



REDEMPTIVE POWER OF LOVE: A PSYCHOLOGICAL PERCEPTIVE OF POSTTRAUMATIC GROWTH THEORY IN KAREN KINGSBURY AND GRAY SMALLEY'S NOVEL *REDEMPTION*

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Abstract: The experience of traumatic events leads a life into challenging or may create stressful life, but all the disasters and failures are not an end. There is a hope. This research focuses on the protagonist, Kari in the novel *Redemption* who faced many challenges to restore her marriage life and finally uphold her happiness in love. To prove the redemptive power of love, this research paper is analyzed by the posttraumatic growth theory, to explain the psychological shifts of Kari. And this made her to think positive by overcoming all the sufferings and to rise successfully at midst of tribulations.

Index Terms - Traumatic events, struggle, strength, overcome, relationship, spiritual and restoration.

I. INTRODUCTION

The famous line says "Life is not a bed of roses", the same way life is not made of happiness alone it has both, ups and downs. Happiness boost up human energy but sorrows teach the lesson to lead a comfortable life by providing experience to know about the world and about self esteem. Love is always placed in a first position of life. Karen Kingsbury and Gray Smalley's *Redemption* is a first novel in the *Redemption Series* which deals about the life of second daughter of Baxter family named Kari. This research portrayed the significance of love through various positive thoughts and actions that were taken by Kari to restore her happiness in complicated marriage life, to analyze that the soul has the power to transform the hatred to love. To prove the redemptive power of love, this research can be analyzed by the posttraumatic growth theory to predict the restored life of Kari in broken marriage, gained strength by being positive in struggles, adopting spiritual, moral and traditional beliefs.

Posttraumatic Growth Theory (PGT) was first coined in mid of 1990s by psychologists at the University of North Carolina, Charlotte. PGT is defined as a positive psychological change of an individual in the struggle of traumatic experiences. They states that philosophy, literature and religion can bring positive changes in adversity with the new experience of exposure. Traumatic events, stressful or challenged events can be called as "Seismic" which means shake or shatter the foundation of beliefs. In the traumatic life an individual accepts the stress and undergoes with the depression for a long time. But in spite of adversity the positive changes took place in the cognitive process helps the individual to go beyond the previous level of function or provoke inner strength to face challenges to lead a compatible life. It is differ from resilience.

Resilience is having the same ability to persist the work daily accompanied by stress or the work that ensue by an individual will not go beyond the previous function but concentrate the work habitually even in the sorrowful situation. But posttraumatic admit the stress in traumatic life but in spite of adversity the performance of an individual goes beyond the previous level of function that happens by the positive shift of an individual in the cognitive process. The theory enlightened with "Five Big" factors that an individual infatuated during traumatic events. Five Big refers to the traits of a) openness to experience, b) conscientious, c) extraversion, d) agreeableness and e) neuroticism.

a) The Openness to experience: shows an individual having the behavior of expressing emotional thoughts to others easily. It gains intellectual and emotional curiosity. b) Extraversion: refers to an individual who has a great tendency to intermingled with others and getting liveliness by the external world. c) Conscientious: is being earnest to help others. An individual encompass with the ability of complying with other individual who has goal seeking behavior. d) Agreeableness: refers to the tendency of accepting things. Finally e) neuroticism: penchant toward self doubt, depression, being anxiety and having negative feelings.

PTG also developed with five domains as an outcome which helped to explain about the positive strategies of cognitive process that an individual undergo to overcome traumatic life and to reach restoration. They are, 1. Relationship with others 2. Personal strength 3. New Possibilities 4. Appreciation of life and finally 5. Spiritual life.

1. Relationship with others: It is good to seek help and support from family and friends. Sharing the views and emotional feeling makes an individual get rid from the stressful life and help to start with the new findings. A good relationship can provide transformational attitudes or behavior. It helps to evaluate and understand the deeper meaning of relationship. The two significant factors happen in relationship. They are “more willing to express emotions” and “more willing to accept help from others”. 2. New Possibilities: Continuous of facing stressful life leads an individual to seek for new options for leading the life. To have a comfortable life an individual will start to focus on developing new skills or new activities to deviate the mind. 3. Personal Strength: Due to high depression, the mind started to focus on different activities. The interest provides an individual to gain confident accomplished with the strength to face future challenges. It provides new enthusiasm for a survival too. The behavioral shifts of an individual can be clearly eminent between the before and after the traumatic event happened. The individual will be showering more skills, ability and strength than before the traumatic event transpired.

