

# A STUDY ON THE CONNECTION BETWEEN LOSS AND SOLITUDE IN THE KOREAN WEBTOON KUBERA BY CURRYGOM

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**ABSTRACT**--Loss can be defined as the fact or process of losing something or someone and solitude can be defined as the state or situation of being alone. These two themes are intertwined and connected in the Korean Webtoon Kubera. The loss of people close to you like friends and family gives rise to trauma, loneliness and isolation in the story, but not everyone is uniformly affected or in the same way. How they try to cope with loss and solitude and the methods they use to alleviate their trauma, pain and suffering differs. This paper seeks to examine how loss and solitude are interconnected in Kubera and to what extent and how the different characters are affected.

**KEYWORDS**—Loss,Solitude,Characters,Themes, Connection

## I. INTRODUCTION

Webtoons are a type of digital comic that originated in South Korea. While Webtoons were mostly unknown outside of the country during their inception, there has been a surge in popularity internationally thanks in great part to most Manhwa (Korean Comics) being read on smart phones. Kubera is a Korean Webtoon by the South Korean author/comic writer Currygom. It is a mixed genre fantasy comic with rich lore, in-depth world building and well developed characters. It is published weekly in Korean in the Naver Webtoon service and globally in the Line Webtoon service, both owned by the Naver Corporation

## II. OBJECTIVE

The objective of this paper is to examine the relationship between loss and solitude in Kubera. It also seeks to understand how it differs among the different characters based on their background, cultural and social origins. The different races populating Kubera have their own structures and divisions. Hence, we aim to see how these different divisions contribute to these differences in reaction to loss as well as how different their solitudes are. Thus, ultimately the paper seeks to understand how these racial, social and cultural differences in the background of these characters shape their world view and how that shapes their reaction to loss and solitude and whether and how much loss leads to solitude in Kubera.

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### **III. HYPOTHESIS**

The amount of care and attention a person gets in the aftermath of experiencing loss has a significant impact on how they deal with loss. There are vast differences in culture between the different races of Kubera as well. We expect these factors to be reflected in the results and thus expect people who get more care to fare better in dealing with solitude and expect the upbringing of the different characters to have a role in it as well. For exploring the relation between loss and solitude in Kubera, we'll look at characters from all three races and compare them to see how they react to loss and how they become lonely.

### **IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

We will also look at how and whether their experiences and responses to them are influenced by their racial characteristics or upbringing by comparative analysis. For this study, we look at the characters named Kubera Leez, Gandharva, Asha Rahiro, Maruna, Brillith Ruin, Agni, Ran Sairofe, Sagara and Agwen.

### **V. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The paper named 'Loss and Solitude in contemporary urban Senegal: exploring loneliness after a family death' by Ruth Evans, Jane McCarthy, Sophia Bowlby and Josephine Wouango explores the question of loss and solitude. The family members of the deceased people interviewed for the paper said that they felt alone in spite of the presence of relatives, friends and neighbors around them. This suggests that a person can feel lonely even when surrounded by others. This is indeed something seen in the case of many characters in Kubera. Loneliness thus can indeed be seen as more of a mental phenomenon than a physical one. Solidarity and mutual support are central in understanding the meaning of loss and solitude in contemporary urban Senegal as per the paper. This idea of support from others is crucial as without it, there cannot be an end to solitude. Overcoming solitude can only be done by getting the support of others and not just being surrounded by others.

### **VI. ANALYSIS AND MAJOR FINDINGS**

There are three major races in Kubera. They are the Suras, Gods and Human beings. The earliest of the Suras were the Nastikas, who along with the Gods were the earliest created beings of the universe. The children of the Nastikas were the Rakshasas. The Suras often fight each other and attack and go to war with those of opposing clans. The Rakshasas are used by the Nastikas as soldiers who must follow their orders. There is thus a strict hierarchy in terms of command, starting from the King of the clan downwards. The Suras like Rakshasas are therefore more often than not brought up in dangerous and stressful environments, under dangerous circumstances. However, there are also similarities between the Suras and human beings as most Suras can feel the same emotions as humans, such as anger, sadness, joy, etc. They do feel love for one's family. They can also love or like other people. Although the Gods do not actively harass or attack the humans (modern humans) like the Suras did, most of them do not care about human suffering, with Agni being an exception. As long lived beings, they do not fear death and most of them use a mechanism of memory loss and leaving behind painful emotions to ease their suffering. Agni seems to be an exception to leaving behind painful emotions.

Kubera Leez lost her village on the year N15. Maruna destroyed the village and Leez believed that everyone in the village, including Kaz and Haas were dead. At the same time, she met Asha, who had come looking for her. Asha rescued Leez and promised her to help her get her revenge. As a result Leez began travelling with Asha. However, at the same time Leez's loneliness didn't go away. She realized that Asha was still hiding things from her, not telling her about what's actually going on, and keeping her in the dark. Also at the same time, Leez kept on relying on Asha as she was the only one who knew about her circumstances. This didn't change even after Ran and Yuta joined their party. Her efforts in befriending Asha stem from a need to form new bonds after losing everything, fearing that she would be all alone otherwise, and unable to survive. Thus, she even refrained from asking Asha about her motives because of her fear that Asha would leave her. At the same time, Leez was forced to suppress her true pain and grief from losing her village around Asha for the same reason. She also finds herself unable to confide in anyone, resulting in a lot of pent up grief, as Agni notices through his insight. Leez realized that everyone was keeping her in the dark regarding everything. When Leez finally found out the truth about Asha, which she been suspecting for a while, she broke down, pained from what she learned. Later, she came to rely on Yuta in order to not feel lonely.

