



GHOST: PSYCHOLOGICAL MYTH OR COMPLICATED TRUTH

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ABSTRACT

Ghost scares. Even the thought of Ghost at any moment in our life can create immediate stir in our whole body. Some says ghost is not real while some believes him real & haunting. Psychoanalysts, Ghost Hunters, Psychotherapist and mystic's around the world create a world ahead us in which we find ourselves in complete imbroglia about its reality i.e. GHOST. In literature as well, several authors tried to explore the hidden mystery of this term by using real life tales, mythology, fiction and an assumption of their own. There are numerous short stories which establish our relationship with our own fear in most scary and even in most comic ways. My paper is a straight attempt to analyze few works from English literature to understand the true essence of the term GHOST used in our literature by eminent authors, poets and dramatists.

Keywords: Ghost, Psychoanalyst, Mystic, Ghost Hunter, Spirit, Soul

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The term Ghost has a Germanic origin which means Spirit or Soul. The term 'Soul' is complicated because various established and widely followed spiritual doctrines like Buddhism neglect the existence of soul in anybody. But it is strange that Chinese Buddhism has a concept of Hungry Ghost; quite similar to the term '*Preta*' in Indian Buddhism and Hinduism. So Buddhism will not accept Ghost as somebody's soul which is appearing on earthly realm to fulfill his desires indeed Ghost is used as metaphor in various stories of Buddhism. Through this simple example, I just want to convey that definition of Ghost is not universal in all cultures across the world. Plenty of literature discuss Ghost as a disturb manifestation afterlife and if some doctrine claims nothing like afterlife exists; we can understand the dilemma.

Eminent Indian Author R.K. Laxman's '*Iswaran the Storyteller*' is a short story of Iswaran,

the cook who works for Mahendra. "The book was usually some popular Tamil thriller running to hundreds of pages. Its imaginative descriptions and narrative flourishes would hold Iswaran in thrall. His own descriptions were greatly influenced by Tamil authors he read." Iswaran mind was already prepared because Tamil thriller and suspense novels made him a wonderful storyteller for his boss Mahendra and one day he narrates a haunted story of a horrible woman ghost he saw nearby when returning from market. Mahendra interrupts him and simultaneously try to console him by neglecting the existence of ghosts. After hearing the story, Mahendra encounters unease and fear grips his whole personality. One night he sees a cloudy form clutching a bundle; suddenly he reminds of the ghost of a woman and decides to leave the place on the next day. Author did not write the cloudy form as ghost but Mahendra reaction to leave the place

on the next day shows that the real ghost was in his mind because we do not find the same reaction and unease in Iswaran character. "Sir, remember the other day when I was telling you about the female ghost with a foetus in its arm, you were so angry with me for imaginary things? Well, you saw her yourself last night. I came running hearing the sound of moaning that was coming from your room..." This statement was more of poking fun on Mahendra than concern for him by Iswaran otherwise he must go into his boss room at night.

American notable poet Robert Frost in his poem 'Ghost House' (Renowned for its wonderful imagery and symbols) represents a different shade of the term ghost. The Poet is describing himself as a person with an aching heart in this poem. The most important thing is that before describing the Ghost of the house, his own mental condition was discussed in this poem; question arises why? My own perception is that his aching heart led him towards Ghosts, not Ghosts which brings him towards an aching heart. Robert Frost can never write 'Ghost House' with joyful heart.

I dwell with a strangely aching heart
in that vanished abode there far apart

Later in the poem, he describes contrast of his loneliness with sweet companionship of the ghosts. Robert Frost assumes and tries to believe that companionship may go afterlife if anybody sincerely has that. Irrespective of live example of companionship, Robert Frost chooses Ghosts. This basic concept has clear notion that Ghosts were not real but an assumed things by the poet to vindicate something.

They are tireless folk, but slow and sad,
Though two, close-keeping, are lass and lad,--

With none among them that ever sings,
And yet, in view of how many things,
As sweet companions as might be had.

Oscar Wilde's **The Canterville Ghost** is a wonderful story depicts Ghost in a completely new shade. The Ghost which is associated with our fear is itself a victim of fear from two children in this story. A very frequent question will arise in our mind; why the author depicted ghost in such an awkward

situation? When that ghost goes to scare Mr. Otis, he gets strange reply from him.

My dear Sir,' said Mr Otis, 'you must oil those chains. It's impossible to sleep with such a noise going on outside the bedrooms.

Suddenly twins of Mr. Otis throw a large pillow on the Canterville Ghost and he, shocked completely, runs towards his secret chamber. In words of the author in the story:

When the ghost reached his small secret chamber, he took a deep breath. No ghosts in history had ever been treated in this manner!

Can anyone expect such a reply and treatment to any ghost when he comes to scare us? One thing that should be noted in the story is the characterization and appearance of the ghost. Ghost is more physical in appearance. There are few examples:

1. He had not been able to wear the suit of armour. The weight of it had made him fall and hurt his knees.
2. He was careful to have oiled his chains and not to make a sound.
3. When a heavy jug of water fell right down on him, wetting him to the skin. The twins burst out in shrieks of laughter and the ghost fled.

