**Self-reliance: Unveiling the Inner Magic through *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz***

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**DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that this dissertation is titled as “Self-reliance:Unveiling the Inner Magic through *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*”. It is the result of the study carried out by me for Masters Degree in English, under the guidance and supervision of Dr. Pritesh Chakraborty, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Acharya Sukumar Sen Mahavidyalaya, Gotan, University of Burdwan. This dissertation is a real copy and has not been submitted for any degree or diploma and not formed part of any paper or lecture.

Ankita Dey

Signature of the Candidate

**CONTENTS**

Introduction 1

Research Methodology 1

Mysterious Oz, the Wizard 1-2

Beyond the Rainbow’s End 2

Believe in Yourself, and You Can Move Mountains 3

The Inner Pathfinders: Self-discovery with Buddha and Mahavira 3-4

Exploring Facts through Theoretical Framework 4-6

Conclusion 7

Work Cited 8

**Abstract**

Fairy tales have been following childhood through decades, for the children carry an instinctive love for fantastic, marvellous stories. This paper is going to deal with *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* which is a ‘wonder tales’ in context of magic but somehow the author, L. Frank Baum wants us to teach something else which is beyond magic but worth learning. This 20th century American literature might have attracted readers with its charming title but this piece of work will illustrate a notable ethical view amongst the other probable perspectives. In Baum’s novel, apart from Dorothy, the protagonist, other personified characters can also be found; the Scarecrow, the Tin Woodman and the Cowardly Lion. Each of them is in quest of some requirement which they think that without these particular characteristics, everything will be unachievable for them to work on. And that is the reason that they start a voyage to Emerald City, where Oz resides, whom they think to be a superhuman. A key message that readers can acquire from this work is that the qualities being sought by all the characters, are already present inside each one. Oz turns out to be none other than a guide. Here lies a considerable discourse.

**Key Words:** magic, wizard, self-realization, inner power, anthropocentrism

**Introduction**

Readers conceptualise wizard as a man or woman with magical powers, made popular in stories and legends. Because, wizards are very good at making things happen. A child visualises wizards being a wise old man, often with a long white beard and flowing robes. He or she may use a wand or cast a magic spell to help or harm other characters. Late 20th century’s modern fairy tale, engaging fantasy characters turned out to be a remarkable popular and classic Childrens’ Literature, which is known as *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. Frank exactly indicates the sensitive place of the children. The caption is so captivating and attractive that the children might think that they are going to trade in magical world that is enticing. But, in reality, when the mystery unfolds slowly, things are not the same. They slowly come across a real world that teaches lessons every minute and shows them the right track to trade on.

**Research Methodology**

In order to elucidate the reasoning behind my approach as well as to ensure the validity, reliability of research studies, research methodology is needed. Besides, it provides a systematic framework. According to my observation, qualitative research methodology is a suitable choice while exploring the theme of my work. This paper involves many sources like different websites, articles, reference books to gain insight into a proper talking point. Additionally, literary techniques like close reading, character analysis have also been utilized to delve deeper into the various dimensions portrayed in the novel.

**Mysterious Oz, the Wizard**

Having a glance at the very title, we are provided with an understandable sense that the novel is going to deal with the magnificent Oz. but, ironically all the personified characters and Dorothy only keep on talking about Oz without knowing where he exactly resides or who he is. Only from Chapter 10, readers can actually come to realise the existence of Oz. but, Oz has no fixed physical form at all. He not only appears as a gigantic green head levitating above a jewelled throne, but also as several other mystical beings as well. Oz encounters Dorothy and Toto as a green head, to the Scarecrow, as an elegant enchantress, to the Tin Woodman, Oz takes the shape of a frightening beast with horns and to the Cowardly Lion, Oz appears as a fierce ball of flaming fire. The iconic character of Wizard can appear to be a rather controversial one. Each of the characters take up their adventures journey towards the Emerald city to ask for help from the Wizard for only he can fulfil their desires by using his powers. The Scarecrow, the Tin Woodman, the Lion have been thinking that they lack a brain, a heart and courage. But, each of them has made it to the wonderful city by manifesting their courage and confidence. No matter how many dangers approach to them along their path, they have not stepped behind rather face those hazards with intelligence. And this is what the text teaches us about. At this point the title matches with the wondrous Oz when Oz points out that each of them possesses individual inner power. They have done appreciable efforts throughout the long journey yet they have not believed in themselves and have been chasing after supernatural powers to get their demands fulfilled. Finding the properties within ourselves is the golden key.

