

Autism in Ann Martin's "*Rain Reign*": A Psychoanalytical Reading

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American Literature is an important movement in drama, poetry, fiction, and criticism which took shape during World Wars. The eventful period that followed the war left its imprint upon books of all kinds. Literary forms of the period are extraordinarily varied, and in drama, poetry, and fiction the leading authors tended towards radical technical experiments. Much advancement is brought into the field of American Movements. Criticism plays a vital role in the field of American Literature. During modern era, literature has changed. Writers of the modern age pay heed to self reflective mode of writing. They have a keen eye on psychological aspect of life.

Ann.M.Martin was born on August 12, 1955. After graduating from Smith College, Ann became a teacher and then an editor of children's books. She is now a full time writer. Ann gets the ideas for her books from many different places. Some are based on personal experiences, while others are based on childhood memories and feelings. Ann always enjoyed writing. Even before she was old enough to write, she would dictate stories to her mother to write for her. As a teen, Ann wanted to help children with disabilities and she worked during her vacation in an Autistic children's home. She studied child psychology that included a course on children who were struggling with disabilities, dyslexia and autism. This experience created an urge in her work to write about children. Her famous novels are; *Inside Out* (1984), *Yours Truly, Shirley* (1988), *Kristy and the Secret of Susan* (1990), *A corner of the Universe* (2002), *Rain Reign* (2014), *How to Look for a Lost Dog* (2016). All these novels talk about children who suffer from Autism and other related problems. The novels focus on the mental agony the children undergo when they are bullied at school and become a laughing stock in the school and what they do about it.

Autism is termed as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). "A child is classified as having autism when the child has a developmental disability that significantly affects verbal and non- verbal communication and social interaction, that is generally evident before age three, and that adversely affects educational performance. (*Code of Federal Regulations 158*)

Autism spectrum disorder is a disorder that happens in the brain. Spectrum is an umbrella term which means diverse. So autism can be identified in an individual in pair with so many other disorders like being Hyperactive, Schizophrenic, with Down Syndrome,

hearing and speaking impairment etc. There are no specific symptoms for autism. Some of them are sensitive to touch and sounds. Rose in Rain Reign is one such kid. “Do you see any other kids clapping their hands over their ears and screaming when they hear the fire alarm”(8). Each and every autistic individual may have varied needs, wants, guidelines, parenting, medical support etc because no two autistic symptoms are the same. Some of them cannot socialize with others and some may tend to hurt themselves. “I was having trouble talking to the other kindergarteners and I cried a lot and was apt to hit myself in the head with a shoe”(20). The cause for autism is not fixed. It may affect every man and woman without any special mention of the rich and the poor, good and bad, any race, tribe or culture. Some say autism is the result of bad parenting. But it is just a myth. Autism cannot be cured. If a person has autism spectrum disorder then the person must cope with it throughout his/her life. But therapies and treatments can aid them in their life.

Temple Grandin is an American professor of animal science at Colorado State University, and she is a consultant to the live stock industry on animal behaviour, and autism spokesperson. She is one of the first individuals on the autism spectrum to publicly share insights from her personal experience of autism. She has designed and invented a machine, which is called a soothe machine, that could relieve her from her stress, tantrums and control her behaviour in public. Most autists do not like to be touched cuddled even by their parents.

Autism cannot be identified before age three. The brain for an autistic child starts to develop rapidly fast. So the child begins to sit crawl, walk and talk before their age. They are found very active and socially adaptive. But when they become three their brain slows down. The child who was found happy and energetic suddenly prefers to be silent. The child who was so fluent in asking for its needs suddenly shuts down and doesn't even make eye contact. All of a sudden they seem to be in some other world of their own, where they do not welcome any guests, be it their parents, siblings, their friends etc. Autists cannot adjust or alter with their routines. They get tantrums and get upset if their routine is disturbed. This is because their mind gets conditioned.

