

## Constructing the Womanhood-Self: Creativity, Self-Reliance, and Sustainability in Anuradha Roy's *The Folded Earth* (2011)

S Arul Little Snita\*  

### Abstract

*Women take a lead for new beginnings in life. Unexpected events disrupt a person's regular routine. The path is illuminated by the impact of a ray of hope. Retracing for logical reasoning is not a frame of traits in womanhood self. In such a context, women stand for creativity, self-reliance and sustainability. The sense of rambling for uncontrollable prospects of past and future is detained in these former dimensions. Womanhood flourishes in later stages. The novel, *The Folded Earth* by Anuradha Roy, puts forth three women who epitomize the former dimensions. These women sprout from different age groups: a teenager, a young adult, and a ripe old woman, and thrive under the same landscape of mountainous regions of Ranikhet. The former dimensions have an in-built progressive trait of free will. It is free from guilts, complaints and expectations. The progressive arena is essential for a high-yielding futuristic prospect. This creates a notion of essential understanding in oneself and provides courageous support to withstand the womanhood-self.*

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\*S Arul Little Snita, Reg. No: 241112702034, PhD Research Scholar, Department of English, St. John's College, (Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Palayamkottai, Tirunelveli- 627002, Tamil Nadu, India.

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The article aims to explore womanhood as a source of strength for women. It encourages women to take the lead roles of life as a daughter, granddaughter, sister, wife, and mother with utmost courage and love. The objectives are to discover the traits in women. These traits are different in form depending on the circumstances of women and their lifestyles. They are also subjected to changes over a point of time. The free-will is a tint of meager understanding in the senses. This focus is attained when a woman introspects with her inner self. The problem arises when a woman bursts out in helplessness while focusing on losses, regrets, guilt, and mistakes. Women are divine creatures for nature. It resonates with their place of inner self. This discovery levels as peace is discovered and sustained.

The lives of Charu, Maya, and Ama are centralized in the Ranikhet forest, Uttarakhand. This region is an ecological zone located within the range of the Kumaon Himalaya. It attracts researchers for varied compelling reasons. Over the past century, the region has experienced severe land-use changes. The transition from a traditional sustainable forest to increase the commercial production is an impact of complex mosaic anthropogenic activities. Under such a landscape, women lead a progressive stage focusing on creativity, self-reliance and sustainability. With the enhancement of these traits, the womanhood-self is reflected through the characters. This reflection builds the courage and strength in the lives of dependent individuals they are related to. The womanhood-self of Charu is intricate in creativity; the womanhood-self of Maya relies on self-reliance, while the womanhood-self of Ama sustains with sustainability. Success and achievements are not the measurement bars for womanhood-self. Poverty, lack of formal literate education, and inappropriate family situations are parallelly disheveled. The womanhood-self paves the way for identity in self and dependent individuals. This identity builds through traits. Free-will is the level of discovery. The free-will defines a woman to be a fully able-handed individual. Successful, professional women are seen as “competent but cold”, while women in traditional roles are considered “warm but incompetent” (Fiske 688–692).

Women, in general, are expected to fulfill responsibilities either on social grounds or on a personal level. This encourages a level of improvement as the scale of age increases. Likewise, there will always be an influence of counterparts in the lives of women. Successful women can also be seen as an economic threat and are sometimes feared, envied, and resented (Glick & Fiske 109). The impacts are felt under a conscious state where none are exempted from guilt, regrets, and complaints. The womanhood-self is brought to free-will when such exemptions are considered a turning point. Women under restricted circumstances have limited access to socio-economic rights and privileges. This demotivates women in lower strata, and potential harmful activities are evident on them. Such situations give rise to the need for an empowered women’s society. Further, the sphere of

participation requires equality in gender roles. The core layers of societal structure rely on the decision-making process. These structured societal demands are ignored in the lives of the female characters of Anuradha Roy.

The womanhood-self is reflected among these women characters, as their determined selves thrive on their inner selves to attain the determined goals. Womanhood-self becomes a pathway to reach their goals. The goal is either a desire, a destiny, or a wish. In this discourse, women are more environmentally conscious than men, while simultaneously more vulnerable to environmental change (Arora-Jonsson 750). In *The Folded Earth*, the author defies the possible range of determined desire, destiny, and wish to be a responsibility. Responsibility takes a serious turn towards commitments. As the traits of womanhood-self portrayed in women characters, there is a lucid flow of alienating leverage. The progress is led through the traits of womanhood-self. At each level of leverage, the step of womanhood-self is stubbornly reflected as the in-built free-will becomes an evident forerunner.

