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***Legends of Halahala: Elements of Absurd, Bizarre and Uncanny
Life Depicted in Graphic Novel***

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Abstract

Graphic Novels are fundamentally made up of visuals and text while these graphics simultaneously goes with the text and form an ambience of still pictures with written dialogues and narrations whenever needed. But in the new-fangled age genre, the graphic novel becomes the viaduct between literature and fine arts. Through this amalgamated work; graphic novelist sometimes uses their murky imagination to widen the landscape. This research will study how an author can convoluted society and its follies through his absurd, bizarre and uncanny contrivance of surroundings, how visuals played a vital role instead of the text, how a graphic novel and its five stories are portrayed thoroughly in visuals and needed about ten written sentences to explain in *Legends of Halahala* a graphic novel by George Mathen aka Appupen.

Key Words: Graphic Novel – Visuals – newfangled – murky imagination – absurd – bizarre – uncanny

Introduction:

Halahala means poison a graphic novel with an exact connotation of it *Legends of Halahal*, was introduced in 2012 by George Mathen aka Appupen. It is a novel from the third decade of the emergence of the graphic novel in India. Appupen presents everyday reality through his own lens. The mood, romance and doldrums of the people in mundane life are shown through five illustrated stories in *Legends of Halahal*. Representing poison through colours and pictures is as dark as imagining drinking poison. Appupen has expressed his vision on five different such issues that have been the routing incidents in society. These five stories and their typical filmy spoofy titles symbolise the insanity of their subject matter. A lot of literary works of art have focused on affection and love's obsession, its unexpected connections and its strange outcomes. These can be overwhelming, as we have witnessed in such Shakespearean dramas. Love can also be comforting, as in one's favourite romantic comedy. Also, it has been said a lot about power of love but when Appupen talks about love and affection in his second book *Legends of Halahala*, his characters do not utter a word about it. Thus, in this compilation of five graphic stories, he talks about love and affection without a single speech or thought bubble and that's make this graphic novel aberrant.



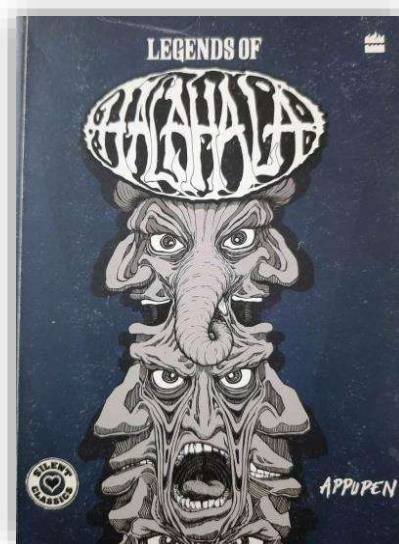
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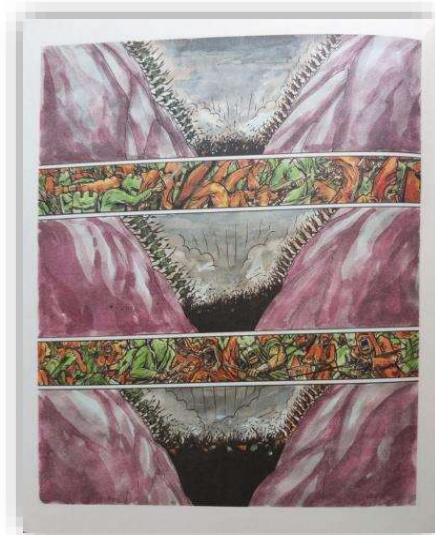
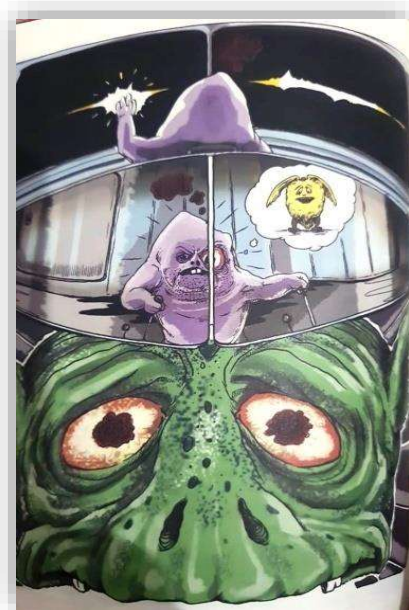
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The first story in *legends of Halahala* is *Stupid's Arrow*, it's about two lovers of the two different kingdoms face each other on top of the mountains, who created a noxious incident with a foolish act by an insane soldier formed a misunderstanding between the two states. Second story *The Saga of Ghost Girl Part 2: Legacy* is a tale of a girl, who saves the city in the nighttimes, and a boy inspired by her and follows her legacy, plot of this story seems to be the inspiration of Batman's childhood tragedy. The third story *Oberian Dysphoria* is a story interspersed with yelping gargoyle faces that appear to be alternately angry and euphoric. The story is driven by characters who are always on the move — gesturing, running, falling, killing, destroying, saving. This story traverses every negative aspect of love and affection at various times and places. The fourth Story of this graphic novel is titled *16917P's Masterpiece*, a man who is known by a number and tries to keep his existence in future and for that he makes some effort to tell that "16917P was here". This story echoes the holocaust event of World War second and the identity crises of mankind. The fifth and last story of this graphic novel is titled *The Accordion Manoeuvre*, a story of a girl who wishes to get a bold, adorable and sensuous young body, after fulfilled wish she becomes well-liked in society and uncanny occurrence that constructs a disturbed society. How this digital age and its social media life destroying youth's dignity and affection towards vulgarity depicted vibrantly.



