

The management of grief flashcard



In “The management of grief”, a story by Bharati Mukherjee the function of the narrator Shaila Bhavé’s journey from Canada to Ireland and through India is a phase of transition from the feeling of denial of the tragic death of her husband and two sons in a plane crash to the slow acceptance of reality and trying to obtain closure on the terrible event. Four days after the incredible tragedy of the crash of the plane in which her husband and two sons Mrs. Shaila Bhavé finds herself at a bay in Ireland near where the crash occurred. There were speculations of what had caused the plane to abruptly blow up but nothing was confirmed. One of the foremost reasons was considered to have been a bomb set off in the plane. Shaila finds herself looking at her neighbor Kusum squatting on this rock which jutted out into the water of the ocean, and she thought that this would probably be the closest she would get to her family. Kusum’s family which consisted of her husband and one of her daughters was also on board that flight. Shaila is ashamed of herself as she can not grieve as all the others do.

She is angry at her calm and says “By the standards of the people you call hysterical, I am behaving very oddly and very badly,” (par 32). This odd calm in her is caused by a dosage of Valium a drug prescribed to her by her doctor so that she can deal with the situation better. Kusum says that it was the fate of the people on the airplane to die there and so they did. Kusum has been seeking advice from a swami in Toronto to get her through this terrible time. Shaila and Kusum are two widows accompanied by four other widowers who have chosen to spend the day away from the hospital where the “relatives” as they are now called are supposed to wait so that they photographs of the dead bodies found from the site of the crash can be

shown to them, and once they claim the bodies of the dead as their dead relatives they can take them back to India to bury them. Shaila finds that the Irish were a lot more comforting and understanding than the Canadians.

Both Shaila and Kusum now wade into the water looking at a small head like structure bobbing in the water. Kusum says that according to her swami it is selfish to grieve the death of a loved one as they are in a better place than us. Dr. Ranganathan one of the widowers starts a conversation with Shaila and says “ It’s a parents duty to hope,” as he hears Shaila and Kusum’s conversation about Shaila’s fourteen year old son, Vinod being an expert swimmer who had also won medals. Shaila is thinking that maybe her older son swam to a close by island or islet and also took his younger brother along with him, just incase they were alive Shaila sets, Vinod’s pocket calculator, her younger son Mithun’s model B-52 plane and a poem she had written for her husband telling him exactly how she felt for him, afloat on the water.

They then return to the hospital, where Shaila is made to go through some more photographs, to identify her family, but she has no luck in doing so. She considers Kusum to be lucky as she found the bodies of her loved ones and will be able to fly them back to India where they will be buried after the proper ceremonies. They go back to India now Kusum and Shaila take the same flight back home. On landing they are stopped by a customs officer who will not let them go and refuses to take charge as he claims that his boss is taking a break.

Shaila gets angry and starts scolding the man who then lets them through. In India Shaila is a single daughter of rich parents. They urge her to stay longer asking her why she would want to go back to Canada to live all alone in the cold. After the fourth month of her stay in India with her parents Shaila travels across all the religious places for pilgrims. In these places she is sought out by astrologers and palm readers who for a fee will give her consolations. She describes how many of the widowers are being set up for remarriage by their families, against their wishes.

She says that she is comparatively lucky as no one sets up a widow for remarriage. Six months and three days after her trip to India when Shaila and her mother are in a small temple in a tiny Himalayan village Shaila sees the ghost of her husband next to the sadhu who is performing a ritual. Vikram, her husband tells her to go back to Canada and finish what they had started out to accomplish a long time back. And so once they get out of the temple Shaila makes up her mind to go back to Canada much against her parent's wishes. Because of this experience she attains some amount of closure.