The Mysterious in Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince*

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Abstract

The present paper attempts to explore the element of the mysterious as depicted in Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince* (1943). The little prince's insights are an antidote to the scourge that afflicts humankind. Saint-Exupéry's stance against the growing materialistic mood of the twentieth century works as a counter-narrative to the pragmatic approach of grown-ups, obsessed as it is with facts and figures. The paper argues that in our rush to explain things in a clear, concise and transparent manner, we fail, at times, to realise that certain elemental features of life still remain mysterious. One must learn to celebrate the mysterious, inexplicable and unpredictable aspects of life also rather than attempting to demystify them every time.

Keywords: Mystery, Mysterious, Logic, Pragmatic.

Noted physicist Albert Einstein once called the "mysterious" as the "most beautiful experience" akin to "the fundamental emotion which stands at the cradle of true art and true science" and "[w]hoever does not know it and can no longer wonder, no longer marvel, is as good as dead, and his eyes are dimmed" (11). Books meant for children are among the first to stir their imagination. This could be one of the reasons why mystery plays such an important role in

children's stories. Writers of children's books play with words and plot lines that create a certain aura of mystery. This paper attempts to explore the element of the mysterious as depicted in Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince* (1943).

In literature, the genre of mystery has largely graduated from mystery plays in the late medieval period to detective mysteries, post-industrialisation. Edgar Allan Poe is usually considered among the first to bring mystery as a genre to readers followed by other celebrated writers such as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Agatha Christie. For children, this genre opened up when Edward Stratemeyer created the *Nancy Drew* and *Hardy Boys* series around 1930s.

Adrienne Gavin and Christopher Routledge in the Introduction to their edited anthology, *Mystery in Children's Literature: From the Rational to the Supernatural* (2001), categorise mystery writing into two parts – the rational and the supernatural (2). The former is where mystery is solved as per "the satisfaction of a character's and/or reader's intellect, causing the mystery to disappear," whereas in the latter, "mysteries are generally resolved to the satisfaction of a character's or reader's instincts and in which the mystery remains" (2). 'Rational' mystery attempts to explain events that are beyond comprehension while 'supernatural' mystery prompts one to accept that mysteries are an incomprehensible part of our lives. The use of mystery in children's literature has seen an almost progressive shift from certainty to uncertainty. Earlier, the 'rational' mysteries in children's tales generally ended with a positive assurance and a sense of security as "clear boundaries and rational explanations in early fantasy for children were conscious or unconscious compromises with prevailing educational views. To leave a child reader in uncertainty was pedagogically wrong" (Nikolajeva 71). Mysteries in stories/novels such as the *Nancy Drew* series, the *Famous Five* series and books by writers like Frances Hodgson Burnett and Erich Kästner

were tidily packaged with solutions, though these works were regarded as detective fiction. The element of mystery in these stories was addressed using logic and rationality.

However, the present day mystery series like *Goosebumps* and the *Point Horror* books by R.L. Stine differ from the previous ones in the sense that these contemporary stories incorporate less of certainty and resolution of problems, thereby making the transition from 'rational' mysteries to 'supernatural' mysteries. Commenting on the significance of mystery to a plot, E.M. Forster writes: "[m]ystery is essential to a plot, and cannot be appreciated without intelligence. To the curious it is just another 'and then—'. To appreciate a mystery, part of the mind must be left behind, brooding, while the other part goes marching on" [*sic*] (87). It appears almost as if more iconic a children's book, more elements of mystery it would contain. According to Gavin and Routledge, "[a]lthough mystery appears most obviously in genres such as detective, horror, or supernatural fiction, it also finds a presence, in some form or another, in almost all children's literature" (3). Thus, the lure of 'what comes next' is what drives the reader to continue with the story.

Prior to the mid-nineteenth century, children's literature was largely didactic in nature, leaving little room for mystery. However, the canon has since stayed away from blatant moralising. In fact, Gavin and Routledge opine that as the "loss of moral and religious certainties that characterised the twentieth century exposed the universe as inherently mysterious and inexplicable", truths began to be woven into the plots and made 'discoverable' independently by readers (Introduction 3). For authors to evoke a sense of mystery and awe in a story, they "must make readers aware of their incomprehension, while at the same time creating a sense that what is being conveyed is greater than the understanding of either the characters in the book or its readers" (Pinsent 15). Many times, Pinsent argues, the mystery

that is present in a children's story can be termed as religious when the "reader realizes that there is no natural explanation for the events which occur" [*sic*] (18). Here, an example would be the description of Aslan, the lion, in *Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950) by C.S. Lewis. Lewis introduces Aslan, one of the most important characters in the series, not 'in person' but rather through the reactions of other characters, giving rise to a feeling of mystery as well as awe among readers.