The basic social group in a society is structured as a family. The bonds in a family are united through relations and kinship. Irrespective of the societies and cultures, family as a structure is witnessed everywhere. The ideal needs for a family are protection, companionship, security, and socialization. The women characters of *The Folded Earth* experience family in varied forms. The family of Charu has a paternal grandmother as the sole head; the family of Maya was dismantled in the very beginning, leaving Maya as a widow, while the family of Ama is fragmented with minimal members. The womanhood-self of female characters leads to a trait for each that reciprocates protection, companionship, security, and socialization to self and dependent individuals. Womanhood-self as depicted through the traits - is found to be without control under free-will. No women characters are controlled. This is the niche that led the traits of womanhood-self to flourish. The notion of self-control is not an aspect of understatement. Each character was liberalized. The free-will brought the audacious circle of entanglement in womanhood-self traits. It assures free movement, and the free-will is self-centered.

Individuals' creative capacity leads to the evolution of creativity. Creative output results from this. Creativity is used to measure life patterns and personality structure. Creativity is a mystical characteristic that initiates innovativeness. The creative person was seen to be either insane or inspired by God. It encompasses questioning quality, pattern formation, and structuring structures. The activities carried out to evaluate and forecast the creative potential under particular relations. Originality, adaptability, fluency, elaboration, and divergent thinking are the fundamental components of creativity. These components link cognitive processes to an individual's personality structures. Charu had a sense of originality in holding her nativity. She structured her routine and invented ways to fulfill her desire in life. The actions of Charu exhibit creativity. The next important factor boasting innovativeness is motivation. High levels of motivation are required for innovation, and innovative people are viewed as displaying devotion and very big

absorption in their work (Harrison et al. 11). Nonetheless, there has not been much evidence to back up the idea that intellect and invention are directly related. Charu was an intelligent girl, but her creativity was exposed in her venture to Kundan Singh. Knowledge is highly necessary for a group of elements related to creativity. The majority of scholars who have analyzed innovativeness have thought that knowledge is a crucial component of both creativity and innovativeness. To be innovative, one must be deeply immersed in domain-specific knowledge. Domain-relevant knowledge indicates a person's level of expertise in a certain field. A person who wants to contribute creatively must not only operate inside a system but also mentally replicate that system.

The womanhood-self of Charu had trait effects of creativity. Charu was a young school-going girl who attended school lessons and eventually discontinued them. The routine of Charu as the mountain region girl demanded her constant taming of kids of goats and disposing of the unwanted food remains. It created an enforced routine that never became a burden in her life. It became a part of her routine. The state of mind of Charu was not pathetic, but it signifies the empathy of the readers. In her world of mountainous regions, Charu was a butterfly. She flew in a way where the breeze was not heavy. "With the rest of the world she was as secretive as was possible in a small town where everyone came to know everything, sooner or later." (Roy 41). She fulfilled her routine work, just as a butterfly wanders around to spot the attractive flowers. Charu was concerned the least for her studies. "If I bring you extra milk every day...will you teach me how to read and write?" (Roy 5). It is a part-time commitment, which she considered to satisfy an utmost necessity. There was a huge lapse in school lesson learnings. She took knowledge as an occasional requirement. Her womanhood-self engulfs the trait of creativity. Charu found her love of life in Kundan Singh, who, as portrayed, was a dedicated individual who focused on building himself through earnings. Charu took herself on a creative stance to show up for Kundan Singh in her consciously spared time. The love reciprocated sprang in the midst of silence. Charu had a sense of innovativeness and loyalty in her womanhood-self trait. In fact, these senses took her to venture into an unknown world.

