

Supernaturalism in Coleridge's Major Poems

Mohammad Shirajul Islam
Assistant Professor, Department of English
Habibullah Bahar University College, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Abstract:



ST Coleridge (1772-1832)

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) is worldwide known as a romantic poet and his name, fame, recognition and appreciation all are evolved around the works 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner', 'Kubla Khan', 'Christabel' and 'Biographia Literaria'. But the theme that haunts the readers and researchers always is supernaturalism. While going through the poems 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner', 'Kubla Khan' and 'Christabel', readers are awestricken and they are in willing suspension of disbelief. Here, this study will be conducted by applying content analysis as proposed by Koul (1984). Content analysis reflects the phenomenon, elements and comparison of the concern topics. It is thus defined as 'documentary activity' or 'information analysis'. The study uses the data which are non-manipulated variables because they are not the result of experiment and these are classified as qualitative type. Data and related information will be collected from the mentioned works and established publications. This article will highlight the supernatural elements- unfolded or lurking, in the poems- 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner', 'Kubla Khan' and 'Christabel'.

Keywords: Romantic, Supernaturalism, Willing Suspension of Disbelief, Content Analysis, Documentary Activity, Non-Manipulated Variables.

1. Introduction:

Supernaturalism is obviously a mysterious thing and often it puzzles any person or reader. What is supernatural thing, or what is it like, or how does it behave, or is there anything in this world as supernatural, all these are common but bewildering questions. It mostly haunts our mind- is there anything beyond the common concept of nature? What is ghost or ghastly things are then? Why do people, writers, dramatists and poets use gothic, supernatural elements and epic machinery in their works? All these are questions from our sheer curiosity or ignorance of the topic. Then, what is supernatural? The answer is - the things which are beyond natural or beyond the cognizance of general nature, are supernatural. According to Wikipedia- 'supernatural refers to phenomena or entities that are beyond the laws of nature. The term is derived from Medieval Latin **supernaturalis**, from Latin **super-**(above, beyond, or outside of)+ **natura**(nature). According to **Oxford Dictionary** - 'the supernatural events, forces, or powers that cannot be explained by the laws of science and that seem to involve gods or magic.' According to Cambridge Dictionary- 'supernatural is the forces or events that cannot be explained by science.'

1.1 Background of this study:

Coleridge's recognition as a romantic poet lies mainly on his application of supernatural elements in his poems 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' and 'Kubla Khan'. Actually, the supernatural elements are mostly mystic and hypothetical. It cannot be explained through nature related agents. In the above mentioned poems, Coleridge uses paranormal elements in different shapes and forms. Even a common used word denotes paranormal thing. Agents, environment, place, figure, a particular

pronoun, heavenly agents, spirit, ghastly ship, ancient saint, staff of the saint, sinking of the ship, isolation, red lips, Death, life in Death, light in the water, seraph band, rowing the ship, departing souls, coming back of the souls, working with the ancient mariner, jerking of the ship, cause of fainting, casting dice, phantom sheep, two voices in the sky, dead albatross, water snakes, glittering eyes of the mariner, long grey beard, plying the skip, sound of the departing souls, appearance of the old mariner, hypnotizing ability of the mariner, pleasure dome, Alps river, cavern of the river, shadow of the pleasure dome, savage place, demon, demon lover maiden, Abyssinian maid, pleasure dome in the sky, flashing eyes, moving hair, heavenly manna, dream, poem in dream, losing the lines of this poem after 53 lines, ancestral cry, war sound, , gothic setting and atmosphere, the forest, castle, moaning dog, Geraldine, Sir Leoline's howling dog, snake-like body, enchanting power of Geraldine's glance, words and touch, unfinished poem, etc.

1.2 Problem of the study:

Taking reference to the study of the three mentioned poems, basically two questions arise in our mind.

- i) Why will we consider “**The Rime of the Ancient Mariner**”, “**Kubla Khan**” and “**Christabel**” as poems of supernaturalism?
- ii) What supernatural elements are found in these poems?

1.3 Objectives of the study:

The study aims at justifying the supernatural elements in Coleridge's three poems “**The Rime of the Ancient Mariner**”, “**Kubla Khan**” and “**Christabel**”.



i) To reveal that the poems “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”, “Kubla Khan” and ‘Christabel’ are the poems of supernaturalism.

ii) To reveal the elements of supernaturalism such as- ghastly sheep, power of the old mariner's glittering eyes, long grey beard, presence of water spirit, skeleton ship, two crew in the ship of death, role of Death and Life in Death, two hundred dead sailors, returning the departed souls in dead bodies, rowing the ship, two voices in the sky, seraph band, water snakes, the saint, pleasure dome, Alps river, cavern, savage place, demon, beloved of the demon, ancestral cry, floating pleasure dome, flashing eyes, moving hair, heavenly manna, dream, missing the lines, unfinished poem, gothic setting and atmosphere, the forest, castle, moaning dog, Geraldine, Sir Leoline's howling dog, snake-like body, enchanting power of Geraldine's glance, words and touch, etc. in the poems ‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’, ‘Kubla Khan’ and ‘Christabel’.

