

# Healing from abnormality through Nature in *The Secret Garden*

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## Abstract:

*The modern age embarks light upon the people living with various impairments. In this rapid progression of the modern age, people like to be free from their illness, pain and sufferings while they are alive. The term which deal with the sense of all human movements is called as disability. There are people who lose their parents and affects psychologically forecasts on all the anthropological activities like gender, identity, age, race, culture and identity. There are many individuals who suffer a lot on this earth. When they suffer, they have an abnormality, a cruel mind, they also become spoilt and self centred. They are always treated as a different and valued negatively. The disabled individuals are marginalized and are being let to suffer undue hardships. When such individuals are being crippled, he or she will not be able to fulfill their dreams and aspirations. But this disability creates a different picture on one's identity and therefore it represents an opportunity to transform from abnormal to normal in the form of nature and transforms them to think positive through the novel *The Secret Garden*. This article probes on how the character Mary lead to disability and transforms from abnormal to normal being and changes her life towards happiness.*

*Key words: Ecology, Nature, Physical Fitness, Nature, Transformation*

The aesthetic of literature depends mainly on the beauty of any literary work. Literature is important for universal expressions of the human world to add value to global truths. It is not only to bring the values of humans, but also to portray their thoughts and expressions to entertain the readers and be influenced with right knowledge. The human relationship with nature plays a predominant role in modern times. It even captures the realistic nature of a healthy environment through the portrayal of the characters in the novel. This relationship transforms the characters from mental illness to mental well-being. Thus, eco-criticism helps both human beings and all living beings to be benefitted from nature. It acts as a medium to maintain a good relationship with the existence of all living beings.

Nature is a natural source which is not an artificial set up to be spoilt by the humans. It is not possible to maintain a good and healthy environment without human intervention. Many believe that nature is more powerful than any other power in the world. It is nature which makes everyone to feel free and also to forget about the problems in life. It makes people to enjoy the natural things to enhance their physical, mental and spiritual fitness. Defining nature, 'it is something that creates a space for gardens, forests and that adds goodness to people.' Nature provides the limitations for the humans to fulfill all the necessities which are needed for their survival. It is proven that nature cannot be separated from the human world and their relationship is said to be considered as interdependent by creation. Nature attracts not only the adults but also the young minds with its deepest beauty.

Children are very eager to show their responsibility towards nature. When such responsibility is taken by them, it creates a lot of joy and happiness within them. It brings them very close to nature, as they try to understand the intricate truths of it by being one with nature. It also helps them to learn the extreme contrast between the good and the bad. Nature tends to bring positively new changes in the minds of the children. Nature has the power to make children be enthralled and transformed allowing them to become as its reliable friend who can possibly be responsible for its peaceful existence. In children's literature, Children are characterized as a representation of joy and innocence. Additionally, the writers make children to realize the difference between ideal and practical realities vs an ideal family and the world of orphans. This kind of reality can be seen in the works of Frances Hodgson Burnett.

Frances Hodgson Burnett is a British born author and playwright who is well-known for his works based on Children's Literature. Burnett has written numerous works in her lifetime and the most prominent of her works is *The Secret Garden* published as a novel in 1911. It is very popular such that it has been included as a classic in British Children's Literature.

In the novel *The Secret Garden*, the story focuses on the garden, which plays a vital role. The contribution of the garden changes the entire personality of the character "Mary" who plays a vital role from the beginning of the novel. "Mary Lennox had a little thin face and a little thin body. Her skin was faintly yellow and she wore tight, sour expressions at all times" (*The Secret Garden* 4). The book opens with nine-year-old Mary Lennox who is abandoned in an Indian bungalow after her parents' death during a cholera outbreak. She becomes a person who is selfish, easily irritated and frequently has trouble while interacting with other people. Mary has a weak physical condition. After the tragedy of her parents' demise, Mary is sent to Misselthwaite Manor where she lives with her uncle, Archibald Craven. This is the place where she finds the secret garden and becomes obsessed with it. "Mary wandered through many paths of the gardens. She wondered what the secret garden would be like and whether any flowers could live in a place for ten years" (24) she often wonders. This makes her more attracted towards the secret garden. She tries to be acquainted with it and know more about the garden whenever her uncle is absent from the manor.

In the secret garden, Mary is able to heal herself gradually. She even learns that nature has the power to cure people. Her recovery involves strenuous outdoor exercise and gardening, as she begins to cultivate her uncle's abandoned rose garden. Once she recovers, Mary tries to help her cousin Colin to rehabilitate from being a bed ridden and a querulous natured child. She is the first person to approach and convince him that nature has the power to heal even the sick and the psychologically weak. Mary is not only able to cure her cousin, but even her hunch backed uncle who has not yet recovered from the psychological wounding from the death of his wife ten years ago. He says "I would love to see a secret garden," he said sleepily. I will have someone find the key and let us into the garden" (*The Secret Garden* 64).

Colin, her cousin, feels very sick and has fear of his own father. But once Mary helps him to overcome his fear and to gain both physical and mental health. Colin often says that "If I live I may be a hunchback, but I shan't live" (74). He is very afraid that he might turn to be a hunchback just like his father's fear. It is Mary who convinces him and helps him to abandon these false beliefs. He gradually comes to accept himself with the help of Mary's positive approach and nature's curing ability. He begins to enjoy the goodness in nature and accept himself more. Through Mary's continuous encouragement he gains confidence in the rose garden, where Colin is able to overcome the fear of the outdoor environment. He is able to prove that he is a perfectly healthy child. He begins to walk, exercise and practice gardening with the help of his cousin. Even the family doctor gets shocked by such a change in Colin.

Meanwhile, Archibald Craven learns to accept the death of his wife by revisiting the secret garden. Archibald by accepting his son, he comes to realisation that he too can overcome the psychological wounding accumulated over the years due to his disability. He pacifies with himself and corrects his attitude towards his own son.

From this story, it is very clear that nature has the power to heal. Though Mary is a child, her understanding towards nature has made her believe in nature that it can cure the sick and the psychologically weak. It makes her accept and be positive in her own existence. This strong passion in her allows her to help cure even the people around her. Living a desperate life and being miserable is only an illusion created by the human world as they tend to blame the outside world for the problems that occur in their life. Mental health and psychological well-being are interconnected with each other. Parents play a predominant role in the lives of the children. Through the novel *The Secret Garden*, it proves that nature cures. It has the ability to have a positive impact in the lives of the children and people for good health by living a better life.

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