

*Vol.1, Issue 1, September, 2023*



# *Efflorescence*



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# *Efflorescence*

Journal of the Department of English, J. D. S. G. College, Bokakhat

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## Concept Note

Since its inception in 1964, the Department of English, a full-fledged department with major courses on literature and language, has been an integral part of Jogananda Deva Satradhikar Goswami College. A good number of alumni of this department has made their mark in different fields such as culture, literature, teaching, administration, journalism and the like. With an objective of honing and augmenting the literary talent of students and scholars alike, the department has now taken an initiative to introduce its new e-journal, *Efflorescence: A Peer-Reviewed E-Journal of the Department of English*.

Pablo Picasso famously says "Art washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life". In these incredibly fast paced times that we live in, the pertinence and relevance of humanities passes through perpetual interrogation. Moreover, frequent modifications in the academic framework are the order of the day. The policy makers are in a constant search for new additions to the existing pedagogy in order to equip the next generation of students with the required skills to tackle contemporary problems. The subjects falling under the category of humanities like literature, philosophy, political science, etc. have always been subjected to immense scrutiny due to their apparently theoretical as well as pedagogical structures. With words like 'marketability' and 'employability' assuming a never-before prominence in the academic paradigm, it becomes really important to re-analyse the benefits of literature as a discipline of study. It is a ubiquitously accepted notion that literature offers fewer options in the job market in comparison to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Management) subjects. Yet, it is worth mentioning that no discipline of study is futile. James Whistler asserts "An artist is not paid for his labour, but for his vision". And literature is second to none when it comes to extrapolating alternate visions of the future which is particularly significant with regards to the dystopian possibilities that our ecologically corroded planet presents. The traditional knowledge systems have always identified dialectical pursuit of truth as one of the major objectives of education. No dialectical pursuit can be successful without the participation of logic or literature as they promote plurality of thoughts and approaches.

Hence, alienating humanities from mainstream education can spell disaster for posterity. The new educational paradigm espouses a fluid, interdisciplinary approach resembling the age old Indian gurukul tradition. Envisaging future requirements, leading universities like Oxford and Massachusetts Institute of Technology have syncretized subjects of various disciplines and has institutionalized courses like Computational Psychology and Cognitive Linguistics respectively, thus concretizing this idea on the ground level. It will be of no surprise that institutions all over the world will follow the template in times to come. The National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 also aims to restructure the existing compartmentalization of various disciplines and create courses catering to the liminal space between physical, natural sciences and humanities for collective benefit.

The Department of English, JDSG College, has always strived to integrate innovative ideas with the existing curriculum in order to provide new avenues of learning for students. This e-journal is one of the most important projects of the department as it tries to establish a rich, fulfilling, coherent and collaborative scholastic relationship with the greater academic community of Assam and the Northeast. This inaugural edition of this e-journal titled *Efflorescence* aims to provide our students a liberal platform to express their literary talents. The word 'efflorescence' refers to the idea of a complete manifestation. As described by famous American poet, Edgar Allan Poe, 'efflorescence' refers to a language that is rich, colourful and blooming. Keeping synchrony with this line of thought, the journal aims to celebrate the enriching and variegated contributions from students covering a plethora of emotions and facets of human life.

We sincerely hope that the journal would prove to be a credible interface in nourishing the organic literary and cultural sensibilities of students. Contributions containing folk-traditions, indigenous stories preferably from the Northeast are highly encouraged as we envision the journal to encapsulate conventional narratives as well as literature of the marginalized section. As Stephanie Skeem says "Flowers do not tell, they show". Wishing you all a happy writing.



**MAIN THEMES FOR THE UPCOMING ISSUE:**

**Reading literature: Texts, Contexts and Prospects.**

The sub themes (but not limited to) are as follows:

- a. Contemporary Forms of Popular Literature
- b. Literature and Culture
- c. Modern Diasporic Literature
- d. Translation Studies
- e. Speculative and Science Fiction
- f. Disability Studies
- g. Literature and Medicine
- h. Pandemic Literature
- i. Future Studies
- j. Post-colonial Literature
- k. Northeast Literature
- l. Folk-Literature and Traditions.
- m. Graphic Literature
- n. Film Studies.
- o. Partition Literature
- p. Literature and Spiritualism.

**SUBMISSION GUIDELINES:**

**FORMAT:**

- Articles should be submitted as MS-Word attachment paper size-A4; Font-Times New Roman (Size-12); Spacing – Single line.
- Authors are requested to follow the latest version of MLA (8th Edition) Handbook in preparing articles.
- The title of the article should be bold and centered.
- Length of the article should not exceed 2500 words.

**MODE OF SUBMISSION:**

The full paper, should be accompanied by an abstract of about 250 words along with 4, 5 keywords. The submissions must be made to the following :

e-mail id [jdsgcollegedepartmentofenglish@gmail.com](mailto:jdsgcollegedepartmentofenglish@gmail.com).

**ANTI-PLAGIARISM POLICY AND SELF-DECLARATION**

All the submissions would be scrutinized with the help of UGC recommended anti-plagiarism softwares in order to check for their authenticity. The contributors, therefore, have to attach a self-declaration form stating that their articles are free from plagiarism (10% similarity allowed). Articles not fulfilling this criterion will be rejected outright and will not be considered for publication.



## *From the Editor's Desk*

Critical thinking is often discouraged (not directly) in the mainstream of Indian higher education system even though there is a great hullabaloo about its necessity in every policy document and in every piece of new regulation governing the space. This is particularly disparaged when such critical thinking emanates from a student, at least in forum like examination, discussion/seminar, etc.

The state of affairs of research in arts and humanities too, call for a greater revamp. Not to speak of research by students, the researches by even many faculty members across a good number of institutions provides a gory picture. Exceptions are few and far between. Even then, research is a much-emphasised and trumpeted term in higher education and theoretically at least, the benefits of research should get disseminated to the students. But only few of us, both teachers and students, pursue research for the sake of research; great majority of us get involved in 'research' either out of a fashion/trend or out of compulsion. For both, there is an exponential growth of research literature, journals and research-books. There is perhaps no gainsaying that most of such researchers publish 'papers' out of a compelling sense of utility. The publishers of such journals are out to capitalise on this mad craze among 'researchers' to catapult their 'intellectual growth' trajectory, albeit mostly for career enhancement, at sky-rocketing prices and enable them to reach their goals overnight. This happens, exceptions apart, even in so-called UGC-CARE listed journals, notably in UGC-CARE Group II journals.

We will not say that we are here to change the entire gamut of research publications. We cannot. The Journal published from our department is intended only as a medium to provide a space and opportunity to our students to have exercises in technical writing and to hone their talents in critical thinking and presentation with the technicalities without adding any price tag. It is also our humble endeavour to guide them to write with the minimum of research ethics and integrity in the age of Artificial Intelligence where everything is so open that there is little time and scope for the stakeholders to plug the holes. It will be one of our primary objectives to inculcate in our students the thought and zeal about which the celebrated British historian GM Trevelyan said decades ago: "Disinterested intellectual curiosity is the lifeblood of real civilisation." If even a few students can live up to this inculcation, we will deem our humble efforts fulfilled.

I offer my sincere thanks and gratitude to all the honourable Reviewers, the Associate Editors and the contributors for this inaugural issue of the journal. Special thanks to my colleagues and friends Dr. Monalisa Borgohain, Mrs. Mansumi Sarmah, Dr. Pritom Panda and Sri Akash Jyoti Sharmah for relentlessly pursuing the publication. More than anybody else, the journal was their brainchild. I am extremely happy that the journal has seen the light of the day. I will only pray and hope that this humble beginning will culminate in robust research outputs both by our students and teachers and the journal will leave behind a legacy of critical thinking, academic integrity and a great growth trajectory.

**Dr. Jayanta Das**  
Associate Professor  
Department of English



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## Politics of Story Telling: A Study of Abdul Rajak Gurnah's *Afterlives*

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### ABSTRACT

Story telling is an age-old art that continues from generation to generation. It brings people together to entertain each other, to learn from each other, and often to teach young people about life and their world. It shapes the reality of the world in their minds. It has been essential in all cultures since the dawn of history to bring people together. It can help us learn about others and empathise with them and their situations. Stories evoke feelings within us for that individual and his way of living. It is a powerful tool in the hands of an astute professional like Abdulrajak Gurnah. He builds trust with the audience – primarily because he involves putting the audience first. A strong brand relies on the narrative of a story. It is up to the craftsmanship of a narrator to narrate the situation artistically. Storytelling is the art of using words and actions to divulge the elements and images of a story while encouraging the listener's imagination. Gurnah's effortless storytelling technique depicts the lives of ordinary people who are captivated by the hands of fate and fluctuating fortunes. Their lives are twisted into a cruel and bitter world of horror, suppression, fear, silence, and trauma.

**Keywords:** Storytelling, Memories, Horror, Trauma, Hope.

Gurnah has a unique way of captivating readers' minds through his art of storytelling. The interactive nature of the mode of narration makes the listener more imaginative and creative. The readers find themselves in the narration and an unconscious involvement in the storytelling. This nature of the artist's storytelling techniques allows the story to directly and immediately impact the readers. People have been fascinated by stories since the time they acquired the speech faculty. A story's features help us remember much more than just facts alone.

*Afterlives*, a remarkable novel by Gurnah, speaks about the extraordinariness of ordinary lives, deeply compelling into the harsh reality of colonial legacy. Ilyas, Hamza, and Afiya are those simple ordinary people whose lives are upturned by colonial ambitions. Their stories take the reader to a certain point of endurance, and their assertive personality gives a clear vision of a life of hope and generosity.

Gurnah introduces every character in the novel through different narrators. He is a master storyteller who gives much emphasis on memories and uses it as an essential tool in the narration of situations. Memories are all those emotional experiences that recollect some past special happenings. These collective memories play a significant role in storytelling. It helps the reader experience the character's emotions and try to relate to their feelings and ideas. Gurnah's stories take place in East Africa, at present Tanzania, and begin during the colonial rule of Germany. In *Afterlives*, the story follows through both world wars, independence, and the years in the aftermath. The main story revolves around the two important characters in the novel- Afiya and Hamza. The book's first half carries their stories in entirely separate ways, along with other interrelated minor characters' stories. Gurnah represents the journey of Hamza from a soldier to a responsible family man.

*"His face was wet and his body was drenched in sweat. There was a sob still in his throat as he came awake. They lay quite still in the dark, Afiya's grip firm on his upper arm. 'You were crying,' she said. 'Is it him again?' 'Him, yes. Sometimes it's him, sometimes the officer. Or else the pastor. It's always them,' he said. 'Only it's not the person so much, it's the feeling they bring.' 'What feeling? Tell me.' 'A feeling of danger, terror. Like great danger is bearing down and there's no escape. Such noise and screams and blood.'"* (*Afterlives*, p. 231)



Through the stories of Hamza, Gurnah shows the impact of war on soldiers and ordinary people. They were either compelled, volunteered, or forced, but they were never respected by Germans, except for a few. The soldiers, known as askari, were also treated as weapons against their fellow citizens and external forces. From the story of Uncle Ilyas, the readers gather the idea that he served in German troops voluntarily for many years, but he was never rewarded, as he was not a German. Violence over the ordinary people, brutality towards the carriers of the troops, and exploitation of askaris are vividly picturised in the stories of Hamza.

*"Her uncle and aunt did not have a field or garden, so all her chores were in the house or the backyard. Her aunt spoke to her sharply at times, but more often, she was kind and told her stories. Some of these stories were terrifying, like a ragged bloated man with long dirty fingernails who walked on the road at night, dragging an iron chain behind him, looking to capture a little girl and take her to his burrow underground. You can always hear him coming because of the chain dragging on the ground. Many of her aunt's stories were about dirty old people who stole little girls." (Afterlives, p. 36, 37)*

However, stories of Afiya are entrusted to the life of ordinary people. Some are affected by war, while others are subjected to misogynistic values in a patriarchal society. Afiya's story travels from a six-year orphan child to her marital life with Hamza. Her story shows different shades of patriarchal society, anguish, and injustice from female members. Gurnah has represented Afiya as a defiant character who is ambitious, optimistic, and courageous. She overcomes her trauma, evolves throughout the novel, and becomes quick-witted.

*"It's broken. I cannot grip with this hand," she said. 'What happened?' he asked. She smiled and reached for his face with her damaged hand. 'That's what I asked you and you burst into tears,' she said. 'My uncle broke it. He was not really my uncle, but I was living in his house when I was younger. He broke it because he said it was wrong for me to know how to write. He said, what will you write? You'll write ugly things, you'll write notes to a pimp.'" (Afterlives, p-208)*

Afiya's brother is Uncle Ilyas, who taught her how to read and write, Khalifa rescued her from torture and suffering from her relatives, and Hamza loved her. These three people treated her respectfully, empowered her, and valued her existence. All the stories are interrelated to these characters, and Gurnah presented them compellingly to the readers.

Khalifa, a half-African and half-Indian man, is hired as a bookkeeper by a cunning and largely unscrupulous merchant in a port city in German East Africa. His pivotal role as a fatherly figure to Afiya, a faithful accountant to the craziest merchant, and a sincere and responsible friend to Ilyas and Hamza is highly appreciable. He is also a conscious citizen of his country but fails in his conjugal life. He is unable to understand the feelings of his wife, Asha Fuadi. His stories recollect the memories from his childhood and how he travels from Gujarat to East Africa. Fear, suppression, failure, memory, and silence are essential aspects of Khalifa's life. However, he narrates the stories to his friends in such a way that it empowers their thought, motivates their presence, and ensures them hope for the future. He lives life blissfully beyond every trauma and suffering. The death of his wife could not even turn him to the bitterness of life. Gurnah presents his character as a strong bond of African pasts. Khalifa has seen many ups and downs in his life, from losing his parents, wife, and unborn children. Still, he finds love, aspiration, and power from Uncle Ilyas, Hamza, Afiya, and her son, Ilyas. His stories show the positivity of life out of all suffering.

*"I don't want to speak ill of the dead so soon after," Khalifa said to Ilyas, 'but that old man was a pirate. As for the young tajiri, well, I have known him for years. He was a little boy of nine, I think, when I started working for Bwana Amur. Now he is grown into a young man of panicky spirit – and who wouldn't be with a father who kept him so much in the dark? Then all of a sudden here he is, presiding over a robbery as the creditors move in. He lost a lot in the chaos that followed his father's death. He knew nothing about the business and those other pirates robbed him. All he is really interested in is wood. He even persuaded his father to let him open that timber yard and furniture workshop. That is what he loves to do – hang around the timber yard and smell the wood. In the meantime, everything else is going to hell.'" (Afterlives, p- 47)*



The friendship between Khalifa and Ilyas grows so deep that when Ilyas joins *schutztruppe*, his sister Afiya is looked after by Khalifa. He protects her, empowers her, and loves her as his daughter. A strong bond of love, hope, and power can be seen in the stories of Khalifa. The representation of the stories of each character by Gurnah makes the reader enthusiastic for the next story. The way Gurnah explains the personal life and professional life of every character in such spellbinding situations. The plot and structure of each story define the demand of readers' craving for more information. He handles the storytelling method very evocative and realistic.