The free-will of Charu fed Puran. She sacrificed the words of Ama for the sake of food for Puran. Each resting hour of Puran made an evident presence of Charu. This took the nerves of Puran to a soft spirit. The free-will of womanhood-self in Charu—enlightened the lives of Kundan Singh and Sanki Puran. The entire life of Charu revolved around the mountains, goats, natural dense forests, and home in high-raised altitudes. The plan for the new venture was her maiden solo trip. The free-will took her as a butterfly to settle down for her love of life, to Kundan Singh. It is also counteracted by Kundan Singh, where the space for free-will of Charu sprang in its heightened form to experience its fullest will. Moreover, for Charu it was her desire to end her substance of life with Kundan Singh. The efforts undertaken by Charu for Kundan Singh reflect the womanhood-self traits. She took her school lessons in person with the assistance of Maya in order to read letters

written and sent by Kundan Singh. The notion of restriction or a strict waypath to fulfill the expectations of family members was a sole aspect of the commitments that the peer group teenagers encountered. Her grandmother, Ama, takes serious efforts and arranges the company of the groom's visitation. It rather falls for derailment, as the free-will of Charu took her womanhood-self trait for creativity. "Charu was too anxious for anything beyond the mechanical performance of her chores." (Roy 141). The desire towards Kundan Singh had no commonalities between Charu and Kundan. The loyal nature of Kundan Singh fulfilled their unity in unventured space at Delhi. Charu neither pointed to her venture as a guilt nor regretted neglecting Ama's groom search. It was not termed as a note of pity either. The negligence of Charu exposed her free-will. It was a stern breeze with heavy winds that kept the butterfly motivated to stay at the pace it was supposed to.

Self-reliance signifies not just a thriving social atmosphere but also a robust natural ecosystem where individuals can be autonomous and innovative. The presence of robust ecosystems facilitates human economic endeavors, while a self-sustaining lifestyle contributes to a thriving natural environment. Gandhi expanded this concept to incorporate a simple lifestyle, asserting that nature produces enough for our wants, and if only everybody took enough for him/herself and nothing more, there would be no people dying of starvation in this world (Kripalani 130). Respect is exercised within a culturally valued context without causing damage to the environment, connecting to both the social and ecological dimensions of sustainability. The notion of simplicity originates from the initial belief in the worth and dignity of the things and concepts that exist. At first glance, this might seem at odds with sustainability, which is defined as a method of safeguarding future generations; however, fundamentally, the concern for the future is rooted in the appreciation of the present and the belief that the future is assured if we make the right choices today. Maya led a minimalistic life in an unknown land. This simplicity brought the kinship with her neighbors. Similarly, Maya had a cordial and mutual respect with her neighbors. In an urban setting, self-reliance principles necessitate the selection of infrastructure, technologies, food production, or energy generation that provide greater control to the community. Here in the mountainous region, Maya had her free-will to experience nature in its purity.

The womanhood self of Maya has a trait explicitly reflected on self-reliance. The life of Maya turned to an abrupt change of acceptance, leaving her with no choice. She turned into a bud that bloomed with each dawn and shut down with each sunset. The life of Maya was an inspirational journey of administration and resilience. "We had defied our families to be together, and those first months we were exultant castaways who had fitted the universe into two rented rooms and one narrow bed." (Roy 6). Maya married Michael, as she found her love of life in him. Michael was a photojournalist whose profession demanded wanderings around city and semi-urban landscapes. Maya discovered the trait of her womanhood-self

in a very young age as she fell for Michael in her days of undergrad, as self-reliance. Her love life had its part of hide-and-seek from the sights of her parents. The utter denial from the end of her parents made her decision to marry Michael at the earliest. “They saved the backpack they had found beside him, and the mountaineering institute sent it to Hyderabad along with Michael’s ashes, which they had put into an empty ghee tin.” (Roy 9). The love life of Maya was not entertained by her father. The disputes began in a religion-based context, and later it declared Maya as a daughter who has forbidden the rightful rule of love of a father. She stood firm and stubborn in a place where she wanted her womanhood-self trait to be reflected. The free-will in Maya, however, was discovered after the unexpected demise of her husband, Michael. The self-reliance was the only path Maya has chosen as her love-of-life journey began. Each moment she spent with Michael was altruistic and turned highly memorable.

