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VIOLENCE WITHIN THE MOST UNEXPECTED WALLS: NOMI
REPRESENTATIVE OF RAPE VICTIMS IN INDIA IN ANURADHA ROY'S
SLEEPING ON JUPITER

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ABSTRACT

This paper enunciates the rape culture in India. The focus of this paper is to shed light on the sexual violence against children especially by their close and trusted people through the work of Anuradha Roy's *Sleeping on Jupiter*. Roy's Character 'Nomi' in the novel represents the rape victims in India. She throws light on sexual harassment that takes place, within the most unexpected walls, in the 'ashram', by the fatherly Godman who protects Nomi from the war once, and then exploits her psychic innocence to satisfy his carnal hunger; Guruji is a representative of aggressors and sexual offenders. The protectors become a threat to the children as Guruji to Nomi. And it suggests a few possible ways to protect children against the sexual offence. Children are the future for a nation. They are the builders of a strong and healthy nation. If the children are assaulted sexually by the care-takers/parent, what will be the future of a nation? This should be stopped at this point of time by amending the rules and punishments to ensure a good life for children who are the future of a nation.

Violence Within the Most Unexpected Walls: Nomi representative of Rape Victims in India in Anuradha Roy's *Sleeping on Jupiter*

Rape in India has become a dreadful and disagreeable culture. During the recent years, articles about rape are predominant in the newspapers, especially those are about the rapes against children. Though there have been a numerous movements and campaigns conducted against the rape, nothing much has changed. The very unbearable part is that the children had lost their innocence and childhood because of these brutal rapes. Further the future life of the rape victims has been less discussed and less cared for.

This paper attempts to exposes the impact of a brutal rape against Nomi, and how it affects her throughout her childhood; Nomi is the main character in Anuradha Roy's award winning novel *Sleeping on Jupiter* (2015), who is also a representative of all other rape victims. The Children in a country are bound to build the future nation. But the violence against these future builders of nation, such as rape is weakening the nation. It is very hard to accept that the offenders are often the family members of the victims and the people who are very close to the children. They are the people from whom the children expect and receive love and have trust. Once the crime has been committed against the children, they loss their innocence and their unredeemable childhood. All they could remember about their childhood is the harassment and the loss of trust over their loved ones.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There have been a lot of studies conducted on Roy's novel *Sleeping on Jupiter*, incorporating various theories. From the perspective of "colonised and coloniser N. Velmani (2015: 105) argues that women body is doubly colonized by men and nature. The researcher talks about the patriarchal perception of women as objects to gratify sexual needs of men. And also talks about how women are being commoditized. The study overall tells us about the social evils such as sexual violence and commoditization of women.

From the perspective of Psychological and physical dislocation R. Abirami(2020:78) studies, how dislocation caused drastic problems to the characters in the novel *Sleeping on Jupiter*. The study says that each and every character in the novel is facing a loss in different form. Nomi is the protagonist of the novel, lost her parents and childhood, while Suraj lost his beloved wife. It also talks about the suppression over women by the male dominated society both by physically and sexually. On the whole the study encourages the author for her extraordinary work.

In his study Bidesh Kumar Sur Roy (2019:126) critically argues about the hypocrisy of Orphanage Homes and Ashrams, which hide themselves under the blanket of religion and says how they exploited women and children. The study examines about the effect of hypocrisy on Children and Women in the novel *Sleeping on Jupiter*. It elaborately deals with the main characters such as Nomi and Guruji. The study denotes Guruji as a hypocrite under the blanker of pious religious leader where as he is really a sexual offender, who harasses children in the Ashram. The study concludes in a way emphasising the desire of Nomi to expose the criminal activities to the real world.

In the later study S. Leena Devanesam and V. Manimozhi (2019:261) concentrate on the aspect of psychoanalysis. The study talks about Nomi's and past traumatic experience. In a deep manner the study focuses on the trauma faced by Nomi which was left behind after the brutal rape by Guruji. In a

crystal clear manner, the authors capture the trauma faced everyday by Nomi. It also deals with the clinical psychology such as anxiety attack and nervous system which are closely related to trauma.

Based on this brief review the current study attempts to shed light on the sexual violence against children especially by their close and trusted people through the work of Anuradha Roy's *Sleeping on Jupiter* and provides a way forward to deal with this brutal culture.