Element of Absurdity:

Appupen is one of the best graphic novelists in the world who is known for his lewd and clumsy illustrations in this era's graphic novels. Absurdities in his illustrations are visible on most of many pages of the graphic novel. Inner page of the graphic novel drawn a wrist and palm of a hand, Appupen draws an eye in the middle and a screaming mouth with the written logo 'Silent Classic' on the wrist, symbolising the speech and thought bubble-less characters of the legends of Halahala. Here in another image of the first story *Stupid's Arrow* yawning pit is gradually filled with the dead bodies of soldiers in green and orange, they are fighting for an inane cause. The lovers of this story have no relevance to the war they just want to be together at any cost. Three panels of this image depicted a yawning pit in such a manner that it gives the impression of a vagina the lewd way of presenting the overwhelming reaction of love. Image from the story 16917P's Masterpiece reminds us of two places: one from the actual incident of the past century; prisoners of Hitler's camp with no name but the numbers and another from the first absurdist fictional Play by Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*. The man in this story is suffering from identity crises in nowhere land, his haunting facial expressions are dense and he still desires to put his number on a garbage heap. The story ends at a point where *Waiting for Godot* starts.

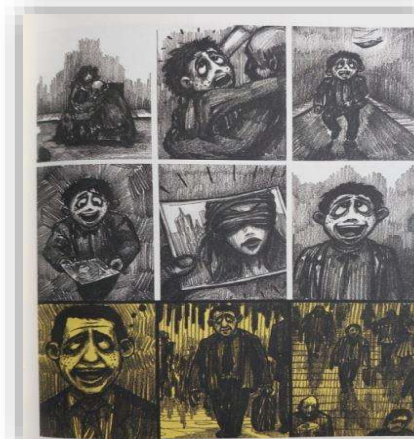
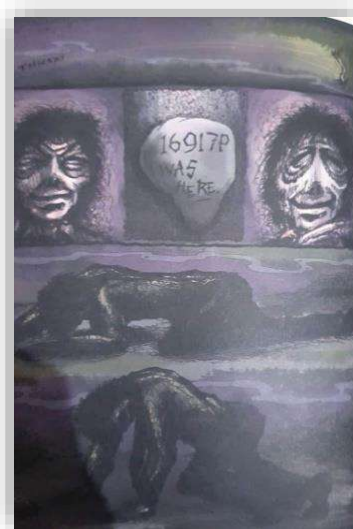


Bizarre Character Sketch and Atmosphere:

Bharat Bharatmuni explained nine Rasas of Rasa theory in Bharatnatyam, out of nine Rasas, Appupen uses the Bibhatsa Rasa largely in his graphic novel. The core theme of the graphic novel is the love and affection of its characters for their strange desires. He also tries to depict a few Rasas on the cover page. Seven faces that melt in each other with different expressions are drawn on the cover page; this also signifies that the reader will feel these Rasas during the reading.

