



RELIGIOUS HYPOCRISY IN SLEEPING ON JUPITER BY ANURADHA ROY

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Abstract

Anuradha Roy's *Sleeping on Jupiter* explores trauma, memory, and religious hypocrisy through the journey of Nomi, a young woman who returns to Jarmuli, a temple town where she once suffered abuse at an ashram. As she confronts her past, the novel exposes the exploitation hidden within religious institutions. Parallelly, three elderly women on a pilgrimage and a temple guide, Badal, navigate personal conflicts, highlighting the tension between faith and reality. The novel critiques blind devotion, showing how religion can be manipulated for power and oppression, especially against women and children. Roy's lyrical prose contrasts the town's spiritual allure with its darker truths, questioning the sanctity of sacred spaces. *Sleeping on Jupiter* is both an intimate portrayal of personal pain and a powerful commentary on the hidden violence within society, urging readers to question the structures they trust.

Keywords: Trauma, Memory, Religious significance, Abuse and Religious Hypocrisy etc.

The novel *Sleeping on Jupiter* by Anuradha Roy is a poignant novel that examines the intersections of trauma, memory, and religious hypocrisy. The story follows Nomi, a woman who returns to Jarmuli, a town she once sought refuge in as a child, only to confront the abuse she suffered at a religious ashram. Roy explores the disturbing reality of how religious institutions,

often perceived as places of solace and spiritual purity, can also harbor deep exploitation and violence. As Nomi reflects on her past, she navigates the painful realization that the supposed sanctity of the ashram was a façade, hiding "the darkest of secrets, hidden beneath the stillness of sacred spaces."

The novel critiques the manipulative nature of religious figures like Guruji, who embodies the theme of hypocrisy. He is described as "a man of deep faith and falsehood," using his position to manipulate the vulnerable under the guise of spiritual guidance. This duality between spiritual ideals and the hidden abuse challenges the characters and the reader to question the true nature of faith.

Through the characters' experiences, particularly those of Nomi and the three elderly women on pilgrimage, Roy underscores how blind devotion to authority, especially in religious contexts, can mask injustice. As one of the elderly women reflects, "we never ask too many questions when faith is involved," illustrating the reluctance to confront the uncomfortable truths that lie beneath revered institutions. Roy's exploration of religious hypocrisy is not only a critique of the abuse of power but also a meditation on how society often overlooks the darker sides of religious devotion, urging readers to rethink the foundations of faith and trust.

In *Sleeping on Jupiter*, Anuradha Roy intricately examines the theme of religious hypocrisy, focusing on how sacred spaces and figures of authority within religious institutions often mask corruption, exploitation, and abuse. The novel presents Jarmuli, a town known for its spiritual significance, where the apparent sanctity of religious institutions conceals deep flaws, especially in the ashram where Nomi, the protagonist, was once abused.

One of the most glaring examples of religious hypocrisy is the character of Guruji, the head of the ashram. He is revered by his followers, who see him as a spiritual leader, yet beneath his pious exterior lies a man who abuses his position of power for personal gain. Nomi's memories of him are tainted by the abuse she endured, revealing the gap between his public persona and private actions: "Guruji, the man who healed and hurt in equal measure." His ability to manipulate and control the vulnerable under the guise of spiritual protection embodies the hypocrisy of religious authority, as he uses his status to silence victims and maintain his power.

The hypocrisy is also evident in the way the ashram is perceived by others. While it is supposed to be a place of peace, healing, and religious devotion, it becomes a site of control, fear, and exploitation. The contrast between the perceived sanctity of the place and the abuse that occurs within its walls calls into question the true nature of the faith practiced there. As one of the characters notes, "The town is built on faith, but the truth is buried deep beneath its prayers."

Moreover, Roy critiques the unquestioning devotion of the characters around these institutions, particularly through the three elderly women on their pilgrimage. They have been

conditioned to view religious authority figures with reverence, which prevents them from seeing the flaws in the structures they place their faith in. One of them reflects, "We never ask too many questions when faith is involved," demonstrating how faith can sometimes blind individuals to the truths around them, allowing hypocrisy to persist unchallenged.

Ultimately, *Sleeping on Jupiter* exposes how religious institutions, rather than being spaces of truth and solace, can become platforms for exploitation and abuse when power is left unchecked. Through these depictions, Roy calls attention to the dangers of blind faith and the way in which religious authority can be used to perpetuate harm rather than healing.

Anuradha Roy powerfully addresses the theme of woman abuse, particularly through the experiences of Nomi, the protagonist. Nomi's past is marked by severe trauma from the abuse she suffered at the hands of Guruji, the leader of the ashram. The novel illustrates how women, especially those in vulnerable situations, are often subject to exploitation by those in positions of power, masked by a veneer of religious sanctity.

Nomi's suffering is compounded by the silence and complicity of those around her, particularly other women who, despite their own struggles, fail to recognize or confront the abuse. The ashram, a supposed sanctuary, becomes a space where women's bodies and minds are controlled, and their voices silenced. The physical and emotional abuse Nomi faces reflects broader societal patterns where women's autonomy is disregarded, often in the name of tradition or faith.

Roy not only critiques the abuse women face in religious institutions but also examines how societal norms enable this mistreatment. Nomi's journey is one of painful self-realization, where she learns that the trauma inflicted on her is part of a larger, deeply ingrained system of gendered violence. The novel asks uncomfortable questions about how easily women's suffering is overlooked when masked by religious or societal respectability.

In conclusion, Anuradha Roy's *Sleeping on Jupiter* offers a profound exploration of religious hypocrisy and woman abuse, shedding light on how power, authority, and faith can be misused to oppress the vulnerable. Through the harrowing experiences of Nomi and other characters, the novel reveals the disturbing realities hidden within religious institutions and the wider society. Guruji's exploitation of his position as a spiritual leader exposes the dangers of blind devotion, where unquestioned faith often leads to the silencing of victims and the perpetuation of harm.

The theme of woman abuse is central to the narrative, illustrating how women are often the silent sufferers in a system designed to exploit them. Nomi's trauma reflects the broader societal pattern of disregarding women's rights, agency, and voices, particularly within spaces of supposed sanctity. Roy's novel challenges readers to confront the uncomfortable truths about power dynamics, gendered violence, and the manipulation of faith, urging a reevaluation of religious and

societal structures that perpetuate such injustices. *Sleeping on Jupiter* stands as a poignant reminder of the need to listen to those silenced by institutions and to question the very systems that allow hypocrisy and abuse to flourish. It calls for a deeper reflection on the true nature of faith, authority, and human compassion in the face of suffering.

In *Sleeping on Jupiter*, Anuradha Roy exposes the deep-seated religious hypocrisy that pervades Indian society. Through the protagonist Nomi's traumatic past and the contrasting experiences of other characters, the novel critiques how religion, often perceived as a source of solace and morality, can be manipulated to justify exploitation, violence, and suppression. The temple town of Jarmuli, a place expected to embody spiritual sanctity, instead becomes a backdrop for abuse, corruption, and moral contradictions. Roy's narrative challenges the reader to question blind faith and societal structures that enable such hypocrisy. Ultimately, *Sleeping on Jupiter* serves as a powerful commentary on the disparity between religious ideals and their real-world manifestations, urging introspection and reform.

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