

Aurora: The Queen of Resilience in Holly Black's Heart of the Moors

Persis Cynthiya E I¹, Dr. R. Anitha²

¹Research Scholar, Department of English, Providence College for Women (Autonomous), Coonoor, Tamil Nadu, India.

²Assistant Professor, Department of English, Providence College for Women (Autonomous), Coonoor, Tamil Nadu, India.

Abstract

Resilience is the process of adapting and gaining strength by facing problems, trauma, and challenges in life. It is an ability that can be acquired by being flexible mentally and emotionally during difficult situations of life. Holly Black is an American fantasy fiction writer who is famous for writing many fantasy novels, graphic novels, short stories and young adult fiction. She makes magnanimous women characters in all her works. This paper focusses on the role of resilience through the character of Queen Aurora in the novel, *Heart of the Moors* written by Holly Black. The paper mainly explores Aurora as a diplomatic queen who rules two kingdoms named, the kingdom of Perceforest and the Moors. It emphasizes on Aurora's persistence in providing safety for the people and creatures in both the kingdoms. She establishes peace between the kingdoms and proves herself as a queen of resilience in a world of chaos.

Keywords: Resilience, Queen Aurora, The 7C's, Moors, Perceforest.

Holly Black is a contemporary fantasy fiction writer of America. She was born on 10th November, 1971 as Holly Riggensbach. She focussed on fantasy, horror, children's literature, young adult literature and short stories. The other novels written by Black are *The Cruel Prince*, *The Curse Workers*, *The Wicked King*, *The Queen of Nothing*, and *The Stolen Heir*. Women protagonists play an insignificant role in her novels. She was awarded with Andre Norton Award, Mythopoeic Fantasy Award and Indies Choice Book Award. Black was also regarded to be one of the New York Times Best - Selling Author.

The novel *Heart of the Moors* written by Holly Black was published on 10th January 2019. It narrates the story of Aurora as a diplomatic queen who rules the kingdom of Perceforest and the Moors. It acts as a sequel to the film *Maleficent*. It is a film of fantasy which was released on 30th May, 2014 by Robert Stromberg. A novelization of the film *Maleficent* titled as *The Curse of Maleficent: The Tale of A Sleeping Beauty* was written by Elizabeth Rudnick. It narrates the story of Aurora as the daughter of King Stefan. It was published worldwide by the Disney Press on 29th April, 2014. It acts as a prequel to the novel, *Heart of the Moors*.

Holly Black has taken efforts to construct the after plot by developing the character of Aurora as a responsible queen in her novel, *Heart of the Moors*. The novel kicks off with the story about *Maleficent* that is narrated by the story teller of the Perceforest kingdom. The rival between the faeries and the humans persists and this makes Aurora to be sleepless as she reigns under the weight of two crowns. She

is surrounded with a lot of chaos and dilemma in the kingdom. She is determined to create a peaceful environment by making the humans and the Fair Folk to sign a treaty of peace. She is guided by her late father's advisor, Lord Ortolan. She is visited by her faithful friend, Prince Phillip, the Prince of Ulstead who falls in love with her.

When a servant boy, Simon, in the castle goes missing in the village, all blame Maleficent for the disappearance of the boy. Aurora takes action in finding out the mystery behind the disappearance of Simon. Maleficent is protective towards Aurora as she is scared about the nature of humans in the kingdom of Perceforest. She does not want Aurora to undergo any kind of pain in her life. She also decides to build a palace in the Moors for Aurora.

Aurora meets her suitor, Count Alain along with his younger sister Lady Fiora in the forest as she goes for hunting. Proud Lord Ortolan warns Aurora that Prince Phillip wishes to marry her out of ambition. Prince Phillip expresses his admiration towards the faerie land, Moors which in turn makes Aurora to fall in love with him. Count Alain ill treats the creatures of the Moors and so he is attacked by a tree man. He considers it to be an insult. Lord Ortolan motivates Count Alain to capture the throne of Perceforest by marrying Aurora. Count Alain becomes ambitious as he wished to become the king. Several characters such as Smiling John, Hammond and Nanny Stoat are introduced in the novel. Maleficent calls Phillip for a dinner at the Moors and insults him for loving Aurora whom she loved truly. Later, Prince Phillip professes his love to Aurora. Aurora is unable to accept Phillip's proposal and asks him to leave to Ulstead.

