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**The Colour of the Music in Roopa Farooki's '*The Way Things Look To Me*'**

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“Autism can't define me; only I can define autism.”

- Dr. Kerry Magro

**Abstract**

Autism is a developmental disability caused by differences in the brain. The persons may have problems like social communication and interaction, and restricted or repetitive behaviour and lack of interests. Persons with ASD have different ways of learning, moving or paying attention and they usually avoid eye contacts with others. They see emotions and sounds as colours or to use the correct term which is synesthetic. Roopa Farooki in her novel *The Way Things Look to Me* speaks about Autism.

**Keywords:** ASD, Disability, Roopa Farooki, Asperger Syndrome

Roopa Farooki was born in 1974 in Lahore, Pakistan, to a Pakistani father and a Bangladeshi mother. Her father was a Pakistani novelist and prominent figure in 1960s literary circles. Farooki's father abandoned her at the age of 13 and married a Chinese American. Her mother, Niluffer, had a relationship with an English Iraqi of Jewish descent. Being of Pakistani and Bangladeshi descent, she speaks only English. She chose Arts at her A-level, which frustrated her ambition to become a doctor. She passed the graduate entry exam for medicine. In 2019, she completed a

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postgraduate degree in Medicine from St. George University of London, commencing work as a junior doctor in London and Kent. Before that, she worked in corporate finance at Arthur Anderson and advertising accounts at Saatchi and Saatchi.

The complexities of the themes are looking at how duty can lead to resentment within a family, at the effects of unequal treatment on children's sense of self-worth, and how family obligation can prevent someone from trying to reach for their own dreams. When the novel begins, the protagonist Asif dislikes his name because of his dead parents' identity, as if he is Declan Khalil Murphy, a charming South Asian man. He was depressed because of his sister Yasmin, who was suffering from ASD. Behind his pleasant face, there is a history that no one knows. Yasmin stands in her house watching Asif from 6.00-6.30 pm. He fears that her symptoms are infectious. She nearly stands for fourteen minutes. When Asif looked at her dress, her normal locks and washing plates in the sinks seemed normal.

As British novelist Mark Haddon, in his work 'The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time,' a boy of 15 years, John Francis Boone, had ASD or Savant Syndrome. He speaks about seeing the world in a surprising and revealing way. The book contains prime numbers in the chapters rather than the conventional successive numbers. An outsider will notice the difference in her washing the plates that were already cleaned, ironing clothes, and cleaning the bedlinen and laundry. Yasmin had a gaze at singing Mississippi one, two, and she drew already cleaned plates. Yasmin dislikes changes around her. Asif persuades Yasmin to say something about her school. She talked about her teachers' punishment in history class, and she saw a spider in the corner of the wall. She used to play in the ground eight times clockwise and anti-clockwise. When her teacher lectured on 'The Pardon's Tale,' she found thirty-one mistakes in her pronunciation.

Everyone expects autistic savants to be maths geniuses, anyway; they're interested in what goes in your head, your unique worldview, all things to do with your synaesthesia, drawing the connections between the different senses the way you do. (*The Way Things Look to Me* 23)

The protagonist is nineteen years old girl, Yasmin, who has Asperger's Syndrome. She was cared for by her elder brother, Asif, after the death of their mother. Yasmin imagines the things around her head twirling with a feel, shape, taste,

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and music, and some are not applicable. Once the production company wants to know about Yasmin, they will type a document on Yasmin's special abilities. The title is 'The World According to Yasmin Murphy. Farooki writes, "Celebration of the gift of Asperger's? Humanity over disability? And they want to showcase your special abilities"( *The Way Things Look to Me* 21). Yasmin's language is good, "Letting people know that she is gifted, not damaged, deserving of admiration rather than sympathy"(22). Her mind could solve the complicated calculations, "Like the cube of.....almost anything with three digits"(22)

Yasmin's memories were about the day on which her mother died. If we take March 27, the third month, 3 is her favorite number, and she loves cubes because it is a multiple of 3. It is for neurotypical persons. Yasmin remembers her room temperature, her black trousers with unequal stitches and five buttons, and the badge for epilepsy awareness. She was wearing that warmth of the copper's badge in her hand, the smile of Mr. Johnson, which he hated, But Lila said that it was irrelevant.

When her mother died, she completely forgot Everything. She lost Everything she used to remember. She even could not remember the crying of Asif and Lila. It appeared as golden fish which opens its mouth and then closes. She has many thoughts, but not much imaginative.

The color of that broken memory is red with orange blotches, the blend of colors that I always associate with anger and loud voices and changes and having meltdowns, and the music that accompanies the silence of the memory is a bit like Wagner's Ride of the Valkyries (*The Way Things Look to Me* 34)

Yasmin still remembers her mother's funeral and still draws every detail. Her mother used to play shadow puppets with Yasmin. After her mother's funeral, to be silent, Yasmin avoided watching *The Simpsons* and playing Tennis; instead, she read 'The Encyclopaedia of Greek and Roman Mythology.' She knew what love meant, but outwardly, she was not sure about it. The love for Mozart and Custard was something that was so important, and that was her mother's love, which she couldn't understand. To her, "Everything began to go red with orange blotches, so I just went into my room with my book and shut the door behind me "(37)

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When Yasmin was young, she wanted to burst out the things inside her. She wishes to talk more and more, scream, and hit something if anyone interrupts her. Sometimes, she has nothing to say because she cannot speak on the topics from her mind. She likes to do things repeatedly, like walking in circles and washing things.

In Yasmin's garden, she and Asif planted walnuts, vegetables, and flowers. She says, "My mind is not like a neat and tidy garden; it is a vast untidy wilderness, full of irrelevancies but with lots of places to wander and get lost" (*The Way Things Look to Me* 94). She used to sit in the garden and speak with imaginary friends. For Yasmin, her mother was her best friend, and after her death, Asif became her friend. Yasmin hates Lila because she does not care about her. Once Lila tore her wrist, Yasmin immediately called an ambulance and took care of her without panic. She was given a blue Peter badge for her quick thinking. But Lila was upset because she was always longing for that badge. Yasmin wants her friend out of her own mind, real as she was. She says that god created Adam and Eve to keep himself busy and because she was lonely.

Now, Yasmin has two changes in her life to meet documentary, and people will acknowledge her and might ask questions about ASD. At the same time, she has to deal with a disease, "a rare genetic eye disease that happens when fatty material builds up on the macula" (170). This can be seen in adolescence, and she has so many things to see around her, such as playing Tennis, watching the Simpsons, going to France, etc.

It's like I am at the center of a set of concentric circles, and these items are dotted around the circumferences at different points, then the circle folds open to become a sphere and then folds open again to become something with four dimensions and no surface area, and this new shape is a little like the landscape of my mind (171).

Yasmin recently knew that dying was easy and it doesn't need any courage, but to live is very complicated especially if they are alone. But she says she is not alone that she has Asif and Lila. They have not been happy nor hopeful for their future, anyway they live their life with courage.

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My name is Yasmin Murphy , and I have a recurring dream . I dream that I know I am dreaming , and so can do anything I like , and I start flying safely around my room, but am scared of being drawn to the open window , because outside , the world is strange and unfamiliar , and I fear that I fall ( 337).

To conclude, there are so many famous personalities who have been autistic, and they are incredibly successful, like Sir Albert Einstein, Charles Darwin, Leonardo Da Vinci, Thomas Edison, Bill Gates, Elon Musk, Mr. Bean, etc. They view the world differently. Yasmin's view of looking at the world seems to be different.

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