

SCRIPTOTHERAPY AS AN ANTIDOTE FOR TRAUMATIC PROBLEMS WITH REFERENCE TO SAPPHIRE'S PUSH

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Abstract: Writing serves as an instrument in the process of healing. Scriptotherapy is the term coined by Suzzette A Henke in her book *Shattered Subjects*. It is a space where the writer explores his/her writing for the therapeutic purposes. The novel *Push* by Sapphire foregrounds the importance of writing where the character Precious undergoes various problems at her young age. Before the age of 16, she gets pregnant twice. Psychic trauma folds her and leads her life in total depression. Most of her problems happen inside the family, she becomes very lonely, depressed, rude and a stone-hearted girl. Once her teacher encourages her to write, she adapts self-narration and develops herself through the writing. Precious searches the opportunities to uplift her, and writing helps out. By writing, she finds a way to change her attitude and finds a different place in the classroom in which once she was considered rude. Writing serves as a way to heal. Scriptotherapy in her life helps her to get out the traumatic problems. This paper intends to find the importance of Scriptotherapy used in the novel *Push* by Sapphire and explores the benefits of writing.

Keywords: Writing, trauma, depression, Scriptotherapy, healing.

INTRODUCTION

“The conflict between the will to deny horrible events and the will to proclaim them aloud is the central dialectic of psychological trauma”

—Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*

The basic urge to employ self writing happens to an individual for many reasons. Many writers write to record history, to record their self and a few writers write to help them survive. Witnessing a tragic blow and acquainting those circumstances as a whole create a great impact on one's life. Writers try to overcome it through the writings. Scriptotherapy is a term coined by Suzzette A Henke in her book *Shattered Subjects: Trauma and Testimony in Women's Life-Writing*. For Henke, “Scriptotherapy is a discursive space within which all the psychological wounds one suffers from are re-enacted with the purpose of making them heal”. This paper examines the way Scriptotherapy is conceptualized in the novel *Push*.

PRECIOUS – THE GIRL IN THE COSMOS OF TRAUMA

Push is the first novel written by Sapphire. The novel was later adapted into a movie. The protagonist of the novel is Clarice Precious Jones, a young school girl.

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By the age of sixteen, she gets pregnant for the second time in her life. She is raped by her own father and gets a baby girl at the age of twelve, and she gets pregnant again at the age of sixteen. She leads her life in utmost miserable state, where she does not get any love even from her mother. Precious explains it as, "Daddy put his pee-pee smelling thing in my mouth, my pussy, but never hold me. I see me, first grade, pink dress dirty sperm stuffs on it. No one comb my hair. Second grade, third grade, fourth grade seem like one dark night. Carl is the night and I disappear in it". (20). Clarieece develops herself as a stone-hearted girl, she never minds anyone. She misbehaves in school by disrespecting teachers. "Class turn the book pages to page 122 please." I don't move. He say, "Miss Jones, I said turn the book pages to page 122." I say, "Mutherfucker I ain't deaf." The whole class laugh. He turn red. He slam his han' down on the book and say, "Try to have some discipline." (5-6).

The school Principal once asks about her pregnancy, and Clarieece speaks with complete disrespect and discomfort. Clarieece school Principal says to her "Your attitude Clarieece is one of total uncooperation".(9). Trauma takes a huge role in the life of Clarieece; from her childhood she admits herself to be a loser. She loses complete hope in her life. Clarieece is only sixteen by age and she gets pregnant for the second time. Her parents physically abuse her, and she fails to receive happiness from outside world. At one point, she tries to commit suicide. "Sometimes I wish I was not alive. But I don't know how to die."(36). This shows the innocence of Clarieece, it is too huge for her age to bare all kinds of pain she has to undertake.

Traumatic experiences faced by Clarieece impact her badly on the social setup she lives; she is no good at school where the school has ended up in suspending her. From Clarieece point it is kind of shutting the window of hope. Van Der Kolk in his book *Psychological Trauma* says "the overwhelming nature of trauma makes psychological integration difficult" (6). For Clarieece, more than the physical wounds, psychologically she gets affected a lot. The first child of Clarieece becomes a mentally retarded child, but Clarieece never cares for the child.

STEPPING INTO THE NEW ARENA OF HOPE

After encountering many problems in her life, suspended from the school, the Principal asks Clarieece to join the other school named 'Each One Teach One'.

"Each One Teach One is an alternative school and an alternative is like a choice, a different way to do something" (29). Clarieece enters the school when she is pregnant for the second time in her life. Clarieece finds it a totally different place, and she meets the teacher Miss Rain.

It is a small class and Clarieece gets a chance to mix with people. Miss Rain, the teacher of Clarieece introduces writing in the life of Clarieece.

““Every day, “Miz Rain say, “we gonna read and write in our notebooks.”
How we gonna write if we can’t read? Shit, how we gonna write if we can’t
write! I don’t remember never doing no writing before. My head spinning
I’m scared maybe we, maybe this ain’ class for me.”(55-56).