*"Afiya was thirteen years old when the British too, had control of the coast. It was now more than two years since Ilyas left for Dar es Salaam and in all that time they had heard nothing from him. Baba Khalifa told her that the news from the interior was there was fighting everywhere with many casualties, German, British, South African, Indian, but most of them African. Schutztruppe askari, KAR, West African armies, many Africans are being killed to settle this European quarrel, he said." (Afterlives, p- 107)*

The stories related to war and its effect on the personal lives of soldiers and their family members are vividly described by Gurnah in the novel. He shows the miseries of German officers towards their soldiers and carriers. The brutal treatment that they enforced upon the ordinary villagers and their livestock. They spread hatred, horror, and violence in the lives of ordinary people. Even they left their soldiers and carriers in pain to die. Gurnah shows the brutal reality of war in the stories of Hamza.

*"In the early hours of the morning, while it was still dark, he smelled the rain before his eyes were open. They woke to discover that most of the remaining carriers had deserted during the night. It was not so unexpected to Hamza or to anyone who understood what they had been muttering incessantly for days. They were exhausted by the relentless pursuit, by the heavy loads and the degrading work they were required to carry out. They were porters for hire but they had not been paid, and in addition many of them had been coerced into work they did not want to do. Casualties were high among them. They were poorly fed and badly equipped, most of them barefoot and dressed in whatever rags they could loot or steal. They died from disease and lack of care, and in the dire straits the schutztruppe were in, they must have*

*been desperate to get away from an army facing defeat. They had been deserting day by day in small numbers but this was an organised flight, an admission that the schutztruppe could no longer ensure their survival or well-being. The Oberleutnant was furious and the other Germans joined him in his rage at the indiscipline of the carriers, as if they really believed that the ragged troop they beat and despised and overworked owed them loyalty." (Afterlives, p- 120, 121)*

Moreover, Gurnah has pictured the misery of doctors during the war. He also shows the positivity of the pastor during Hamza's illness. Even Gurnah also visualises the herbalist, mganga and hakim, during Afiya's and Asha Fuwadi's treatment. Gurnah has portrayed the characters from religious beliefs to scientific expeditions. Most stories describe the pain and suffering of internal and external problems. Some pains are healed with love, care, and support in the case of Hamza, Afiya, and Ilyas. At the same time, some are left untreatable, like carriers, soldiers, Asha Fuwadi, Khalifa's parents, and Afiya's parents.

The story was the oldest and most substantiated means for humans to remember and store information (Abrahamsen, 1998). Storytelling happens in many situations, from kitchen-table conversations to religious rituals, from telling in the course of other work to performances for thousands of paying listeners. Some storytelling situations demand informality and some are highly formal. Some demand certain themes, attitudes, and artistic approaches. As noted above, the expectations about listener interaction and the nature of the story itself vary widely. Stories are easy to pass, and it is that age-old oral culture that Gurnah continues in his writings. He gives us a glance at the historical representation of life through his storytelling method. The readers are fascinated by the words he uses in Swahili, German and Arabic languages in his novel, and how he translates them is impressive and highly appreciated. Many civilisations survived due to storytelling because they ensured the continuity of life experience for the next generation. There are many cultures on earth, each with rich traditions, customs and opportunities for storytelling. Gurnah has successfully portrayed his characters, stories, situations, emotions, and experiences throughout the novel. Every moment and situation is elaborated precisely from the novel's start to end. ●●●



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## Human Conflict and its Effects on Nature: A Study of Takahata's "*Grave of the Fireflies*"

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### ABSTRACT

"*Grave of the Fireflies*" is a 1988, Japanese film, by Isao Takahata. Published by "Studio Ghibli", this movie is set in the concluding years of the second World War, following the journey of two siblings, Seita and Setsuko. Isao Takahata's brilliant representation of the struggle of the common people during the war is compared and contrasted with the interaction of the materialistic mindset of human beings to the spiritual philosophy which existed in Japan from long before. In a narrative portraying both the living and the afterlife, we see our protagonists meet their deaths in a series of events resulting from the various actions of people which, both directly and indirectly, affect their lives. This paper is an attempt at understanding the connection between the spiritual and the physical world, as the characteristic trait of "Studio Ghibli", through the study of the film "*Grave of the Fireflies*".

**Keywords:** war, nature, Japan, Studio Ghibli

### INTRODUCTION

Armed conflicts between parties belonging to opposing forces, ranging from small communities in a state to entire nations, have been a recurring event in the pages of history. Ranging from the battle of Normandy in the West to the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the East, war has been a common occurrence throughout the world, responsible for not only the casualties caused in the battles but also the overall loss of life, collapsing economy and breaking up the society. It is also responsible for influencing centuries of literature - ranging from epics like Beowulf and Mahabharata to modern dramas like Lord of the Flies and Don Juan comes back from the War. However, the way of viewing and presenting war has changed drastically over time, as the idea of valor and chivalry in war was replaced by a sense of

meaninglessness and futility of life. The World Wars brought an end to the unity and rationality in the society, killing the dream of the Romantics and leading the way to the "Lost Generation".

In this dystopian era, an animation studio from Japan, starting its roots from humble origins, came into existence creating brilliant works of imagination, filled with colours and spirituality. A company which was the outcome of three passionate Japanese animators namely, Hayao Miyazaki and Isao Takahata as the head directors, and producer Toshio Suzuki, Studio Ghibli was founded on 15th of June, 1985. The main contributors, Mr. Miyazaki and Mr. Takahata, created many animated films which, although held the same sense of spirituality, were vastly different in their representation of life. While Miyazaki's works were detail oriented, colourful and full of imagination, which were characteristics of the Romanticism, Takahata's works were a mix of detail and outline, focused more on an incomplete sense of reality, which were characteristics of the Modern literature. These contrasting ideas, however, did not hinder in the progress of the studio as it managed to produce five of the ten top-grossing animated feature films of all times. Some of the most popular Ghibli films include titles like - "*The Tale of the Princess Kaguya*", "*Only Yesterday*", "*Grave of the Fireflies*", "*Spirited Away*", "*My Neighbour Totoro*" etc.

Japan entered the second World War after their surprise attack on the U.S. fleet at Pearl Harbor to gain a strong foothold on Southeast Asia. But, what followed was an era of catastrophe for Japan as their enemies "rained hell" upon them, finally ending the war with the dropping of the Atom Bombs. Amidst this political struggle for power, the sufferings of the common people went unnoticed. "*Grave of the Fireflies*" or as titled in Japanese, "*Hotaru no Haka*", released in the year 1988, is a movie by Isao Takahata and based on the Naoki Award-winning



short story by Nosaka Akiyuki (published 1967), portrays the condition of the public which did not actively participated in the war and yet, became victims of the mistakes of their leaders. Set in Kobe (1945), in the waning days of World War II, "Grave of the Fireflies" is a realistic drama, focusing on the suffering and eventual starvation deaths of fourteen-year-old Seita and his four-year-old sister, Setsuko.

The movie starts in a railway station with the protagonist, Seita Yokokawa's sore ridden and emaciated body lying down, as the people pass him with remarks of disgust. His spirit, which is painted with a red hue, narrates that he died on 21st of September, 1945. Corpses of a few other children lay alongside Seita's body in the station. The workers of the station come and search their bodies for belongings to keep. One of them finds a metal container with Seita and seeing no value in it, decides to throw it out, from which scatters out the last remains of Setsuko. Her spirit arises from the bones and rejoins with her brother's spirit in a journey to the past where everything started.

Then we see the sibling's journey through the wartorn city of Kobe after they lost both their mother and their house. In a conflict of ideals resulting from the ongoing war, we witness how the actions of people ultimately resulted in the death of both Seita and Setsuko. Presenting a spiritual journey in a completely materialistic world, this movie provides a deeper insight in Mr. Takahata's take on the World War and an attempt to rekindle the flame of humanity. The paper, thus, attempts to show the connection between nature and human beings, and the results of the interaction between the both.

Isao Takahata can be deemed a genius in his capabilities of blending the spiritual elements within the materialistic components. He brings in the traits of both the Romantics and the Modernists to create his movies, the interaction in which ranges between the present and the past, and the physical and the psychological aspects. In "Grave of the Fireflies", the Modernists' notion of life itself being futile can be seen. The shattered society resulting as an aftereffect of the war created a grim scenario where communication was seen as vain, and people lost faith both in religion and in humanity. "Futility", a poem by Wilfred Owen, speaks of this loss of faith as his God was unable to revive his dead friend. Seita's death in the station contrasted with the unfazed attitude of the

people as they resume their daily work or Setsuko's death being contrasted with the playing of the song "Home, Sweet Home" as people return back to Kobe with all excitement after the war ends, shows the degrading value of life, which was once praised in majestic words like that of Alexander Pope's "An Essay on Man". But, while the physical existence of men is considered futile, the spiritual element, however, gains more importance as we witness the brother and the sister reunite after their death to live on for eternity. This portrayal of the spirit can be considered as an allusion to the Transcendentalist philosophy, that something or someone beyond self and the material world exists and makes life complete and meaningful. This philosophy is again derived from the Romantic belief which is rooted in the preservation of nature and creative genius. Thus, the spirits of Seita and Setsuko presents a view on the importance of nature and presents creative imagination as the only eternal element. Even the ring of their mother, which Seita gives to Setsuko, is never spoken of again and loses all its value over the course of time. What remains constant till the end is the innocent childhood fantasy and memories - of their heroic father, of the tasty foods and of the memory of their mother. Takahata's representation of nature through the eyes of struggling and innocent children gives the most unbiased view to the audience, thereby, making an attempt to help them reconnect with nature and in time, with humanity too.

The death of the sibling, although a sad incident, is not an uncommon occurrence. In the train station as well as on the beach, we see nameless dead bodies which are never spoken of again, and in that, the movie makes the audience become a part of the modern world as, even wanting to, we are unable to dig any deeper into the lives of those dead people. This technique of direction shows that the common people of that period did not willingly accept their indifferent behaviour but were forced to adopt it in order to survive the existing scenario. So, when the aunt rebukes the children or the farmer beats Seita for stealing his produce, these actions indeed appear cruel but at the same time, understandable, as they are forced to take harsh measures in order to survive themselves, the same thing which Seita does. With the coming of a materialistic world, the naturalistic elements started to change for the worse, with problems like Global Warming erupting up. These changes too, although harsh, were forced responses



against the devastation caused by the human beings, in a similar manner to the characters in the movie. Thus, Mr. Takahata gives a beautiful presentation of the preservation of nature in a dystopian and materialistic world.

John Keats wrote "A thing of beauty is a joy forever". As a Romantic poet, it held true to his period and thoughts. But, with the devastating arrival of the Modern Period and the World Wars, this statement becomes illogical. Beauty is a fragile concept. The title of the movie denotes exactly that. "Grave of the Fireflies" is direct reference to a scene in the movie where Seita and Setsuko buries a bunch of fireflies. Their stay at the bomb-shelter was uninteresting and for that reason, Seita decided to bring in some fireflies to illuminate the cave and also entertain Setsuko. While doing that, he handed Setsuko one firefly which she crushes by mistake. He explains to her that she should hold it gently. Later, in the next morning, we see that all the fireflies inside the shelter are dead. This portrays the fragility of beauty and nature. Within that same scene, we see Seita imagining the fireflies to be lights of a battleships where his father works and imagines himself as a soldier in the ship, only for the insects to die the next morning, thus bringing an end to his dream forever. Soon after, we see him stealing, an action exactly opposite to that of being a soldier. The dystopian modern era prohibited anyone from pursuing anything of beauty and people strayed away from it with time. E.M. Foster in his essay "Does Culture Matter" questions this ignorant mindset of people towards beauty in the form of culture and traditions. With the beauty of creativity and imagination dying, the natural part of humanity will ultimately be extinguished like the fireflies, and eternal darkness will prevail in an eternity of the dystopian condition.

"Grave of the Fireflies" follows the life of two children, Seita and Setsuko. Each represent a different aspect of the world - Seita symbolised Humanity in general and Setsuko symbolised Nature. Seita is more influenced by his father, a naval officer and his dreams are shaped by the same. His aunt's constant reminder that he is worthless if he doesn't help in the war only serves to push forward this notion of duty. His answer to a curious Setsuko who asked him that what would happen to them as their home was destroyed was that their father would exact revenge upon the enemies. From early childhood, he built up the idea that revenge is better than reconciliation.

Part of that reason is because of the "Pride of a warrior" attitude which the Japanese harboured. This pride was so much instilled in the minds of Japanese warriors "Samurai" that they not only lived by that code but also died by that code. Being a nation who held firmly to its traditions and customs, this pride became a part of the common people too. Seita followed the same ideal of pride which made it so that he left his aunt's house rather than ask for forgiveness as his pride would not allow him to stoop down to ask for help. But, that pride did not last long as the need for survival soon forced him to start stealing from others and the entire reason, for him leaving the protection of his aunt's house, failed. More than a brother, he becomes a father to Setsuko, going to extreme lengths for his sister. He becomes a provider and for that same reason, he had to leave his sister alone to fend for herself for the most part of the day. He becomes a representation of the males of a household in that period, their sense of duty taking prevalence over family.

Setsuko, on the other hand, represented the natural part of the World. Her innocence, curiosity and unapologetic demands showing the true essence of nature. The interaction of the brother-sister portrays the interaction of humanity and nature over the course of history. Seita carried Setsuko in the first part of the movie and her plump figure showed the flourishing nature. But, as time passed on, Setsuko's dependence on her brother, though much essential, was lessened, as she learned to fend for herself in the solitude of the bomb-shelter. And slowly but gradually, she became malnourished, leading to starvation and death. Many human actions, from the aunt's harsh treatment, Seita's pride, the farmer's barbarity and the doctor's uncaring attitude, led to the demise of Setsuko, showing the harmful results of the interference of human actions that might, both directly and indirectly harm nature. Seita's death in a train station amidst the filth, shows the repercussions that humanity will have to face if the damage done exceeds the rate of restoration.