Another mode in which mystery unravels itself in a story is through coincidence as seen in *Black Beauty* (1877) by Anna Sewell. Towards the end of the book, after years of hardship, Black Beauty finally finds owners who are kind. The idea that hard work, trials and tribulations are rewarded in mysterious ways is integral to the plot in many children's tales. Such stories remind young readers that there exists a balance in the universe between forces of good and evil. Indeed, this aspect has attracted writers for long. Authors such as C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien have been known to tap into the huge reservoirs of Judaeo-Christian and Nordic beliefs. Using religious motifs and imagery from such beliefs, a large number of writers have crafted stories of good versus evil in a host of ways that illustrate that goodness not only wins but also produces a sense of awe. Thus, mystery is either shown as the unknown, inexplicable and indecipherable or it is represented in the form of a symbol.

Edward Stratemeyer, during the 1930s, gave young readers mystery series with characters such as Nancy Drew and Hardy Boys who were self-assured, adept, bold, daring and unafraid in their quest to uncover the truth. Things would always resolve themselves in the end with villains being punished for their dastardliness, and fortunes being restored to the innocent. Stratemeyer and his team framed the

stories around certain predictability with villains having character flaws such as avarice and conceit. This ability to 'know' what to expect next brings the reader back to the series: "[k]nowing already' precludes having to find out … and it is for this reason that knowingness is a defensive posture. We adopt this stance to protect ourselves from something we cannot know; in this case, what we cannot know is that human reason will not save us" (Coats 186-7). Contemporary writers of children's mystery stories such as R.L. Stine tend to have a different take on 'knowing' and being able to predict things. The mystery tales do not attempt to set things right or bring everything to an apple-pie order. As these stories come to a close, neither their characters nor the young readers are any wiser regarding either the mystery or about themselves than they did before the stories began.

Mystery, it can be said, is the apprehension of something beyond human logic, perception and reason. The existence of black holes, white holes, dark energy and dark matter in the field of physics would be a case in point. They might be considered a mystery because they can neither be seen by the naked eye nor felt. Yet, the fact remains that they do exist; just as something being invisible does not mean that it is a figment of one's imagination for "[e]mpty space isn't really empty – it holds a mysterious energy that can explain the cosmos. The problem … is that our brains might not be able to comprehend it" (Rees). Research in theoretical physics would certainly attest to the fact. Thus, mystery, arguably, is akin to the unknown.

The journey of mystery from Edgar Allan Poe to contemporary times appears heavily enmeshed with religious and supernatural imagery. However, with changing times and the growth of reason and rationality, mystery became the means to comprehend the unknown through the use of human reason and logic. The religious element of mystery seems to have waned in children's literature being produced in modern times. The reason for this has been the ability and willing-

ness of the human mind to comprehend the physical and the existential, with a particular emphasis on the moral universe; in the absence of religious and metaphysical certainties.

Children's literature in different parts of the world is marked by simplicity in language and content. However, children's literature in France distinctly stands out as well known French writers have had a history of penning fewer, but more meaningful, works of children's fiction that are either political or philosophical in nature, though the story itself remains appealing to children (Bell 1483). Among notable French writers writing for children is Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (1900-1944) who wrote the children's classic, *The Little Prince*. He was a pilot whose plane mysteriously disappeared while on a reconnaissance mission for the Allied forces during the Second World War.

Saint-Exupéry wrote *Le Petit Prince* (*The Little Prince*) in 1943. It was published in the U.S. in the same year whereas in France, the book saw the light of day after World War II. The book begins with the narrator, a pilot, stranded in the middle of the Sahara Desert. He meets a golden-haired child-man whom he calls the little prince. The narrator learns that the little prince has travelled through six different asteroids before reaching the Earth. The friendship between the little prince and the pilot-narrator helps the narrator learn valuable lessons that transform his life. In the end, when it is time for the little prince to return to his planet, the pilot-narrator is unable to reconcile with the thought of his friend's departure. However, he eventually learns to live with the lo**ss.**

In *The Little Prince*, the first creature that the little prince comes across on Earth is a snake. The little prince is so innocent

that he pities the snake because it is "no thicker than a finger", it has no "feet" and it "cannot even travel" (56). The snake, however, remarks: "I am more powerful than the finger of a king…. I can carry you farther than any ship could take you…. Whomever I touch, I send back to the earth from whence he came…. But you are innocent and true, and you come from a star…. You move me to pity–you are so weak on this Earth made of granite…. I can help you, some day, if you grow too homesick for your own planet" (56). The little prince asks the snake if it always speaks "in riddles", to which the snake emphatically responds, "I solve them all" (58). To be rid of all anxieties would be akin to solving all problems one faces on the Earth.

