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**“Stigmatized soul: A tale of Forbidden passion and Redemption”.**

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Set in the austere backdrop of 17th century Ruritan Massachusetts, this novel is an intricate exploration of human nature, morality, and the inexorable ties that bind individuals to society. Within its pages, readers are confronted with a tapestry of themes that challenge conventions and probe the depths of the human soul. ‘The scarlet letter’ delves into the consequences of Sin and societal judgment through the story of Hester Prynne, a woman branded with a scarlet ‘A’ for her adulterous affair and her journey to redemption. Alongside Hester is tormented minister Arthur Dimondale, who grapples with his hidden guilt. The novel explores sin, guilt hypocrisy and redemption, highlighting the tension between personal desires and societal expectations. Through its characters, it offers a thought-provoking expectation of human nature, and the quest for personal redemption and transformative pour in a rigid moral landscape.

**Key Words:-** Sin, redemption and transformation conflict, hypocrisy, moral anguish self punishment and societal expectations.

1. The scarlet letter (1850) the romantic fiction, is written by renowned American novelist, short story writer, a master of the allegorical and symbolic tale Nathaniel Hawthorne. The present paper analyzes forbidden passion or love and regeneration in ‘The scarlet Letter’. Different Layers of Sin are presented in this novel. There are sins of the flesh, sins of weakness, sins of will and the intellect. Hawthorne drew on Puritan orthodox thought to examine the individual and collective consciousness under the pressure of suffering. His writing is marked by introspective depth and an urge to get inside the character, he created. He attempts to give a genuine picture of the times by presenting a realistic setting and real puritanical philosophies.

2. In ‘The Scarlet Letter’ Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale were in love each–other, but it was forbidden because Hester was married and Dimmesdale was the pastor of the

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community church. The experience of Hester and Dimmesdale recalls the story of Adam and Eve because, in both cases, sin results in expulsion and suffering. But it also results in knowledge—specially, in knowledge of what it means to be human. For Hester, The scarlet Letter functions as “her passport into regions where other women dared not tread” leading her to ‘speculate’ about her society and herself more ‘boldly’ than anyone else in New England. As for Dimmesdale the burden of his sin gives him “sympathies so intimate with the sinful brotherhood of mankind, so that his heart vibrate in unison with theirs” his eloquent and powerful sermons derive from this sense of empathy. Hester and Dimmesdale contemplate their own sinfulness on a daily basis and try to reconcile it with their lived experiences. The Puritan elders, on the other hand, insist on seeing earthly experience as merely an obstacle on the path of heaven. Thus, they view sin as threat to the community that should be punished and suppressed. Their answer to Hester’s sin is to ostracize her. Yet, Puritan society is stagnant, while Hester and Dimmesdale’s experience shows that a state of sinfulness can lead to personal growth, sympathy and understanding of others. Paradoxically these qualities are shown to be incompatible with a state of purity.

3. Forbidden love has conquered literature for decades, even centuries. After reading ‘The Scarlet Letter’, the most famous story that comes to mind is that of “ Romeo and Juliet” Shakespeare writes the tale of the two falling in love, despite their feuding families. When their blooming relationship is discovered, they are torn apart and must find a way to be together again. Tragically, after some miscommunication and tardiness, they both end up dying, for they can-not live without the other. Forbidden passions are star-crossed and that are forced to apart whether by families, culture, geographical distance or other factors. Obstacles are woven into the background of the characters, setting and the story .This historical fiction also provide a throw back to an era, where individuals were frequently stripped of all basic rights. Nothing comes close to the idea of allowing everyone to live life by their own standard. In this novel, we express our way of perceiving things and more. In the prologue Hawthorne said:- “From forth the fatal loins of their two foes, A pair of star-crossed lovers take their life” Perhaps they are “Thwarted by a malign star” or that the stars are working against the relationship.

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4. Hawthorne ingeniously employs this symbol 'A' to signify much more than just adultery; it encapsulates the broader theme of societal judgment. Hester's stoic acceptance of her guilt highlights the oppressive weight of expectations. The writer lays bare the hypocrisy that festers beneath the façade of moral righteousness. Characters such as Roger Chillingworth, whose quest for revenge masquerades as concern and the towns people who hide their own sins while condemning others exemplify the moral duality inherent in the society. This condemnation of hypocrisy serves as a stark reminder of the dangers of rigid orthodoxy and judgmental attitudes. It is an attempt to understand the 17th century society through their eyes of the 19th century society. This is justified from the text-where write wrote:-

5. In the 'Scarlet Letter', the Puritans saw the world through allegory. The Puritan community sees Hester as a fallen woman, Dimmesdale as a saint and would have seen the disguised Chillingworth as a victim- a husband betrayed. Instead, Hawthorne ultimately presents Hester as a woman who represents a sensitive woman being with a heart and emotions. Dimmesdale as a minister who is not very saint-like in private but, instead, morally weak and unable to confers his hidden sin, and Chillingworth as a husband who is the worst possible offender of humanity and single-mindedly pursuing an evil goal. Hawthorne's embodiment of these characters is denied by the Puritan mentality. At the end of the novel, even watching and hearing Dimmesdale's confession, many members of puritan Community still deny what they saw. Thus using his characters as symbols, Hawthorne discloses the grim underside of Puritanism that lurks beneath the public piety.

