



DIVE INTO THE WAVES OF ADVENTURE: JOURNEY OF *MOANA* AND *LUCA* THROUGH THE OCEAN

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Abstract: Water is indispensable for the survival of all living beings in the world. Water is the central element that children would love to play with as they encounter innumerable experiences playing on the seashore. Ocean plays a significant role in Children's literature. The blue colour of the sea and the sound of high waves quickly gain children's attention. Moana and Luca are Walt Disney films in which the ocean plays a prominent role. The paper aims to research children's adventures and fantasy in the sea, the importance of nature and the discovery of identity, and highlight the significance of blue humanities in these movies.

Keywords: Blue humanities, Moana, children's literature, adventure, identity.

Water has always played an influential role in literature, in different genres, from poems to plays like Tennyson's *The Brook*, Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, and Hemmingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*. Water appears in literature from the ancient period to the contemporary age embodying different things. The ocean has been a source of enchantment and inspiration in children's literature. Its vastness, mystery, and beauty have captivated young readers for generations, and many children's books have used the ocean as a backdrop for stories that impart important lessons and messages. The influence of the ocean in children's literature can be seen in several ways like adventure, exploration, imagination, fantasy, cultural diversity, emotions and so on. The ocean is vast, inaccessible and difficult to understand. The use of water symbolises rebirth, fertility, or purity.

The paper aims to analyse the significance of blue humanities in the movies *Moana* and *Luca* by highlighting the adventures and fantasy in the ocean. It also examines the significance of the ocean in the movies and how it helps develop the children's moral characterisation and explore their identity.

Blue Humanity is an interdisciplinary approach that explores the relationships between humans and the oceans, encompassing various fields such as literature, history, cultural studies, environmental studies, and more. In the context of the Disney animated film *Moana*, the blue humanities perspective can be applied to analyse how the film portrays the ocean as a central character and how it represents its significance to the Polynesian culture and its people. The movie reveals the complicated relationship with oceanic cultural knowledge.

Moana is a 2016 American computer-based animated fantasy adventure film produced by Walt Disney Animation Studio. Moana means "ocean" in Polynesian languages. The ocean plays a significant role in the movie as it is personified and portrayed as a living entity. The movie begins with the storytelling of Moana's Gramma. She retells the story, "In the beginning, there was only ocean until the mother island emerged, Te Fiti. Her heart felt the greatest power ever known. It could create life itself" (*Moana* 00:00:53). Some tried to steal the heart of Te Fiti so that they could confiscate the power. *Moana* draws on Polynesian culture and mythology, showcasing the deep connection between the Polynesian people and the ocean. The character of Maui, the demigod of wind and sea, who possess the power with the help of his magical fish hook, is also a mythical character in the Polynesian culture. According to Smith and Steve Mentz, *Moana* is a vehicle of islander culture and ideas (11). In the Movie, Maui stole the heart of Te Fiti, and everything began to crumble, giving birth to complete darkness. It shows the greed of human beings and the after effect that people are facing due to natural exploitation. Maui tried to escape with the heart, but Te Ka, the demon of earth and fire, fought with him, which led to the loss of the heart of Te Fiti and the magical fish hook in the ocean. Gramma says that all this happened thousand years ago, and the islands, one by one, are facing its consequences, and their Island will also be suffering one day.

Moana's first encounter with the ocean was when she was a child. Water is the basis of all energy, and Moana adored the ocean from her childhood. One day she helped a young turtle attacked by birds by covering the turtle with a leaf and leading it to the sea. Suddenly there was a change in the water movement in the ocean, which gifted her with beautiful seashells by making way for her to the sea. There she saw the young turtle happily moving with its mother. The ocean plays with her and presents her with the heart of Te Fiti. The movie depicts a close connection between the ocean and Moana.

Motunui is the beautiful Island where Moana and her family reside. The entire people of the village depend on the nature of their survival. They go fishing, collect coconuts, and use it for making various products. They believed that Island gave them what they

needed. As the story once told by Moana's Gramma, their Island had also started to face problems. The coconuts they collected were useless, pulling fewer fish from the ocean. The movie also exhibits the repercussion of natural exploitation and how it affects people. "The natural exploitation is portrayed symbolically with Te Fiti as the mother nature that has an immaculate power to create life, but unfortunately, the power she has have been removed from her by a demigod Maui" (Akhiyat 62). Gramma always advised Moana to listen to the voice inside her. Moana always felt that the ocean is calling her. So, as the chief of the Island, Moana is determined to help the people, and she goes to the ocean without her father's approval and moves beyond the reef. However, the sea was rough, and she was washed to her Island. Later Moana learnt from her Gramma that they were once voyagers, and they stopped the voyaging due to the issues that arose with the loss of the heart of Te Fiti. The "world of our ancestors was a large sea full of places to explore, to make their homes in, to breed generations of seafarers like themselves. People raised in this environment are at home with the sea...." (Perez)