4. Appreciation of Life: Going through the adversity even a small happiness can help an individual to appreciate the life. Most of the people spend time with the nature for their relaxation. Even the nature teaches the lesson in great sorrows. It provides pleasure more and increases the sense of taking life easier which pays a way for personal strength to go forward with positive thought and action. 5. Spiritual and Existential Change: The focus on spiritual matters helped an individual to build positive circumstance by having the basement of faith. Strong faith in oneself acts as a coping mechanism in the cognitive process which helps to find a new hope even after facing unremitting traumatic events. With the help of Scriptures and by hearing sportive words the traumatic memories which provide depression may be healed.

The Posttraumatic Growth theory can be applied to the novel *Redemption*. Kari is the second daughter of Baxter family. She was blessed with the loving and spiritual parents called John and Elizabeth, born with three sisters and one brother. She was married to a young professor called Tim Jacobs. They had a very happy life but soon her life became void when she heard that her loving husband was having an affair with a student named Angela Minning.

In the light of those dreams, Kari's loss felt greater than at any time since Tim had left home. Even if they did get back together and managed to work things out, what memories would the two of them have now? Their good times would forever be tarnished by Tim's affair. The reality of that grieved Kari beyond words. (Kingsbury & Smalley, 2013, p.155a)

The novel written with the theme of love: love is a decision. It described the positive actions taken by Kari with the unconditional love to redeem her husband from the adultery. She faced so many challenges when her husband was not near. She hesitated even to go church because she felt ashamed of going alone when others come with the family. She felt pain in the heart when someone asked about Tim.

She had no idea how her siblings or her friends at Clear Creek Community Church would react. Everyone had always known her as the good girl, the one destined to do right and stay married forever. She hated the idea that now those same people were bound to feel sorry for her. (Kingsbury & Smalley, 2013, p.57a)

Her life became very dark and even afraid to tell to her parents about the pathetic situation that she was undergoing. So she spent her days mostly in her house alone without going to job and her parent's house.

Once when Kari's mother called her, she burst out with the tears and shared all the difficulties that she was facing. After the conversation with the parents and the advice boosted her and made to gain strength to face challenges in her life. During the period of trauma her parents were highly supportive. They spent time talking her friendly that helped her to come out from the depression. In her mother's arm she got peace of mind.

But the moment she felt her mother's arms around her, the sobs that had gradually subsided rose again and spilled over. “Mom...you won't... believe it...” Deep, gut – wrenching convulsions pummelled her body, doubling her over and causing her to gasp for breath. *Help me, God, I'm losing control.*

“Kari.” Her mother's voice was sharp, loud, as it had been when Kari was a small girl and had gotten in trouble for something. “It's okay. Whatever it is, we can get through it” (Kingsbury & Smalley, 2013, p.53a)

Kari's mother comforted her at every moment when she feels sick. The same way father John, though he was busy with his patients and treatments he was too supportive by taking her in his arms and listening to her grievances. “Her father's silent reassurance was so strong that for the first time Kari had sense she would survive. She allowed herself to be lost in her daddy's arms, sobbing as if she might never stop.” (2013, p.54a) The guidance and love of her parents and siblings helped Kari to have an optimistic approach towards the life. The positive vibrant in cognitive helped her to come out from grief and started to accept the failures and challenges in right spirit. Being openness to everyone she developed the behavior of expressing emotional thoughts to others easily when it is necessary. It helps Kari's to gain intellectual and emotional curiosity about her life. To overcome her life challenges she also had a very good fellowship with others.

Kari engaged herself talking to others and listened some of the advice to lead a compatible life. One among them was Pastor Mark. Kari had a closed fellowship with Pastor Mark who was a great supporter of her life during traumatic events. His spiritual advices were truly helped her to overcome her tribulations and emotional imbalance. He requested her to attend many seminars about marriage issues and arranged two days of intensive counseling for both Tim and Kari and that paid a way for oneness of both. Thus the behavior of extraversion created a great tendency to intermingle with others and gets dynamism by the external

world. It helped them to find out their faults and capitulate to rectify their mistakes. The counselors suggested them with the three points for the redemption of married life. It was very useful to them to understand the importance of adjustment in family life.

“First, because of your tendency to binge drink, you should give up any form of alcohol completely.”

“I...I tried that.”...

“Second, you should be completely faithful to each other, both emotionally and physically.”

“And most important of all,” the woman counselor interjected, “you should both commit to understanding your individual fears and changing the way you cope. And that means the *d*-word- divorce- should not be included in your vocabulary.” (Kingsbury & Smalley, 2013, p.264a)

The counselors conveyed to them that these three points will be appropriate for every couple who is leading their life in misunderstanding and requested to correct it to have reunion. She started to agree and accept the advice of the counselors for benefit of her life. This couple was assistance and came to know the significance of togetherness by correcting few mistakes of life and move forward for redemption.