Snakes have generally been associated with mystery and dark magic through the centuries. Myths and folktales are replete with instances where the serpent is often cast as the evildoer. In some tales, the serpent appears as a monster with many heads at the entrance of a sacred cave guarding a treasure. The hero must slay the serpent before he can move on to rescue whatever treasure it was guarding. James Frazer, in his book *The Golden Bough* (1890), refers to many interesting tribal rituals where snakes are either looked at with dread or are revered and regarded as guardians. Even Indian mythology is full of such serpent-characters from the *Sheshnag*, the *Ichchadhari Nag* to *Vasuki*, the serpent-god coiled around Lord Shiva's neck.

In this context, primate behavioural ecologist Lynne Isbell's Snake Detection theory also comes to mind. She is of the view that ophidiophobia, that is, the fear of snakes is the most commonly prevalent fear among people despite the fact that they have never

come in close contact with the reptile (Isbell Introduction 3). Further in her Introduction, Isbell writes that this fear is not a learned response as "this singular fear of snakes goes way back, even farther back than six million years when our hominin line first appeared" (4). The co-evolution of primates and venomous snakes, spanning millions of years, has had a "long antagonistic history" as primates have, over this period, fallen prey to snakes (Isbell Preface x-xi). In response, primates developed certain characteristics that aided their chances of survival including sharper vision for the detection of snakes and better developed brains for a quicker response. Thus, it would appear that the inherent fear of snakes has been hardwired into our brains and can be traced in most cultures across the globe.

In the classical Greco-Roman world, however, the serpent was looked upon more positively. It seems unlikely that a poisonous snake could also provide therapeutic relief. But that is the myth surrounding Asclepius, son of Apollo and Coronis, the Greek god of medicine. He is often depicted as carrying a staff upon which is entwined a serpent. According to this myth, Asclepius was tutored by Centaur Chiron, who was a master in different forms of medicine. Also, Goddess Athena taught Asclepius skills to heal as well as to harm people. With time, he became so skilled at healing that he could bring people back from the dead. Asclepius eventually also realised that snakes are often depicted as guards at the entrances of temples. Consequently, he came to the understanding that snakes must also be keepers of all mysterious knowledge of the gods, the temples, the priests as well as the laypeople. Asclepius, therefore, decided to rear a snake. Since then, the serpent has closely been associated

with Asclepius, with healing and with medicine (Tsoucalas and Androutsos 55). Moreover, as per serpent physiology, 'sloughing', a stage wherein the snake sheds its skin, has come to be associated with fertility, renewal and rebirth.

Even so, the fear of the serpent is a relatively recent phenomenon, one created by the Western mythos. The most famous serpent in the history of humankind is the one that tempted Eve with the forbidden fruit. The serpent has long been regarded as deceitful and evil, an agent of Satan, if not Satan himself. Even tales from *The Panchatantra* portray snakes in a similar manner. For instance, a story in Kākolūkīya, the third book, "Frogs Go For a Ride on the Back of a Snake", has an almost Machiavellian quality to it wherein a "[w]eak-venomed" wily cobra, Mandavisa, craftily devours all the frogs in a pond by offering them piggy-back rides (Olivelle 137).

In *The Little Prince*, the reader comes across a yellow-coloured poisonous snake whose poison is so potent that with one sting, it can send a being 'back to the earth from whence he came'. It is important to analyse why Saint-Exupéry depicted the snake positively whereas as per Christian doctrines, a serpent is construed as the devil incarnate. The answer to this conundrum partly lies in the fact that Saint-Exupéry stayed away from Christianity throughout his life. In fact, Dermot O'Donoghue observes that Saint-Exupéry was disinclined towards religion since "… his thought sheered away instinctively from the sharp edges of dogma" (416). Saint-Exupéry was much too independent-minded in his thoughts to surrender completely to the Church. Had he accepted the Church, he would ultimately not have heeded to its doctrines. His beliefs gravitated

more towards human camaraderie and fellow feeling rather than religious doctrines.

