicks had taught about “the evils of commerce to the dangers of “religious fanaticism.” Luke understood the concepts of humanism and freethinking approach and interested because the Professor had explained about Freethinking with an example of fallen towers. “Whereas theism is based on the assumption that all goodness originates from a higher being, humanism places trust in the power of human intelligence and the human spirit to conquer evil with acts of goodness.” (RMR 224)

Luke was impressed and attends many classes and he found Lori Callahan. She was too attractive to him and planned to live with her for pleasure. “Something about her was cultured and attractive in a brainy sort of way.” (RMR 227) The friendship ended with the relationship. They started to live together. But the free will of life became a seismic problem of Luke’s life. The continuously down fall led him to face challenges. The challenges were given him great distress and he was an imbalance in cognitive to control his emotions.

The first challenge faced by Luke was the guilty conscience of moving out from his loving family befell his memories. Secondly, when days goes on he never felt physically and psychologically attracted to Lori because of the disturbances of past golden memories of Reagan. Meanwhile the exchange talk of Luke with his father Dr. John made him too poorer. He gave him news that Lori was in ICU at St. Anne’s Hospital as his patient who “was suffering from an infected uterus due to post abortion difficulties.” (RTN 54) She had lived with many and shared her bed often without knowing to Luke. The information

traumatized him, as being a charlatan, he was in grief and guilt and regret. “Remorse and anger and desperate.” (RTN 55) Since the challenges of Luke were unbearable and he was ruled by rumination thoughts.

However Luke had a relationship with Lori and wanted to be true to her, he was troubled by Reagan’s memories when he think about her uniqueness not where not seen in Lori. He strained himself to pay attention in the classes of freethinking but it was impractical. “He forced his eyes back to where he’d left off in the book, but three lines later he stopped. Not one word had registered, and not just because of Lori’s strange behavior these past days. But because of Reagan.” (RTN 59)

Above all Luke was occupied with the thoughts of the Hound of Heaven. The experiences of constant thoughts of religious had come to him unwillingly, produced some restoration. The voice of God chased him by saying, “**Son, I have loved you with an everlasting love. Return to me. Return to your first love.**” (RTN 310) He was impressed by The Bible and he used to read and heard the verses from the radio often – conversed the incidents with his family members. Nevertheless, after he left the house, he hadn’t touched the Bible. But he was chased by all those verses which was heard and read by him.

A Bible story came to mind-something from the sermon he’d heard on the radio long before his world turned upside down. Jesus was talking to his friends after many of his followers had turned away. Tension must’ve filled the air as Jesus looked at those who reminded and asked simply. “Will you go, too?”

Peter’s answer rang through Luke now... “Where would we go? You alone have the words of eternal life.” (RTN 310-311)

Since Luke was covered with the positive vibration of rumination thoughts he started to cope up with his traditional and cultural beliefs. The restoration had raisin from his cognitive process and stepped towards his new journey of life. He heard the news through his sister Ashley that he had a son who looks similarly like him growing alone without a father.

As PTG theory suggested the changes in spirit and acceptances in the cognitive process helped them to manage the negative circumstances and increase the level of positive growth in Luke’s life. Personal and external factors are also involved in his life during reformation.

Personal factors like optimism were seen in Luke and Reagan’s life. Luke had a faith that for sure his parents will welcome his changes. Reagan, even though she faced lot of struggle alone in her she

believed that her son will bring her some revival in her life. This faith in life reformed them to triumph over the stressful life. External factors such as family, friends, relatives, colleagues, teachers, and community also help them to get rid of the thoughts of traumatic events after examining reformation of both. And it is called social support.

For both Luke and Reagan their family was great support for their reinstatement. They all forgave and accepted him wholeheartedly and that was his new beginning of spring life.

The feeling of forgiveness.

Forgiveness and newness, hope and a second chance. They suddenly loomed as big as all his tomorrows strung together.

He savoured the feeling. Then finally he started the car engine. The best part about the story of Peter was that for all his early boasts of strength and for his dismal denials, God never gave up on the man. (RTN 312)

After coping success, Luke gained his personal strength which is considered as a most essential outcome of PTG theory.

