



K. R. Meera's tough and tenacious Women in *The Angel's Beauty Spots*

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Abstract— This paper examines the three novellas of *The Angel's Beauty Spots* by K. R. Meera, which portray the triumphant stories of three tenacious women who overcame agonies and traumas to assert their identities in adverse surroundings. Meera's women draw attention to the voices of numerous unheard, emotionally neglected characters, and the purpose of this paper is to highlight how their strong-mindedness, premeditated thoughts, and unfeigned emotions helped them stand second to none in the engrossed minds of readers. Through her signature mark of creating power-packed lady dons, Meera announces to the world that physical strength does not match a person's intestinal fortitude, particularly a woman. The paper aims to show the efficacy of writing that ultimately makes the characters sensible, pleasant, still, a painful memory.

Keywords— Trauma Theory, Tenacity, K. R. Meera, Mental Health, Yudasinte Suvisham, *The Angel's Beauty Spots*



I. INTRODUCTION

The original inner catastrophe of an individual, which overwhelms the subject symbolically or physically, as an experience of excess emotions, can be termed trauma. As Geoffrey Hartman says, the knowledge of trauma is composed of two contradictory elements. A traumatic event, registered rather than experienced, directly falls into the psyche. The other is a memory of the event. Literature is one way to express whatever kind of memory the traumatic event allows it to—Coover's view of writing as therapy goes right with trauma theorists. To them, post-modern techniques are akin to the victim's struggle to transform traumatic memory into narrative memory. K. R. Meera's text moves on the same analysis as the victims transform their memory of trauma into a narrative written form. The relation between the narrative voice of the post-modern texts and the struggles of the traumatised to articulate the events emotionally for a better feel is the technique the writer adapts.

Considering the text as psychoanalysis, the amount of mental fear undergone by the protagonists makes them one of the traumatised type. Interpreted that way, the text offers a different understanding to the readers. Trauma tends to possess its victim, distorting reality in numerous ways, and 'hallucinations' are among the symptomology of the traumatised (Morrissey, 2021). Drawing a connection between Ted Morrissey's Trauma Theory and the characters of *The Angel's Beauty Spots*, a post-modern technique is used to showcase the victim's sufferings as a traumatic memory. Morrissey's discussion of the correspondence between the post-modern narrative voice and the struggles facing the traumatised when applied to the characteristics exhibited by the dominant characters shows the amount of mental exhaustion to which they are subjected. Modern Trauma theorists also, like the psychoanalysts, draw a close connection between trauma and literature.

Morrissey included contemporary trauma theorists in his study to avoid post-modernism in a branded net. To Cathy Carruth, the traumatised carry with them an impossible

history, or they become a symptom of history. This view goes well with The Angel's Beauty Spots. K. R. Meera's characters carry thorn-in-the-flesh with them; they represent history and create history. The clashes between their self and obligations make them bear the trauma lifelong without questioning the patriarchal norms to which they are subjected. But, their superficial ability to rise above the ordinary, challenging the system prevailing by doing 'strange' things makes them a part of history. The mental sternness they exhibit shows their mental strength. They questioned their consciousness; their willpower was so incredible. Like the tides hitting the cliff, their scattered thoughts roared, turned left and right, sprinkled, and danced, indicating a possible danger.

As Morrissey describes, K. R. Meera's characters of The Angel's Beauty Spots give readers insight into 'the psychic origins of creativity'. The feeling of trauma is passed from one reader to the other, from one location to the other. Morrissey even uses the theories of Michel Foucault in analysing the minds of past people through the texts they left behind. To Michel Foucault, the study of past cultures helps us understand past cultures' thoughts. The same technique can be used in analysing this text. Also, the topography of the author's mind produced the topography of the text. Similarly, the study of the text helps us understand the topography of the text.