1.4 Significance of the study:

All poet's endeavor to impart messages to the readers and his/her (P) purpose is to give them (R) pleasure and moral lessons. Coleridge applies his literary device ‘Willing suspension of disbelief’ in “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” in “Christabel” and complex supernatural elements in “Kubla Khan” to make his goal fulfill. Supernaturalism is a theme that can be felt, understood and imagined or sometimes seen in our ordinary rustic or oftentimes in urban secluded life. But it cannot be shown, explained or if explained, the things remain ambiguous or unintelligible. Coleridge is the poet who has made the supernatural things convincing and plausible to the readers and listeners by his unparalleled writing skill. The study of the poem “Kubla Khan” bewilders the readers because of its narrative style, subject matter, various relevant references and high imagination and supernaturalism.

2.1 Literature Review:

Supernaturalism is a complex term which is to be believed and psychologically felt or

imagined. It can be felt or seen as a bodied or unbodied or of changed forms. They may appear in the-shapes of God/Gods, goddesses, angels or in the shape of particular or uncertain animals. Theism is related to it. But the doctrine denies the existence of any supernatural elements. Even though, the existence of supernatural elements is found in the mind of men whether in conscious or subconscious way. Different writers and poets have made it more plausible and convincing. When we go through the poems of S. T Coleridge, particularly the poems-**“The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”**, **“Kubla Khan”** and **“Christabel”**, we can find the ample uses of supernatural elements there. In the poem **“The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”** the presence of supernatural elements do not make us bewildered, rather they assert that this poem is incomplete and baseless without the dominant and active presence of various paranormal elements. The poem starts with a hideous supernatural flavour. S.T Coleridge starts this poem as –

**“It is an ancient Mariner
And he stoppeth one of three.
‘By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,
Now wherefore stopp’st thou me?’”** (Lines-01-4)

In this stanza, the words ‘It’, ‘long grey beard’, ‘glittering eye’, all exclaim supernatural essence. Ancient mariner is an old sailor and overall a man. Against him, the poet should have used the pronoun ‘He’- but he (Poet) uses ‘It’ that means the ancient mariner is not presented as a man rather something else, that means he is a supernatural agent. If we can contemplate the appearance of the ancient mariner and remember the comment of the marriage guest, it becomes clear to us that the ancient mariner looks like a ghost or the like (line-228-229). So, the word ‘it’ for the old mariner is justified. The marriage guest declares that he is stopped by the long grey beard and glittering eye, not eyes. It means that there was a mysterious and supernatural power in the long beard and in one of his eyes. The third stanza of this poem tells us that the

appearance of the old mariner was like a supernatural creature. The lines are-

**“He holds him with his skinny hand,
‘There was a ship,’ quoth he,
‘Hold off! Unhand me, grey bearded loon,’
Eftsoons his hand dropt he.”** (Lines-9-12)

Here the phrases ‘skinny hand’, and ‘grey bearded loon’, make it clear that the ancient mariner had skinny hand and he is an unwanted crazy man having white coloured beard. It seems that he is not a common man but a supernatural image having corporal body with skinny hand and long grey beard. When the wedding guest became angry with the old mariner for holding his hand without permission, the old mariner just then dropped his hand and held him with his glittering eye, a tool of supernatural power. The wedding guest was hypnotized by the old mariner and the guest behaved as a booby of three years old. The old mariner’s this spell- binding- power makes us bewildered and we thrust ourselves in ‘willing suspension of disbelief’. The narrator tells-

**“He holds him with his glittering eye-
The Wedding-Guest stood still
And listens like a three years’ child
The Mariner hath his will.”** (Line13-16)

The ship of the mariners started from a clear harbor situated under the kirk and the light house of a hill. Here the kirk, hill and light house definitely denote the supernatural atmosphere. Kirk, a holy place, a place of Holy Ghost, hill- a mysterious natural structure beyond the reach of human understanding and light house-shows the path to the mariners in the darkness. Its function is related to darkness, the origin of the earth. Coleridge here very skillfully inserts supernatural ideas to create an atmosphere of horror and mystery. (Ref-lines 21-24). Lines 37-38, again reflect the supernatural power and ability of the old mariner. The marriage guest was not willing to listen to the story of the old mariner. He was a close relative to the bridegroom and he was at the same time hungry. Overall, he could hear the sound of the setting of the food items and

the entry of the bride. It was very difficult for him to listen to the story of the old mariner but he had to hear because he was spelt bound. The narrator tells-