Meanwhile, Aurora decides to conduct a festival between the faeries and the humans so that she can make the peace treaty be signed by both the counterparts. A riddle contest is conducted in which many of them participate enthusiastically. Maleficent goes to the castle to discover the hidden truth behind the mystical events taking place in the kingdom. She becomes a prey to the plan of Lord Ortolan as she is being captured by him using a iron net. Aurora is alarmed by Diaval, a raven, about Maleficent who is in danger. She rushes to the palace to discover Maleficent. Later, she becomes aware with the cunning plots of Lord Ortolan and Count Alain. Through the help of Maleficent, Aurora is able to punish both of them. Simon is also discovered and the peace treaty is signed between the faeries and the humans at the end of the novel.

Resilience deals with an individual's quality of adapting to adversities in life. It includes the ways in which individuals see the world and also manage situations with balanced temperance in life. It is not a biological trait rather it can be traced as a unique capacity or dynamic process of adaptation that is achieved through problem solving skills and communication skills. The pioneers in the study of resilience are Michael Rutter, Ann S. Masten, Norman Garmezy, and Emmy Werner. Norman Garmezy is regarded as the founder of research in resilience. According to Garmezy, 'Resilience is designed to reflect the capacity for recovery and maintained behavior that follow initial retreat or incapacity upon initiating a stressful event'.

Dr. Kenneth R. Ginsburg is a Pediatrics Professor at Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania and a Co - Director of the Center for Parent and Teen Communication at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. He has specialized himself in social adolescent medicine. He has also developed the teen centered method that enables youngsters to produce and explain their own solutions to problems faced by them in the society. He has written six parenting books that deals with the process of building resilience among children and teenagers. He serves as the Medical Director for Covenant

House, Pennsylvania. He also contributes his ideas of building resilience among the US Military and The National Congress of American Indians.

Ginsburg has propounded a framework titled The 7 C's Model of Resilience in his book titled *Reaching Teens: Strength –Based Communication Strategies to Build Resilience and Support Healthy Adolescent Development* (2014). 'Resilience advocates are committed to helping youth overcome adversity' (Ginsburg 31). It deals with seven components that makes an individual to become a resilient being in life. The seven crucial C's are Competence, Confidence, Connection, Character, Contribution, Coping and Control. Through the Ginsburg's resilience model, many parents or adults help their children or teenagers to become resilient in facing everyday life situations.

Ginsburg reveals the ways in which Confidence plays a vital role in moulding an individual's resilient personality. 'Confidence may be an important starting point for positive behavior because a young person who lacks confidence may be demoralized and can't imagine taking the steps necessary to make wise decisions' (Ginsburg 32). He considers that young people should believe in their skills.

The novel *Heart of the Moors* deals with the predicaments that Aurora need to face as the Queen of both Perceforest and the Moors. As Aurora is positioned as a queen for both the kingdoms by Maleficent, she begins to realise the responsibility to create harmony between the faeries and the human beings. The presence of Maleficent makes Aurora to believe in her capabilities and skills of being a queen. She is confident and determined to create peace by signing a treaty between the humans in the Perceforest and the faeries in the Moors. She wants them to be united and be complementary towards each other. Aurora wishes to be an independent ruler with a strong will power. She has qualities of good leadership throughout the novel. Though she is a human, she loves the Moors and its creatures. "I am the queen of Perceforest and the Moors, and I do not consider ruling them a burden". (Black 45).

Dr. Kenneth points out the role of Competence in building the resilient behaviour of an individual. 'A sense of competence is earned through experience and helps create the important self-perception that one can set and achieve goals' (Ginsburg 32). He considers that youth should be able to manage situations in life by developing some problem solving skills. Their minds should be open to learn, act and adapt to new environments.