The day-to-day events that happen in the life of the traumatised could have a mounting effect on them. The language used by the author amounts to a more significant part of the description of the depth of trauma the traumatised undergoes. Intertextuality, sarcasm, factual representations and narrations, repetition, mode of narration, and fragmentation, are other devices K. R. Meera uses to reach out to the roots of readers' minds. Suppose the extremity of trauma caused symptoms of PTSD in the characters of the text. In that case, the author's narrative method of the pain left the readers with the painful memory of those characters, making them unique, matchless, and determined. K. R. Meera's characters are born bold; trauma doesn't make them weak; it makes them fight, control, and then sacrifice. Yes, they sacrifice, not with the self. On the pretext of sacrifice, they tried just to have a compromise, a compromise with the obligations of an individual.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The key objectives of this research paper are listed below:

1. To understand the psychological reasons behind the traumatic nature of women.
2. To analyse how trauma can shape a woman to be tough and tenacious.

3. To highlight how the women protagonists evolve a new outlook towards love and life.
4. To showcase that societal support becomes vital for the evolvement of women as a citizen.
5. To discuss how women resurge

III. METHODOLOGY

To evaluate how different theories of trauma enable researchers in evaluating the mental health of the characters involved, the research paper is based on exploratory research and therefore utilises research search engines such as Google Scholar, ResearchGate, SSRN, and Academia.edu.

IV. DISCUSSION OF THE TEXT THROUGH THE THEORY

K. R. Meera's The Angel's Beauty Spots has three novellas centred around the lives of three tenacious women. Angela of The Angel's Beauty Spots, Radhika of And Forgetting the Tree, I... Geeta of The Deepest Blue is portrayed as a symbol of tenacity. The three of them were exposed to trauma, but they hesitated to surrender to any emotions other than self-generated. They were born strong, yet victims of trauma. While the text expresses the voice of the traumatised, it also sounds the voice of the sternness of the brave-hearted. As Geoffrey Hartman points out, the language of literature, be it figurative or not, offers the opportunity to tackle grasping the elusive traumatic event and thus move beyond the irrepresentable suffocated voice. The unheard, suffocated voice is heard through the medium of powerful writing and vocabulary. The protagonists' voice of The Angel's Beauty Spots has moved beyond the author's language.

4.1 Novella: The Angel's Beauty Spots

Angela's struggle to be a good mother to Ann and Irene made her violate the social norms set aside by society which made her a victim of trauma. Alexander and Angela were staying separate, and as Angela, herself says, they were not married to be divorced. Alex didn't try to understand Angela, he carried a feeling deep in his heart that he didn't deserve her. Being beautiful to look at and also at heart, Angela chose to be the wife of many, to express it in her terms...his prejudice as a man of importance leads to his decline, and the character of Alex is created in such a way that neither it deserves any sympathy nor an excuse. Alex pushed Angela into whoring, to cut her down and control her. Poor Angela, then, she didn't realise it.

4.2 Description of the Traumatized Character:

Angela's thirty-year-old body was magical, says K. R. Meera. Her piercing brown eyes, well-shaped nose, and

tempting lips captivated men. She kept on moving places of work, sensing danger from Alex. When she met Narendran, she was twenty-five and as she appeared for a job in his company, she was 'ready to pay any price' for the job there. Angela offered a 'romance of four years, an elopement after' for getting a job there. Narendran gave her a job there and helped her get accommodation, bearing the expenses of Ann's school admission. Later at night, when he visited her, she said,

This body is a huge liability, very hard to lug without a job! And hard to find a job with it! I've had enough men staring at me, so wherever I go, I look for the top man there (Meera, 2019).