6. Hester Prynne is the public sinner who demonstrate the effect of punishment on sensitivity and human nature. She is seen as a culprit who deserves the ignominy of her moral choice. She struggles with her recognition of the letter's symbolism just as people struggle with their moral choices. The Paradox is that the society stigmatizes her with the mark of sin and, **in so doing** reduce her to a dull, lifeless woman whose characteristic colour is gray and whose vitality and femininity are suppressed over the seven years of her punishment, Hester's inner struggle changes from a victim to a decisive woman in tune with human nature when she meets Dimmesdale in the forest in chapter 18, Hawthorne says:- "The tendency of her fate and fortunes had been to set her free. The Scarlet Letter

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was her passport into regions where other women not tread” and “She had not known the weight until she felt the freedom.”

7. The letter “A” changes its meanings with the growth in Hester’s character. It is apparently a symbol of her sin. However, it radiates other meanings as Hester becomes a “transformed” person. “A pure hand needs no glove to cover it”. When Hester becomes a Ambassador of Mercy it means “Able” or even an “angel”. “The letter was the symbol of her calling. Such helpfulness was found in her,- so much power to do and power to sympathize - that many people refused to interpret the scarlet A by its original signification. They said that it meant Able; so strong was Hester Prynne, with a woman’s strength”.

8. Dimmesdale on the other hand, is the secret sinner whose public and private faces are opposites inside the good minister, however, is a storm raging between holiness and self torture. He is unable to reveal his sin. At worst, Dimmesdale is a symbol of hypocrisy and self-centered intellectualism; he knows what is right but has not enough courage to make himself do the public act. His inner struggle is intense. When he leaves the forest and realizes the extent of the devil’s grip on his soul, he passionately writes his sermon and makes his decision to confess. As a symbol he represents the secret sinner who fights the good fights in his soul and eventually wins. “Then, and there, before the judgement seat, thy mother and thou and I, must stand together. But the daylight of this world shall not see our meeting!

God knows; and he is merciful! He hath proved his mercy.

By giving me this burning torture to bear upon my breast!

By sending yonder dark and terrible old man, to keep the torture always at red-heat! By bringing me hither, to die this death of triumphant ignominy before the people!

Praised be his name! His will be done”.

9. Pearl is the strongest of these allegorical images because she is nearly all symbols, little reality. She represents three major themes:-

1. Passion

2. Penance

3. Redemption

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She exists because she is a product of passion. Dimmesdale sees Pearl as the “freedom of broken law”, Hester sees her as “the living hieroglyphic” of their sin; and the community sees her as the result of the devil’s work. She is the scarlet letter in the flesh, a reminder of Hester’s sin. As Hester tells the so called pious community leaders in chapter 8, “.....

“She is my happiness! she is my torture..... see ye not, she is the scarlet letter, only capable of being loved, and so endowed with a million-fold the power of retribution for my sin?”

When Dimmesdale confesses his sin in the light of the sun, Pearl is free to become a human being. All along, Hester felt there was this redeemable nature in her daughter, and here she sees her faith rewarded.

10. Chillingworth is consistently a symbol of cold reason and intellect unencumbered by human compassion. He is fiendish, evil and intent on revenge. In his first appearance in the novel, he is compared to a snake, an obvious allusion to the Garden of Eden. Chillingworth becomes the essence of evil when he sees the scarlet letter on Dimmesdale’s chest in chapter 10, where there is, “no need to ask how Satan comports himself when a precious soul is lost to heaven, and won into his kingdom”. In all these examples, the meaning of the symbol depends on the context and sometimes the interpreter.

11. “The scarlet letter’ remains a literary masterpiece that continues to captivate readers and critics alike. Literary Scholar Terence Martin argues that this journey toward redemption offers hope and serves as a “central means by which Hawthorne probes the human soul. Hester’s redemption comes through her resilience and charity work. Dimmesdale on the other hand, struggles with his guilt in secret, ultimately revealing his sin, achieving a form of redemption through confession and atonement. The novel explores the idea that redemption is possible even in the face of society’s judgement. Forbidden passion serves as the catalyst for the story leading to their inner struggle with guilt. Hawthorne delves deep into forbidden passion and the resulting stigmatization of the soul. Through the experience of Hester and Dimmesdale the novel highlights the struggle between societal norms and individual desires, as well as the potential for redemption and personal transformation. In nutshell Hawthorne explores good and evil, love and hate, and culture under the influence of Puritanism. The writer beautifully quotes the following lines to represent the personal transformation of the stigmatized soul where Hester candidly said:-

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“ Else, I should long ago have thrown off these garments of mock holiness, and have shown myself to mankind as They will see me at the judgement seat. Happy are you, Hester that wear the scarlet letter openly upon your bosom! Mine burus in secret! Thou little knowest what a relief it is, after the torment of a seven years’ cheat, to look into an eye that recognizes me for what I am!”

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