Gramma is optimistic towards the future and says that one day someone will travel beyond their reef, find Maui and restore the heart of Te Fiti. To Moana's surprise, Gramma handed over the heart of Te Fiti to her. Then Gramma discloses that she was there when the ocean chose Moana to complete this monumental task. She insists that Moana find Maui and restore the heart of Te Fiti. Soon Gramma is on her deathbed and gifted a necklace with a pendant which can place the deity's heart, and she starts her journey through the ocean to find Maui. Moana is a Disney princess who does not wait for her prince charm to rescue her from their blaspheme. This journey shows the close intimacy between Moana and the ocean. The ocean plays a supporting character in the movie. It collaborates with Moana to end the tribulation and restore the heart of Te Fiti. Ocean awakes Moana when she is asleep, and she also asks for the help of the ocean when in trouble. During a thunderstorm, the same happened, and the ocean washed her to the place of Maui.

Amid this, the ocean becomes its most credible companion for Moana. It is depicted as a guiding force and a power source, assisting the main character, Moana, on her journey to save her people and restore the deity's heart. This portrayal of the ocean as an active character goes beyond the conventional anthropocentric view of the ocean as a passive backdrop. It reflects a more ecocentric perspective that acknowledges the agency and vitality of the natural world, which aligns with the principles of the blue humanities. The ocean is sentient in the movie, and it can grab objects. It also appears to have human traits like head nodding and high five to encourage Moana. Throughout the expedition, the ocean assists Moana in accomplishing her task. The ocean also indicates irritation when Heihei, Moana's chicken, drowns in the water numerous times and puts it inside the basket.

On the other hand, Maui was also stuck doing nothing without his fishhook for the last thousand years. The power of the ocean and its support to Moana to restore the heart can be seen in the scenes where Maui refuses to help her. Whenever Maui throws her into the ocean, it will put her back in the boat. The journey of Maui and Moana is adventurous as they encounter several enemies like Kakamora, the murdering little pirates and Tamatoa, who has Maui's fish hook.

Their journey is so arduous that they have to fight with Te Ka, and Maui's fish hook has broken, and he drops the plan to help Moana and restore the heart as he cannot do anything without his magical fish hook. Moana was heartbroken and gave back Te Fiti's heart to the ocean. When the spirit of Gramma emerges from the ocean and talks to Moana, she changes her mind, recollects Te Fiti's heart, and then sculls the boat to restore it. In the final battle, Maui and the ocean helped her to reach Mother Island. Shockingly Moana learned that Te Fiti was gone and the demon they were fighting was Te Fiti. "The ocean – and indeed water imagery more broadly - has long held connotative meanings of calm and peace, amid holding wider the symbolic meaning of life itself. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that the ocean in Moana, with its ability to neutralise the threat of the lava, is the peacekeeper between Moana and Te Ka" (Durham). With Moana's approval, the ocean allows her to reach Te Fiti and finally restores the heart.

Moana became successful when she crossed the horizon to find Mother Island. Everything becomes expected as earlier. The flowers begin to bloom in the Motunui. Te Fiti gifted Moana a boat to return and Maui a new fish hook. He apologised to Mother Island for whatever happened. The people of Motunui welcome Moana back, and they again become voyagers by reconstructing their identity. As explorers, they voyage to discover a new island by singing "We Know the Way", celebrating their voyage and their pride in discovering their new identity. Moana is steered by her passion to explore the ocean and follow in the footsteps of her ancestors.

The film sketches the ocean as a source of identity, spirituality, and knowledge for the Polynesian people, who have a long history of seafaring and navigation. The film highlights the importance of traditional ecological knowledge and the intergenerational transmission of cultural practices, including navigation techniques, as integral parts of the Polynesian relationship with the ocean.

The blue humanities perspective also raises questions about environmental issues and human impacts on the ocean. In *Moana*, the ocean is pictured as polluted and corrupted by the actions of humans, specifically the theft of the heart of Te Fiti by the demigod Maui. This portrayal reflects the film's underlying environmental message about the consequences of human actions on the health and well-being of the ocean and the need for responsible stewardship and conservation. It can also be applied to analyse how *Moana* depicts the ocean as a character with agency, portrays its significance to Polynesian culture, and raises awareness about environmental issues. The film provides a platform for exploring the complex relationships between humans and the ocean and how cultural, spiritual, and environmental aspects intertwine our understanding of the seas.