**Beyond the Rainbow’s End**

The very ironic object is that the text is about magic, for the children, magic always fascinates them. Abracadabra! Little one’s eyes glitter and his or her face glows as the coin disappears into thin air. Throughout the novel, the children will wait for the exact moment of climax that is when the wonderful Oz will execute something unimaginable for the novel characters, but their excitement goes in vain as the Oz does not perform any tricks. The novel clearly talks against the magical discourse. In a narrative or semantic inversion, the text about magic notifies us that there is no magic at all, rather the anthropocentric way is the only way to achieve success or whatever one is looking for.

**Believe in Yourself, and You Can Move Mountains**

The Scarecrow is in search for a brain, the Tin Woodman looks out for a heart and the Cowardly Lion hunts for courage. Aristotle has suggested that every successful speech will contain those three elements: Brains (similar to Logos: information, data, logic, reasoning); Heart (akin to Pathos: passion, emotion, enthusiasm); Courage (aligned with Ethos: character, a sense of purpose, a speaker who demonstrates courage also embodies character and credibility). A key message from *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* is that the qualities being sought by all three characters are already present inside each one. As the story unfolds, the Scarecrow learns that he is already pretty smart. The Tin Woodman has demonstrated that he, indeed, has a heart. Even the Cowardly Lion displays unexpected courage in the face of adversity. But all three have been believing or imagining that the Wizard has special powers to somehow bestow these sought after qualities on each of them.

**The Inner Pathfinders: Self-discovery with Buddha and Mahavira**

For a better understanding, we surely can look into the past era of Buddhism and Jainism. So that point of view informed by the Oz, can be equated. As Oz has stated that if anyone make realistic goals and strive towards it, then success is no more a dream. The fact is each character has been considering Oz to be a Godlike figure. But Oz is as normal as the other persons. What makes him wonderful is his ability to create a bridge with the characters’ own capability which they already possess but fail to recognize. This is exactly what Buddha used to believe. He being a spiritual leader had been silent on the existence of God, the Almighty, as he believed on the moral and highly ethical core within a man. Scholars have interpreted his silence as disbelief as he neither accepted nor denied the existence of God. Mechanical worship of Gods was brushed aside and a high ethical code was elevated to the status of religion. (Tayal B-39) That is how our story is taking place with the characters’ illusion that the Oz is magnificent and he can do everything. In the mean time they have lost their faith from themselves, their capability. They are seen to use their brain, intelligence but they think themselves as powerless. Just like Buddha said that enlightenment can only be achieved by one’s own effort, it is completely up to the individual. Even Oz answered, “You have plenty of courage, I am sure”

The same way, Mahavira did not believe in the existence of God. He had no faith in the theory that God created the world. According to him, man is responsible for his own destiny. Emancipation from suffering does not depend upon any outside power. All he was trying to mean that God is within us. (Tayal B-36) If we trust ourselves, our soul and walking straight with our will power no matter what nightmare troubles us that will be the way to pay homage to God who lies within our soul. There is a popular verse in the Bhagavad Gita, which states as, “You have a right to perform your prescribed duties” (Prabhupada 165). As the famous quote from Stephen Hawking says, “However difficult life may seem, there is always something you can do and succeed at.” (Hawking 54)