Michael, as a passionate trekker, underwent his trekking trips on an occasional basis. Maya, as a naïve adult, had little knowledge about trekking; nevertheless, she was always the untiring cheerleader for Michael. Unfortunately, Michael passed away from a concussion that occurred as he went on a trekking trip. This utterly devastated the love life of Maya while her free-will sprung from nowhere. “She had no way of getting news of me unless I contacted her. I did not. Not yet.” (Roy 11). The prospect of emotionally settling down her young self with her mother was a far sight. Maya had only one person whom she loved, and he too took his heavenly abode. In the later stage, even the funeral of her mother was left unattended. She stood by herself at each loss of her life. The loss was uncompensated at any level in the future. This shows her space where the existence of free-will was discovered. “ “ Father, find me work in Ranikhet. Please,” I said. “I can’t stay on here a single day longer.”” (Roy 15). The settlement of Maya became a tough process. The reality of no one she had and no house welcoming her with comforting hands entangled her free-will with a destiny she never yearned for. This destiny earned her a position to be a teacher in a convent at a mountain range. Being a teacher was not a deserving self of Maya. Father Joseph, as a close associate of Michael, guided Maya. This position of a teacher also did not last longer, and finally she turned to be a manager in a factory owned by St. Hilda Convent. This destiny resonated with the passion of the father of Maya. “A time had come when I became a hill person who was only at peace where the earth rose and fell in waves like the sea.” (Roy 21). The womanhood-self of Maya assisted in taking her steps forward. It was not a phase of complaints while it turned her point to bloom as a flower. The cheer she exchanged with Michael then excelled with the self-reliance trait of womanhood-self in herself.

Maya became a re-flowered young woman. Each aspect of Michael kept her mind and memories so refreshed. The long-awaited love of life with Michael became a self-reliance trait of womanhood-self. She developed her own circle of people around her. The family roots destined Maya to turn into an entrepreneur in Hyderabad, while destiny made ways to seek shelter with nature, which sniffed the

last breath of Michael. These factors made her run a pickle factory in Ranikhet once her teaching profession was spotted with drawbacks. All the past known acquaintances became a source of strength to have safe and secured memories of Michael. The free-will of Maya took its shape as she returned to the place when her husband took his last breath. Maya subjugated herself with self-reliance. The life she shared with Michael is all she rested on, only to realize her womanhood-self. She progressed to become a teacher. She adopted her few known acquaintances, namely Diwan Singh, Charu, and Ama, to be her family. The heightened side of self-reliance was reflected in Maya's decision to shift at the mountain range without returning to the roots where she came from. The womanhood-self of Maya revolved solely around reflowering herself. She rarely made remarks about her small cottage nor the dusty places she dwelled. The power of resolving the new phase came through the happiest memories she shared with Michael and the trait of self-reliance in womanhood-self of Maya.

Sustainability exhibited a slight prevalence in leadership qualities. Sustainability management integrates two essential components: reaching economic goals and maintaining sustainability. The strategic capabilities involve the ability to take up an orbit-shifting challenge, focus on experimentation and innovation, build collaborations and partnerships, and build a learning organization driven by the social mission. The leader should be able to balance the speed, cost, and impact of execution (Seelos 241). In many instances, sustainability is employed for management operations. For Ama, leadership was a necessary process for her sustainability. She managed her households with Charu. She had her sole commitment to tackle the people around. She acted as a bridge of peace in shaping the lives of Charu, Puran, and Maya. Her moral support strengthened the existence of Diwan Singh. Sustainability is always focused on future generations. The stability in Ama brought the sense of belongingness and a life to be lived for her neighbors. To gain the trait of sustainability, no skills were trained and developed in Ama. This was inculcated with her way of life. The sustainable management emphasized production. Production processes are financially oriented and make an individual increase the level of possession. Ama gave the least thought to it, yet the mastery she held in hers turned her into a subtle leader.

The trait of womanhood-self in Ama was sustainability. Ama acted as a guiding moon in the lives of people for whom she was a whole part, namely Charu, Maya, and Puran Singh. The life of Ama revolved around the mountain range. She fondly witnessed the transformation of the region as it evolved from a dense area to a residence. Her manners and behavior were strict to the point of command. "She was not afraid of anything or anyone and had thrown Charu's father, her younger son, out of her house for being drunk every day and beating his wife to death in a drunken fit." (Roy 18). The influence of English phrases and words shows the impact of tourism structure in the region. "You must breathe in steam from water boiled with eucalyptus." (Roy 19). The words of Ama were directed towards

immediate obedience, and no point of negotiation was left. The liabilities of Ama were centered on herself.

