

Dynamics of Trauma and Healing in Stabddha Aranya

Rupa Saikia

PhD Research Scholar, Department of English, Nagaland University, Kohima Campus,

Meriema, Kohima, Nagaland, India.

| ORCID ID: 0009-0004-1739-9166

Abstract—Trauma has become an intriguing concept in literary studies, particularly in psychoanalytic approaches. It enables new methods of reading and listening, allowing authors to explore and process the effects of past events and experiences on their characters. Trauma is a recurring theme in literature. This research paper investigates the inherent trauma experienced by the protagonist, Samudra, in the novel *Stabddha Aranya*, following the death of his beloved wife, Shubra. Additionally, the paper examines the roles of love and friendship as epitomes of post-traumatic growth. The researcher uses a dual theoretical framework that combines trauma and psychotraumatological perspectives to gain a deeper understanding of the subject. This approach draws on the influential works of Cathy Caruth and Judith Herman to provide a rich and nuanced analysis.

Keywords: (Trauma, Psychoanalysis, Love, Friendship, Post-traumatic growth)

A Brief Introduction to the novelist (1952-)

Kumud Chandra Hazarika, famously known as Ranju Hazarika, was born on July 24, 1952. Hazarika is one of the most beloved writers of Assam and has written over seven hundred books in Assamese across various genres, including thrillers, social horror, science fiction, children's literature, comedy, and adventure. At the age of fifteen, Hazarika composed his debut novel, *Bahurupi*, in 1973. His principal works encompass *Zulu*, *Eta Dip Satta Kabar*, *Uttar Phalguni*, and *Narakar Phool*. Hazarika garnered esteemed accolades for his literary contributions, including the Rahashya Samrat (2008), Prerana Bota (2008), and Sishu Sahitya Academy Bota (2024)

About the novel *Stabddha Aranya* (*Stunned Forest*)

Ranju Hazarika's *Stabddha Aranya* is a novel centred around revenge. It narrates the tale of Samudra, his wife Shubra, the village girl Gauri, and the man-eating tiger. Samudra and Shubra have a love marriage and lead a content life, with Shubra also expecting a child. During a picnic in the jungle, Shubra tragically falls victim to the tiger. Following this, Samudra's mental state deteriorates, and his psychologist offers two solutions: bringing back Shubra, which is impossible or slaying the tiger. Samudra and his friend Bhaskar obtain permission from the forest officer and the government to hunt the tiger. They relocate to the village head's house in a nearby village, where they encounter Gauri. After enduring significant challenges, Samudra avenges Shubra by killing the tiger, and he and Gauri unite.

Trauma Theory:

The term “trauma” derives its etymology from a Greek root that denotes physical hurt. However, the word was given a psychological dimension by the medical and psychiatric

fields as well as Freud's works, meaning a mental wound that does not adhere to the straightforward and reversible processes of the body (Caruth 3-4).

In contemporary society, the extensive use of the word "trauma" draws our attention to the importance of trauma and trauma theory. The initial stages of trauma studies discussion lie in the technological development of "railway spine," the study of hysteria, and shell shock. And later, this study was incorporated into the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM)* with a full-fledged and official status of trauma studies. In literature, trauma theory gained its major attention after the publication of Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996) and Kali Tal's *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literature of Trauma* (1996).

Psychotraumatology

The study of psychological trauma, known as psychotraumatology, focuses on understanding the impact of traumatic experiences on the mind, body, and behaviour. The term "psychotraumatology" was coined by George S. Everly, Jr., and Jeffrey M. Lating in the text entitled *Psychotraumatology: Key Papers and Core Concepts in Post-Traumatic Stress* (1995). It seeks to understand the causes, symptoms, and long-term effects of trauma while developing healing strategies. Additionally, it examines how individuals process distressing events. Psychotraumatology integrates various psychological theories to explore how trauma affects memory, emotions, and identity. In this field, significant contributions have been made by theorists such as Sigmund Freud, Cathy Caruth, and Judith Herman.

Psycho-traumatic symptoms in *Stabdha Aranya*:

We can never predict the future or the situations we may encounter; thus, life is uncertain. Despite the unpredictability of the future, we have to maintain and follow up on our duties. In the novel, Samudra and Shubra were happily living their life. Pathetically, because of their love

marriage, their family abandoned them, and they had to live separately. However, with the constant support from each other, they feel content and are progressing in life.

In the novel, Samudra's office colleagues organized a picnic, and the party was held in a forest surrounded by nature. All of them reached the destination, and at that time, Samudra shared the good news with his friends that they were expecting a child. All were happy, but a man-eating tiger took the life of Shubra. Samudra was devastated, and his mental condition deteriorated. And he has developed symptoms of psychotrauma, like Samudra's unstable mindset, depression, isolation, and emotional numbness, which illustrate the impact of his trauma. As mentioned in the previous section, Samudra's psychologists have given two remedies for recovery from his traumatic situations. Samudra's friend adopted one remedy to kill the tiger. And to kill the tiger, they reached the nearby village. Regrettably, they have to wait for a long time to reach their mission. They can murder the tiger and get revenge on it, however, because of their positive mindset.

Healing Mechanism in *Stabddha Aranya*.

"Healing mechanism" refers to the process or methods through which an individual recovers from physical, psychological, or emotional trauma. Psychology and trauma studies often involve both internal and external factors, such as coping strategies, therapeutic interventions, emotional support, and resilience-building, which help a person restore their mental, emotional, or physical well-being. These mechanisms can include psychotherapy, self-care, social connections, and sometimes spiritual or cultural practices that promote healing and resilience.

Judith Herman, in the book *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence—from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (1992), has alluded to three recovery stages of trauma: establishment

of safety, remembrance and mourning, and connection with ordinary life. Implying these three recovery stages in the novel, *Stabddha Aranya*, reminds us that Samudra's healing from his traumatic experiences is facilitated by establishing safety with his friends and beloved. Samudra's friend Bhaskar, with his unconditional devotion and support, becomes instrumental in Samudra's healing process. Gauri, the daughter of the village head, and her love and commitment to Samudra also become a healing mechanism. He connects with his surroundings and starts a new life as a result.

Conclusion

It may be concluded from the discussion above that *Stabddha Aranya* by Ranju Hazarika offers a powerful depiction of trauma and healing. The novel makes it clear that friendship and love may cure pain. Samudra, the main character, exemplifies the complex process of post-traumatic growth (PTG), which refers to the constructive mental changes that take place following the resolution of incredibly challenging life circumstances.

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