In the case of Gandharva, it was said that after the death of his wife Menaka, his only real reason for living was his daughter, to whom he dedicated himself to. He lost his daughter, friends and clan mates in the attack by the Tarakas. The hope of his daughter surviving was the only thing which kept him going. He became lonely, even with Maruna at his side. He too couldn't find someone to comfort or support him.

Asha Rahiro lost her mother due to the events of N5 on Carte caused by Maruna and Gandharva. Her mother died in a red sky attack by Maruna. She held back her tears and resolved to get revenge. She was found by Vishnu who offered her a way to gain power. That way involved killing people. The path Asha took was corrupt from the beginning. Thus, she could not confide with others about what was inside of her and what her plans actually were. Even with Brillith, her best friend on the planet Willarv, she couldn't be open about her true intentions. This is a clear case of solitude, although it was not created directly by loss. Rather, it was created by Asha's response to that loss, how she reacted following that loss and her decisions and the path she took. Later, before evacuating to Willarv, she met Rao, the father of Leez. He was kind and compassionate and she cried and opened her heart in front of him. However, Vishnu had told her that if Rao lived to arrive in Willarv, Leez would arise as a rival to her and the power which Vishnu told her would instead belong to Leez. Thus, she caused Rao's death while on the rescue ship from carte to Willarv. Rao was likely the only person she could have confided her feelings with. With his death, she became truly isolated.

Maruna greatly loves his siblings and values his clan. He remarked in his second stage that he missed his siblings and mother (not his dad). However, he is seen to be quite stoic and rational although he misses his family. During the Cataclysm, his mother died and his father fell into a coma after it ended, but he didn't cry over it. He said he learned not to mourn things like that for very long and that it was Akasha who taught him that. This shows how being brought up and used as soldiers by Nastikas affect Rakshasas. There is no solitude in his case as he is fine with things even though he misses his family.

In the case of Brillith ruin, things are far messier. She was a member of the ancient human race, which was annihilated by the Suras and the Gods. In the place of the ancient human race, the modern human race was created, which was weaker and less intelligent and wise. The new human race was subservient to the Gods and the Suras

and lived under threat of attacks by the Suras, too weak and helpless to defend themselves. As said by Brillith, the modern humans lived in the place formerly occupied by ancient humans, worshipped those who destroyed the ancient humans and lived in a way ancient humans abhorred. She was the last of her race. This fact made her feel very lonely whenever she regained her memories of her past lives. When she regained her memories, she felt out of place among the new humans. As Agni, whom she loves is a God, she could no longer be open with him about how and what she truly felt every time she regained her memories. This loss of intimacy or closeness with Agni lead her to keep everything bottled up inside, further increasing her isolation from others. In her current life before regaining her memories, she was still isolated from most people as she was a priestess and people kept her on a pedestal, rather than talking to her as an equal. Her mother had also died before she became a priestess. Therefore, even as a child, she did not have any friends of the same age to whom she could talk with and even adults saw her as superior.

Agni was an outsider among the gods due to the values he held. He had not lost his compassion. But he did not have bad relations with any of them. He got along well with many Gods. And some of them were his good friends. However, as they had chosen the power of 'Oblivion' to ease their suffering and left emotions which caused suffering at the 'Top', they could no longer understand his feelings. This left him isolated. He also lived through millions and hundreds of millions of years without meeting up with Brillith, to whom he was betrothed to and whom he loved. This pained him greatly as he didn't get rid of the worldly feelings and emotions which caused him such torment. He could have easily left behind his suffering at the 'Top', but he didn't. The greatest losses suffered by him are, the loss of the ability of his friends to understand him, the loss of his married life with Brillith, and being unable to be with her through the vast majority of her lives. These elements left him very lonely inside, even when surrounded by others. When he did meet Brillith in her various lives occasionally, he could not open up to her. Thus, loss for him leads to solitude.

During the Cataclysm, Ran Sairofe's mother, who was a half ran amok due to emotional resonance and he ended up killing her. However, he suppressed his memories about him killing his mother to cope with his trauma. His childhood friend and future wife Rana helped him forget it. His brother Lutz who arrived on the scene decided to take responsibility for it. His brother said that it couldn't be helped. He nevertheless was traumatized by what happened and developed a fear of halves. However, as he still had family and friends, he didn't feel isolated. The death of his mother too didn't torment him too much after a while as he was helped by Rana and others including his friends and family to move on.

Sagara misses Ananta deeply. He does have a few Rakshasas in her clan who follow her, but it's clear that the other Nastikas in her clan do not acknowledge her as King as she used some unknown means to become king after the passing of Manasvin. She couldn't have become the King the normal way. Thus she is shunned. The loss of Ananta affected her deeply and she is currently looking to revive him. However, the loss of Ananta didn't lead to solitude for her as some like Manasvin and Vasuki were supporting her. And some Rakshasas, particularly her own children were following her. Thus, there was no solitude. For Agwen, the loss of her fiancé, her closest friends and mother at the hands of her father during the cataclysm caused a lot of suffering, but it cannot be said that it resulted in solitude.

## VII. CONCLUSION

From the above, we can conclude that there is a definite link between the amount of care and attention a person gets in the aftermath of experiencing loss has a significant impact and how they deal with loss. Racial differences are of mixed importance when it comes to the link between loss and solitude. The Rakshasas seem to be affected up to some degree by their upbringing, but other than that, the race or origin of a character has little influence in how deeply they have felt their loss or how much they have been isolated from others. How much a person can cope with loss mostly depends on how much support they get from others.

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