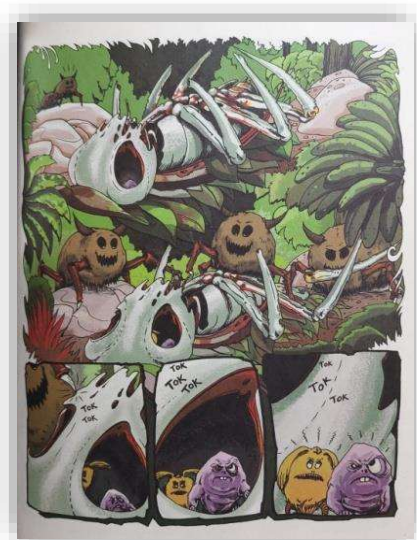
Bizarre creatures are the main magnetism of the graphic novel, the third story of the graphic novel Oberian Dysphoria is a love story of gargoyle-shaped creepy-crawlies who are born out of a dead animal. The colourful illustrations of two creepy-crawlies who love mutually, with lovable company of each other they roam in the jungle and pass through many different places including Deathly Valley, they also meet other creepy-crawlies and apart by a crow who attacks them and catches them female creepy-crawly. A turtle-shaped creature with the ability to breathe fire appears on a few pages whose mind and body are controlled by the male creepy-crawly and he starts searching for the female creepy-crawly. The Saga of Ghost Girl Part 2: Legacy, the second story of the graphic novel also depicts this kind of creature who replaces the goons of the street.

In this aspect, readers can observe that Appupen's point of view towards Love is very bizarre. He sees life's some event in a very disgust manner.



Uncanny life of the characters:

Elements of the uncanny life of the characters are reasonably discernible in the second and fifth stories of Legends of Halahala. The Uncanny Incident and its After Effects show in The Saga of Ghost Girl Part 2: Legacy is a story of a ghost girl who saves the citizens in the night-time from brutal demons. The plot of the initial story can be influenced by the famous fictional DC comics' character Batman, At a night a couple and their 8 to 9-year-old kid go back home and they are attacked by a demon creature, opposite to Batman's tragedy, here is a Ghost Girl who saves them all and the boy gets inspired out of affection of that Ghost Girl. In the later part, a reader can also discern queer aspect of that boy and his affection for the Ghost girl.



The fifth story titled *The Accordion Manoeuvre*; is the 'Bloodless stimulation' of bone healing as described by Professor Ilizarov, an appropriate title to the story. The present era of the virtual social media lifestyle of youth is sarcastically depicted in this story where a little girl seeks a boon from the goddess to give her attractive big breasts and buttocks and a shapely plump young body so that she can flaunt them, so attract people's attention and indulge her lust. In the subsequent incident, one of her breasts bounces like a ball and a group of people rushes to catch it. The whole incident creates a insanely funny and the dark side of the society depicted in colourful but in murky manner. The use of uncanny element of a girl and bouncing breast is very clumsy and lewd there.





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Wrapping up:

The new-fangled age genre graphic novels' expansion is widened than its appearance. Graphic novelists like George Mathen have been contributing their creativity to this genre and helping their readers broaden their reading experience vertically. Predominantly graphic novels are made in an illustrated way where not only the fictional storylines felt by the readers but the fictional world is also being watched especially through the lenses of the creators. Appupen's miscellany of absurd, bizarre and uncanny elements in this graphic novel is astonishing in Indian Graphic literature.