Married and having mid-level liabilities, Narendran loved Angela. He was the happiest man in town until his wife Sunita found out about them. Angela convinced Narendran, who wanted a divorce from Sunita, that good women don't make men happy. Angela's way of looking at life was matured, she had compromised with her lost life, yet was not ready to surrender. She never lets out her fears, her anxieties, but suppresses them. Deep in her, there was an infinity, which she hesitated to share with anyone, even Narendran. She took care to see her children are happy and made them believe that their mother was always happy. A light that burnt from within kept her confident and outwardly happy. She exhibited no symptoms of being traumatised, but internal clashes always went on. While answering the numerous questions of her toddlers, she kept soothing herself, perhaps dreaming within. She carried a lot of history with her. Her fears made her traumatic, her trauma made her 'she'. Irene, Angela's younger child carried a beauty spot, just like Narendran, for Angela that spot was a traumatic memory. While dying, Angela thought of that beauty spot.

Angela was stabbed to death by Alex, on Irene's birthday. When the knife penetrated deep into her stomach, while Angela tasted her blood, she thought of her children. She tried to reach out to them to safeguard them from her murderer. Struggling like a trapped snake, her blood hissed like a stream during rain. Though life cheated Angela again and again, though it pimped her to death, even when the knife went into her many times, though she writhed and struggled, Angela, hesitated to cry. Even while lying in the coffin, she looked utterly fulfilled, her worries and sadness had vanished. She looked peaceful, like a clear sky after rain. Her face truly looked like an Angel's. An aura of radiance always prevailed in her, in her house, surrounding her. Trauma couldn't make her deceased; her worries made her strong and bold. At the root of her heart, she had fears, perhaps that could be even similar to the ones exhibiting symptoms of PTSD, but K. R. Meera projects her lady dons

at the peak of their courage and inner strength. Alex's continuous stabbing could not hurt Angela. She smiled as she was dead, he had killed her a long, long time ago when Alex himself threw her to one of his friends. Life gave her a pile of donuts; life gave her death. From the corner of her eyes, she looked at her children when she fell. She flew ahead to save them. Even while dying, her body couldn't make her cry, nor could Alex. Life, too, couldn't make Angela cry and curse.

Angela's mental sternness is unmatched. The only worry her face showed was the worry/fear about her children's safety and their future. Spirited, unyielding, and resolved, Angela is an ultimate creation of tenacity. The spell of her life on earth was symbolic to show her successful journey to defeat trauma just to become tenacious. Her unwillingness to surrender to the problems is indicative of her inner strength. Society's stake in gifting worries and anxieties to a woman to make them feel pathetic about themselves aggravates the amount of fear they already possess. Amidst problems, volunteering to carry the donkey's burden by herself, Angela had to voyage alone. Her security was not her concern, the society that would have been a shadow for her became a center of mockery for women like Angela. A part of her trauma can be attributed to society's gift.

4.3 Novella: And Forgetting the Tree, I... Description of Radhika, the Traumatized Character:

Radhika, at ten, left by her father on the wayside, becomes a victim of rape. Her own father's negligence leads to a lifelong traumatic spell that sent shockwaves through her spine very often. She tried to smile, though her body bore those rape scars, also her mind and thoughts. Now she's a housewife, thirty-six years old. Years later, Christy, her lover, returned to her life from nowhere. She had never thought that she would see him again. It was her terrible childhood experience that came to Radhika's mind when she saw Christy again, after ten years. The scent of that raw-boned man, a wood-cutter who had molested her, the reeking scent of rotten wood, persisted under her nose suddenly. Life was much better for Radhika during the latter part of her childhood, as her mother accepted the 'trade' to buy medicines for her ailing father and to send her three children to school. She got to know her mother's job only after her mother passed away.

Radhika too, decided to accept the same 'trade' to bear the expenses she's liable to pay. Though Radhika was reluctant to yield, the man in the hotel room, raped her, surprisingly, the same man loved her intimately after. Radhika narrated the whole of her past to the new man of her life. While narrating the terrible incident to Christy, Radhika didn't weep. She always feared the tears coming, but couldn't weep ever as a fallen tree blocked her tears. With a gust of

hurt sentiments within her, with a pounding heart, she confined herself, being the sole owner of the difficulties of her life. Letting out of the emotions could have been a possible way of relief to her, the extremity of troubles made her rough-skinned by heart. Now that she's a lawyer, she was fearless, except for her traumatic past. Christy's second coming made Radhika remember all those rots that had happened to her ten years before.