The third protagonist is an inanimate object - the can of Sakuma Drops, which Setsuko carries with her. Sakuma Drops are a type of Japanese hard candy made using real fruit juice. They were first developed by Sojiro Sakuma, a Japanese-style confectioner living in Tokyo. By 1908 (during the Meiji era), the Sakuma Candy Company would be formed and the sweets, with their distinctive tin-can packaging and



unconventional taste, would take Japan by storm. The company has also gone through multiple transitions since its inception. When the Pacific War began in 1941, it became increasingly difficult for Japanese companies to access foreign products. By the following year, The Food Management Law was enacted, which instituted a national food rationing system for all Japanese citizens. This made sugar a luxury and sought-after item that was nearly impossible to obtain through legal channels unless it was provided by a person's employer. Ultimately, these challenges, along with the company's factory being destroyed in a bombing raid, led to its closure in 1945. The can of Sakuma drops has an important symbolism in the movie. The word candy usually brings in positive feelings and are usually used as rewards for children. These candies, however, portrayed temporary moments of happiness and hopelessness in the movie. At first, the can of candies became a source of excitement for the children but as time passed, it became nothing more than Seita's way of consoling his sister, giving her momentary satisfaction. But, with time, the candies were getting less and less, and even a young girl like Setsuko, who had no idea regarding the values and lessons of survival, learned to ration her candies and as a result learned to ration her limited moments of happiness. While the ring which was a memory of their mother was ignored, the can gained more importance as the movie goes on. After the candies were over, the somewhat comfortable life of Seita and Setsuko also came to an end as they left their aunt's house for the bomb shelter. Later, we see that Seita puts the ashes of Setsuko inside the can. The can which once held the wonders of a child now held the remains of despair and loneliness. Setsuko was unable to open the can and so she relied on her brother to open it for her. So, the can became symbolic of Seita's strength and responsibilities. The candies inside were the objects of wonder for Setsuko, representing her childhood curiosity. Later, after they died, the can held the remains of Setsuko and became the only object of interest for the worker at the station while searching Seita. Thus, the can represented Seita himself and the ashes, Setsuko, and together, it represented the co-existence of nature and humankind.

As the movie ends, we see Seita and Setsuko looking towards a modern and flourishing Japan. After all the struggle, their spirits finally reunite and are freed from the shackles of a deploring society. They watch

their own journey from a wartorn Japan to a blooming one, their spirits remaining eternal looking over the new generation with a sense of satisfaction that they will never have to face the struggles of the several Seita and Setsukos who passed before them. The reality and the spiritual finally united as the curtain closes, showing that no matter how much Japan progresses, the spirits of the ancestors and their struggles which brought Japan in its current state, will always be remembered and will not vanish away from the hearts of the people. Isao Takahata and Nosaka Akiyuki have successfully paid tributes to their ancestors, whose struggle have allowed for a flourishing future for their nation, through this anti-war and spiritual movie. ●●●

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## Discovering Nature Through the Lens of Studio Ghibli With Special Reference To Spirited Away

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### ABSTRACT

Studio Ghibli is known as the Disney of Japan and rightly so, for what both of these studios focus on, is their unique representation of nature and the environment through their movies. While Disney took the route of portraying the good in society through fairy tale-like images and bright colorful environments and stories that can inspire young kids, Studio Ghibli took the other route and portrayed both the good and bad of society as a whole. Moreover, in the Ghibli Studios, the representation of nature is not simply presented to the audience explicitly, rather the minute details, hints and references are hidden throughout the movie, in the personality of characters, dialogues and the ever changing setting of the movies. *Spirited Away*, one of Miyazaki's finest creations, won the Academy Award for Best Animated Feature at the 75th Academy Awards and this movie too features the hidden representation of nature and the environment. Thus, in this paper, we will look in detail about how exactly nature is portrayed as a pillar of human life in the grand scheme of life with reference to the movie, "*Spirited Away*".

**Keywords :** *Spirited Away*, Hayao Miyazaki, Nature, Studio Ghibli.

### CHIHITO'S MYSTERIOUS TOWN - SPIRITED AWAY

#### INTRODUCTION

Hayo Miyazaki was born in 1941 in Tokyo. After receiving a degree in political science and economics from Gakushu University, Miyazaki worked at Toei-Doga (currently Toei Animation) creating scene designs and original drawings for *Little Norse Prince Valiant* (1968). Later, he moved to A Pro, where he was responsible for stories, screenplays, scene settings, and key animation in 1973, he, along with

Isao Takahata and others, moved to Zuiyo Images. Miyazaki went on to work on scene design and scene organization for *Heidi* (1974) and to direct *Future Boy Conan* (1978) and *Lupin : The Castle of Cagliostro* (1979). In 1985 after working for Nippon Animation and Telecom, Miyazaki became co-founder of Studio Ghibli. He wrote and directed the screenplay for *Nausicaa of the Valley of Wind*, a film based on his original manga serialized in *Animagn* magazine. Since then he has directed the animated feature films *Laputa: The Castle in the Sky* (1986), *My Neighbor Totoro* (1988), *Kiki's Delivery Service* (1989), *Porco Rosso* (1992), and *Princess Mononoke* (1997). He is the author of the books *The House Where Totoro Lives*, *Shuna's Journey*, *Mononoke Hime*, and *From This Point Forward*.

At first sight this film is an adventure story even though there is no brandishing of weapons or battles involving supernatural powers. However, this story is not a showdown between right and wrong. It is a story in which the heroine will be thrown into a place where the good and the bad dwell together, and there, she will experience the world. She will learn about friendship and devotion, and will survive by making full use of her brain. She sees herself through the crisis, avoids danger and gets herself back to the ordinary world somehow. She manages not because she has destroyed the "evil," but because she has acquired the ability to survive. The main theme of this film is to describe, in the form of a fantasy, some of the things in this world which have become vague, and the indistinct world which tends towards erosion and ruin. In everyday life, where we are surrounded, protected, and kept out of danger's way, it is difficult to feel that we are working to survive in this world. Children can only enlarge their fragile egos. Chihiro's skinny legs and her sulky face are their symbols. However, once the reality becomes clear and once she encounters a crisis, she will surely be aware of the life



she actually possesses and of a capacity for flexibility and patience, and for decisive judgment and action. Most people just panic and collapse while shouting, "It can't be true." Those people will be erased or eaten up in the situation in which Chihiro finds herself. In fact, Chihiro's being strong enough not to be eaten up is just what makes her a heroine. She is a heroine not because she is beautiful or because she possesses a unique mind. This is the key characteristic of this work.

Words are power. In the world Chihiro wandered into, words have a great importance and immutability. At "Yuya," where "Yubaba" rules, if Chihiro were to say, "I don't want to do this," or "I want to go home," she would be eliminated by the sorceress. She would be made to wander about with nowhere to go until she vanishes or is made into a hen to lay eggs until she is eaten. On the contrary, if Chihiro says, "I will work here," even a sorceress can't ignore her. These days, words are thought to be light and unimportant like bubbles, and no more than the reflection of a vacuous reality. It is still true that words can be powerful. The fact is, however, that powerless words are proliferating unnecessarily.

To take a name away from a person is an attempt to keep them under perfect control. Sen (Chihiro) shuddered when she realized that she was beginning to forget her own name. And besides, every time she goes to see her parents at the pigpen, she becomes used to seeing her parents as pigs. In the world where Yubaba rules, people must always live among dangers which might swallow them up. In this dangerous world, Chihiro began to come alive. The sulky and languid character came to have a stunning and attractive facial expression by the end of the film. The nature of the world hasn't changed in the least. This is also the reason why Miyazaki created a fantasy set in Japan. Though it is a fairy tale, he did not want to make it similar to a Western story which allows many possibilities for escape, and is likely to be taken as a cliché. He created a world where Yubaba lives in a pseudo-western style to make it seem as if it is something that has been seen somewhere else and to make it uncertain whether it is a dream or reality. Moreover, Japanese traditional design is a rich source for the imagination, we are often not aware of the rites, designs, and tales of the gods. It is true that "Kachi-kachi Yama" and "Momotaro" (folktales) are no longer persuasive. However, it is a poor idea to

push all the traditional things into a small folk culture world. Surrounded by high technology and its flimsy devices, children are losing their roots more and more and we must inform them of the richness of our traditions.

The world of film can have a striking influence by fulfilling the traditional functions, as a piece of a vividly colored mosaic, to a story which can be applied today. That means, at the same time, we can gain a new understanding of what it means to be the residents of the island country. In this borderless age, a man who doesn't have a place to put down his roots will be looked down upon. A place is the past and also a history. A man without history, or a people that forgot its past will have no choice but to disappear, like a shimmer of light or to lay eggs endlessly as a hen and be consumed.

### **Analysis of the Film "Spirited Away"**

"Spirited Away" is a masterpiece of animated filmmaking, directed by Hayao Miyazaki and produced by Studio Ghibli. The film tells the story of a young girl named Chihiro, who becomes trapped in a magical world of spirits and must find a way to save her parents and return to the human world. One of the most distinctive aspects of "Spirited Away" is its beautiful animation. Miyazaki and his team of animators bring the world of the spirits to life in breathtaking detail, from the intricate designs of the bathhouse to the fluid movements of the various spirits. The film is a visual feast, full of color and movement that transports the viewers to a world that is both beautiful and dangerous.

At its core, "Spirited Away" is a coming-of-age story. Chihiro is a young girl who is initially timid and uncertain, but she gradually gains confidence and independence as she travels through the strange world of the spirits. Her journey is a metaphor for the challenges of growing up, as she learns to rely on her own strength and courage to overcome obstacles and face the unknown. The film also explores themes of identity and transformation. Chihiro is forced to adapt to the spirit world and take on new identities to survive, first as a worker in the bathhouse and later as a friend and ally to the various spirits she encounters. Similarly, many of the spirits in the film undergo transformations, either physical or emotional, as they confront their own fears and desires.



Another important theme in "Spirited Away" is the relationship between humans and nature. The film portrays the spirit world as a place of balance and harmony, where the spirits are connected to the natural world and live in harmony with it. In contrast, the human world is portrayed as destructive and out of balance, with Chihiro's parents unwittingly causing chaos and disruption when they stumble into the spirit world. Throughout the film, Miyazaki also explores the nature of power and authority. Yubaba, the witch who runs the bathhouse, is a powerful figure who uses her magic to control the spirits who work for her. However, her power is ultimately revealed to be fragile, as Chihiro is able to outwit her and free herself and her parents from the spirit world. The film suggests that true power comes not from domination and control, but from empathy and compassion. Ultimately, "Spirited Away" is a visually stunning and thematically rich film that explores the challenges of growing up, the relationship between humans and nature, and the nature of power and authority. It is a timeless work of art that speaks to audiences of all ages, and it is a testament to the visionary talents of Hayao Miyazaki and Studio Ghibli.

### **Significance of the Stink Spirit**

A significant symbol used in the film is the Stink Spirit. The Stink Spirit appears after Chihiro first starts working at the bathhouse. Also, it's important to note that after getting a job at the bathhouse, the witch who runs it, Yubaba, gives Chihiro a new name: Sen. I'll talk about the significance of this in a little bit, but for now, let's just keep in mind that when I say "Sen," I'm talking about Chihiro, our protagonist. The Stink Spirit looks like a giant sludge monster, and based on the way the characters in the movie react to its presence, you can tell it really stinks. The other bathhouse workers try to keep it from entering, but it trudges forward, insistent on getting a bath. Naturally, no one wants to take care of the Stink Spirit, so Yubaba makes Chihiro do it as a sort of hazing or initiation task. Chihiro, never one to be stopped, carries out the work of bathing the Stink Spirit dutifully. In fact, she works so hard to get it clean that she accidentally falls in the bath with it. And it's in this scene, while Chihiro is struggling to get out of the bath, that she feels something pointy coming out of the Stink Spirit's side, like a thorn. Once she gets back out, Chihiro enlists the help of the bathhouse staff to pull this thing out of the Stink Spirit. But when

they're finally able to yank it out, Chihiro realizes the thorn is really a bicycle handlebar, and pulling it out releases a deluge of trash and pollutants. With the pollution gone, all the sludge surrounding the Stink Spirit dissolves to reveal a River Spirit. People throwing pollution into the river made it a Stink Spirit, but Chihiro saved it, and it thanked her by giving her a ball of medicine before leaving.

### **Elements of Shintoism in "Spirited Away"**

In some ways, this story really happened. Miyazaki got the idea after working on a river cleanup when he pulled a bicycle from the river. Hearing this gave an impression of animism, which is the belief that everything—including plants, animals, so-called "inanimate" objects, and natural phenomena—have souls. And of course, animism is central to the ancient Japanese religion Shinto, or Shintoism. Practitioners of Shintoism, usually called Shintoists, believe in supernatural beings called kami. Kami inhabit the landscape, and they can either be benevolent or malevolent towards humans, depending on whether or not humans honor them properly. In Japan, there are shrines to kami all over the place, and you can also see them in the opening scenes of Spirited Away.

In an interview with Robert Epstein from The Independent in 2010, Miyazaki said, "I do not believe in Shinto...but I do respect it, and I feel that the animism of Shinto is rooted deep within me."

But Spirited Away pays homage to another important aspect of Shintoism as well: the purifying power of water. In Shintoism, cleanliness is very important. It's just like that old saying in English, "Cleanliness is next to godliness." Yubaba's bathhouse, then, is a place where spirits can come to be purified. It just so happens that a number of these spirits turn out to be nature spirits, like rivers.

### **The Importance of Haku -**

There's another important river spirit we meet in Spirited Away, though we don't realize what it is at first. Haku, a young man, helps Chihiro when she realizes she's stranded in the spirit world, in fact Haku is the one who tells Chihiro she must get a job working at Yubaba's bathhouse, and he also teaches her the importance of remembering her name after Yubaba gives her a new one, warning her that if she forgets it, she'll be stuck in the spirit world forever.



Haku, it turns out, has firsthand experience with this. He's actually the spirit of the Kohaku River, but he can't escape the spirit world because he had forgotten his name. Near the end of the movie, Chihiro realizes she had met Haku several years before when he saved her from drowning in the Kohaku River. Now, Chihiro says, the river has been filled up to make way for apartment buildings.

Although subtle this is in a way a reference to how with the rapid urbanization and development of buildings all over Japan, an astonishingly huge number of rivers, lakes and ponds have been filled to form the land for the construction of all such architectures. This again is a way of Miyazaki telling us how in our search for modern life, we are paying the price of our environment, our identity. Our roots are after all tied with the place we grow up in. What value is there to a life lived in a cluster of buildings and apartments, identical to each other all over the world. Does our identity not lose its value then, if we sacrifice our environmental beauty and aspects for a monotonous life that is no different to one another? This is exactly what Haku forgetting his name means, for Haku is us and we are over time forgetting our identity and our culture that defines us.

Japan is a beautiful country full of mountains, lakes, and streams, though its rivers are known for being shallow and short due to the country's mountainous topography. Rivers hold historical significance for supplying drinking water and for creating alluvial plains, which are perfect environments for growing rice. But in modern times, Japan has built a lot of hydroelectric dams on rivers to generate power.

This is a common practice all over the world. The Three Gorges Dam, which is located in the Yangtze River Basin in China, cost \$31 billion to build, and it produces roughly eight times the electricity of the Hoover Dam. It also holds the unique distinction of being both the world's biggest dam and the world's biggest power station. The reservoir it created is bigger than Lake Superior in the American Midwest. It's extremely difficult to overstate the sheer enormity of this dam. As you can imagine, the Three Gorges Dam didn't come without resistance from scientists and environmentalists who were concerned about the potentially devastating effects the project could have on the local environment. Not to mention the effects it would have on the 31 million or so people who lived in the area. According to a Scientific American

article from 2008, construction of the dam required about 1.2 million people scattered across two cities and 116 towns to relocate, and scientists were concerned that building the dam would cause an increase of landslides and waterborne diseases, which would further impact the people who didn't have to relocate.

