



## The Incompleteness of the Title of the Story, The Selfish Giant by Oscar Wild: A Critical Analysis.

Rabindranath Das

Assistant Teacher

School Education Department

**Abstract:** In the canon of English Literature, especially in children's literature, the story of "The Selfish Giant" is immensely popular as it has an important moral message that is: Punishment for selfishness and Reward for kindness. It is the title which should be responsible to reflect that moral message of the story to its global readers in a complete sense. But here the title, "The Selfish Giant" semantically reflects only the selfishness of the Giant whereas it is seen in the story that the Giant becomes kind from almost the mid-portion of the story and remains kind still the end. So, this paper simply tries to uphold the fact that, to the global secular readers the title of this story is a little bit incomplete in the general sense as the story not only talks about selfishness but also talks about kindness. The complete title could have been "The Selfish Turned Kind Giant."

**Index Terms - Title, Incompleteness, Morality, Message, Children's Literature, Digital Literature, Online Study, Reader.**

### INTRODUCTION

According to many literary scholars and critics 'Title' plays a vital role in carrying the key message of a literary text. "A title is not just a word, a phrase, a sentence but a kind of mono or poly-lexeme unit, which is the 'key' to the ideological context of the text." "Titles are sometimes which guides to the interpretation of the literary works, altering our listening, seeing or reading of the work, pointing the ways to its correct perception." So, the completeness of the title matters. Here the title "The Selfish Giant" by Oscar Wild has been taken for a critical analysis.

The story starts with the natural description of the Giant's Garden and the children playing in it in the absence of the Giant. One day the Giant came back after visiting his friend the Cornish Ogre with whom he had stayed for seven years. "When he arrived he saw the children playing in the garden. 'What are you doing here?' he cried in a very gruff voice, and the children ran away. 'My own garden is my own garden,' said the Giant; 'any one can understand that, and I will allow nobody to play in it but myself.' So he built a high wall all round it, and put up a notice-board.

TRESPASSERS WILL BE PROSECUTED."

Then the author declared "He was a very selfish giant." That means the Giant has become selfish now. The children become very unhappy. The story proceeds and it is seen that the 'Nature' starts giving mental punishment to the Giant through various ways. In his garden the 'Spring' does not come, the 'Trees' forgets to bloom, the 'Flowers' do not dance, 'Sweet Breeze' does not blow, the 'Birds' stop singing. Neither 'Summer' nor the 'Autumn' comes. Only the 'Winter,' the 'North Wind,' the 'Snow,' the 'Frost' and the 'Hail' start reigning in the garden. The Giant becomes incredibly sad, and this sadness is his mental punishment. After that suddenly one day a change occurs. "He saw a most wonderful sight. Through a little hole in the wall the children had crept in, and they were sitting in the branches of the trees. In every tree that he could see there was a little child. And the trees were so glad to have the children back again that they had covered themselves with blossoms, and were waving their arms gently above the children's heads. The birds were flying about and twittering with delight, and the flowers were looking up through the green grass and laughing. It was a lovely scene. Only in one corner it was still winter. It was the farthest corner of the garden, and in it was standing a little boy. He was so small that he could not reach up to the branches of the tree, and he was wandering all round it, crying bitterly. The poor tree was still covered with frost and snow, and the North Wind was blowing and roaring above it. "Climb up, little boy!" said the Tree, and it bent its branches down as low as it could; but the boy was too tiny. And the Giant's heart melted as he looked out. "How selfish I have been!" he said; "now I know why the Spring would not come here. I will put that poor little boy on the top of the tree, and then I will knock down the wall, and my garden shall be the children's playground for ever and ever." He was really very sorry for what he had done." Now here the true realization takes place in the heart of the Giant. He starts becoming kind to the children. As the story proceeds further, it is seen that he undertakes many kind activities to make the children happy again. He now becomes very happy, and this happiness is his reward. He afterwards remains kind till the end of the story, and he finally receives a special reward that is – after his death, he is taken to 'paradise' by 'the child' (Symbolizing 'GOD').

After reading the whole story, a global secular reader can ask the question - 'Is the title complete?' The proverb goes – "Don't judge a book by its cover." Then it also can be said here "Don't judge a story by its title," if the completeness of the title of the story "The Selfish Giant" is accepted. According to some scholars, "The latest trend of the twenty first century is the study of literature through the digital platform, introduced during the past modern era. This literature is created to promote the exchange of ideas and to increase easy access to literary works through e-books, blogs, webpages, including audio and graphics. The benefits of digital literature are easy accessibility, and the digital contents are engaging and inspiring because of their interactivity. Moreover, online text and webpages are never out of stock." This means the present generation globally is highly influenced by internet system.

Online study is the current demand of the modern students of this present generation. In this digital world, the number of entertaining items such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, Disney+ Hotstar, Amazon Prime Video, Netflix and other social media and OTT platforms has increased so much that the people have started feeling that they do not have enough time to spend more on a single entertaining item.

With this respect, it can be easily understood how important role, the completeness of the 'title' in a story or any literary text, can play in this fast-moving digital generation. Especially modern children who spend a considerable time on digital platform, select stories for their reading by judging the titles of the stories. Here the mistake can take place as far as the title of the story 'The Selfish Giant' is concerned because they may think that the story would be only about the selfishness of the Giant and they may avoid reading it as they are generally advised not to watch, hear, or read any negative thing on internet. Now the problem is- if they avoid reading the story, they will be deprived of a great moral lesson that if we become selfish, 'Nature' will punish us and if we become kind, everyone including 'Nature' and 'GOD' will love us.

## **CONCLUSION**

If the world-renowned author Oscar Wild were alive today, he would have probably understood the need of this present digital generation and accordingly would have completed the title. Now the story belongs to the public domain. And it is up to the present literary scholars and critics across the globe to think of the bad and good of the story and its title and accordingly take necessary measures so that the present generation and the coming future generation would not be deprived of the great moral lesson or message due to mistaking the title negatively and avoiding reading the story because of the incompleteness of the title. One probable complete title of the story can be – The Selfish turned Kind Giant – to a globe secular reader. Now the modern literary scholars and critics across the world can think of this completeness of the title of the story.

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