The thing which suddenly appears and disappears in a wink, wears the suit of armour, oils his chains and becomes wet when a jug of water fall upon him looks strange. The story may look funny but actually it has some hidden realities of life. Oscar Wilde very artistically shows us something which needs our close contemplation. There are plenty of people across the globe living with unbearable pain and agony in their life and surprisingly neither the media nor we people care about them. We can make them criminal anytime but never with intellect try to understand the harshness of their life. Ghost of Canterville is a metaphor denoting the pain of millions. "The whole depiction of ghost in this story is not because ghost exists; but pain exists". Author is depicting a flip side of our goodness where we ignore person and pain of millions. Virginia, the daughter of Mr. Otis is a character which

understands the pain of Canterville Ghost and ultimately saves his soul to peace. The concluding remark of the story by Virginia is very meaningful.

He made me see what Life is, and what Death signifies, and why Love is stronger than both.

When someone wins a war, he has already won half of his next war without even been fought. Victory brings honor but inadvertently it brings desire and expectation also. Victory and honor is more physical and outward but desires and expectations lie somewhere hidden. Our desire changes into passion and a passionate person is very aggressive always. A passionate mind justifies everything unjustified, creates its own version of reality, enforces others to accept its ways and very feeble to accept failures. While studying William Shakespeare's **Macbeth**, we can experience such thoughts.

Who is Macbeth; just a passionate mind!
Who are 3 Witches; his own version of reality!
Who is Banquo Ghost: his own denial to accept his ill deeds!

The world outside is just the projection of our mind. Witches are also the projection of Macbeth and Banquo minds and those witches are born from great victory and impeccable chivalry of Macbeth and Banquo. Both have desires, the only difference is the transformation of desire into ruthless passion. Rather than ghost or witches, we should study the mind and have a belief; mind is more haunted realm than any other place. Macbeth is psychological treasure house. Many scholars consider Banquo as a moral pillar but he was no different from Macbeth. He also wanted to be a king like Macbeth. Macbeth wanted to achieve everything in his life but Banquo was happy to be an ancestor of upcoming royalty. Banquo ghost was not an awakening call for Macbeth but he was the last fear of Macbeth. Later in the play, we see more ruthless Macbeth who even does not care the death of his beloved wife; the wife, who was the motive force behind the achievement of what Macbeth intended for him. Ruskin Bond '**Out of the Dark**' is yet another poem with a scary tone. The poet took a shelter in a lonely and ruined house outside his town on one

stormy night and later he described his scary experience at that place.

"An alcove in a wall, moss green and redolent of bats"

It was long abandoned large and spacious mansion and suddenly poet heard a haunting cry of someone who is begging to come inside the mansion.

**Oh Son, please let me in,
Oh son, please let me in.....**

It was obvious for the poet to feel uncomfortable at that situation. He wanted to know who that person was, but does not get any response. Till the dawn, he heard that sound many times and he saw nobody at that mansion. In this poem, we do not have any ghostly figure but that haunted cry by someone undisclosed by the poet raises few questions.

In **Cittavagga 'Dhammapada'** describing the power of mind states that:

There is no fear for an awakened one, whose mind is not sodden (by lust) or afflicted (by hate), and who has gone beyond both merits and demerits.

We encounter several stories and experience of people related to ghosts. In pursuit of those experiences, we analyze various places and declare them haunted. Ghost hunters, the newly coined term, play an important role in establishing ghost as a true identity. But do we ever try to analyze the mind of the person who is witnessing any haunted experience? Various psychological discoveries have proved that well directed mind is powerful and beyond the realm of fear, attesting the statement of Dhammapada. "Out in the dark" by Ruskin Bond is the visualization of Poet's mind at abandoned place.

In an article published in BBC, David Robson quoted, "Some paranormal experiences are easily explainable, based on faulty activity in the brain. Reports of poltergeists invisibly moving objects seem to be consistent with damage to certain regions of the right hemisphere that are responsible for visual processing." He later discussed about 'Anthropomorphism'. Anthropomorphism is the attribution of human traits, emotions, and intentions to non-human entities and is considered to be an innate tendency of human psychology.

We create beliefs in ghosts, because we don't like believing that the universe is random

Adam Waytz at Northwestern University in Illinois

Any literature discussing about ghosts can only be analyzed after close observation of social psychology and its implication on our way of life. In 'The Uncanny', Sigmund Freud strongly suggested that irrespective of all the technological advancement, Ghost will continue going to hold us.

Conclusion

In our literature, ghosts are widely used as symbol to discuss author's pain, passion, fear, anger, love and desire. We cannot deny existence of Ghost at once because so much literature across the globe, so many rituals in many cultures around the globe and our anthropomorphic nature stood in the way but surely this is also a reality that Ghost appears when we want them to appear. Ghosts are; When they are in our culture and literature but they are not real when our mind is well directed and at peace.

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A Brief Biography of the corresponding Author

Ajay Kumar 'Lilrain' has completed his post graduation from Kurukshetra University in year 2009 and got selected in Department of School Education, Haryana as Lecturer of English (H.E.S II) in March 2014 and presently serving Government Senior Secondary School, Hassan. Apart from post graduation in English Literature, author is also post graduate in Computer Sciences from Guru Jambheshwar University, Hissar. He is a regular

contributor as Article Writer in Youth Ki Awaaz (www.youthkiawaaz.com) and 2 articles have been published so far. He co-authored a poetry collection named "Do Anmane' (Hindi) with Smt. Deepmala. The following is a paper he has written on the Ghost through the light of few literary works.