These fears turned out to be true after construction of the dam was complete. The Chinese state-owned China Yangtze Three Gorges Development Corporation began raising the water level in 2003, triggering a landslide that created waves big enough to kill 14 people. Years later, increased pressure on the land from raising and lowering the water level led to a landslide that swallowed a bus, killing 30 people. At one point in 2007, residents of a nearby village watched as a giant crack in the earth spread 655 feet wide just behind their homes. The crack was so huge that concerns for public safety led Chinese officials to evacuate the town, forcing villagers to camp out in a mountain tunnel for three months. The worst part of all of this is that landslides were only part of the problem. Building the Three Gorges Dam also led to decreased rainfall and water shortages in other cities and towns, and building the reservoir caused great harm to endangered species of plants and animals in the extremely biodiverse areas surrounding the Yangtze River.

*Spirited Away* addresses the problems arising out of exploitation of water resources through the symbols of the Stink Spirit as well as Haku.

### **No Face and Self-Destructive Greed**

The film narrative also introduces the character called No Face. No Face comes to the bathhouse after the Stink Spirit leaves. It had been raining for a long time, and Chihiro sees him outside in the garden. She feels sorry for him, so she lets him in. Now, just after No Face enters the bathhouse, Chihiro has to attend to a sick Haku, so she doesn't really get to know anything about No Face. But No Face almost immediately starts wreaking havoc, offering the bathhouse staff huge amounts of gold nuggets for all the food they can bring him. In the process, he actually eats several staff members. The bathhouse staff remain undeterred by this, and they keep bringing him food to get more gold. When Chihiro finally returns and tames No Face, all the gold turns into mud. The bathhouse staff were risking getting eaten alive for a kind of fool's gold.



The No Face incident seems like the perfect metaphor for what happened in China on how some people will see an opportunity for wealth and power, and even though it will cost others their lives, they decide to keep building, keep bringing more resources to feed the monster. The world isn't quite there yet, but the possibility of impending doom because of projects such as the Three Gorges Dam remains.

### **Chihiro's Relationship with Haku**

Chihiro surprisingly winds up saving Haku by remembering his name, but Haku actually helped Chihiro remember her name first. In the beginning of the movie, just after Chihiro gets the bathhouse job and Yubaba gives her her new name, Sen, Haku reminds her of her real name and warns her never to forget it. Frightened, Chihiro confesses she had already forgotten her real name and thanks Haku for reminding her. This is significant because of who Haku really is; the spirit of the Kohaku River. And whether we believe in kami or stink spirits or animism in general, there's no denying that what we do to the natural world has consequences, and these consequences can be dire. Water is precious for its life-sustaining and purifying qualities, but when we pollute it, it can become a source of disease and destruction.

We see this with the Stink Spirit and No Face, but Haku shows us how water and nature in general give back to us. Chihiro only knows Haku's real name because he saved her from drowning as a young girl. And Chihiro may have even forgotten her name if Haku hadn't reminded her. This is what the natural world does for us. It provides us with the resources we need to live, and it even helps us remember who we really are. As humans, it's easy to forget our identities amid our grand aspirations and innovative new ideas, but nature brings us back down to earth, so to speak, reminding us of our place in the universe. In a way, it helps people to remember what makes us human to begin with. In terms of climate change, Chihiro's relationship with Haku shows us that if we care enough and try hard enough, we can save the things we love. We'll need all the help we can get along the way, sure, but sometimes saving someone or something starts with remembering their name—who they are and who they're supposed to be. ●●●

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## Animals and Humans: Animal Imagery in Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*

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### ABSTRACT

The paper aims to examine the use of animal imagery in Thomas Hardy's last novel *Jude the Obscure* and how it provides a more comprehensive understanding of the characters and the events in the novel. The animal imageries in the novel not only provide a glimpse of the psychological disposition of the characters but also foretell their fates. The paper also seeks to analyse the condition of animals during that period and how animals were perceived in late Victorian society in the face of Darwin's theory of evolution. The concept of Social Darwinism has been used to understand how the incorporation of animal imagery suitably captures the essence of evolving English society at the cusp of Modernism.

**Keywords:** Thomas Hardy, Animal Imagery, Social Darwinism, Capitalism, Modernity.

### INTRODUCTION

The use of animal and bird imagery to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the characters and events in the novel is a common trope used by the novelists in the Victorian era. From the early Victorians including Emily Bronte and Charles Dickens to the late Victorian including Thomas Hardy, everyone used animal and birds as literary symbols in their works. The novel *Jude the Obscure* incorporates a lot of animal imageries from the beginning to the end, and these images not only represent the physical and mental state of the major characters but also foreshadow their destiny. In the second chapter of the first volume itself, the novel establishes the loneliness and abandonment of Jude through his comparison to the wild rooks that come to eat the crops in Farmer Troutham's field. The lines "They seemed, like himself, to be living in a world which did not want them. Why should he frighten them away?" (Hardy 9) make us aware that

despite being with Aunt Drusilla, Jude is an unwanted child. This unwelcoming sense of Jude's existence remains dominant throughout the novel. Jude is constantly disillusioned about his existence and keeps questioning his purpose in the world. At one point, the social, religious and educational institutions ostracize him from being their part and he is forced to live alone, ambitionless and without anybody by his side. The natural empathy of Jude to the pain of both animate and inanimate things goes to the extent that his kindness is regarded as a weakness of character, a weakness that is ironically predicted to cause himself a lot of pain in his lifetime.

The following lines show the sense of kindness and sensitivity that Jude has for fellow beings- both human and non-human. This sense of sensitivity also leads Jude to his eventual doom towards the end of the novel. It is this same sense of sensitivity that ignorantly makes him prey to the malicious designs of Arabella and gets him married to her twice despite him not being fully committed:

*'Poor little dears!' said Jude, aloud. 'You shall have some dinner- you shall. There is enough for us all. Farmer Troutham can afford to let you have some. Eat, then, my dear little birdies, and make a good meal!' (Hardy 9).*

It can be said that Jude inherits this sense of kindness to birds through the teachings of his favourite school teacher Phillotson, who, on his final departure to Christminster, advises Jude to "Be a good boy, remember and be kind to animals and birds, and read all you can." However, he is berated and beaten by Troutham when he tries to follow his advice of being kind to the birds. Also, Phillotson's advice to read as much as he can is rendered fruitless as we go on to see that Jude neither gets admission in the University nor gets any employment opportunity out of his education. Phillotson's statement therefore, can be read as



a critique of education system during the Victorian times that was idealistic and did not have the practical capacity to reform the life of a working class individual in the English society. Just like Jude follows the advice of Phillotson to be kind to the birds allowing the rooks to feed on the crops but gets punished for the action, he acquires his education through rigorous studies and goes to Christminster for his University education only to be rejected by the University as he belongs to the working-class and this pursuit of education ultimately leads to his death in the end. Through the character of Jude, Hardy offers the fate of an idealistic Modern man who naively follows conventional advice or traditional education attempting to be a good man, only to be embroiled later.

The use of a pig is another important animal imagery in the novel. Jude comes across Arabella, a daughter of a pig-farmer, as she throws "a piece of flesh, the characteristic part of a barrow-pig" (Hardy 80) at Jude who is walking while being fully invested in his University dreams. Arabella is introduced with her act of throwing the pig's genitalia that dissuades Jude from his dreams of his future. This act is symbolic in the sense that Jude's educational prospect at Christminster is deferred as he entangles himself with the sexuality of Arabella and gets married to her. The genitalia of the pig symbolizes the sexuality of Arabella that distracts Jude and his greater aspirations of a University education. Moreover, she seduces Jude by holding a bantam's egg in her bosom, claiming that she is hatching the egg. The egg was wrapped in wool and a piece of pig's bladder and this, reflects her animalistic passion. She remains fully aware of her sexual attraction and takes full advantage of it. In the pig-killing incident, Jude's wish for the pig to be killed instantly so that its death is less painful shows his mercy for the animals. This mercy stands in complete contrast with Arabella's attitude who ruthlessly wants to kill the pig as slowly as possible. Her lack of empathy adds to her animalistic trait, as she is compared to a female predator having "no sympathy more than a tigress" (Hardy 176). This lack of empathy foreshadows the ending of the novel where she ruthlessly leaves Jude to die and goes on to her flirtatious adventures. Just like the pig dies slowly making a lot of agonized sounds, Jude too dies a slow death after suffering for a long time. The third and final cry of the pig can be linked to the final words of Jude where he reflects on his tragic life and curses himself for being born.

Sue Bridehead, on the other hand, stands in complete contrast to the animality of Arabella as she is described as a "phantasmal bodiless creature, one who... has so little animal passion" (Hardy 250). Just like Jude, she is extremely sympathetic to the suffering of animals. Like Jude, she is also compared to a caged animal that is suffering. For example, when she is to be married to Jude, she exclaims, "The little bird is caught at last!" (Hardy 258). This comparison to animals achieves its zenith in the rat-trapping scene. As Jude hears the rabbit cry, Jude understands that the rabbit has been trapped in a cage and out of kindness goes to put its pain to an end by breaking its neck and killing it. As he does this, Sue appears in front of him with the similar intention of putting the misery of the rabbit to an end by killing it as revealed through the following lines:

*I haven't been able to sleep at all, and then I heard the rabbit, and couldn't help thinking of what it suffered, till I felt I must come down and kill it! But I am so glad you got there first. . . . They ought not to be allowed to set these steel traps, ought they! (Hardy 205)*

The cry of the rabbit in pain is symbolic of the suffering caused to Jude and Sue by the marital system in Victorian England. After Jude kills the rabbit, Jude and Sue confess their feelings to each other passionately through a kiss. However, both Jude and Sue are caught into the trap of their first marriages that is painful to each other in different ways and they bring a great loss to themselves by trying to escape from those traps in their attempts to live together. Sue's suggestion to ban the gin shows her concern to change the institution of marriage at that time. The characteristic differences between Arabella and Sue establish the difference between flesh and spirit in the novel. For Jude, Arabella stands for his sexual affinities whereas Sue indicates his spiritual pursuit and like a rabbit caught in a gin trap, he is constantly torn and inflicted because of his affinities to these two ideals. The gin trap can also be interpreted in terms of the times in which Jude and Sue lived. Jude and Sue were living in a transitional phase that was neither entirely Victorian nor Modern—a period characterized by the presence of dialectics such as religion versus science, spirituality versus sexuality, ideal versus reality, and so on.

Throughout the novel, Sue is compared to a tiny little bird because of her "light and slight" features. In the Melchester Training School, she flies away from the institution by jumping through the window and get



through the river. While being married to Philotson, she similarly jumps out of the window to protect herself from sexually exploited from Philotson. The analogy is prominent as Sue has to share bed with Jude and she says, "the little bird is caught at last!" and Jude replies to this by saying, "No-only nested" (Hardy 258). Nesting here can be read as settling down in opposition to marriage, which would mean re-entering the gin-traps. Psychologically too, Sue associates herself with a trapped little bird. When the two pigeons that Sue kept as pets were sold at the auction to the butcher, she feels extremely sympathetic for them and eventually frees them. The act of freeing the pigeons mirrors her decisions of not being pigeonholed into the traditions of marriage, either to Philotson or to Jude. However, she regrets the action later as she says, "It was so foolish of me! O why should Nature's law should be mutual butchery!" (Hardy 296). The act of freeing the pigeons is a repetition of Jude's act of freeing the rooks in the opening chapters of the book. Sue's comparison to a bird is found even towards the end of the novel as she cries "like a screech owl" (Hardy 353) on the eve of her remarriage to Philotson. However, Sue re-enters the cage as she remarries Philotson. The image of the bird is very important technique that helps in fleshing out the complicated personality of Sue. The birds associated with Sue are both domestic and wild. Although, there are numerous comparisons of Sue to wild and free birds such as Raven, Owl, and so on, her eventual action of getting remarried and re- entering the cage can be read as the quintessential role of domesticity that Hardy's time prescribes for women. Like a pigeon in a cage, women were also demanded to be trapped within the confines of patriarchal structures as the "Angel of the House".

The Victorian period is known for its remarkable concerns against the cruelty of animals. As this Age saw the burgeoning rise of Colonialism, many animals and birds from the Orient were captured and brought to England for entertainment, medical and economic purposes. The imagery of cage that looms around the animals, birds as well as the characters remind us about the caged existence of the Oriental animals that were hunted for selfish motives of the Empire. On the other hand, there were various animal welfare organizations and laws as well as acts passed in England to prevent this sense of cruelty to animals and birds. For instance- the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), a charity organization that promotes animal welfare was

founded in 1824. The Cruelty to Animals Act, 1876 sets limits on the practice and established a licensing system for animal experimentation. Hardy was a faithful and passionate animal welfare activist throughout his life. Paul Turner, in his biography of Hardy, writes, "... there was another notable feature of his emotional make-up which was far more individual: a special feeling for animals ... It was actually a key element in his personality, instinctive in childhood, but soon justified intellectually by Darwinism... He was still more ahead of his time as a champion of animal rights" (Turner 3-4). Hardy's love for animals is also visible in other novels such as *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. The protagonist Tess is compared to birds, a snake, a leopard and even a fly. Like Sue, she is also projected as "a wild animal" (Hardy 57) trapped in the schemes of Alec and later, Angel- the major prototypes of Victorian patriarchy and eventually ends up in succumbing to the trap.

Charles Darwin's theory of Evolution and the idea of Natural Selection through the books *On the Origins of the Species* and *Descent of Man*, published in 1859 and 1871 respectively, greatly impacted the scientific and social world in the Nineteenth Century. Hardy wrote all of his great novels in a Post- Darwinian World. The rising consciousness among the people about the connection between animals and human beings in terms of a common evolutionary history can also be traced in Hardy's novels, evident from the numerous imagery, parallelisms and metaphors associated with animals and birds. Also, Darwin's argument that life is subjected to painful struggle and variation is seen in the trials and tribulations that Jude and Sue face throughout the novel. Darwin also formulated that human beings adapt according to their environment and that man is no longer in control of his surroundings; he is no longer the supreme of all the creatures but a minuscule part of the environment. The repeated allusions of the major characters in *Jude the Obscure* and their comparison to the birds and animals reinforce this idea of commonality and equality between human and non- human life.

Darwin's idea of Natural Selection postulates that organisms with advanced genes are better suited to environment; they are selected for survival and so, pass on to the next generation. Darwinism also led to the development of the concept of 'survival of the fittest', a term coined by Herbert Spencer that describes the mechanism of Natural Selection. Spencer extends Darwin's idea of evolution to the



working of the entire societies and conceptualized the ideology known as Social Darwinism: an idea that successful and moral people are bound to live and prosper whereas the immoral, weak and unfit deserve their failure. In *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy projects a society where innately good, hardworking and idealist people like Jude perish away whereas extremely cunning, selfish and deceitful characters like Arabella thrive in prosperity. This projection not only criticizes the idea of Social Darwinism but also shows the Pre- Modern competitive English society that was suffering from moral and spiritual lack owing to the Darwinian Theory.