Secondly, after attending the counsels and seminars, they helped Kari to renew her personal strength and she started to approach her husband. She had a confident that she definitely wins the heart of her husband by showering her true love. “She had cried, but even then she’d been willing to work on their relationship. She believed in marriage, in God’s plan for marriage, and despite the way he’d failed her, she believed in him.” (2013, p. 241a) She tried her level best to tell that she was pregnant and she was having true love on him. She confessed that she accepts him with true heart, forgive him, and will bury all the hurting moments that was made by Tim. “Each word, each syllable painted hope and life and possibility into areas of his heart that had been dead and buried. She was willing to forgive him after all.” (2013, p. 250a) She took so many steps for reunion. She never felt ashamed asking for the counselors to give counsel for both. She came out from all the shyness, gained her confident and work hard for her life to be redeemed.

When Tim died Kari did not know why Tim was murdered. She wants to know the truth of her husband’s death. Even though it was very risk for her to find she renewed her strength and found out to stop the scandals. She came to know the doctor who cared Tim through her father. Her father John was working in the same hospital so the doctor was very close friend of John never hesitated to tell the truth of what happened to Tim. “The doctor furrowed his eyebrows. He looked first at her father and back to her. “I’m told the shooter was a young man, nineteen years old. He fled the scene, but police have him in custody. He confessed everything.” (2013, p.331a) The situation clearly pictured her that Tim was pretending her that he was true and detached from Angela. The pain of betrayal that she had was more than the news of his death. Kari had gone to neurotic mood doubting her husband ruled by negative thoughts and depressed.

But again the doctor came to Kari’s father and gave a letter to him stating that he had found a letter in Tim’s pocket before he died. Kari again felt nervous that she felt the pain like a knife in her heart. She requested her father to read the letter.

““Dear Angela, I’m sorry about what happened between us, but you need to know something. I don’t want you coming by my office tomorrow – not tomorrow, and not ever. And I don’t want you calling me. What we had together was wrong; I never did. I’m truly so sorry. But I don’t love you. I never did. I’m in love with my wife, and that’s where my focus is and must be for the rest of time.”” (Kingsbury & Smalley, 2013, p.353a)

Kari’s hard work never failed. Because of her personal strength that gained during trauma allowed to know the truth of her life and experiences captured the patience and forgiveness in her spirit. The same time she saw Angela who was standing guilty approached her for clemency and told her that,

Compassion.

“I’m sorry, Mrs. Jacobs.” Tears pooled in Angela’s eyes. “It was my fault he was killed.”

Kari’s had no idea what the woman meant, but a ripple of anxiety coursed through her while she waited. Angela swallowed hard. She glanced at Kari’s father and then back at Kari’. “I...I told Tim I was pregnant, but- ” a sob slipped from her throat- “I lied to him. I wanted him to come back to me.” She hung her hand again. “He came over to tell me he wanted to stay married to you.” (Kingsbury & Smalley, 2013, p.336a)

Thirdly Kari searched for new possibilities to find the new beginning in her complicated marriage life. When the counselors asked Kari and Tim to exchange their views she accepted her fault that she always compare her with another woman and feel inferior to be his wife often because of his profession. “I was afraid I wasn’t smart enough.” (2013, p. 264a) She confessed to him that she forgotten betrayal and earning for new arrival of life. She took initiated to bring him back to her parent’s home and when he came back she engaged the situation and supported him that at any circumstance he should not feel guilt and hide himself before family members. “There was a glow of faith in her eyes- not just faith in God, but in Tim as well.” (2013, p. 278a) She devoted her life to find a way for Tim helping him to come out from alcoholic addiction. With the great compassion and patience she achieved the goal of winning her husband soul again.

After Tim’s death, Kari searched for her livelihood and at the same she wanted to make use of her vision of counseling the couple who is leading a miserable life of misunderstanding. She finds new possibilities of making her vision to come true by being a bridge to a couple who faces difficult to reunite.

“Anyway, last week I practically felt God tap me on the shoulder and tell me there’s still something he wants me to do. Women who are hurting- I mean really hurting- won’t necessarily seek help from a weekly Bible study.” She locked eyes with Pastor Mark. “What they need is, well, sort of a mentor. Someone who will meet with them one-on-one, study the Scriptures with them, cry with them, and listen when they bare their soul. Sort of an anonymous friend who can keep their secrets. Someone who can look them straight in the eye and say, ‘I made it through the fire, and you can too,’ You know, to bridge the gap between pain and progress.” (Kingsbury & Smalley, 2013, p.91b)

