

Rethinking Resilience Affect, Gender and Ecology in Forager Life

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Abstract—This study explores the interaction of female subjectivity, emotional experience, and emotional resilience through the lens of the forager. Moving beyond standard patriarchal and neoliberal interpretations of resilience as "emotional healing" or "detachment," this study suggests a feminist reconfiguration of strength based on affective depth. By examining "emotiosevere" subjectivity, a way of being marked by high emotional intensity, continuous care work, and environmental precocity, the study contends that the forager's emotional existence serves as an epistemic tool rather than a liability.

The study examines forager agency through a multidisciplinary lens that includes affect theory, ecofeminism, and anthropological subsistence models. The results indicate that emotional resilience in this context is cyclical, collective, and environmental.

Index Terms—Emotional Resilience, Forager Identity, Affective Labour, Ecofeminism, Emotional Agency, Feminist Theory.

I. INTRODUCTION

According to Anuradha Roy, women's lives are shaped not only by visible struggles but by the emotional negotiations they conduct in silence. Her fiction consistently returns to women who are inward-looking, ethically alert, and emotionally resilient, not because they conquer adversity, but because they learn to live with its weight. Roy's narratives resist the spectacle of empowerment and instead privilege interior survival, suggesting that endurance itself is a meaningful form of agency.

Anuradha Roy's novels reveal a deep commitment to exploring female subjectivity as a fluid and evolving consciousness rather than a fixed identity. Her women are often displaced by grief, trauma, political upheaval, or domestic confinement and this

displacement becomes the ground on which selfhood is forged. Emotional resilience, according to Roy, does not imply recovery or closure; it is the ability to carry loss without allowing it to erase the self. In this sense, Roy's women are never "healed" in conventional terms, yet they remain profoundly alive.

This paper examines female subjectivity and emotional resilience in The Forager, situating it within Anuradha Roy's broader fictional landscape, particularly The Folded Earth (2011), Sleeping on Jupiter (2015), and All the Lives We Never Lived (2018). The metaphor of the "forager" is used to conceptualize Roy's female protagonists as gatherers of emotional meaning. They assemble their identities from fragments memory, silence, artistic impulse, and ethical choice rather than from stable social roles or institutional support.

Roy's narrative style reinforces this vision of resilience. Through interior monologue, non-linear temporality, and symbolic use of space, she foregrounds emotional depth over dramatic action. Landscapes such as the Himalayas, abandoned institutional spaces, and claustrophobic domestic interiors mirror the psychological states of her female characters, transforming physical settings into extensions of consciousness. Silence, withdrawal, and solitude function not as signs of defeat but as strategies of emotional self-preservation.

II. FEMALE SUBJECTIVITY AND THE METAPHOR OF THE FORAGER

Female subjectivity in Roy's fiction is deeply introspective and often articulated through silence rather than speech. Her women do not seek validation through societal roles; instead, they construct meaning

privately, often in isolation. The metaphor of the “forager” aptly captures this mode of existence. Like foragers who gather sustenance from sparse environments, Roy’s protagonists assemble identity from emotional remnants—memories, losses, and unresolved trauma.

In *The Forager*, female subjectivity is shaped by emotional scarcity. The women navigate fractured relationships and moral uncertainty, developing resilience not through confrontation but through adaptation. Their emotional intelligence allows them to survive hostile environments without surrendering their ethical core. Roy’s narrative strategy foregrounds interior monologue and reflective distance, allowing readers access to the evolving consciousness of these women.

This form of subjectivity resists linear development. Instead of growth arcs that culminate in closure, Roy’s women remain in a state of becoming. Their resilience lies in sustaining selfhood amid emotional instability, making survival itself a political and feminist act.

III. EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE IN THE FOLDED EARTH

The Folded Earth presents Maya, a young widow who retreats to the Himalayan town of Ranikhet after the sudden death of her husband. Maya’s emotional resilience is defined by her refusal to “move on” in socially acceptable ways. Her grief is not resolved but integrated into her identity.

The mountainous landscape functions as both sanctuary and challenge, reflecting Maya’s emotional terrain. Isolation allows her to confront grief without societal pressure, transforming solitude into a space of self-reflection. Maya’s resilience is evident in her ability to coexist with pain rather than eradicate it. Roy thus redefines healing as endurance rather than recovery.

IV. TRAUMA, SILENCE, AND SURVIVAL IN SLEEPING ON JUPITER

In *Sleeping on Jupiter*, Roy explores female subjectivity through Nomi, a survivor of childhood sexual abuse in a religious institution. The narrative structure mirrors trauma itself—fragmented, non-

linear, and elusive. Nomi’s silence is not a sign of weakness but a deliberate assertion of agency.

Emotional resilience in these novel manifests through refusal: refusal to explain trauma, refusal to conform to narratives of forgiveness or redemption. Nomi’s subjectivity is guarded, shaped by memory and resistance to emotional exposure. Roy challenges conventional representations of trauma survivors by allowing Nomi to exist without moral resolution, reinforcing resilience as the right to emotional privacy.

V. ART, MOTHERHOOD, AND RESISTANCE IN ALL THE LIVES WE NEVER LIVED

All the Lives We Never Lived offers a different yet complementary portrayal of female resilience through Gayatri, a woman constrained by domestic expectations and nationalist politics. Gayatri’s artistic pursuits and eventual withdrawal from motherhood disrupt dominant ideals of feminine sacrifice.

Her resilience lies in choosing self-expression over conformity. Unlike traditional maternal figures, Gayatri refuses emotional erasure, asserting her subjectivity through art and emotional distance. Roy presents this withdrawal not as abandonment but as an ethical choice, complicating notions of female duty and resilience.

VI. CONCLUSION

Anuradha Roy’s fiction offers a profound reimagining of female subjectivity and emotional resilience in contemporary Indian English literature. Through *The Forager*, *The Folded Earth*, *Sleeping on Jupiter*, and *All the Lives We Never Lived*, Roy constructs women who survive not by overcoming trauma but by living alongside it. Their resilience is quiet, introspective, and ethically grounded.

By employing the metaphor of the forager, this paper has demonstrated how Roy’s women gather meaning from emotional fragments rather than stable structures. In doing so, Roy challenges dominant feminist narratives that equate empowerment with visibility or rebellion. Instead, she affirms emotional endurance as a powerful mode of female resistance, positioning her work as a significant contribution to feminist literary discourse.

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