*The actions of Jude and Sue of saving the animals disrupt the evolutionary cycles in the novel. Jude letting the rooks eat the crops looks very human but this action might lead to the rooks damaging and destroying the crops. Sue's action of saving the pigeons is detrimental to her family's economic opportunities. On the other hand, Arabella appears as a practical and materialistic thought human who not only kills a pig heartlessly but also directs Jude to slowly bleed the pig to death so that the blood does not get congealed, otherwise they would "lose a shilling if the meat was red and bloody" (Hardy 58).*

Hardy, through the tragic death of Jude, seeks to portray the tragic destruction of Nature including both animals and birds at the face of scientific, industrial and Capitalistic development during his time. He satirically displays a successful and Capitalistic human society that solely focuses on its own material progress without any consideration of the others, and people like Jude or Sue who do not abide by this sense of Utilitarianism end up having disastrous consequences. In a way, this is a forewarning of the growing insensitivity and heartlessness of human soul, the consequences of which reaches its zenith with the outbreak of the First World War of 1914.

Thus, the imagery of various animals and birds in *Jude the Obscure* displays the inherent goodness and idealistic mindset of both Jude and Sue. It shows the parallel between the conditions of both the Oriental animals and Working Class people in England and also, talks about various reforms passed to improve the conditions of the both. Last but not the least, the novel through its rich use of animals and birds imagery, also deals with the Darwinian idea of Evolution and portrays the loss and destruction of innocent and traditional individual qualities and social structures at the threshold of Modernity. ●●●

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## ***Mrs. Dalloway and Woolf's Interpolation of Colour Psychology: A Critical Study***

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### **ABSTRACT**

The sense of colour has a distinguished place in human psychology as different colours have different impacts on the human psyche. Virginia Woolf plays with variegated colours in her novel *Mrs. Dalloway*. She fused two simultaneous sets of events taking place in two different characters' lives on a single day. She, while describing the life events of either the titular character Mrs. Clarissa Dalloway or the shell-shocked war hero Septimus Warren Smith, used various psychological domains including memories, mental reverberations, hallucination etc. Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* is often regarded as an explicit experiment on the human psyche which directly or indirectly illuminates human nature, behavior, and as a whole, societal stature too. Throughout the novel *Mrs. Dalloway*, Virginia Woolf significantly uses numerous colours with vivid intentions. The colours used work in the background of the novel, assisting other recurrent themes. Her use of colours is intentional, but not accidental. Woolf makes use of the colours like yellow, green etc. to portray cheerfulness and hope in life, and on the other hand, her novel is mostly populated by the colours like blue, red, grey etc. which symbolically refer to the diverse human psyche and mental sufferings. The colours are used to assist the significant themes and to portray the images within the novel. By using colour psychology, Woolf not only shows her depth of knowledge on human psychology but also drives the genre of novel towards modernism.

**Keywords:** Colour, Memory, Psyche, Modernity.

The human eye is the most important constituent of the human body and its being. It is a significant sensory organ that makes humans see, live, and feel the beauty of life through vision. According to Aristotle, "... every sensory organ is sensitive to specific qualities. In the case of the eye, these are the colours" (Crone 9). The sense of colour is intricately knitted with the human psyche, which elicits different feelings and emotions and also has effects on human behavior. "The human eye loves Colour. Whether they know it or not, all people react or respond to the influence of Colour, the degree of their reaction varies greatly, for some people are naturally much more sensitive to Colour than others. But all are susceptible to its influence. Colour has the power to attract attention, to stimulate emotion, to cheer and animate, or to quiet and subdue" (Snow 41). Colour plays a significant role in psychology. It is recognised that psychology, in general, is concerned with spiritual laws rather than physical science. So, aside from the sources of colour and its constituent parts, its properties or dimensions, and even its harmonies, there is the question of the effects that different colours have on our feelings and emotions. Colour Psychology is "the study of the effects of colour on behavior. The discipline which subscribes to the view that the personality of individuals and the essence of corporate entities, as well as the environments in which they operate, can be expressed and reinforced by the use of particular colours and the avoidance of others" (Paterson 113).

Virginia Woolf foregrounds facets of the human psyche while creating her masterpiece, *Mrs. Dalloway*. Two simultaneous series of events in two different characters' lives in a single day are blended. She, while describing the life events of either the eponymous character Mrs. Clarissa Dalloway or the shell-shocked war hero Septimus Warren Smith, uses



various psychological dimensions including memories, mental reverberations, hallucination, etc. Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway is highly deemed to be an explicit experiment on the human psyche, which some way or the other illuminates human nature, behavior, and also as a whole societal stature. It is Woolf's visionary stride toward carrying out an experiment in the literary genre called the novel, which has been a pony to traditionalism till then. The style, form and manner that she proposed for novel writing, are defended in her treatise "Modern Fiction". The present study looks into the concept of colour fitted in the stature of 'novelty' that Woolf proposes for modern novelists and analyses how the human psyche and colour are inseparably entangled.

Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway and many other novels are true specimens of modernist novel. "Mrs. Dalloway is not a novel that chronicles the years of the life of Clarissa Dalloway. Mrs. Dalloway is not a conventionally narrated novel at all. It is a collage, a mosaic portrait; it pieces together bits of Mrs. Dalloway's past and bits of Mrs. Dalloway's present on a single day" (Carey 12). Virginia Woolf makes skillful use of colours from the very beginning of the novel. They are so tactfully wrought that they do not fall out of place. Woolf writes, "A charming woman, Scrope Purvis thought her (knowing her as one does know people who live next door to one in Westminster); a touch of the bird about her, of the jay, blue-green, light, vivacious, though she was over fifty" (Woolf 4), and with Scrope Purvis, a neighbor of Clarissa Dalloway, Woolf gives us an external view of Clarissa comparing her with a bird called 'Jay' and to put emphasis on her comparison through the neighbor, the author uses the colour "blue-green" as the bird itself has blue feathers. The author uses this analogy of colour i.e., "blue-green" to depict the emotions of that neighbor while seeing Clarissa. This analogous colour "blue-green" has a psychological significance as it produces effects on the human mind, which are often "quiet, restful, and serene" (Snow 4). After having seen Clarissa, Scrope Purvis' mind is filled with quietude and rest as she is "charming" though is "over fifty." So, from the very beginning of the novel, Woolf makes her intentions clear to make use of colours to illuminate the inner impressions of the characters further in her novel. While moving through the novel, readers would find the character of Elizabeth as "blue-eyed." This description of her eyes not only emphasises her ethnicity or physical beauty,

but also the colour "blue", a symbol of the "quiet and reserved" (Snow 42) human psyche, which fills the readers' minds with sympathy for that little girl, who has to live a solitary life, inheriting her mother's sense of privacy and prefers the country and dogs to London and parties. The colour "blue" once more appears while describing the relationship between Clarissa and her former lover Peter Walsh. "So Peter Walsh and Clarissa, sitting side by side on the blue sofa, challenged each other" (Woolf 66). Here the author paints the sofa in "blue" only to highlight the plight of love between two ex-lovers who are still in love with their previous love life; and struggling to come out of their memories. The colour blue "is modest and retiring" (Snow 42), here the colour signifies the growing modesty in their relationship and also their retiring love story. In addition, while smoking a cigar, Peter remembered "blue-eyed" Elizabeth, the daughter of his former love, "the rich benignant cigar smoke eddied coolly down his throat; he puffed it out again in rings which breasted the air bravely for a moment; blue, circular —" the colour "blue" is again significant here. The "smoke", absorbed by him, provides him a physical coolness, but the exhaled smoke of his cigar appears "blue" which signifies his inner reverberations about the "blue-eyed" daughter of Clarissa. Woolf makes the "blue" smoke come out from Peter's cigar, not only to cover the outer circumference but also to cover his mental circumference simultaneously.

A significant modernist novel, Mrs. Dalloway is an inauguration and the enthronement of the modernist novel to the world literature. Woolf uses various symbols of modernism within her novel. For example, the "car" is a symbol of modernity as well as modernism. She mentions a car, carrying an important personage when the "old ladies on the tops of omnibuses spread their black parasols; here a green, here a red parasol opened with a little pop. Mrs. Dalloway, coming to the window with her arms full of sweet peas, looked out with her little pink face pursed in enquiry. Everyone looked at the motor car" (Woolf 21). The "old ladies" on the tops of "omnibuses" are used to give a symbolic adieu to the previous age and both the arrival of the "motor car" and curious pink-faced Clarissa symbolize both the embrace and entry of modernity. The varied colours of the "parasols" signify variegated attitudes toward modernity. The "black" parasol symbolises "fear", the "green" parasol "hope", and the "red" one



symbolizes the "super-sensitive temperament" towards modernity. Woolf spreads the black parasol first, then the green, and then the red parasol which symbolises the emblematic initial fear, kindling hope, and super-sensitive temperament. On the face of it, Clarissa's "pink" face emphasizes her curiosity which collectively provides a whole attitude toward the modernness of the then society

The colour "grey" too is one of the dominant colours within the novel. The colour "grey" symbolises the mental sufferings of Septimus Warren Smith, the shell-shocked war hero. We find an episode in the novel, in which Rezia is talking to Septimus; he suddenly sees a man in "grey" approaching him and he assumes that it must be Evans, his dead friend, bringing him a message, though it is none but Peter Walsh only. "A man in grey was actually walking towards them. It was Evans! But no mud was on him; no wounds; he was not changed. I must tell the whole world, Septimus cried, raising his hand (as the dead man in the grey suit came nearer)" (Woolf 105). Woolf makes Peter Walsh wear a grey suit and bring him towards Septimus which incorporated the inner states of both characters. The colour "grey" is a mixture of both "White" and "Black" colours, a faded shade indeed, and here Peter is seen wearing a "grey" suit, which is symbolic in essence. Snow suggests, "Black and white when used together in a costume create the strongest possible contrast if employed in equal or nearly equal quantities. This makes the wearer most conspicuous." (46) Here the grey suit of Peter makes Septimus conspicuous towards him. On the other hand, while "white" symbolises a peaceful state of mind, "black" symbolises the mental catastrophe. The enigmatic colour "grey" which is an amalgamation of both positivity i.e., "white" and negativity, i.e., "black", symbolizes the initial enthusiasm of Septimus' mind, while seeing Peter, which later turns to hallucination and gradually turns him suicidal.

While describing parties that took place in the past and the one at present, Woolf uses the colour "yellow". For example, when Clarissa remembers one of her past days spent with Peter in Bourton, she describes, "there were a great many people there, laughing and talking, sitting round a table after tea, and the room was bathed in yellow light and full of cigarette smoke" (Woolf 88). When Clarissa organises the present party covered in the novel, the jubilant "yellow" persists, but in a different way.

People from different strata of London society flock to Clarissa's party and they stand side by side "by the yellow curtains" (Woolf 269). The colour "yellow" is a symbol of a "cheerful, buoyant personality" (Snow 41). In the first event which is extracted from Clarissa's memory, readers will find a room "bathed in yellow light", here "yellow" signifies her joyous cheerful moments and also cheerful and passionate love of Peter for Clarissa. That "yellow" light which is soon covered by the poisonous cigarette smoke symbolises how their cheerful love life has been levitated in present. Both the yellow light and yellow curtain provide a cheerful environment to the readers. The omnipotent and all-encompassing yellow youthful light hovered over their lives in the past; the yellow curtains fixed at the upper edge to the curtain holders offer a sense of joy at present, but the joy of remembrance only, a sense stuck somewhere in the past. Yellow is also used to emphasize the sunny season as both of those events are held in summer, representing the changing tides of time that are indifferent toward petty human concerns.

While referring to the "Regent's Park", Woolf frequently uses the colour green. "Green, the combination of yellow and blue, shows the psychological tendencies of both components. It is higher and more cheerful than blue, in effect, and has more dignity and repose than yellow. Green is restful to the eyes and nerves, is a relief from the warmth and heat of the summer sun, and is not depressing" (Snow 43). Both the characters Septimus and Lucrezia very often are seated in the Regent's Park. The colour "blue" is for Septimus' mental sufferings and the colour "yellow" is for Lucrezia's cheerful behaviour towards him and together they create "green" which is not only symbolic of the cheerful environment of Regent's Park but also the hope of Lucrezia for her husband's cure. The use of the colour "black" is also significant in Septimus' case. Woolf often uses this colour to portray mental suffering, suffocation, wars, and death. For example, while describing the eventual death of Septimus Warren Smith, Woolf writes "There he lay with a thud, thud, thud in his brain, and then a suffocation of blackness" (Woolf 280). Here the "blackness" not only symbolizes the death of Septimus but also illuminates the final evolution of his mental suffocations.

For the party, Clarissa chooses a "green" dress to wear, which symbolises her hopes for and from life; and they are later disclosed with her thoughts after



she learns about Septimus' suicide. Clarissa's green dress is described as a "silver-green mermaid's dress" (Woolf 264) and the folds it has got are like 'waves'. In this instance (as with Septimus' death later) the sea consoles the heart by divorcing it from the body and its world-weariness. At the same time, the waves also symbolise Clarissa's fascination with the minutiae of life. For her, nothing should pass by unobserved or unappreciated (Pattison 71). Woolf intentionally makes her prime character Clarissa wear a green dress and later refers to it as 'silver-green mermaid's dress'. The colour "silver" is a fascinating one that symbolises the artificiality and material shine of that era and the "green" signifies simultaneously the hope that Clarissa cherishes to live her life in that artificial society. The fusion of both refers to the eternal originality adorning modern traits.

The extraordinary tale (?) that Mrs. Dalloway holds, uses manifold colours with vivid intentions. The colours used by Woolf work diligently in the background of the novel assisting the other recurrent themes. The use of colours thus seems intentional, not accidental. Woolf makes use the colours like yellow, green etc. to portray cheerfulness and hope in life, and on the other hand, her novel is mostly populated by the colours like blue, red, grey etc. which symbolically refer to the diverse moods of human psyche and mental states. The colours add to the verbosity of significant themes and images within the novel. By juxtaposing colours and using colour psychology predominantly, Woolf not only shows her depth of knowledge on human psychology but also navigates the genre of the novel towards modernism.



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## ***Through the Looking-Glass and Xiali Palegoi Ratanpur: Themes, Techniques, Languages and A Comparative Analysis***

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### **ABSTRACT**

Through the Looking-Glass is a children's fiction published on 27th December 1871 by Lewis Carroll. This book represents the Elizabethan society of 17th century. Here Alice a girl seven and a half years old is the protagonist of the story. Her imaginative power is so strong. The whole story appears in her dream. The novel opens with Alice, talking to her cats Dinah, Snowdrop, and Kitty, and she is the only human who appears in the novel. She travels through this strange-looking glass World and because this is a dream, it reflects Alice's thoughts and anxieties about her real world.

Then another book was published in the year 1962 by Nabakanta Boruah. He is an Assamese writer and the book is also written in the Assamese language. The story is set in Assamese society. Here, Jun is a little boy like Alice, and his imaginative power is also very strong. The whole story of this particular book also appears in Jun's dream.