Radhika remained troubled for a few days; she didn't go to court due to a headache. Ajith, her husband, was a simple man. Though Ajith wanted to have children, Radhika denied it. She had even told him to marry another woman if he wanted one. Also, she had confessed to Ajith before marriage itself that it was her second marriage. Taken aback, Ajith had thought of withdrawing, but reasons compelled him to marry Radhika. On their first day together, Radhika learns that Ajith had married her only and only because he felt sorry for her. Radhika once again was left to herself, her worries, and anxieties continued to be with her. She didn't want to live on his charity. However, he loved her even though, it was a terrible love. His love wanted the shade and the fruit, but he took care not to allow the roots and the branches to grow. He taunted her every time he made love to her. His love was like paring off branch after branch and finally cutting off the trunk.

He also took care not to nourish the shoots that desperately wanted to sprout. Every question Ajith asked hurt her anew. Whenever he could, Ajith swung the axe hard at the base of the tree, assuming the tree was truly realised in the axe. He never offered her a loving word. He undressed her roughly and assaulted her roughly. Christy's reappearance drew out all these thoughts deep from the grave. Digging up the twigs, he pierced her wounds open, which were in their healing process. From within the decayed core of her heart, sorrow scurried out and rushed all around, just like termites. Radhika's mind was again out of order. It functioned, but not well. She had to settle it soon. Compromising with her rioting mind, she moved on. Christy Issac, an intellectual, who was the nominee for Nobel Prize in Literature, emerged suddenly to unsettle her thoughts. She was surviving, recovering from her traumatised memories. Preparing to talk to him about his purpose of revisiting, Radhika learns that Christy had come to her for getting a legal notice ready and send it to his parents for force-feeding him medicines and subjecting him to shock treatment to 'cure' him from mental illness for the past sixteen years.

Christy's second coming too turned traumatic to Radhika as his brothers informed her of Christy's past after their parting. Sadly, she understands Christy's sad state. He was beyond recovery. Radhika, spiraling down into the past,

thinks of the plucked foetus of their son, Aristotle. She remembered his baby arms, tiny legs, and as blood flowed like a river, Radhika's body was wounded. The electrocuted feeling of a mother when she had to kill her baby, is sketched through Radhika's wounded thoughts about Aristotle. She pulls herself up from those painful thoughts, unwilling to be a victim of love again. Her constant meetings with Christy again drop her in the same position as she was before ten years. Her memory started fading the moment she realised she was living in 1989, not 2005. Radhika was ready to compromise for Christy. She was ready to betray Ajith for her love. Love gave her only pain, she had become addicted to that pain.

The never-ending troubles that life gifted her from a very young age made her tenacious. Had she been a coward, she would have never opted to choose her love over her husband. She was sick, more of mental sickness, the ache of her mind was reflected in the form of an outward ache. Headache constantly threatened her, she couldn't bear the ache from within. Her decision not to bear Ajith's child is just a reflection of the pain of forgotten love she carries along with her. Like a tree, it had long roots. Its branches, uncut, spread across. The tenacity to withstand trauma is perhaps the specialty of K.R. Meera's characters. Trauma could make her woman cold, and non-responsive. Tenacity made Radhika establish over her sadist husband. The coldness in her answered all the questions her husband threw at her silently. Though she failed to make the appropriate decisions about her life in public, she did justice to her soul. What else would one expect from a woman? A woman can't cheat her conscience, her genuine emotions. Yes. Trauma can make her tenaciously strong.