Luca is a 2021 animated movie produced by Disney Pixar. Water plays a crucial role in the movie as it revolves around the lives of sea creatures named sea monsters by humans. The film takes place in a small coastal town in Italy where the sea creatures do not move to the water's surface for fear of land monsters or human beings. Throughout the movie, the characters interact with water in various ways, from swimming and diving to boating and fishing. The title character, Luca, is a sea creature under the guidance of his parents, especially Luca's mother, who thinks the human world is dangerous, and they take care of him not to let go above the water's surface. "Looming against his desires are his mother and father's fear from living by a human, sea-monster-hunting oceanfront village. Nevertheless, dry world affectations fall to the ocean floor: an alarm clock, a playing card, and a wrench. These items draw Luca closer to the surface" (Daniels).

One day he met Alberto, another sea creature who can transform into a human when on land. Luca was astounded to know he could transform into a human kid when not in water. Alberto acquainted him with what he knew, like how to walk like humans, inhale the air, and things in nature like the sun, clouds, sky, and other human belongings — a bond of fellowship developed between them. Water also serves as a metaphor for the transformative power of friendship. Both craved a Vespa to travel worldwide and have an independent life and freedom. However, Luca's parents learnt about their friendship and decide to send him with his Uncle Ugo. Alberto and Luca flee to Portorosso via the ocean, and it is a source of joy and wonders for the characters and a means of escape and adventure. Water serves as a symbol of freedom and self-discovery. Luca and Alberto long to explore the world beyond the confines

of their aquatic home. For them, the ocean denotes the possibility of adventure and the chance to discover who they are. In Portorosso, they met Giulia, who introduced them to the Portorosso race. Giulia dreams of winning the cup, while Luca and Alberto desire to get the Vespa offered as the race prize. The Vespa shows the desire for freedom both the young boys wish for and the unobstructed expedition they could execute on the land as they accomplished in the water. The town's annual triathlon catalyses the story's conflict, as Luca and Alberto dream of competing. They team up with Giulia for the race, and their most significant challenge is to live like humans, as they do not even know how to eat like humans. However, they must conceal their real identities from the townspeople who fear and hunt the creatures in the ocean. Throughout the Movie, Luca and Alberto's affinity evolves and deepens as they share new experiences and face challenges together.

Luca's parents arrive at Portorosso town in search of him, and they splash and plunge the young kids into the water to see whether Luca is among them. Luca's curiosity about learning is also depicted in the movie when he learns about the stars and universe from Giulia and wishes to go to school with her. Unfortunately, Alberto obstructs him from his passion for acquiring an education. They argue, leading Giulia to learn that both are sea monsters, and Alberto departs from the town.

Later, Luca promises Alberto that he will participate in the race and win the Vespa as they wish. He splits the team with Giulia and completes the first two rounds. Unluckily, it started to rain in the last cycling round, and Alberto tried to help his friend and won the race. Everyone learns that both are sea monsters, and Giulia's father rescued them from the human attack. Luca unites with his parents, allowing Luca to join Giulia at the school while Alberto stays with Giulia's father. The friendship between Luca and Alberto is like the ocean and both unpredictable and unifying, bringing them closer together even as it tests their limits.

The water in *Luca* represents the possibility of adventure, self-discovery, and the transformative power of friendship. The movie highlights the importance of the ocean, its creatures, and how human actions can affect their habitat. The relationship between humans and sea creatures is also explored, emphasising the need for empathy, understanding, and acceptance.

The Blue Humanities examines how people interact with water and how water shapes cultural practices and identity. In *Luca*, water plays a significant role in shaping the characters' identities and relationships. For instance, Luca's love of the ocean and his passion for exploring the world beyond his small town motivates him to take risks and defy his parents' wishes. Overall, the movie showcases the power of water and its influence on the human experience. The movie's themes of acceptance, empathy, and environmental awareness align with the blue humanities' focus on fostering a deeper connection between humans and the natural world.

In conclusion, the ocean significantly influences children's literature, providing adventure, environmentalism, imagination, emotions, and cultural diversity. Through books that feature the ocean as a theme or setting, young readers can explore and appreciate the wonders of the sea while also learning important lessons about life, the environment, and the world around them. Both movies highlight the moral of preserving nature and the earth, which sustains our life. As children are our future, we must teach them the consequence of protecting natural resources and being generous for a bright life. Water brings the boys and Moana to reconcile with their families and self-discovery of their identity.

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