So, readers can find vivid similarities between these two prominent books. From the plot construction to the use of language, readers may find that Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* and Nabakanta Boruah's *Xiali Palegoi Ratanpur* shares commonality in narrative techniques and nonsensical elements. Although both of the authors represent two very different societies and their languages are different, the motif of their works is similar which significantly helps to grow the genre of children's literature.

**Keywords:** children's fiction, imagination, dream, nonsensical elements,

Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass* and Nabakanta Boruah's *Xiali Palegoi Ratanpur* are two best children's literature representing two different literary arenas. The gap between the two works is almost a hundred years, yet both shares various similarities and illuminate world literature through their distinctive characteristics. The two books deal with the similar plot and narrative style and the used elements are also similar. Nabakanta Boruah attributes his book *Xiali Palegoi Ratanpur* to his grandchildren and explicitly mentions that his grandchildren would find similarities between his protagonist Jun and Carroll's protagonist Alice. So, it is clear that Boruah is influenced by Carroll while creating his masterpiece *Xiali Palegoi Ratanpur*.

There are many wonderful similarities found between the two books *Through the Looking-Glass* and *Xiali Palegoi Ratanpur*. Even at some point in time, a reader may feel that how the Assamese novel *Xiali Palegoi Ratanpur* is inspired by the masterpiece *Through the Looking-Glass*.

Both Lewis Carroll and Nabakanta Boruah set their entire books in the context of a dream. The dream remains unclear throughout the story, but Alice in *Through the Looking-Glass* and Jun in *Xiali Palegoi Ratanpur*, at the penultimate part of both stories, acknowledge that they had adventures in a dream, either in their own or some others. It is notable that the fact that the absence of reality does not matter to the protagonist and it either does not matter to the authors of the novels. Both the novels deliver a message that both Carroll and Boruah seem to believe that dreaming is ideal, especially for young children. Both novels represent the subconscious mind of children which makes them feel that life is just the stuff of dreams. This is how the nonchalance about the issue of what is real and what is not or what is partly,



makes Alice and Jun a compelling protagonists. In both novels, the writers act like a psychologist who tries to draw a pen picture of how figures and situations in real life affect the subconscious mind of a child. In Alice's dream, her little kitten "Snowdrop" acts like the "White Queen" while her Black Kitten "Kitty" acts as the "Red Queen". Alike that in Jun's dream, his Alarm clock works like the "Telephone" and The crinkly bed sheet of his bed seems like "The Way". The ants that come to eat his leftovers act as if they were cats. Their vast imagination allows Carroll and Boruah to expose the reader to a multitude of fantasies. And as Alice and Jun never ultimately pass judgment to the point of denying their whimsies, both the authors become able to bring their readers into an intricate world of their invention.

One of the most apparent themes used in both *Through The Looking-Glass* and *XialiPalegoiRatanpur* is Reflection or Reversal. The naming word of the first book "The Looking-Glass House" itself is an example of this Theme, which provides a reflection of the actual world for Alice to explore. Within the magical looking-glass, everything goes backward. Text is reversed: Alice finds difficulties to read the poem *Jabberwocky*.

*"Beware the Jabberwock, my son!  
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!  
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun  
The frumious Bandersnatch!"* (Carroll 13)

Again Space/direction is found inverted: Alice must have to walk away from where she wants to go in the garden to get there. Even Ideas are also inverted. It is plain in many of the conversations that Alice has with the characters encountered in the looking-glass world. The White Knight talks about putting a right foot into a left shoe. In the railway carriage, Alice finds herself traveling in the wrong direction.

These features can easily be found in Nabakanta Boruah's *XialiPalegoiRatanpur*. In this novel, the main character Jun also faces the same experiences as Alice. Carroll moves his protagonist to a mirror world and Boruah moves his protagonist to a constellation, both authors illuminate the dream, imagination, and fantasy of a child's mind.

Like "Jabberwocky", Boruah also uses poetry:

*"Jon Bhaity Namaskar  
Tumi Iman Pariskar  
Tumar Solat Istri  
Umrao Ching Mistri!"* (Boruah 17)

Boruah to emphasize the dream world, and Jun's fantasy, and also to highlight the nonsensical characteristics of his plot frequently uses poetry like Lewis Carroll.

Alike, Alice, Jun is also confused about the directions. Here there are many strange directions he had to face i.e. Pub (East), Poshim (West), Uttar (North), Dakshin (South), Ishan (North-East), Agni (North-West), Vayu (South-East), Noirhit (South-West), Urdha (Up), and Orddha (Down). Every direction calls Jun to come to their side. All directions used different languages to call Jun and try their best to attract him through poetry. Even there are numerous roads and sub roads with different colors which call makes Jun much confused. At last, Jun chooses the upper direction.

Both Carroll and Boruah do not mean their tales to be serious. Despite this, both the novels work like social Satire where both of the writers try to figure out a certain "Set of Silly Rules". Lewis Carroll criticizes Victorian society by poking fun at authority figures and pointing out the hypocrisy of the rigid social hierarchy.

*"Tweedledum and Tweedledee  
Agreed to have a battle;  
For Tweedledum said Tweedledee  
Had spoiled his nice new rattle.  
Just then flew down a monstrous crow,  
As black as a tar-barrel..."* (Carroll 34)

In *Xiali Palegoi Ratanpur*, Nabakanta Boruah also leaves satire on the corrupted government system where there is the tradition of giving or taking bribes. "...*Tohotieimasorchalonikhonote Uthijukor. Jituei-haribi take moi" boksir dim Chonda mas eta...*" (Boruah 13)

Both Alice and Jun in the respective books are alone through much of the story, though not as much literally as figuratively. They are the only one of their kind in the Looking-Glass world. Even though they are surrounded by creatures, they have trouble relating to their foreign ways. In *Through the Looking-Glass* Alice has faced some strange characters like the "Red Queen", "White Queen", "Red King", "White King", "Humpty-Dumpty", "Hatta and Haiga" who leads her to many unlinked situations as well as they try to keep her dominated almost all of the time, "I don't what you mean by your way... All the ways about here belongs to me...." (Carroll 21)



In *XialiPalegoiRatanpur* Jun has to face the same strange characters in form of Ten roads with different colours, "Telephone", "Puhari" (a fish-woman), "Porua"( ant), all of who try to figure out their importance. Both Alice and Jun are isolated from the rest of their family due to her imagination; there is a reference to the frustration they cause when they play pretend.

In both *Through The Looking-Glass* and *XialiPalegoiRatanpur* anthropomorphic form is given to non-living beings to enhance the nonsensical elements. For example, Carroll makes his prime character Alice face an anthropomorphic clock with a smiling face, Boruah, on the other hand, also gives life to inanimate objects. Boruah, in his book, makes the "telephone" speak and gives a human voice to that non-living, inanimate object. Both authors provide a human voice to their characters either living or nonliving which also assists the nonsensical elements of both novels to shine.

Both the novel *Through the Looking-Glass* and *XialiPalegoiRatanpur* have similar language pattern-sat many points. Nursery rhymes have been used in both on several occasions. In "Through the Looking-Glass" Alice recites rhymes that cause Tweedledum and Tweedledee, Humpty Dumpty, and the Lion and the Unicorn to perform the actions that she describes in her rhymes.

*"Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall:  
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.  
All the King's horses and all the..."* (Carroll 53)

*"The sun was shining on the sea,  
Shining with all his might:  
He did his very best to make..."* (Carroll 36)

Such rhyming language is found in almost most of the pages of *XialiPalegoiRatanpur*:

*"AgaliKalapat lore ki Chore  
Silaniaaimuragotepore"* (Boruah 13)

*"Rode BoroxunekhoraXiyalorbiya  
Ghansirikaitamulkatise  
Amakuakhondia"* (Boruah 39)

On the other hand, both novels use many Nonsense elements to amuse their readers as well as make jokes about the social system as well as education, and the Government system. In *Through the Looking-Glass*, we find the White King constantly falls from the Horse, The Red Queen takes the dictionary as "Nonsense". Humpty- Dumpty demands the rhyme

on their name as the History of England. A similar description is found in *XialiPalegoiRatanpur*. Here a Road demands Jun can go to Ratanpur and His home using the same road as one can eat or drink with the same mouth, "Kio? Ekekhonmukhereibhaat u khuwa, jolpan u khuwa, ankipani u khuwa, tente nu eketabaterieiRatanpuraarughorolojuwatu ki kotha?" (Boruah 7). Again, the character of Fox repeatedly confesses that while he speaks, he is wrong in spelling and while he tries to write, he makes mistakes in pronunciation, which also indicates nonsensical elements.

Both *Through the Looking-Glass* by Lewis Carroll and *XialiPalegoiRatanpur* are two masterpieces created in two different parts of the world and languages as well as periods. Despite this, the two books show many similarities. In this discussion, the major elements of similarity between the books have been clarified, but a detailed discussion will show many other themes where the two books also share similarities. Both the books are representative of two different societies and the similarities in both books reflect the mental world of the children. From the point of view of pleasure, both books can be read easily but at the core of both the books, the social stature and the psyche of the children can be found simultaneously. ●●●

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## Absurdist Tradition in North- East Literature With Special Reference To Arun Sarma's Play, *Sri Nibaran Bhattacharjya*

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### ABSTRACT

Absurdity, existential crisis, lack of purpose and meaning in life have become a very common topic in the modern day literature. It reaches almost every genre of literature all over the world and recently to North- Eastern Literature also. The main purpose of this research paper is to find out how absurdist tradition has reached to the North-Eastern literature and for this, one of the most influential play Arun Sarma's "Sri Nibaran Bhattacharjya" has been taken into consideration. Though this play cannot apparently be called as a full-fledged absurd drama, there are many elements in the play that characteristically fall under the category of Theatre of the Absurd and this paper will bring out those to the front. One of the main characteristics of Absurd drama is tragedy. The events, incidents, characters and conversations in this play are very unrealistic. Though there are many comic elements, but it shows the protagonist, Nibaran's tragedy of lacking an identity and purpose in his life. Not only the protagonist but the other characters also, more or less feel uncertainty about their life. Therefore the main aim of this paper is to see this play through an absurdist lens.

**KEYWORDS:** Theatre of the Absurd, Existentialism, North-East Literature.

### INTRODUCTION:

The term Theatre of the Absurd is applied to a number of works in drama and prose fiction which have in common the view that the human condition is essentially absurd. This absurdist movement emerged in France after the horrors of World War 2. The Absurd plays focus largely on the ideas of existentialism and express when human existence lacks meaning or purpose and communication breaks down. The structure of these plays is typically a round shape, with the finishing point the same as the starting

point. The origin of these plays may go back to Albert Camus' "The Myth of Sisyphus", as it uses the word "absurdity" to describe the human situation: "In a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels a stranger. His is an irremediable exile...this divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of Absurdity." Other thinkers associated with this movement are Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, Arthur Adamov, Jean Genet, Harold Pinter, Edward Albee etc. Eugene Ionesco's "The Bald Soprano", "The Lesson", Samuel Beckett's "Waiting for Godot", "Endgame", his prose fiction "Malone Dies", "The Unnamable" etc are significant among others.

In India, Post-independence trauma like class conflict, ethnicity conflict, social conflict, conflict of political establishment and hundreds of other mental traumas were spreading across the country. These incited the dramatists to write Absurdist dramas. In post-independence era, Assamese literary circle Arun Sarma, Basanta Saikia, Ratna Ojha, Himendakumar Borthakur can be treated as the pioneer of "Absurdism". They turned their attention from depicting external social reality towards exploring the deeper darker human emotions. Arun Sarma's "Jinti", "Urukha Paja", "Purusha" appeared during the early 1960's. His fourth play "Sri Nibaran Bhattacharjya" and another play "Aahar" probably mark the beginning of Assamese Absurdist play.

Munin Borkotoky says about Nibaran Bhattacharjya, "Nibaran Bhattacharjya is a play intended to make the audience sit up and ask questions. And you will be failing in your duty if you were to be left cold as you leave the auditorium". He further writes that Nibaran Bhattacharjya's tragedy is the "tragedy of an intense artist" who is "cheated of his life's dream at the climactic moment of his career and made to stare at a society without a soul." Pona Mahanta says "this is not a play that can really be called an absurd drama.



While the situation in the play is to some extent absurd, the dialogue is much of a realistic type with nothing of the silent language that is characteristic of the Theatre of the Absurd".

### **Representation of Absurdity in the Characters:**

All the characters in the play are lost and floating in an incomprehensible universe and abandon rational thoughts fulfilling the most important characteristic of Absurdist tradition. The central character, Nibaran-Bhattacharjya, is a failed dramatist who always lives in a world of illusion and imagination far from the harsh reality of life. The room that he lives is the example of complete absurdity. His lonely existence in a small and almost inaccessible room and the rusted lock shows that his eyes are not open to the reality of life. At the threshold of his room, old costumes, tins, boxes, theatre curtains, theatrical props are dumped and one has to climb that dump in order to go out or enter into the room. There is also an old tur drum on which he sits sometimes. His room is full of spider webs and he himself once said that he loved the carefree lives of the spiders living in his room. Each of the spider-web is for them a mini forest. They hunt there, live their life there, reproduce there and he has not introduced any law pertaining to their birth control. All these shows his living in an imaginary world. The play shows the tragedy of Nibaran who has repeatedly failed to communicate to his audience. He himself says that no one came to watch his plays. The few that did come left mid way through the play. No one stayed till the end. Even after immense failure of his 12 unconventional and innovative plays, he writes his 13th play and thinks that it will be a successful one. He arranges for its performance in front of five hundred invited spectators. He imagines them to be intelligent and discerning audience who are connoisseurs of art. He dreams of standing beside the microphone, reading the lengthy prologue of his play and how his words will flow like snow from his throat. All these imaginations show how ignorant he is about the harsh reality, how people whom he thinks intelligent, ridicule him for his behaviour. As the curtain raised very tragically he discovers that not even a single spectator is present and all the chairs are lying vacant. But ignoring all these, he determines to read aloud his prologue to the audience, and in an accident, he falls from the stage and dead. He is such an illusionary person that even after everyone lie to him about the coming of the audience, he cannot get a single hint about the real outcome. Thus he

tragically dedicates his entire life to the unsuccessful theatres which is very absurd. Absurdity in Nibaran's behaviour is shown in other aspects also like how he frequently forgets the name of Robin Duwara, and calling him by the name of Ramen, Robin Bhuyan etc. Moreover he frequently addresses his four sons as 'imbecile'. He always used to invite people to his room and give a lengthy, charmless, lecture on his plays. Though it makes the people bore, helpless, unbearing, tired to hear his lectures, he knows nothing about it and only persists in his talking. Once he gives reasons for why Ramesh and Robin ignore him even after seeing him. He says that it is natural to ignore him since he is as useless as the tar drum lying beside the road and moreover, since the colour of his skin is no different from that of the tar drum's. When Ramesh and Robin Duwara fall down from the dump, the irony lies in the fact that Nibaran laughingly asks them that they may fall down but warns them not to break his stuff. Nibaran's existential crisis is seen when he talks about how he is alienated from everyone his children, his wife. His wife abandons him leaving a zero in his heart.