Violence Within the Most Unexpected Walls

Nomi is an unfortunate child who is often left out with scars by the course of time. And the saying that "Time, heals all the wound"- is not an appropriate saying for Nomi, since it is not only a physical but a psychic aspect. As the time progress, she acquires new wounds and scars which is not being healed by it. Nomi has been introduced by the novelist as a happy child who lives in a hut somewhere near a dense forest; that doesn't last for long. The happy family is being destroyed because of war; Nomi is being separated from her family; her father dies and the references to her brother is not given by the narrator; her mother leaves her in the middle of an unknown seashore. No one would ever imagine these would happen in their lives. "I kept looking at the place where my mother had stood with the man. I was hungry. I called for her. My stomach ached with hunger. I stood up and opened my mouth as wide as I could and I shouted for my brother. Nobody." (Roy, 2015, p. 11).

A child's happy place is his/her parents and the home. But there are children with no home and parents, also survive in this earth; some are in orphanages and some are anywhere that we couldn't imagine. We can hardly assure that the children who stay in such places are happy and safe. Nomi is one such child who lost her home and parents and stays away from home in an ashram. The ashrams are believed to be the homes for homeless and homes of love for the parentless children. But the ashram that Nomi stays is appeared to be safe but in fact was not so where ashram is led by a godman called 'Guruji'.

A report by National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) titled "Crime in India 2019-Volume-I" shows that among the registered cases on child rape, 94.2% of the cases in which the aggressors/criminals are the people are known to the child, such as family members, family friends, neighbours, online friends, and other known people to the child (Table 1).

The ashram that Nomi takes refuge is make her to believe as the safest place for her, especially because of the war taking place outside the ashram. "stay inside the line, never go out. Understand?" 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, p. 40-41). The same ashram which is trusted by Nomi as the safest place turns to be the hell, after that brutal rape incident. It is very hard to handle for anyone to know about a child who gets offended by someone who once the child had trusted and was once a loving person, a closed relative who showered love on them. This kind of terrible incidences takes place when the most trusted, soft, and

ever-loving Guruji raped Nomi after her first period. "I remember how Guruji came in, locked the door, sat down and patted his thighs...My body felt as if it would tear into two when he forced my legs apart, then wider apart..." (Roy, 2015, p. 173).

Guruji pretends himself to Nomi as a father figure. He shows special concern towards Nomi. He is kind enough to not punish her even when she tries to peep out the fence to understand what is the world outside the ashram. "You think you have nobody...That is not true. I am your father and your mother now. I am your country. I am your teacher. I am your God. He said it like a chant" (Roy, 2015, p. 37). Many rape cases in India are of the same nature; the offenders are the closest to the victims. According to NCRB's 'Crimes in India 2019' report the children are being molested or raped by their own fathers, relatives and the well-known persons. What if the home for children is not safe at all! There is a recent rape case which was on the news, in the outskirts of Harthras, a city in Uttar Pradesh, India. This case dealt with a young girl who was gang-raped by her neighbour. The girl got raped because she belongs to a lower-caste family. The offenders are the upper-caste neighbours; and the gang-rape is widely believed by the villagers as a tool of suppression.

The survivors of rape have been taught a false ideology that they should hide themselves as if being vulnerable is their fault. After a brutal rape incident, the victim's family is expected to be unnoticed, not to be exposed to the society's eyes. The worst thing is that when the victim is a child, she will undergo a long trial and a plight of psychological health! According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data for 2019, on an average, 88 rapes take place every day in India. However, the conviction rate is as low as 27.8%. This means, out of 100 accused, only 28 gets convicted (New Indian Express). The victims are already mentally plagued by rape and the years long trail worsen their wounds and scars. They should be given special care through all the possible ways.

Though Nomi had grown up to be twenty-five years, her scars the brutal incident had left behind were still in her memory. She remembers every minute detail about the brutal rape that she underwent. How come anyone can have forgot such a brutal incident that happened to her/him? Nomi's case was not filed in the court, but the years-long trial continues within herself. "journalists would come to interview Guruji. They printed articles...My picture was in the paper once. We were line of girls...I was knock-kneed. Guruji stood behind me. He was smiling his fatherly smile. I remember I could feel his flappy belly and his stump pushing against me between my shoulder-blades. But you couldn't tell that from looking at the picture." (Roy, 2015, p. 174). This is one such incident that left as a stain in Nomi's memory. While reading the quoted text above one can understand the horrible and ugly feeling that Nomi had underwent. 'The fatherly smile' that the picture captured has not true in real. This feeling is something very sensitive in nature, because a trusted father figure who becomes a predator and hunts Nomi like a prey to his hunger. Children from a numerous of

households in India and the world too face this very cruel and terrible incident in their lives, which change their whole beautiful life upside down.