In fact, Saint-Exupéry was once stranded in the Sahara with ten of his pilot-comrades, exactly at the spot where a year prior, two of their fellow-pilots had been murdered by tribesmen of the desert. Apprehensive of the three hundred-odd armed Moors in the vicinity, the crew built a makeshift camp to pass the night. While keeping an overnight vigil, Saint-Exupéry recalls how the "handful of men who possessed nothing in the world but their memories were sharing invisible riches" by way of jokes and stories (*Wind* 32). About brotherhood amongst pilots, and by extension, all men, Saint-Exupéry further writes: "[m]en travel side by side for years, each locked up in his own silence or exchanging those words which carry no freight—till danger comes. Then they stand shoulder to shoulder. They discover that they belong to the same family. They wax and bloom in the recognition of fellow beings. They look at one another and smile" [*sic*] (32). These are sentiments that would best describe the French writer. His religion was doing one's duty, universal brotherhood and love for humanity. That is perhaps the reason the snake aids the little prince in sending him back to his planet, though it might appear otherwise.

Another element of mystery in *The Little Prince* is the appearance of the water-well. Since the stranded pilot-narrator runs out of water and the little prince too is thirsty, both begin to search for a well in the Sahara desert even though the pilot-narrator finds it "absurd to look for a well … in the immensity of the desert" (73). As they appreciate the splendour of the desert, the little prince remarks:

"[w]hat makes the desert beautiful … is that somewhere it hides a well" (73). He is delighted to hear the narrator's reply: "[y]es…. the stars, the desert – what gives them their beauty is something that is invisible!" (74). Eventually, the pilot-narrator does find a well. To his surprise, the well is not one of the general hole-like wells found in the Sahara, but a village well even though there is no village in sight. This prompts him to observe: "[i]t is strange…. Everything is ready for use: the pulley, the bucket, the rope" (76). The little prince is, of course, jubilant to see the well. As he sets the pulley in motion, he remarks: "[d]o you hear…. We have wakened the well, and it is singing" (76). When the narrator raises the bucket of water for the little prince to drink, he notes: "[i]t was as sweet as some special festival treat. This water was indeed a different thing from ordinary nourishment. Its sweetness was born of the walk under the stars, the song of the pulley, the effort of my arms. It was good for the heart, like a present" (76-77).

Water is regarded as one of the essential elements of Nature in most cultures. According to Patricia Curd, in ancient Greece, it was the Presocratic philosopher Empedocles who, around the fifth century, carried forward the idea of a "cosmos" comprising the four "roots" found in nature – earth, water, air and fire ("Presocratic Philosophy"). It was Aristotle (384-322 B.C.E.) who subsequently came up with the fifth element, "aether" [*sic*], which was "inaccessible to earthly beings", and thus, played "no part in the constitution of mundane matter" (Ball 10). In this context, the ancient Indian tradition also speaks of the Pancha Tatva or the Panchabhuta, that is, the five elements that the physical world is composed of. "The whole visible

world is composed of one or more of these five elements", or the "Pañcabhūtas", namely, "Pṛthvī (earth), Ap (water), Tejas (fire), Vāyu (air) and Ākāśa (ether)", observes Vettam Mani ("PAÑCABHŪTA" 547). This is further labelled as the "Pāñcabhautikasiddhānta" or the "doctrine of five elements" (547). Water is an essential source of nutrients and is therefore regarded as most vital for the well being of the body. It rejuvenates and revitalises life. Indeed, water drawn from the well by the narrator is termed 'sweet' because it not only quenches thirst but also provides sustenance to the soul. The water alchemises into an elixir, replenishing the soul previously parched of love, friendship, kindness and warmth. Thus, the inexplicable presence of a well in the middle of a desert is no less than a mysterious miracle.

The mystery of what happens to us after death has been a matter of much deliberation for centuries. Philosophers, scholars and writers have been grappling with this eternal question. The fear of life after death has been most aptly expressed by William Shakespeare in *Hamlet*: "Who would fardels bear/To grunt and sweat under a weary life/But that the dread of something after death/(The undiscovered country from whose bourn/No traveller returns) puzzles the will/And makes us bear those ills we have/Than fly to others that we know not of" (3.1.75-81). Though death is the inevitable end of life, not many wish to dwell much upon it.

