



The Topography Of Trauma: Memory And Identity In Anuradha Roy's *Sleeping Of Jupiter*

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Abstract

Identity is an essential aspect of human existence, signifying each person's ongoing quest to discover their identity and place in the world. This concept of self is not created in a vacuum; rather, it is a complicated construct shaped by our connections, memories, and individual experiences. However, the process of creating a secure identity becomes difficult for someone who harbors terrible memories from the past. Nomi, the main character in Anuradha Roy's book *Sleeping on Jupiter*, personifies this quest for identity. Nomi sets off on a voyage that is purportedly for her profession as a documentary filmmaker by going back to the temple town of Jarmuli, but it is actually a profound encounter with a past she had long. By returning to the temple town of Jarmuli, Nomi embarks on a journey that is ostensibly for her work as a documentary filmmaker but is, in reality, a deep confrontation with a history she had long tried to escape.

Memory as a Catalyst for Self-Discovery

People's understanding of themselves is greatly influenced by their memories. For Nomi, the past is not a far-off place but rather a live force that still shapes her feelings and ideas as an adult. This is similar to the unclaimed experience that trauma theorist Cathy Caruth describes, in which childhood traumas go unprocessed until they are brought back to the location of the initial suffering. Roy employs the town of Jarmuli as this trigger; its streets, temples, and scenery serve as metaphors that evoke memories Nomi had been attempting to forget for years. Roy writes: "The past never leaves us completely; it waits quietly in our memory". (82)

This line highlights how personal history continues to dictate the present. Roy's narrative technique is particularly effective because it avoids direct, chronological descriptions of the past. Rather, memories emerge gradually through thoughts and emotions. This is similar to how human memory actually works, where certain details may fade but the emotional impact endures. Nomi is compelled to face the realities of her own existence as she uses her camera to study her surroundings. In order to comprehend how her early experiences influenced her present personality, self-reflection is an essential first step.

The Crisis of Emotional Distance

Nomi's emotional detachment from people around her is another important issue that the text explores. Even in social situations, Nomi frequently feels alienated and has a strong sense of loneliness because of her early traumatic experiences. She struggles to define herself because she does not feel like she belongs to any area or group, which causes a serious identity problem. This state of being reflects the theories of Judith Lewis Herman in *Trauma and Recovery*, which explain how survivors of trauma often experience a fracture in their sense of self. Nomi moves through the world with uncertainty and hesitation, her inner thoughts revealing a constant state of confusion. Rather than using dramatic scenes, Roy illustrates this conflict by concentrating on the character's subdued emotional life. This method helps the reader relate to and understand Nomi's quest for identity. The novel poignantly notes: "Memories follow people like shadows, always present even when they are not noticed". (Roy 115) This imagery emphasizes that her identity is perpetually haunted by a past that refuses to leave her completely, even when she is not consciously thinking about it.

The Symbolism of Setting and the Path to Healing

The town of Jarmuli is a representation of memory and identity rather than just a physical place. Nomi's return to this location as an adult gives her a more mature perspective on her early years. Locations frequently bear the emotional burden of our past, and returning there may be both painful and thought-provoking. Roy's meticulous depictions of the sea and the temples serve as a mirror of Nomi's own inner state, which is both lovely and worn down by time. While the novel deals with significant pain, it also highlights the possibility of healing. Healing is portrayed not as a sudden event, but as a slow and gradual process. By facing her memories honestly in Jarmuli, Nomi begins to accept the experiences that shaped her life. This acceptance does not erase the past, but it provides the emotional strength needed to move forward. As Erik Erikson suggests in his studies on identity, the resolution of such a crisis leads to personal growth and a more integrated sense of self.

Conclusion

In conclusion, *Sleeping on Jupiter* offers a sensitive and insightful portrayal of the human search for self-understanding. Through Nomi's journey, Anuradha Roy illustrates that identity is not a fixed or permanent state but something that develops over time through experiences, memories, and personal reflection. By confronting the past in Jarmuli, Nomi is finally able to understand how her childhood influenced her adult identity. Roy's work reminds us that while the past may be a place of struggle, confronting it is the only way to achieve true self-discovery and lasting peace.

Works Cited

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