4.4 Novella: The Deepest Blue- Description of Geeta, the Traumatized Character:

While Meera warns chaste wives and monogamous men not to read her account in *The Deepest Blue*, readers are exposed to a strange reading experience. The author takes the risk of narrating a silver experience of love, so different from the usual theme and mode of narration. While searching for a 'Naalukettu' house, Geeta happens to see one that belongs to a 'sanyasi.' The owner wasn't ready to sell it, yet, she wanted her husband to try it on insisting that 'Naalukettu' was the kind she had dreamt of. As they entered the gateway, the owner turned towards them. Clad in an ochre dhoti, he had an ochre towel, covered on his shoulders. The gait of an ascetic, he told them that she was giving away the house to some Aashram. Geeta sensed piercing pain and a stabbing desire for the ascetic. She wanted to see him again on some pretext. After continuous insistence, her husband agreed to her wish of seeing the house of the ascetic again, just to see the house. On their

second visit, asking permission to look around the house, she tries to explore the house and its surrounding.

Stepping into the evening darkness, she reached amidst dense foliage of mango trees, kaitha bushes, a river, and the serpent grove. She returned unconscious, having been bitten by a cobra. Her frequent comparison of herself to a snake molting and shedding leaving a string of lovers behind in search of 'the one' and getting bitten by a snake in her dreams, makes her dream of herself as one who paints herself with a deep blue colour. To Geeta, it was the only colour of love. When Geeta opened her eyes again, she was on the veranda of the ascetic. The mother of two girls, the wife of a forty-year-old man, she was shameless and impossibly bold, immeasurably assertive. Before her husband returns, she kisses the ascetic. Geeta's desire for the ascetic was just a reflection of her wandering mind, perhaps a longing to get loved by a man of her choice. The wounded mind often travels, though it doesn't reach its destination.

Geeta, through frequent visits, wanted the ascetic to become her own. The ascetic resisted. The less he turned interested, the more she became decisive. After making him her own, she felt peaceful. With the hope of meeting him again in the next birth, she returns with a promise of finding him. Geeta knew she could never possess the love of the ascetic. She didn't want to corrupt any system. The love she had in her mind just exploded; she too didn't want to silence it. The ephemerality of her love was acceptable only to her heart. She knew she would meet him in her next life. Her effort to make her next life beautiful is very suggestive of the unsatisfactory life she had to live this life. To the world outside, everything looked normal, the world within was tough though.

Geeta was honest, to the author. Honesty doesn't require morality. Her husband, her children, her house, her servants, her marble floors, her orchids, her anthurium, her outer skins, everything was hers but the gasp she took was for him. Geeta often looked and laughed at her female form. She questioned, what is this woman? Why was she born? Why is she living? This forty-year-old man with his slightly greying hair and these girls aged ten and twelve, who are they to her? She, who is she? The questions about her own identity vexed her. Whenever she got an opportunity to see the man whom she loved, she went. By evening, she returned. She had no repentance of her actions. Everything appeared bluish as if they are consumed by venom. Geeta, right after her first look at the ascetic, felt like two beings who had grown weary in their search for each other across many lives. She matched herself to a serpent that had lost the gem it had guarded. Instead of her lurching and

staggering, she couldn't find it. Frustratedly, she asks if there's a woman in this world who has been loved fairly.

The author doesn't try to project Geeta as a promiscuous woman. She just lets the sophisticated readers guess the trauma Geeta may undergo, having let her love go. The ache of suppressed love is traumatic. Geeta's decision to be with her family speaks of her tenacity. Or else, she could have given up a familial co-existence, or they could have eloped, or she could have apologised to her husband with the promise of remaining a chaste wife thereafter. She chose to be otherwise. She believes a smouldering bit of life cannot be either rewritten or denied. Letting her love burn like a house freshly on fire, she withstands the pain of separation. Even in the downpour of separation, her love blazed brightly. With a stern decision to meet her love in their next birth, she becomes a thread dipped in oil, burning bright, spread light, yearning inside. She thinks of her love as a languid serpent of tremendous venom. It lay in wait for him, biding its time. Once again, she hopes her deadly fangs can turn him the deepest blue, for only a man of the deepest blue colour can survive her venomous fangs.