Aurora decides to prepare some laws as she would make both faeries and humans live without fear. She likes to promote peace and ecology between them from the beginning of the novel. "I want you to be able to meet one another in peace. And get to know one another without fear. I have been preparing a treaty to create laws --- so that you don't have to be afraid of them and they don't have to be afraid of you" (Black 112). She is determined in abolishing the enmity that prevailed between the faeries and the humans. Though Aurora is a human, she always declared herself as the protector of the Moors. "Now I am not your queen, but theirs. The queen of the Moors" (Black 109).

Ginsburg considers that youth should always be connected with the adults of high moral values to make themselves resilient in nature. 'Connections with family, school, community, and culture, are key as youth need multiple layers of connection to thrive' (Ginsburg 32). In the kingdom of Moors, Aurora has a strong connection with nature because of Maleficent and the three faeries. She considers Maleficent as her role model. She also gives attention to the words of the three faeries whom she called as aunties lovingly. They know the desires of Aurora well more than her servants at the castle. She appoints Knotgrass, Thistlewit and Flittle to take care of the riddle contest. "The riddle contest will be the first event of the festival. Perhaps you three can be in charge of that" (Black 169). They act as the event

managers of the festival. Through this event, Aurora provides more responsibility to the natural creatures in all her endeavours. She considers them as trustworthy beings of her life.

Aurora is also concerned and loving towards the people of Perceforest but she also feels that she is being suppressed by the male characters such as Lord Ortolan and Count Alain. In the kingdom of Perceforest, Aurora connects with Nanny Stroat, an elderly woman who believes that the Fair Folk are hard workers who provide blessings to the new born children of the kingdom. She condemns the greedy action of the nobles who exploit their crops and wealth by demanding taxes to protect them from the creatures in the Moors. Aurora considers Phillip as her confidant in life. "I am holding a festival, and if you will come and dance with the Fair Folk, surely it will help the people of Perceforest be less afraid of them" (Black 129). She calls Phillip to dance with the Fair Folk at the treaty signing festival as she believes him during her hard times.

Dr. Kenneth argues that a resilient individual should have a strong character who is able to observe and understand the plight of others around them. 'In the end, it is character that ensures one's "assets" will be used for the greater good' (Ginsburg 32). Unlike King Stefan, Aurora is kind hearted, merciful and loving towards the servants in the castle. She does not like to live a luxurious life. She gives importance to the needs of the people. Aurora wants to have smooth dealings with the magical creatures as well as the human beings. At an instance, she also wishes to make Count Alain and other nobles of the kingdom understand that the creatures in the Moors do not harm any human beings without any cause.

Aurora is determined to prove that the faeries in the Moors are harmless. They are generous and gentle. So, Aurora wants the human beings to realise the good nature of the faeries. "She had to discover the means to make the people of Perceforest see that the faeries in the Moors were helpful, kind and clever -- even if they were also sometimes hot-tempered or mischievous" (Black 90). Though Aurora belongs to the human race, the faeries loved her and this humane character of Aurora made Maleficent to crown her as the queen of both the kingdoms.

Ginsburg suggests that young people who adopt the primary 4C's (Confidence, Competence, Connection, Character) in life gradually tend to contribute towards the people or the society around them in order to gain appreciation and gratitude. 'Contribution offers the opportunity to learn valuable leadership skills and gain a sense of purpose and accomplishment' (Ginsburg 33). Aurora contributes herself as a valuable leader to both the kingdoms. Her confidence, competence, connection and character makes her to contribute plans to unify the two kingdoms and she also gains respect and gratitude from the people and creatures around her. Aurora enjoys the humorous behaviour of the wallerbogs who are muddy creatures of the Moors. When Count Alain is attacked by a tree sentry who acted as the guardian of the Moors, Aurora commands it to drop him down. "The sentry heard her, and its fingers opened immediately, letting Count Alain fall" (Black 69). All the creatures in the Moors including the tree paid respect to Aurora as they consider her to be their protector or queen.