Since Clarieece is not good with alphabets, reading and writing, she has never thought that writing would change the dimensions of her life. But when she starts writing, she starts seeking meaning for her life. Miss Rain serves as a guiding light in her life. She encourages her by saying “She real serious now, say, “The longest journey begin with a single step”(56)

Suzzette A Henke calls this as Scriptotherapy, where the space is created for the writer to remember the past and helps to give voice. Riordan calls Scriptotherapy as “the deliberate use of writing designed to enhance therapeutic outcomes”. Clarieece has the past memory which is full of traumatic incidents, in which she had no opportunity to share with the outer world. All her life, she has been alone and sad, but now writing opens a window of hope in her life. When she starts writing, a change in the attitude is evident in the life of Clarieece.

WRITING – A NEW PERCEPTION TO STEP FORWARD

At first she wanted to die, but after she starts writing, she develops the hope. After the birth of the second child she says,

“I am Precious ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRST
UVWXYZ
My baby is born
My baby is black
I am girl
I am black
I want house to live.” (85).

At the birth of her second child, she is only at the stage of learning alphabets, and she associates herself with it; it shows the way Clarieece sees the alphabets that have brought a new hope in her life. She also develops the hope to live. At first she refers to her first child as money, she does not often see her child but after she starts writing, the love for her develops in Clarieece. At first Clarieece says “Little Mongo is money for me!”(62), but later when she starts writing, her attitude towards the love alters completely. Thus she says,

““Underneaf what I wrote Miz Rain write what I said in pencil.
li Mg o mi m
(Little Mongo on my mind)””(69).

Clariecee is not sure with alphabets and spellings, so after writing, Miss Rain helps her in changing it into correct spelling. This helps her to reveal her past, and she feels happy about the writing, about which she says,

“She read me what she wrote, tell me to write my answer to her question in the book. I copy Little Mongo’s name from where Miz Rain had wrote it. Litte mony is mi cie Miz Rain read, “Little Mongo is my child?” She have question in her voice. I say, “Yes yes.” Miz Rain know Little Mongo is my child ‘cause I wrote it in my journal. I am happy to be writing. I am happy to be in school.”(69).

Clariecee accepts the past after she starts writing. She considers writing as one of the best thing which is good in her life. It changes her stance towards her life. It even makes Clariecee to forgive the past.

“Sixteen years I live in her house without knowing how to read. Since I was little her husband fuck me beat me. My daddy. I want to hate him— but it’s funny I, he, give me the only good thing in my life aside from Ms Rain, ABCs, and girls at school; Abdul come from him, my son, my brother.”(96).

Clariecee gets affected by AIDS from her father. Again life seems miserable to her, but her teacher asks her to write. “You not writing Precious. I say I drownin’ in river. She don’t look me like I’m crazy but say, If you just sit there the river gonna rise up drown you! Writing could be the boat carry you to the other side.”(107).

At first Clariecee writes only when she is in the class, but later Miss Rain asks her to write everytime, which she says “More than 15 minutes an she write back. Say walk wif it. The journal? I say. Yeah, she say, Walk wif da journl. Everywhere you go, journal journal go. You know I go walk with Abdul etc., take journal, write stuff in journal.”(109).

Clariecee feels better when she writes her own story, she tries to admit the reality and tries to move on. She writes,

“I feel btretter L, j glad I write my book
Precious
3/6/89.” (112).

Clariecee starts writing poetry, and it helps her pour out her feelings. The intervention of literacy brings a lot changes in her life, including the transformation in the approach towards life. Clariecee accepts and adjusts and finds a new life after the introduction of literacy in her life. She tries to relate all the good things with writings, which she says ABC.

“I am Precious ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ”.(85). Clariecee says it after the birth of her second son. In another situation she says, “That is

good proof to me I can do anything. Already Abdul know ABC. Plus he know his numbers".(99). She is very happy that her son Abdul also starts learning ABC. In one of her poems, she expresses the hope for life.

"I say my name is Precious Jones and this poem is for my baby son, Abdul Jamal Louis Jones. Then I let loose:

Mother to Son

Well, son, I'll tell you:

Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.....

So boy, don't you turn back.

Don't you set down on the steps

'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.

Don't you fall now—

For I'se still goin', honey,

I'se still climbin',

And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.(123).

The above poem shows the maturity level Clarieece has attained by the course of writing. She develops the courage to admit and run through the problems.

CONCLUSION

"Telling Your Story Git You over that River".(108), Miss Rain asks her to choose writing, the boat that can help her to get out of the river in which Clarieece thinks that she is drowning. Reading and writing give a new hope in the life of Clarieece. Though she is uncertain about the future because of her disease, she finds a way to mould her life she wants. Scriptotherapy in her life helps her to pursue life in a meaningful way. She promises to live for her children, which has not found in her life before the intervention of literacy. By writing, Clarieece testifies her own story and she gets healed. She becomes a poet and her poems contain the elements of motivation and inspiration in it. The poems of Clarieece stands as the testimony for her life, she has changed from a hopeless girl to a strong woman. She progressed herself with writing to lead her temporary life. "You can make anything by writing"- C.S. Lewis. Writing helps Clarieece to start a meaningful life after a tragic assault. Scriptotherapy plays a major role in the life of Clarieece. Scriptotherapy helps her to re-construct her life. Many women writers have survived through Writing, many women writers embrace Scriptotherapy to pour out their emotions. "Unexpressed emotions will never die. They are buried alive and will come forth later in uglier ways" -Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Scriptotherapy helps a person to express, to overcome the difficult situation. Many women writers have used Scriptotherapy in their autobiographical works. The present study has

examined the Scriptotherapy which has helped Clariecee to come out of her painful memories.

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