Trodding on its hood, her love traversed along the mountains, the white snow and red sand taking its form in her eyes. Geeta could never come back to her familial life thereafter. She had confidence in her love, though she knew she may have to wait for lives together to be with him. Her willingness/ the sternness of her mind to tame her thoughts, and the numerous possible questions that could be thrown to her face, speak volumes about Geeta's decisive consciousness. Magic is mixed with metaphor to explain the traumatic state of mind Geeta possesses. As a wife who yearned for a love that transcends lifetimes, Geeta will have a permanent place in readers' hearts as representative of hundred unheard voices. Known for writing strikingly original fiction, K. R. Meera has the sharpest vocabulary in her altogether different way of storytelling by creating women as they are created nowhere else. The painful memory the readers carry about those women could be the realisation that those women reflect their minds and their thoughts, which otherwise would not have seen the light, even in a written/ printed form.

4.5 Trauma That is Common Among the Three Women

Both trauma and tenacity were the common characteristics of Angela, Radhika, and Geeta. Three of them were in love; their love was like a stream that flowed silently. No one heard the enormous roar of undercurrents. The currents were so strong that they shook the crust. Their faces, actions, and words didn't speak their mind. K. R. Meera's ladies in *The Angel's Beauty Spots* were not outspoken. They did what they thought was right. They did not ask for anyone's permission or wait for the right time to act. Love

satisfied their soul; everything else was just a liability for them. All three characters of the three different novellas are portrayed as victims of failed love. The ache of suppressed love is traumatic. Unlike those who showed symptoms of PTSD, Meera's characters believed in a compromise, compromise with the ultimate realities of life. Meera has employed intertextuality, repetition, fragmentation, and language manipulation to create meaning due to extreme traumatic stress.

The internal reminders of the traumatic period gave them trouble throughout. Angela grew restless sometimes, she had a few nightmares, which reflected her troubled mind. Her distressing thoughts about her children were so much that she had altered her anxiety state and mood swings. In Radhika, it was childhood abuse that led to the formation of such a disease in her. She wanted to be alone and find comfort in her company itself. Ajith's presence irked her; his touch made her feel numb. Her increased anxiety shows the extent of the trauma she is subjected to. Geeta was passionate about a man, a man permanent in her life. Was she towards attaining something impractical? The machine-like functioning of Geeta in her family shows her disinterest in her very life.

V. FINDINGS

The research paper proves that a woman can survive traumatic conditions, and beyond a limit of tolerance, she flies high over them, turning more tenaciously beautiful. Their attitude towards life takes a bold turn, and irrespective of the male dominancy forced upon her, she hesitates to subjugate. How she voyages from extreme trauma to the pinnacle of tenacity is found out after a thorough study.

VI. SUGGESTIONS

It is suggested that there is some support system to help women overcome the difficulties of their lives and lead an independent life. Causing troubles by anybody that may affect her mental health should be curtailed by effective legal measures. Traumatic disturbances caused by society should be restrained effectively. Under such circumstances, women turn out to be tough and tenacious.

VII. CONCLUSION

A series of tragedies makes Meera's women tenacious., The author could have created them in the interest of the elite readers. She could have made them sound/act like heroines. Courage is beautifully blended with the themes of betrayal, tragedy, and violence to create an impact on the readers. The audacious depiction of bold women, tormented by longing

and love, subdued by patriarchal norms, has been the trademark of K. R. Meera. Misfortunes in life, discontented marriages cruelty of the spouses shape these women. Heavily metaphoric, Meera's writing is prolific and highly sensible, for it illustrates the life of married women. They cannot be regarded as ordinary. They are very vicious, defying social law and order. However unfair, they are stern and fearless. K. R. Meera perhaps would have wanted us not to think that trauma can never make a woman subdue to others' whims. Let there be more angels to create beauty that lasts forever.

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