Temple Grandin says that there are three ways in which the autistic mind thinks. They are Music Thinkers, Maths Thinkers and verbal thinkers. Visual thinkers think in pictures. For example if we say 'apple' the mind visualizes an apple. If we say 'drink water' then the mind first visualizes the action of drinking water. These children can specialise in arts and building blocks. Maths and music follow some rules or patterns which would be easily recorded in the minds of Music or Maths thinkers. Such children when they are taught calculation or counting grasp it in no seconds. The same goes with music; they can play musical instruments or songs without flaw just by listening to them for once.

Francesca Happe's Autism: An Introduction to Psychological Theory is used to study the autistic world presented in Ann Martin's novels. It discusses autism in three levels: Biological, Behavioural and cognitive (reasoning). He explains the difficulties in each level. The book deals with Autism, Dyslexia, Asperger syndrome and other related physical disorders. It identifies autistic children with special talents. It focuses on the deeper understanding of the autists' view of the world. Baron-Cohen tells in his book in his book Empathizing- Systemizing (E-S) Theory, that an autists mind fails to empathize or reciprocate to others' feelings. Rather it lives by a set of rules (systems). Novels on autism are significant and much valued contribution to literature. These novels take autists and their problems out of their bounds of therapeutic arena and bring them into the field of literature.

Rose in Ann Martin's Rain Reign is twelve years old and her official diagnosis is High Functioning Autism. As Simon Baron Says Rose's mind is conditioned to rules and so she strictly follows rules. She gets upset and more irritated if she finds anybody breaking the rules. "They are supposed to follow the rules! They aren't following the rules" (35). She is bullied off in school and she don't drive in the school bus for this behaviour. "Somethings I get teased about are following the rules and always talking about homophones" (5). People call her 'retard'. Another obsession that she has is for the Homophones. "I like homophones a lot. And I like words. Rules and numbers too" (4). She in the novel is ready to express to her readers what homophones are and the rules of it. Ann. Martin speaks through Rose throughout the novel. Whenever she hears somebody speak her mind immediately drives her to think of the homophones that can be formed through those words. For example if her teacher says 'Write', her mind would say 'Right, 'Rite', and 'Wright'.

Rose's father used to get complain from her school teachers very often. He often scolds her very bad. "Rose, for god's sake, keep your mouth closed when you think of a homophone" (8). So to divert her from the homophones and the rules, he gifts her, a dog. She names it Rain because the dog came to her on a rainy evening. Immediately her mind formed the homophone of 'Rain' which is 'Reign' and 'Rein' this has become the title of the novel. So Rose and her obsession are inseparable. According to Happe' Rose's character has to be dealt with autistic individual in the cognitive level. It means that Rose's thinking process is different from other children of her age. Not all children can think of a homophone for each and every word and not all children will stick to the rules. "I am the only student in my classroom who's interested in homophones" (14). This novel does not portray Rose as a girl with disorder but tries to project her as a girl who can do things what normal children cannot do.

One day rose loses her dog in a storm. She has become so close with the dog that it has become her soul mate without which she cannot be happy. "Rain and I have routines. We like routines" (11). So she dares to come out of all her routines and goes in search of her dog.

She finds it very difficult to cope with new situation, environment and people. Yet her mind is focused in finding her dog. She plans a strategy, on her own makes a map and at last with great determination finds her dog in a shelter house for dogs. Rose finds her dog with its previous owner and this is the most shocking situation she faces. But towards the end of the novel Rose is ready to leave her soul mate, the dog with its previous owner understanding that they would also have missed the dog so badly as she missed it for more than a week. She became strong from there.

The Autistic girl whom we think cannot make eye contact, who cannot socialize with people, who cannot control her behaviour if something goes wrong, has taught the world to respect others feelings and overcome their pitfalls by striving hard to achieve their goals in life. So Autists should not be looked down and must be treated equally well in the society. Because the world needs every kind of mind to work together to create a better world.

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