Death has been a part of many children's texts such as Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), *A Little Princess* (1905) and *The Secret Garden* (1911) by Frances Hodgson Burnett to name a few. However, life-after-death is seldom depicted in children's literature. For this reason, the manner in which death and life-after-

death have been explored in *The Little Prince* deserves special attention. Despite his own apprehensions, the little prince's approach towards preparing the narrator for his eventual death is rather unique. A short while prior to his death, the little prince shares with the narrator his need to return home that very night since: "[t]onight, it will be a year… My star, then, can be found right above the place where I came to the Earth, a year ago" (82). The little prince explains to the narrator of his impending death via the analogy of gazing at stars. He states that looking at the stars could mean different things to different people but they would have a unique meaning for the narrator because "[y]ou−you alone−will have the stars as no one else has them…. In one of the stars I shall be living. In one of them I shall be laughing. And so it will be as if all the stars were laughing, when you look at the sky at night … You−only you−will have stars that can laugh!" [*sic*] (83). Wisely, he consoles the narrator:

> And when your sorrow is comforted (time soothes all sorrows) you will be content that you have known me. You will always be my friend. You will want to laugh with me. And you will sometimes open your window, so, for that pleasure…And your friends will be properly astonished to see you laughing as you look up at the sky! (83)

Laughingly, the little prince continues: "[i]t will be as if, in place of the stars, I had given you a great number of little bells that knew how to laugh…" (83). To infuse the other's consciousness with such positive thoughts in the face of one's own imminent death is seldom

visible in life and very rarely evident in literary writings.

Stars have traditionally played an important role in many ancient cultures. Maritime history documents how sailors used the position of stars, especially the position of the Polaris or the Pole Star, to navigate the high seas. It was the North Star that guided the Magi to Baby Jesus. Centuries later, the same North Star helped Black slaves escape to freedom through the Underground Railroad. In this context, referring to the significance of stars in the ancient world, Toby Wilkinson observes in *The Rise and Fall of Ancient Egypt* (2010) that the pyramids in Egypt were uniquely designed, each pointing to the north. Wilkinson cites the example of the Great Pyramid of Giza, also called the Pyramid of Khufu, constructed around circa 2550 B.C. The narrow passages above the burial chamber led "to the outer edge of the pyramid, stopping just short of the world beyond" (69). These openings "had a purpose that was altogether loftier and more transcendent, for they pointed to the stars—more specifically to the culminations of Sirius (the dog star), a star in the constellation Orion, and two of the circumpolar stars that rotate around the celestial north pole" (69). The expertise of the ancient Egyptians in astronomy is well established. "[S]tars played an important part in state religion, especially in beliefs about the king's afterlife", writes Wilkinson (69). Of special interest were the "circumpolar stars" as they "alone remained permanently visible in the night sky, never setting, and were thus the perfect metaphor for the king's eternal destiny—a place in the great cosmic order of the universe that would endure forever" (69). Therefore, the pyramid meant for Khufu "was nothing less than a way of uniting heaven and earth for the everlasting well-being of

the king" (69). The star in *The Little Prince* also holds a peculiar meaning for the narrator. It refers to a mysterious and specialised connection that the stranded pilot-narrator shall, henceforth, share with stars in the sky.

At the end, there is no air of despondency or of melancholy as the narrator recounts how the little prince died when bitten by the snake: "[t]here was nothing there but a flash of yellow close to his ankle. He remained motionless for an instant. He did not cry out. He fell as gently as a tree falls. There was not even any sound, because of the sand" (87). After his death, the narrator surmises that the little prince is finally able to return to his planet since he does not "find his body at daybreak…. [and] [i]t was not such a heavy body" (87). Painful memories of losing loved ones appear to have seeped into Saint-Exupéry's life as also into his writings. It is, therefore, with bittersweet nostalgia that the narrator remembers the now-departed little prince: "[a]nd at night I love to listen to the stars. It is like five hundred million little bells…" (87). And just as the little prince wished, the narrator learns to look past his bereavement even though he misses his friend very much.