She developed the behavior of Conscientious. Pastor Mark also finds that she was perfect for the job because she can mould the broken hearts by sharing her truthful experiences. Pastor Mark handed over a paper about a young couple who is having no children find hard to lead a married life. "Struggling in her marriage. She said she's planning to leave her husband in the next few months. She needs complete confidentiality." (2013, p. 339b) Kari received the phone number too and wanted to meet her. But Pastor Mark said that she hadn't mentioned her name. When she read the letter she felt sorry and wanted to counsel her. "Kari's heart broke for the woman. Marriage could be so difficult, especially with all the pressures that came from daily life. Yet, if she and Tim had worked through their problems and found unity and love again, so could this woman – whoever she was." (2013, p. 339b) By reading the letter she had a doubt of that woman whom she is going meet may be her own sister called Erin. She accepted to meet her and as she doubted that her sister herself. Both of them were shocked. Kari gave some advices to her and promised she will not reveal anything to anyone but keep in prayer for the improvement of her sister married life. The will power and personal strength that Kari possessed created the new possibilities even to counsel her family members.

Fourthly Kari had a spirit of appreciating a life even though her married life was full of challenges and struggles. The spirit of appreciating helped her to gain stamina to move forward positively in all her obstacles. She encouraged herself in troubles and sufferings that she says to herself that she is like a clay and God is mending her to have a good future. And she believes that the tribulations teaching her to lead a life with patience, love and faith. "Her broken heart was beginning to mend." (2013.p. 265a) Kari had a habit of admiring the beauty of nature. She had a faith that she and Tim with the daughter Jessie, as a family lead a life happy without any distraction. She compared her future life with an eagle. She had a faith that she, Tim and Jessie will live family like an eagle. "And an eagle, because eagle families are forever. And one day when we're past all this, we'll have forever too." (2013, p. 318a) The dream that she had was she take care of daughter like an eagle which use the wings to carry the little ones. "The white synthetic fur was whisper soft, and she could picture their daughter, a few years now, carrying the eagle around by the wing." (2013, p. 318a) Because of her hard work and endeavors to reunite the family she often dreamed about her future. Even though she lost her husband she was satisfied with Jessie and led a happy life.

Kari accepted everything in her life and believed all things were happened for good. Because every problem taught a new lesson. "Beauty from ashes" (2013, p.52b) Even though the failures that she was faced was not consumable, she appreciated and believed that the failures helped her to gain strength and endeavors her to do hard work. "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." (2013, p.53b) She was buoyant herself in the troubles and believed the suffering will be revised bring froth the new version of life in the future.

Kari tiny daughter stared at her tiny daughter, awed by her. She had been wrong the night of Tim's death. The best part of life wasn't over.

Hope lived on – her baby girl was living proof.

God's plans for her were not dead; they had merely been revised, made new.

As new as the precious life in her arms. (Kingsbury & Smalley, 2013, p.2013, p.344a)

Even though her life is full of sorrow she believed God's plans are still on her way and she was happy with her daughter Jessie and contented with what she had.

Finally above all, Kari had a faith in God and believed that God will reunite her family. She strongly believed He can alone transform her traumatic life into happy one. "Even now, with her world upside down and every breath an effort, Kari knew the Lord would never leave her. And somehow he would help her and Tim sorts through this mess, even if right now the idea sickened her." (2013, p.19a) She finds peace in prayer and believed that the prayer brings victory in her life.

The tears came in earnest, and she knew there was only one way out of the despair that gripped her soul. She slid off the side of the bed and landed on her knees. With head bowed, body convulsing in sobs, she buried her face in the bedspread and cried out to the only One who could make sense of her life. I need a miracle, Lord...I'm at the end of my rope. (Kingsbury & Smalley, 2013, p.176a)

Whenever she feels depressed she listens to the Word of God and had trust in verses from the Bible to encourage herself and it provided peace to her soul. It helped her to come out from the depression. "It came in the form of Psalm 50:15 : *Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you, and you will honor me.*" (2013, p. 36a) Though her heart never allows her to forgive Tim after the betrayal she remembered the verses from the Bible "...And now these three remains: *faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.*" (2013, p. 31a) From this verse she learnt love is a decision and it is considered as the keyword of the *Redemption* book. The constant and everlasting love of Kari delivered him from the adultery and they started a new life happily.

After months of anger and betrayal and grief beyond words, a seed of love and laughter deep inside them had survived. If they could laughter together now, after the long seasons of fall and winter their counselor had described, it could mean only one thing.

Spring was on the way. (Kingsbury & Smalley, 2013, p.308a)

Thus Kari's redemptive power of love reciprocated Tim's mind and life, made him to surround to his marriage bond again.

Conclusion:

This research paper explores the significance of transformation of a soul in an adversity. It provides information that the soul has the power to transform an individual from a life of hatred to love. Due to traumatic events there was life- changing psychological shifts happens in cognitive process that makes an individual to think positive and also relate the world that contribute the personal change by analyzing Posttraumatic growth theory to throw the light of character how they emerge successfully by overcoming their sufferings and restoring transformational behaviors.

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