Rapes within the most unexpected walls such as households, ashrams and so on are worst thing that can ever happen to a child. Because, if a stranger commits the cruel rape, there would be parents, family members and relatives, friends to take care of the child's physical and mental needs. What if the family members and the child's most trusted people themselves commit the crime! There are no words to demonstrate. Those kids never have a good future. They would be left alone with no support, though there are NGOs which aim at those children and take care of them. The support lent for all the child rape victims is very huge question mark. Nomi had a foster mother to take care of her all the needs but not her mental health. She heals her wound herself. Children are not comfortable to talk about the horrific incidents that happened to them with parents. Commonly children talk about rape out of home but not inside the home. Intimate family space should be liberal enough to speak about the molests and the brutal incidents like rape that the children of the family undergo. Parents should make the child understands consent and the need to stand for themselves even after the traumatic incident, being a rape victim. Government should take special care over children of all ages especially of the homeless. Schools should empower children against any violence against them; Change begins from home and so what brings the change is becoming the home.

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Table 1

Offenders Relation to Child Victims of POCSO Act (Section 4 & 6) - 2019

S. No.	State/UT	Cases in which Offenders were known to Victim				Cases Offenders Unknown or Not Identified	Total Cases (Known+unknown Offenders) (Col.3+Col.7)	Percentage Share of Known Persons Cases to Total Cases
		Cases Offender known to Victim (Total) (Col.4+Col.5+Col.6)	Family members	Family Friends/ Neighbours / Other Known Persons	Friends/Online-Friends on Pretext of Marriage			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
STATES:								
1	Andhra Pradesh	253	29	154	70	12	265	95.5
2	Arunachal Pradesh	22	10	12	0	0	22	100.0
3	Assam	1112	74	734	304	151	1263	88.0
4	Bihar	714	118	309	287	7	721	99.0
5	Chhattisgarh	1347	155	460	732	30	1377	97.8
6	Goa	0	0	0	0	0	0	-
7	Gujarat	1520	62	524	934	19	1539	98.8
8	Haryana	1119	100	853	166	55	1174	95.3
9	Himachal Pradesh	1	0	1	0	0	1	100.0
10	Jammu & Kashmir	67	5	56	6	8	75	89.3
11	Jharkhand	458	59	280	119	11	469	97.7
12	Karnataka	1614	163	799	652	9	1623	99.4
13	Kerala	112	18	66	28	1	113	99.1
14	Madhya Pradesh	3232	286	1539	1407	105	3337	96.9
15	Maharashtra	3079	224	1203	1652	38	3117	98.8
16	Manipur	47	2	14	31	0	47	100.0
17	Meghalaya	139	22	97	20	6	145	95.9
18	Mizoram	36	6	30	0	0	36	100.0
19	Nagaland	9	3	6	0	1	10	90.0
20	Odisha	1416	13	1403	0	1	1417	99.9
21	Punjab	231	23	85	123	1	232	99.6
22	Rajasthan	3	1	2	0	1	4	75.0
23	Sikkim	61	11	39	11	0	61	100.0
24	Tamil Nadu	1732	138	461	1133	10	1742	99.4
25	Telangana	1177	163	350	664	3	1180	99.7
26	Tripura	103	21	57	25	4	107	96.3
27	Uttar Pradesh	2531	247	1716	568	813	3344	75.7
28	Uttarakhand	152	8	56	88	79	231	65.8
29	West Bengal	1265	82	966	217	113	1378	91.8
TOTAL STATE(S)		23552	2043	12272	9237	1478	25030	94.1
UNION TERRITORIES:								
30	A & N Islands	82	9	24	49	1	83	98.8
31	Chandigarh	0	0	0	0	1	1	0.0
32	D&N Haveli	38	0	3	35	0	38	100.0
33	Daman & Diu	5	2	1	2	4	9	55.6
34	Delhi UT	933	99	472	362	36	969	96.3
35	Lakshadweep	14	0	14	0	0	14	100.0
36	Puducherry	48	0	48	0	0	48	100.0
TOTAL UT(S)		1120	110	562	448	42	1162	96.4
TOTAL (ALL INDIA)		24672	2153	12834	9685	1520	26192	94.2

● As per data provided by States/UTs
 ● Due to non-receipt of data from West Bengal in time for 2019, Data furnished for 2018 has been used

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Note. Adopted from *Crime in India 2019* published by National Crime Records Bureau, 2020 p. 350. Copyright 2020 by NCRB.