In this context, Anne Dodd makes an interesting observation: "[d]eath here is not final as far as the narrator is concerned…. Perhaps there is a hint here of a life after death, for the little prince does return to his planet and his rose; would that not be heaven for him?" [*sic*] (774-775). After all, to be home and near his beloved 'rose' would indeed be a blessing, like being in heaven, for the little prince. This was the only way the little prince thought he could reach his planet. To say that the narrator finally gets over his grief would not be

correct. He still feels the loss of his friend dearly and considers an individual fortunate to have found a true friend. However, the manner in which he handles his friend's death and the resultant loss is truly commendable.

Saint-Exupéry's personal experiences regarding friendship are remarkably similar to those of the narrator in *The Little Prince*. The author writes that "hope of joy" can be found only in "human relations" for: "[i]f I draw up the balance sheet of the hours in my life that have truly counted, surely I find only those that no wealth could have procured me. True riches cannot be bought. One cannot buy…friendship…of a companion to whom one is bound forever by ordeals suffered in common" (*Wind* 30-31). Thus, to think that death is the end of life would not really be correct. Life and death are but two sides of the same coin – one beginning where the other ends and vice versa.

The idea of the modern world rests upon man's ability to reason and to use logic in order to solve problems. However, in our rush to explain things in a clear, concise and transparent manner, we fail, at times, to realise that certain elemental features of life still remain mysterious. This aspect is evocatively highlighted in William Wordsworth's poem *The Prelude*, Book One: "There is a dark/Invisible Workmanship that reconciles/Discordant elements, and makes them move/In one society" (lines 340-345). It is this 'Invisible Workmanship', in addition to reason and rationality, which gives meaning to life. Harold Bloom, in reference to this poem, rightly observes that "[i]f the human heart, in its common, everyday condition, will love and trust the phenomenal world, then that world

will never betray it" (Introduction 4). Thus, acknowledgement, and acceptance, of such mysteries could certainly help enhance our understanding of life. It can be argued that the preponderance of reason has led to a distrust of things that are beyond the realm of logic, coherence and comprehension. While reflecting upon the task of thinking, Martin Heidegger, in his essay "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking", borrows Aristotle's line of thought from *Metaphysics*, Book IV (1006 a): "For it is uneducated not to have an eye for when it is necessary to look for a proof and when this is not necessary" (324). In other words, one needs to develop the discerning eye for knowing when to ask questions and when to trust the cosmic energies working in the universe. For instance, when it comes to nature, it is important to trust the flower and the way in which it reveals itself rather than getting caught up in discovering its scientific composition. Here, the use of logic and intellect would diminish the experience of appreciating the beauty of the flower in all its splendour. In *The Little Prince*, when the stranded pilot-narrator chances upon the little prince in the middle of Sahara, he remarks: "[w]hen a mystery is too overpowering, one dare not disobey" (8). Attempting to rationalise the mysterious appearance of the little prince in the middle of the desert, miles away from human habitation, would take away from the beauty of the tale. Further, in this context, Lama Anagarika Govinda, scholar and teacher of Tibetan Buddhism writes: "[a] mystery can be experienced and yet remain inexplicable. It is not a mystery because it is something hidden and unknowable, but because it is too great for words" (208). Therefore, one must also learn to celebrate the mysterious, inexplicable and unpredictable

aspects of life rather than attempting to demystify them every time.

In a way, Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince* can be regarded as a clarion call for humankind to reconnect with the ongoing primordial elements of nature that form the continuum of life. Unless we develop a deeper connection with these primal elements that operate through the mystery of life, we will remain highly superficial creatures caught in the pragmatics of life. Although being practical is an important part of life, yet it should not be allowed to overpower or rationalise those elements that enrich human life. A pragmatic approach cannot ever access the kernel of life. The core, therefore, remains connected with the mysterious flow of life and everything in it that we seldom focus upon. Commenting on the ebbs and flows of life's experiences, John Harris states: "[f]or all of us, life has its deserts as well as its oases; and for most of us, the dry expanses must simply be endured, not necessarily without complaint, only without surrender. The blind, bare act of faith in something beyond the horizon sustains us" (141-142). However, "[f]or zealots of Saint-Exupéry's stamp", Harris writes, "such faith is not enough" as "[t]hey do not endure the ordeal but revel in it, and their vision of the beyond resounds with spring water and dances with houris" [*sic*] (142). Thus, as the book shows, it is imperative that we do not get dissociated from the eternal flux of life since there are bound to be junctures in life where reason and logic become insufficient instruments to deal with its vagaries. *The Little Prince* is a reminder that we tune ourselves with those mysterious elements of life that continue to remain an enigma.

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