The other characters like Upen, Durge, Suren, Dhiren also have some absurdist and ridiculous behaviour. Their behaviours bring the comic elements to the front. Upen, the gatekeeper of a cinema hall, lends his sister's ladies goggles to wear and says that it doesn't matter whether it is gent's or ladie's because he needs it only to look stylish. Thus, he is very far from the reality that goggles are used only to protect oneself from the sun, not just to look stylish. Moreover, he tells Nandini that he cannot arrange movie tickets for her and her colleagues because it is a quite loss for him since he has to buy tamul, fried peanuts, popcorns etc. for them.

Durge, the carpenter, is also ridiculous. He frequently uses the sentence "face the music today". Moreover, despite having spent twenty years with splinter and mallet, he hits his own hand with the hammer. In spite of Nandini's frequent warning to him to repair the roof and the stage since the woods are rotten, his mind can not catch it. At last, at the eleventh of hour of the theatre show of his father, he goes to repair it. And the irony is that his father, Nibaran, meets his death by falling from the same roof.

Suren, the third son, has a cycle repairing shop and this is his seventh business. That day, he closed his shop so soon only because he was supposed to repair



a number of cycles by evening that day and since he couldn't repair, the customers would come to fetch their cycles and would yell at him. But he cannot get the fact that the people would come the next day and would abuse him twice over them.

Moreover, the local newspaper reporter, Robin Duwarah, is also ridiculous. He cannot even meet his girlfriend, Kuntala, and explain something without the help of Ramesh. He is such a coward person Ramesh laughs at him by telling that now-a-days, streets are not the place for courtship. There are many restaurants, coffee shops, parks now-a-days for all that.

#### **Representation of Absurdity in the Setting:**

The setting of the play is also somewhat absurdist. The house they live is not normal. There are three doors in the house. The first door is linked with the main part of the house. Second and third door is connected to a special room. The way the second number door is opened is, in a way, very awkward. There is a ventilator with broken glass above the second door and a rickety wooden chair beside the door. In order to open or close this door from the outside, one should stand on the chair, push his hand in through the broken ventilator and then latch the door. The way the auditorium is decorated is very ironical. The chairs and others essentials are brought very far from the time arrived. The colour selection of the script is ironical. Nibaran cannot decide which colour will match the prologue light blue, light pink, deep red, white, yellow, black, violet etc.

#### **Representation of Absurdity in the Language:**

The language of Absurd plays are very nonsense and comical. This is seen in the speech of Nibaran and Upen. Everytime, Nibaran pronounce the word "imbecile" with regard to his sons and Upen pronounces "face the music today."

The long speech that Nibaran gives by boasting of his identity is very much ridiculous. He says that some day exactly fifty nine years ago from that day, a child had come into the world and on that day fifty nine years after his birth, a child had been brought into being a creation. It's name is Sri Nibaran Bhattacharjya. The fifty nine years of his life consists of many crores of second which are wasted before he has reached that day, that moment of his life. These fifty crores of seconds have created one Nibaran Bhattacharjya along with the big sun of his hopes and the boundless sky of his visions. Though these are the examples of his indomitable spirit but all these are in vain and useless and only results in absurdity. His

passion for horse riding though apparently gives a glimpse of his restlessness of his soul and his urge to move forward, but the irony lies in the fact that that horse riding leads to his falling and breaking of his back and to his ultimate catastrophe. Thus "Sri Nibaran Bhattacharjya" somewhat fulfill the traits of Absurdism.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

India's Northeast, geographically located at the margins of the vast nation, has wide-ranging variety within the region in terms of culture, social structure, language and everyday practices. The region is inhabited by people from South-east Asian origin such as the Tibeto-Burman and the Mon-Khmer and it has no any social or cultural affinity with the rest of the Indian polity, which is of Dravidian or Aryan descent. Geographically also the place is in a marked area. The region shared only two percent of its boundary with India, while the remaining 98 percent is bordered by the countries of Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal and China. In terms of their physical features, ethnicity, culture, food habits and language, there is a closer affinity with the people of Southeast Asia than with the population of mainstream India.

But as far as literature is concerned, Northeast has a handful of influential writings and these generally include the pertinent issues happening throughout the region. Insurgency is a dominant theme which covers almost all the genres of North-east literature. Insurgency happened between India and several separatist rebel organizations. In all the seven states of Northeast India, insurgency happened and tensions existed between insurgents in these states and the central government as well as their native indigenous people and migrants from other parts of India and illegal immigrants. Other themes like the landscape, myth, tradition are also part of the North-eastern writings. Absurdity starts with Arun Sarma's play "Aahar" and continues with "Sri Nibaran Bhattacharjya". ●●●

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## In the Quest of Ramifications of Slavery: A Reading of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*

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### ABSTRACT

This article is an attempt to explore the ramifications of slavery in the novel *Beloved* written by Toni Morrison. It will discuss, how, like the other novels based on slavery, this novel too, incorporates the issues of slavery. Lying behind the term "slavery", the history of the United States of America speaks of prejudice and oppression in the context of colonial rule. Each page of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* speaks of agony of slave lives, with the social, political, and the psychological impacts of slavery such as trauma, marginality, alienation over these people, through the life of Sethe, the protagonist and the other characters. In the novel, Morrison shows how they survived the days of oppression until the days of freedom, describing their journey in the both individualistic and collective spectrums. Incorporating these issues, the typical relationship of colour and hierarchy regarding master and slave, and Morrison's way of breaking it in the novel will be analysed. In addition to this, another notion of slavery, which Morrison put in the novel, i.e. slavery in relationship will be discussed here.

**Keywords:** Slavery, Prejudice, Oppression, Colonial Rule, Trauma, Marginality, Alienation, Colour, Hierarchy, Master.

### INTRODUCTION:

Incorporating the notion of mastery and hierarchy, the hierarchy that turned some vain human into inhumane and deprived some humans from their human rights, slavery devastated the sphere of the oppressed. This is slavery where a part of society reins the supremacy and the other alienated part of people, being with the stigma of "slave", bear with any brutality happening to them.

Concerning the title, the article will include the tragic stories of slavery of being used in labour, and deprived of all the rights that a human gets by birth. The slavery in *Beloved* speaks of the slavery that prevailed in the United States of America a long ago in the nineteenth century where the history speaks of lives in anguish. The slavery system incorporates the cruellest activities of using "slaves" as animals that has ever happened to human in this world. It speaks of slavery, which is not measured through the eyes of "service" but of oppression and supremacy. Toni Morrison, one of the Black writers with bold contribution to literary field, the Nobel prize winner, with her bold nib, tells how the reality was once in American land that witnessed how mastery dominated its own people.

### Oppression, the Oppressed and the Oppressor in *Beloved*: the Triangle

The American Declaration of Independence of 1776 says, - "We hold to these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and pursuit of Happiness." Regarding this, as Amber Kaur argued, "This category of 'men', the later history of America says, meant to be only a relatively very small group of bourgeois White male; men of color and women were excluded from it." This 'later history of America' is the history of American Civil War and the issue that begot this war is - slavery. This 'later history' of slavery is what Morrison has weaved *Beloved* with. The real story of slavery system that prevailed in the land of America before, which is found in *Beloved* is not of the leaders that took part in the clash of the North and South, but this is the story, sprouted from the very grass root level, of the people, the common ones, to say in a nutshell, the preys.



While dealing with a very sensitive topic like slavery system, the system that had a socio-political history of the "identityless" Afro-Americans, Toni Morrison, despite the complexity of the plot, starts the plot from the historical trace of the Africans' journey to America. In the novel, there is a short description about the journey of the people from Africa to America, the journey that would change ultimately their lives, pushing them into the trench of brutality. Toni Morrison, through the words of Sethe, cites how her mother along with other people from Africa was led to America, "She told Sethe that her mother and Nan were together from the sea. Both were taken up many times by the crew" (Beloved, 75). The beginning of the journey itself was not beautiful, the Whites had showed the impending bleak future that those people were going to live in an unfamiliar place. The idea of North and South is also depicted in the novel, tracing the historical significance of this issue, – "Free North, magical North" (Beloved, 134). Apart from this, Beloved is actually deconstruction of Margaret Garner's life, a slave who killed her own child, which Morrison designed in her own words, – "The historical Margaret Garner is fascinating, but to a novelist, confining... So I would invent her thoughts... freedom, responsibly, and women's "place" (Foreword, xi).

In this world, the atrocities that are taking place or have taken place before, the atrocities to force human with severe dominance which doesn't want to be answered rebelliously is one of the brutal happenings ever happened to human civilization. To make a human a slave by a human, the former has to be deprived of his/her free will, courage to fight against brutality because, as William Drummond wrote in the final lines of the preface to *Academical Quotations*, – "He who will not reason, is a bigot; he who cannot, is a fool; and he who doesn't dare, is a slave" (xv). In addition, the so-called masters did not leave any chance to take away that courage of the "slaves" with brutal atrocities that are the lurid stories lying behind the pages of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. The "slaves" were treated as animals. Sethe's mother's toil in plantation shows how the plantation workers had to toil hard. The atrocity of the masters also incorporates the use of iron put into the mouth of the slaves, – "... about how offended the tongue is, held down by iron.... Days after It was taken out, goose fat was rubbed on the corners of the mouth But nothing to soothe the tongue or take the wildness out of the eye" (Beloved, 84).

The working people were the ways on whom the masters had the "chance" to withdraw their unnecessary wrath. Sethe was beaten by the schoolteacher in Sweet Home that gave her back a tree like structure where the skin and the flesh had become like a rough bark, – "Schoolteacher made one open my back, and when it closed it made a tree. It grows there still" (Beloved, 20). The people who tried to flee, they were hanged. Sixo, when all the Sweet Home men and woman tried to flee from schoolteachers' oppression, having been caught, was burnt alive, "By the light of hominy fire, Sixo straightens. He is through with his song. He laughs.... Smoky, stubborn fire. They shot him to shut him up. Have to" (Beloved, 266). The lives that the slaves were leading, being unprotected, fear stricken are depicted by short words, – "Move. Walk. Run. Hide. Steal and move on" (Beloved, 78). Morrison depicts a helpless mother, Sethe, killing her own daughter Beloved, to save her from slavery, – "They ain't at Sweet Home, schoolteacher ain't got them" (Beloved, 194).

With a female protagonist around whom the whole story took place and emerged in its own ramifications, Toni Morrison, as Mae G. Handerson wrote in 'Toni Morrison's *Beloved*: Re-membering the Body as Historical Text', was able to measure a psychic and expressive boundary separating the speakable from the unspeakable and the unspoken. Therefore, her task as a writer was to transgress these discursive boundaries. According to critics, Morrison is more open regarding female victims than the other authors who did not speak much on the women as victim of molestation. Swagata Biswas quotes Jean Yellin's saying that Harriet Jacobs, the writer of the autobiographical book *Incidents*, expressed her feeling on revealing woman's physical suffering in a letter to Amy Post, – "Woman can whisper her cruel wrongs into the ears of a dear friend much easier than she could record them for the world to read" (qtd. in Biswas, 706). Quite the contrary, with the reality revealed in her book, Morrison depicted female characters as victims. From Sethe's mother to Sethe, from Baby Suggs to Ella, the female slave characters are remembering their past brutal days in the novel. Women were the machines of propagation, and more they gave birth, more the masters would get to entrap the new-born in the slavery tie. Schoolteacher, from Sweet Home to Cincinnati, came to take Sethe back, as she was a female and pregnant too, "...they had traced her down in Cincinnati, because,.....her price was greater than his; property that reproduced itself



without cost" (Beloved, 269). But, enduring everything, Morrison's female characters are the struggler of life amidst storm. She has raised them as courageous, provided them respect.

One of the typical ideas regarding slavery is generalizing every master to be the oppressor while every slave is considered as a prey of that oppression. Breaking this typical idea, Morrison reveals what reality is. Two kinds of masters she has depicted in Beloved, one couple who were the master of Sweet Home, who were more than masters – the Garners. It were the Garners that didn't make the lives of the seven Sweet Home men and women devastated, rather they were safe and sound under their canopy:

*"He grew up thinking that, of all the Blacks in Kentucky, only the five of them were men. Allowed, encouraged to correct Garner, even defy him. To invent ways of doing things; to see what was needed and attack it without permission. To buy a mother, choose a horse or a wife, hand guns, even learn reading if they wanted to" (Beloved, 147).*

Morrison shows the school teacher as the master of prejudice. It was the schoolteacher that made Sweet Home ironical, it was the schoolteacher who burnt Sixo, assaulted Sethe, became the reason of Halle's mental instability, and it was he who was the reason why a mother was compelled to kill her own child. He devastated Sweet Home in a flash, –"Four years Paul D believed schoolteacher broke into children what Garner had raised into men" (Beloved, 260). Regarding "slaves" Morrison shows, it was not only the Blacks, but also the Whites were the slaves of the Whites. It was Amy Denver who is a White but a slave. It breaks the typical idea of colour and hierarchy.

The pain of physical torture departs from human body, but what remains of it, is the pain of mind – trauma. Being a slave narrative, Beloved is weaved with traumatic scenes under which slave characters in the novel are dying with the misery of the past, which haunts them everywhere. Regarding trauma, the theorist Cathy Caruth in her book Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History wrote:

*"The repetition of the traumatic event – which remain unavailable to consciousness but intrude repeatedly on sight – thus suggest a larger relation to the event that extends beyond what can simply be seen or what can be known, and it inextricably tied up with the belatedness and incomprehensibility that remain at the heart of this repetitive seeing" (92).*

And Morrison incorporate traumatic scenes in the free life of the Black in Cincinnati where trauma makes free life ironical:

*"Some things go. Pass on. Some things just stay... What I remember is a picture floating around out there outside my head. I mean, even if I don't think it, even if I die, the picture of what I did, or knew, or saw is still there. Right at the place where it happened" (Beloved, 43).*

It was trauma that compelled Baby Suggs, a preacher, to die in her own house, alone; it is trauma that made Denver alienated in the society. Everyone, including the children, are the prey of trauma. Oppression devastated their physique, while trauma devastated the mind. Toni Morrison showed an example of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder through Halle after he witnessed the physical assault of Sethe. While dealing with trauma in Beloved, Morrison shows the generational trauma in the characters. The storytelling method that Nan took or Sethe took to describe how they or their predecessors suffered to their children, is a kind of trauma trespassing generations. The similar kind of generational trauma can be found in Angkush written by Juri Bora Borgohain, where a mother narrates to her daughter, the displacement and trauma her mother faced once.