The womanhood-self of Ama exposed the trait of sustainability; she sustained the changing environment while the people remained in their essence of nativity. "From here and there, she had picked up English phrases and words with which she seasoned her talk." (Roy 19). She adapted a balance to coordinate the neighborhood with her sustainability. The way of life Ama led made Diwan Singh end a will to owe a lifelong stay in his bungalow after his death. In the will the name of Ama was mentioned as Dharma Devi, the only place in the entire novel where her real name was mentioned.

The house and all its grounds are to go to Ranveer Singh Rathore, provided he undertakes to allow lifelong rent- free cottages on the estate to Dharma Devi, her son Puran Singh, and her grand- daughter Charu Devi; and also allow Maya Securia to occupy her cottage as long as she pleases. (Roy 255)

The free-will of Ama made her fellow dependents have a sense of belonging in the estranged mountainous regions. Ama acted as a guiding moonlight. This guided light made Maya have a sense of relativeness with Ama. In fact, the free-will of sustainability in the trait of womanhood-self of Ama, made the courageous venture of Charu. Ama had a far-sighted vision and hoped for the best life for Charu. "She will learn when the time comes. A girl learns what she needs to know." (19). The wish of Ama for the wellbeing of her so-called dependent fellows ended the same way she wished. Diwan Singh had a painless heavenly abode. Charu found the love of her life in her desired man. Maya flourished her presence in the mountain range. The worries about her son Puran rested as he was soothed down over days of time. The trait of sustainability brought the free-will in Ama, which expressed resilient peace in-built. Ama underwent each day expressing the peace built in as an attribute to the trait of sustainability in womanhood-self. The prospect of losing the environment to human dwelling is not an easy way. The change in human behavior and intrusion of machinery create a necessary space for native dwellers without forgoing their aesthetic experiences. Ama led a life without grumbling about the past events. She sustained the scars of time and turned into a lively relic. The sustained trait of Ama brought her widespread arms to receive and welcome strangers, which made the mountain region their new home of warmth and comfort. The loss of the past was neither her concern nor the glorious futuristic forms. Ama is focused on present times and events. The free-will of Ama made her evolve and adapt to circumstantial changes.

The lives of women are often filled with sufferings and downright lies and subjected to violence and financial instability. The author clearly neglects such common external penetrations in the lives of women as portrayed in the novel. On parallel grounds, education, self-employment through skill development, and independent earnings are considered to be rescuers. Any rescued woman is further forced to come to an arena where the past experiences are discussed. This

discussion has a pile of regrets, complaints, conscious mistakes committed, guilts, and broken trust of individuals once believed to be life givers. The point of culmination happens when all women who had a rough path join together and form a community. This is a place of motivation for society and assists in helping the women who are under such conditions. The newly formed community develops the concept of preferences for enactment. The choice also differs from person to person. In comparison with the lives of women in Roy's characters, this notion of rescue is completely denied. Each woman character takes a lead to the next step in life. Choice, option, and preference did not define their desire, destiny, and wish. The further steps are led without regrets, guilt, and complaints. The past is carved with reminiscences of beloved people rather than a heavy burden that has been suppressed. Such prevailing circumstances show that these women were carved with one niche. The only existence they believed was womanhood-self. The prospect of being a woman held their lives. Being a woman became their strength of existence. Shattered into pieces and disintegrated, kinship relations were supposed to be the way they existed under societal conditions. However, withstanding womanhood-self they made stern progress. The womanhood-self was rediscovered through traits of creativity, self-reliance and sustainability. It doubled their spirit of existence through free-will as its nervous system.

Women are necessitated to realize the womanhood-self through creativity, self-reliance and sustainability. These traits had a womanhood aspect of living life. When a woman lives her life, it, on the other hand, allows counterparts to experience and lead a better life. The desire of Charu made Kundan Singh become a cook, the destiny of Maya led Michael to enjoy the passion of his life till his last breath in his heavenly abode, and the wish of Ama had a resounding calmness over Puran. These manners of innate intimacy were brought about by free will attained through traits of womanhood self. A sensible womanhood-self brings a life without guilt, complaints, and digging in the past. It restructures and rebuilds the life through a comforting present. In each of the female characters' journeys, the external factors of satisfaction are the least bothered. Each woman prioritized their individual selves and acted on it. This flourished the lives of men dependent on their existence. Men feel free will, while the existence of manhood-self will be a new prospect of a field to discover. Although the women stood on their womanhood-self existence, societal conditions were fulfilled and satisfied.

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