Luke approached Ashley and conveyed about his arrangement to meet Reagan. After many days and months had gone he didn't know what will be the situation to Reagan. He also heard that his mother had said about him to Reagan once and what will his opinion about him now? He never minded all those moments. He enriched his light his spirit and planned to call her and said, "I need to see you, Reagan. I know about Tommy." The banter made his relationship with Reagan bloom again with positive vibrant. Reagan dread that he may doubt her son but seeing his son's image as his own he cherished with joy. "Her feelings for him were as strong now as they'd ever been. No matter how hard she'd tried to distance herself from him, her heart had not forgotten. (RTN 297)

Secondly, Luke hesitated to see his family members especially his father, John. The guilt covered his face. How long he will hide himself from his father? He renewed his strength and planned to apologize to his father for the terrible mistake that he had done. He believe that his apologize may pay a away for a happy reunion of his family. "Luke's heart did an about-face. No matter what their differences, he needed to make things right with his father. Maybe not today or tomorrow, but sometime soon. He squeezed his eyes shut. Dad, I'm sorry. I've been an idiot, Dad, I didn't know." (RTN 302)

As PTG theory suggested, the behavioral changes of Luke were clearly distinguished between before and after the traumatic event had happened. He was bestowed more proficiency, ability and strength than before the traumatic event occurred.

The personal strength enriched within himself because of the advices and the guidance of his family, relations and friends. The transformation of the soul happened with the help of many members. Improving closeness of intimate relationships to carve up the emotional feelings provided him with a new thought of a reformation. His father Dr. John and his mother Elizabeth were great support for his changes.

Landon and Ashley were acted as a bridge to Luke and Reagan's relationship. When Reagan was about to deliver a son, Landon was her beside. He supported all her needs. He was one who consoled the anger of Reagan towards Luke and explained the fact of reunion. "I have a lot of decisions to make, but that one is already made. I'm not telling Luke, and I don't want anyone else telling him..." She was angry with Luke for what he'd done, for moving in with someone else so quickly after their relationship." (RTN 90)

As PTG theory suggested that the relationship may change one attitude and behavior, Luke's attitude was changed among all the foremost was his mother's prayer, love, and advices. "It was the last time he ever ran and jumped in my arms and gave wildflowers. Only I didn't know it was the last time." (RJE 207)

Because of the help of his relations he met Reagan and they got married to lead a happy life.

Luke found new possibilities to retain his happiness were- First, accepting Reagan and his son without any doubts by forgetting all past tragic memories. Secondly, he decided and planned to stay at Mother-in-law's house after marriage gets over. Since Reagan's father had gone, her mother was satisfied with Reagan and the little grandson Tommy. Reagan explained to Luke that her mother would be an orphan if she moves out. . "All of this was fine for him, but the news was bound to be a surprise to his family. "We'll live on campus; Reagan wants to be close to her mother." (RTN 325) So he confessed his eminence to his family of staying in Reagan's house and happy settled in New York, started to live in mother-in-laws house as being her own son.

The next Fine outcome of PTG theory is appreciation of life at midst of traumas. Similarly Luke appreciated certain things and cherished with some the past memories. He ignored God after Reagan had left him and when busy of learning freethinking principles however as soon as he realized everything that is he is not going in a right way, he apprehended that: for each trauma there will a hope and God would be

the answer. The faith had increased in Luke's cognitive when fallen with traumas. "Life was tragic, and God . . . God wasn't the problem. He was the answer." (RJE 88)

This appreciation of life paid a way for Luke to attain final outcome of PTG theory – Spiritual growth. He followed faith in God but after the tragedy of September 11th he lost his faith and adopted the doctrines of freethinking.

He winced as he remembered arguing against the Creator for his class project, the one he'd worked on with Lori. There he'd been, proclaiming the benefits of humanism and encouraging others to think for themselves, not to believe the faith of their families.

So strong was the stance he'd taken against God that he'd taught himself to dislike everything about his past, his faith, even his family. (RTN 312)

But after the transformation of Luke's life with the facilitation of advices from relations he started to confess and prayed to God that he had done a great sin. He used to pray often before meeting Lori and it was stopped for a while in the presence of Lori but when he rejoined with Reagan, again he started to pray the Almighty. *"God, I've done everything wrong, broken every promise I ever made to you . . . to my family. But I understand now. I do. There's nowhere else I want to turn. You hold my future, God. Please forgive me."* (RTN 312)

Thus the life-changing story of Luke was analyzed by the Posttraumatic growth theory to show the importance of redemption. No one cannot live without doing sins and without doing mistakes, but everyone should have a heart to rectify them with wholeheartly for restoration. After realization one should confess them, learn some moral lessons from them, and shouldn't repeat them again. In Luke's life he confessed it, learnt the great lesson –how to be a good son, husband and a loving father by restoring his personal strength, accepting others' advice and information, finding new possibilities for self-improvement, gaining confidence by appreciating his own life, and finally maturing his spiritual growth.