**Exploring Facts through Theoretical Framework**

According to theories of anxiety relief and control, people tend to turn to magical beliefs when there exists a sense of uncertainty and potential danger and little to do about it. Deconstruction denotes the pursuing of the meaning of a text to the point of exposing the supposed contradictions and internal oppositions upon which it is found. The concept of deconstruction was introduced by the Algerian-French philosopher, Jacques Derrida. He described it as a turn away from Platonism’s ideas of “true” forms and essences which take precedence over appearances. A modern fairy tale was enormously popular and became a classic of children’s literature. Today, on the completion of 122 years since it was first published, there are some important life lessons that *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* taught us – if one looks within oneself, one may be able to pull out the strength, courage and intelligence that one never knew he or she had. One has what is takes to succeed. Like the protagonist, Dorothy realizes that she does not need any wizard to send her home; she holds the power all along to make it to the place which she loves the most. Dorothy finds some bumps along the yellow brick road on her search. The wrath of the Wicked Witch of the West and her troops of flying monkeys stand in her way, but she never stops following the route to the Emerald City.

So, we can easily catch a sight of a discourse – magical discourse. Symbolic Convergence Theory highlights that our perceptions and experiences of magic can be shaped by the power of storytelling and shared symbols. By the first glance, the book seems to contain full of supernatural elements. But, with the time the discourse paints a realistic view of the world, blurring the lines between fantasy and reality. Discourse is understood as a way of perceiving, framing and viewing the world. Discourse analysis involved the examination of how the ways of speaking about things. Foucault’s notion on discourse interestingly highlights the ways in which language and power have been intertwined to shape our understanding of reality. Dorothy’s awakening to the deception of Oz’s supernatural power mirrors Foucault’s concept that power can be operated through the control and manipulation of knowledge. Toto reveals the true identity of the Wizard of Oz by knocking over a screen that is supposed to hide the man from his subjects. The Oz is actually an ordinary human with no magical power to speak of. However, through his inventions, he has managed to convince the people of Emerald City as well as the readers that he is a wizard.

However, ‘Symbolic Interpretation’ theory also suggests that the elements and events portrayed in the story are symbolic representations of deeper meanings. In Freudian terms, symbolic interpretation of Dorothy’s journey is a manifestation of her unconscious desires and fears that symbolizes the stages of her personal growth and self-discovery. In this instance, the presence of magic can be seen as a symbolic depiction of the inner strength of the characters as well as their resourcefulness. The magic in this story serves as a metaphorical tool in effort to convey the important announcement of personal growth, self-discovery. The journey of Dorothy and her companions towards the Emerald City in search of Oz, can be interpreted as an allegory for the challenges and obstacles faced in life and the transformative power of courage and determination.

Additionally, Baudrillard’s concept of hyperreality can also be associated with the novel, for how the text not only challenges the idea of magic as a mythical tool but also delves into the concept of hyperreality. It ultimately challenges the illusion of external forces. Baudrillard’s theory suggests that our contemporary world is saturated with simulated experiences that mask reality. Oz can be looked at as a hyperreal space, where the illusion of magic serves as a means to conceal the characters' true potential and inner power.

**Conclusion**

The end part of the novel creates a shocking revelation. “I thought Oz was a great Head”, stated by Dorothy. (L. F. Baum 138). The other statement made by Oz himself leaves the readers startling when he says “I’m just a common man.” (L. F. Baum 139). Baum’s subtle insights into his somehow very human animated beings are perpetually refreshing. Besides providing entertainment, the novel also teaches that self-belief is the most important thing in life which helps the person to fight against all odds and achieve success. That is actually something that the children need to learn from the very beginning of their life. One should not lose hope in their abilities even if they face many hurdles on the way. Colin Powell, an American statesman and a retired four-star general in the USA Army, once said that “A dream does not become reality through magic. It takes sweat, determination and hard work” (Powell 15). This purpose of this topic is to showcase the idea that magic may be a whimsical element but the ultimate source of modification and success remains in one’s ability.

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