Aurora wishes to protect nature but she is also concerned about the basic necessities of the poor farmers in her kingdom. She is humane to Hammond, the farmer who robbed the rabbits from the forest for the survival of his family. "You may take rabbits from my woods so long as your family needs food, Hammond", she said. (Black 63). In spite of loving animals that are part of nature, she did not punish the farmer whereas she justifies his action of stealing to meet out his family needs. Aurora is seen as a woman of kindness, generosity and justice. She earns gratitude and reverence from the people of Perceforest by practicing the qualities of humility and kindness.

Dr. Kenneth scrutinizes the role of coping for an individual to overcome the challenges of his/her life. ‘The best protection against unsafe, worrisome behaviors may be to possess a wide repertoire of positive, adaptive coping strategies (Ginsburg 33). Aurora is completely exhausted with the responsibilities that are vested in her hands. She is sleepless for many nights pondering about the ways in which she can perform her duties in a diplomatic manner. She also fears that both the kingdoms will never be united forever, but she has the capacity to convince them. “But she reminded herself that being a ruler meant not being distracted by every problem in her kingdom. She needed to go on the ride” (Black 40).

Aurora wants both the kingdoms to be happy and united without any war. Many human beings are against her idea of uniting the kingdoms as they think that faeries are good at giving curse to the human race. Lord Ortolan and Count Alain are the two male counterparts who flatter Aurora for acquiring the throne. Aurora loves nature but Lord Ortolan, her late father’s advisor opposes Aurora’s love for nature. When Lord Ortolan complains about the black large roses that are growing rapidly over the road, she admires the shining roses which are soft and beautiful. Immediately, he blames Maleficent for the hindrance created. Meanwhile, Aurora does not agree to Ortolan’s words and she believes that Maleficent will not be a danger to the humans in the Perceforest. “She means no harm to anyone in Perceforest,” Aurora said, stroking one of the black petals” (Black 30). She does not accept Lord Ortolan’s advice blindly. Aurora is not moved away by Ortolan’s crafty suggestions as she is not ambitious. She also does not give him ways to exploit her mind during stressful situations.

Ginsburg points out the idea of control or self – efficacy that makes an individual to believe in his / her own ability to avoid or manage risks and temptations of life. ‘Having a sense of control over one’s environment leads to having the capacity to act independently and is related to a sense of purpose/future’ (Ginsburg 33). The novel ends with the fulfillment of Aurora’s dream. Aurora creates unity and peace between both the kingdoms through a treaty signing ceremony. Nanny Stoa is appointed as the representative for the humans and Maleficent is appointed as the representative for the faeries. A document is signed by Stoa and Maleficent along with Aurora. “It will be signed not just by me, but by representatives from the humans and the faeries” (Black 301). “But first”, said Aurora, “let us sign this treaty and agree to be good neighbours to one another” (Black 303). Aurora fulfills her dream of creating peace between the humans and the faeries. She creates a chamber of advisors that includes both faeries and humans such as Maleficent, Robin, Nanny Stoa and Smiling John. She serves the two kingdoms as a diplomatic queen amidst the pressures of Lord Ortolan and Count Alain.

Phillip admires Aurora for her positive resilient skills. She faces the stress and challenges with a positive attitude. Phillip states to Aurora, “I love your laugh and the way you see the best in everyone. I love that you’re brave and kind and that you care more about what’s true and right than what anyone thinks--” (Black 163). She is able to make situations to be under her control in a diplomatic manner. “I want the humans and the faeries to see that it’s possible to live together fruitfully,” Aurora said, “to have love and trust between them, as you and I do” (Black 79).

Dr. Kenneth R. Ginsburg considers the 7C’s model to be an effective tool to analyse an individual as a resilient personality. ‘The 7C’s model offers an overview of the assets and circumstances, and supports a young person needs for optimal development and for resilience’ (Ginsburg 33). In the novel *Heart of The Moors*, Black creates Aurora as a humane and diplomatic character who is confident, just, competent, will powered, and humble in nature.

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