Morrison, portraying identity crisis of the marginalised, shows how the slaves were denied the right to the basic form of identity – their names. The Paul brothers were named as Paul A, Paul D and Paul F as they have been cohesively arranged like objects. Baby Suggs was also called Janey by Mr. Garner though she cited that that was not her name. They were Afro-Americans, but named as "niggers" of which Langston Hughes in the Big Sea says, –"The word, you see, sums up for us who are colored all the bitter years of insult and struggle in America" (p – 159)

Using the folksongs prevailing amidst the contemporary Afro-American folks, Morrison gave the novel a native essence showing how not only the characters but also the folksongs speak of the unendurable experience of slavery, – "Little rice, little bean/ No rice in between" (Beloved, 48). One of the folksongs found in Beloved depicts how the female slaves, being away from their own children, had to take care of the children of their masters, – "Layeth she her hands upon / Like a veil the curly head" (Beloved, 9).



Morrison's novel reflects how the marginalized voices could not reach any high authority because the authority was dominated by the masters. But the news of Sethe's killing her own daughter occupied a space in newspapers because a slave killing her child was not an ordinary news like killing or raping a slave, – "It would have to be something out of ordinary... if not gasps"(Beloved, 183)

Slavery in Beloved is not only the oppression done by the masters, it also incorporates slavery in relations. According to critics, Sethe was enslaved by her children. The slave life couldn't break her to the extent to which Beloved broke her. On the other hand, Denver freed her twice, from being hanged, and at last from the mental torture of Beloved.

Apart from all these, the ultimate specimen of question upon slavery is raised through Paul D, – "How much a nigger supposed to take?"(Beloved, 277) which is followed by the answer of Stamp Paid, – "All he can, all he can" (Beloved, 277).

### Conclusion

Beloved speaks of sundry lives in slavery, delving their heart and experience. Incorporating the child to the aged, Morrison, shows the impacts of slavery on lives of different ages. Along with the people oppressed in slavery, the inclusion of child and her experience in a post slavery period can be designated as a significant part of Morrison's way of presenting the reality in front of readers, showing how the child, surpassing the horrible period of alienation, healed herself at last. In contrast to the successors under slavery, the child as a grown up human, is endowed with more power to heal the self and the other, which shows that the lives under slavery have lost this ability, even to heal the self. It shows the distinction of psychological ability of people suffering slavery and people of the post slavery period. An assumption can be made out of this, that timeless severe oppression, thus, can make the sufferers lose their psychological ability inherited as a human.

The way Toni Morrison is unique in presenting the reality of slavery, in a similar token, she is unique in treating the Black people. While the voiceless are given space to speak through the novel, the treatment of Morrison regarding these people is seen. Writers like Hannah Moore, according to Pramod k. Nayar, in 'Slavery: a Poem' published in 1788, showed the virtues of slave, – "For they have keen affections, kind desires/ Love strong as death, and active patriot fires"

( Moore lines 85-86) which show Moore's treatment of the slave a sentimental Black man who is not very competent in using rationality. On the contrary, Morrison has provided her Black people with ability to think. It also shows the distinction between the colonial mindset and of the colonised. Morrison's treatment of Black people is embedded with equal space to both the male and female counterpart. In Beloved, the biasness of allotted space to the male and female characters is not seen, despite having a female protagonist, despite being a literary creation a female counterpart. Through focalisation on both female and male characters, the novel has given space to their voices in an unbiased way. Paul D's dialogue towards the end of the novel shows solidarity of the both counterpart, – "Sethe,... me and you, we got more yesterday than anybody. We need some kind of tomorrow" (Beloved, 322). Apart from this, this dialogue, reflecting transition of the narrative, from agony to glimpse of hope. Morrison acknowledges hope to lives of the Black people, a calm atmosphere after the storm. However, as in the calm atmosphere, the devastation of the storm remains, the novel also leaves a question mark regarding the future of these Black people that are trying to get themselves out of the devastation. ●●●

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## Women, Dreams and Society: A Reading of Ao's *Laburnum For My Head*

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### ABSTRACT

Temsula Ao's short story "Laburnum for my Head" is mostly read and celebrated for its depiction of the close connection between woman and nature. This paper attempts to explore how there occurs a critical perspective of the position of woman in society and her struggles to achieve what she wants, no matter how miniscule. The laburnum acts as a metaphor for women's dreams, something that she has to struggle to achieve. Ao's writing is realist, which lays out the stark reality of being a woman in North East Indian society. The text is filled with stereotypes and subversions and whether it is an ultimate containment of the subversions or a step towards embracing them is left for the reader to interpret, many choosing to see the subversive elements as a welcome change in society. The paper tries to present both the sides to the reader so as to give multiple perspectives, if not helping in their assessment of the story's goals, if any. It employs close reading to draw attention to the relevant parts of the text for better illustration of ideas.

**Keywords:** Northeastern Literature, women, eco-feminism, close reading

### INTRODUCTION:

Recently, there was quite an uproar on social media regarding the beautiful Naga woman who played a spectacular rendition of the national anthem on her electric guitar during the inauguration of the Hornbill Festival. Every Northeast Indian felt proud at the moment, flaunting the woman's skills and by extension, the progressive nature of our societies. It was curious how people fawned over the event, mainly because it involved a woman. Whether the event would have been so widely publicized had it been some male with similar terrific skills remains an

unanswered question. Projections of art and literature often involve self-aggrandizing interpretations which many times tend to put a veil over the reality- the honest one, if not the brutal.

Naga writer Temsula Ao's 2009 collection of short stories *Laburnum for my Head* is a slender text that includes stories from the Naga hills and the Assam plains told in a simple but empathetic, humane way. These stories prefigure a female in most narratives and they form an important, if not their central part. It is to be remembered at the very outset that this collection was published about twelve years before the present time and as a result, things as they stand might be somewhat different today. Ao's stories are beautiful in their simplicity and only hint towards the unnamed society of the times and the readers are left to glean their understanding from the characters and their actions. Readers have pointed out the feminist streak in these stories, with women who play an active role in the action, even as they are surrounded by or serve the needs of patriarchy. From Lentina in the first story to Imchanok's wife Tangchetla, Martha, Medemla, Lipoktula and Imdongla, women often form a crucial part of the action in the story. Tangchetla sees the torment of her husband and sets him off on the path of redemption; Medemla and Lipoktula manage to set up an independent life away from the patriarchy that stifled them to bring up the child Martha and Imdongla poses the question that makes the rebel leader not only reflect upon his actions but also free her husband.

### The Text:

The first story of the collection is the eponymous - "Laburnum for my Head" which sees a woman's determination to have a laburnum tree close to her and the various trials and tribulations to bring about the fulfilling of this seeming simple wish. It is irrefusably true that Ao renders her characters some



space to chart out their own actions, Lentina being someone who strives to make her dream come true in spite of all obstacles. However, it is also to be noticed that while Ao's women are active agents of their lives who want to bring about a change, this agency is inevitably interlinked with men and the patriarchal society at large. Women are often the nurturers and helpers of men and are mere helpers in the action. Ao makes their actions serve an important function in the story, as in the story of Imdongla who manages to free her husband or Tangchetla who leads her husband to redemption. These instances point towards the familiar stereotype of women being nurturers and wise pillars of support in the man's life.

Janis Birkeland in her "Ecofeminism: Linking Theory and Practice" says how "Women have historically been seen as a part of nature" (Birkeland 18). Lentina, the protagonist of the story loves the "humble Indian laburnum bush" (Ao 1) and is filled with the desire to have it in her garden so that she can see the yellow blossoms close by. In a world where women do not seem to fulfill their desires so easily, this innocent wish of Lentina is not to come true so soon. She plants the laburnum saplings in her garden but they are struck by disaster year after year. The first time, her gardener, perhaps a male, weeds them out and then cows eat up her saplings. The third year, a worker from the health department came in her absence and sprayed deadly DDT, killing the plants. All these incidents indicate towards the metaphorical hindrances that Lentina as a woman has to face in fulfilling her simple dreams. "Lentina's longing for this beauty of nature can be read as her defiance of the patriarchal setup of the society" (Gogoi 2), she is adamant and determines to have the laburnum bushes in her garden despite the explicit obstacles that the whole universe seems to be throwing her way. People were convinced that she was developing "an unhealthy fetish for laburnum." (Ao 3) and she was openly talked about in the family gatherings. This 'obsession' or 'fetish' can be seen as just the strong determination of someone who wanted to succeed in fulfilling their wish in the face of all odds. Perhaps in the case of a man, it would have been hailed as passion. But then again, it would never have been this hard if it was a man's wish. A woman being called crazy for breaking societal expectations is not a new development either in literature or society. Lentina's desire to have a laburnum bush near her might remind us of Yeong-hye of Han Kang's *The Vegetarian* and we are left wondering of her fate in the asylum for

wanting to be a tree. Lentina is not to be subdued so easily as we see in the unfolding story and in here lies the resistance of the character.

It is mentioned initially in the story how Lentina loved the laburnum for its seeming humility-

*"She had always admired these yellow flowers for what she thought was their femininity; they were not brazen like the gulmohars with their orange and dark pink blossoms. The way the laburnum flowers hung their heads earthward appealed to her because she attributed humility to the gesture."* (Ao 2)

This attribution of conventional feminine qualities to the laburnum flowers is just a glimpse of the entrenched patriarchy that women internalize. Women, like the laburnum flowers are applauded for their humility and called out for their brazenness. Lentina perhaps even identified herself with the flower, or thought she did as her spirit was in no way conventional. After her failed attempts at growing a laburnum plant and open derision by her family members, she manages to stifle her desire until the death of her husband. This removal of immediate patriarchal authority seems to free Lentina and she begins to showcase her true self. At the funeral ceremony of her husband, she insists in following the men to the graveyard, a radical step for a woman in a society which did not allow women to be a part of the procession. It is interesting how she speaks of the event- "some impulse urged her to join them." (Ao 4) This is Lentina who acts freely on her impulses without caring for what others would think. She had a similar "intense yearning" (Ao 3) for the laburnum bushes earlier, but had given up due to social pressure from her family. At his funeral, she observes the headstones all around her and reflects on the vanity of human beings at vying for attention and immortality. It is here that the idea dawns upon her- to have a laburnum bush over her grave instead of a gravestone. The thought of this delights her so much as to make her smile in the somber surroundings. This act of smiling at a husband's funeral is unheard of. It is when her smile is noticed by a relative that she goes back to looking "appropriately bereaved" (Ao 4), an action that proves she is still conscious of social codes and boundaries for women. But, this consciousness does not stop her from renewing her desires of having a laburnum bush over her grave. Her action this time shows her growth as a person but it should be kept in mind how this action comes with the death of her husband, the symbol of patriarchy in her family. After



his death, she assumes the role of the head of her family and it is only then that she seems to be able to have the power and free agency to fulfill her desire. It might also be well to remember Lentina's status and position in the society. Her husband was given a grand funeral as he was a "prominent member of society" (Ao 4) which implies her privileged position. Yet, for a person of her stature, she could not have her laburnum plants and was looked upon as a senile old woman. She had to be conscious of her actions and could only assert herself after her husband died.

However, even after her husband's death, things prove to be as bleak regarding her laburnum desire. She has to carry out the plan secretly and subtly. She first plans to buy a plot of land for her grave. To execute this plan, she needs someone's help as she does not have the agency to even go and inspect the plot she wants to buy. She chooses Mapu, her old driver with whom she visits the graveyard riding on the assumption of visiting her husband's grave and there, picks out a corner spot for herself. The driver is befuddled with his mistress's actions and wonders about what the "young masters said about madam losing her mind" (Ao 6), confirming to the readers how Lentina was looked upon in her family. He is left more confused when she picks up a spot for her grave and exclaims- " 'but madam, your place is already earmarked beside my master!' " (Ao 6) Even after death, a woman is bound by the societal rules as to the place of her burial. In this context, Lentina's step to decide her own place of burial and having a laburnum bush over her grave is again a radical step. To fulfill this step, she has to again go through a lot of trials. This time however, fate seems to submit to her will and she unintentionally acquires a piece of land adjacent to the cemetery, owing to a tip she received from her late husband about assets. The acquisition is also unconsciously mediated through her husband as it is his friend's son Khalong from whom she manages to buy the land. After buying the land, she is left to negotiate with the town authorities and the sons are made aware of mother's "crazy plan" (Ao 10). They, however, do not put up much objection and Lentina quells their wives in a tactful manner. In the scene of discussion between the town council and Lentina, we see a woman present her own set of prefixed terms to the authoritative perhaps all-male self-important council. Through her wit and intelligence, Lentina manages to convince them and secures the desired lot of land for her grave, fulfilling her long-wished dream.

After her success, Lentina feels a "fatigue that comes after a sustained effort and achieving a long-cherished dream." (Ao 14) Yet, it is her desire to see the laburnums bloom that provides her with a will to live when she was not expected to even survive the winter. This proves her tenacity in a world which expects something else from her. It is only when she sees her dear laburnum bushes bloom and is reassured of them outliving her that she closes her eyes forever in peace. All this struggle for a plant may seem silly in the reader's eyes but it is sufficient to indicate how a woman has to undergo to fulfill her desires, even a simple one as having a plant. By putting up a cemetery where flowers bloom with no crude headstones, Lentina acts against ecological destruction and this also immediately implies an awareness of the "connection between patriarchal violence against women" (Mies and Shiva 14)

Lentina dies peacefully but lives on forever in the quiet cemetery where the laburnum bushes bloom with yellow blossoms every May. As she says when they first bloom- " 'I felt it in my bones' " (Ao 18), she is depicted as having a close relation with nature, which is what people most often recognize and celebrate in Ao's writing. However, in this process the struggle of the female in a patriarchal world to realize even a simple wish is negated. We cannot simply dismiss Ao's writing as celebrating woman's sensitivity as well as emotional connection to nature as it is a claim that reinforces the "structural division of man and nature", which is seen as analogous to that of man and woman" (Mies and Shiva 5). Lentina becoming the 'humble' laburnum bush, puts a veil on the feminist streak of the story as it ultimately espouses humility for women, to always bend their heads, even in death. This humility does not display the struggles behind having the flowers bloom. By equating women with nature, we bestow them with the stereotypes of nurturer and carers of a mostly-male population while she is hailed as 'Mother' Nature.

### Conclusion

Ao's writing is honest, if not explicitly, pointedly feminist even though we cannot miss the inclination. We cannot really expect a woman brought up in a patriarchal society to present us with stories of women radically breaking the conventions in a way that is unrealistic. If Lentina would have put her foot down and ordered her sons to secure her plot for



burial, she might have never been successful. Women must rely on secrecy and careful scheming, if not cunning to achieve their goals. From this point of view, the feminist angle of Ao's stories might seem skeptical, yet it is this step towards being an active agent in making one's reality that the author becomes relevant. Lentina, inspite of the numerous setbacks, never backed down and managed to fulfill her wish of seeing flowers bloom over her grave. She might have liked the flowers for their humility, but her humility in no way stops her spirit to make her simple dream a reality. She brought about a change, no matter how miniscule. In that small town, she managed to bring up a cemetery where people are content to have beautiful flowers and plants over their grave rather than some crude, flattering headstone. It is nothing short of a miracle, a miracle that happens once every flowering season and bursts the graveyard into a soothing story of afterlife. All this was the work of one woman who refused to be daunted by the world and persisted in making her small dream come true, a feat which is an inspiration to women of her society.



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