**“The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,
Yet he cannot choose but hear;”** (lines-37-38)

In lines 93-94, the old mariner imparted the marriage guest that after killing the harmless albatross, a bird of good omen, all the sailors (two hundred) became angry and they blamed the old mariner for killing the innocent bird that made the wind blow. Here the sailors made it clear that the bird was the cause of blowing breeze to them and shooting such a bird is nothing but killing a Christian soul. It was thus a mysterious bird and it had the power of healing woes to the sailors. The old mariner tells-

**“For all averred, I had killed the bird
That made the breeze to blow.”** (Lines-93-94)

The sailors also asserted that the old mariner had killed that bird which brought fog and mist to the mariners' ship. So the bird mentioned here is not only a mere bird, rather it is a bird having holy and supernatural power or a bird belonging to any supernatural agent. The old mariner's ship, after killing the bird, went to the Pacific Ocean and stood in such a secluded place that, according to the description of the old mariner, even God would feel afraid there. Actually, the ship of the old mariner along with



Mariner's ship with 200 dead bodies

two hundred sailors was driven to that part of the ocean by the water spirit, the owner of the albatross. The water spirit followed and chased the old mariner's ship from the south sea and its aim was to punish the old mariner for killing

the innocent bird albatross. The water spirit (**ref. lines-132-134**) was chasing the ship staying thirty six feet (9 fathoms) under the ship and it is obviously a supernatural agent.

In lines 127-130, we get direct references to the supernatural things. Here the poet uses the things-death fires, water like witch's oil, green, blue and white coloured fire, which are all supernatural in nature. The poet tells-

**“About, about, in reel and rout,
The death- fires danced at night;
The water, like witch's oil,
Burnt green, and blue, and white.”** (Lines-127-130)

The death fires danced at night but not at day time. The water of the sea behaves as witch's oil, here witch is obviously a supernatural agent and fire burns in the water at night in the forms of green, blue and white colour. These all frightening things are possible in our imagination. If these things happened and seen by any one, these are then supernatural phenomenon which cannot be explained by any scientific demonstration.

In **Part-iii**, of this poem, the poet starts giving us the description of a horrible ship and its two crew. In utter helplessness and draught, the mariners became awestricken and lost their faith that they would be able to survive and they had a chance to go back to their country. They could not speak because their throats became as dry as hay. In this circumstances, the old mariner could keep a dot, later a speck and then a showdown of a ship to the west and at last detected it as a ghastly ship that came from the island of death with two crew- one Death and another Life in Death. When a reader reads these lines, his/ her blood becomes cold and the reader transports him/her near the death ship. Two supernatural characters become clear before our eyes and we definitely forget that it is a mere story and not real thing. The poet narrates-

**“Her lips were red, her looks were free,
Her locks were yellow as gold;
Her skin was as white as leprosy.
The Nightmare, Life-in-Death was she,**

Who thicks man's blood with cold." (Line 190-194)

The poet calls the ship- a naked hulk, that came alongside the old mariner's ship and at night the two crew started playing dice. The game being over, the Life in Death that is the dreadful woman with the above stated appearance whistled thrice to declare her victory. She has the power of thickening man's blood cold and the death himself is the agent of death that hatches people to Hades. It is beyond imagination if a naked ship comes beside anyone's ship in the deserted sea and if the crew of that ship are -one Death and another Life in Death. It is also awestricken when they play dice and the winner whistles thrice after the game being over. The poet here gives the descriptions of the supernatural ship and the activities of the crew in the following lines-

**"The naked hulk alongside came,
And the twain were casting dice;
'The game is done! I've won! I've won!'
Quoth she, and whistles thrice."** (Lines-195-198)

When the sun sets, the imperial night with darkness falls down with hideous supernatural experience of life. The two crew of the specter ship were whispering and their sounds were not clear. The old mariner became afraid and his level of nervousness touched the height of climax. It seemed to him that he was sipping his life blood. But the climax did not stop rather it became grimmer and horrible. The two hundred sailors later started dying one after another and the souls of these people went to heaven or hell making the sound of cross bow.



The Phantom ship

The poet describes the scene in the following way-

**"Four times fifty living men
(And I heard nor sigh nor groan)
With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,
They dropped down one by one.**

**The souls did from their bodies fly-
They fled to bliss or woe!
And every soul, it passed me by-
Like the whizz of my cross bow!"** (Lines-216-223)

The old mariner himself to us is also a supernatural agent. He was not having the appearance of a common man. The marriage guest listening to his (M) story looks closely towards him and thinks that he (MG) is listening to the story of a ghost. He then tells the old mariner- **"I fear thee, ancient Mariner! / I fear thy skinny hand! / And thou art long lank, and brown,"** (lines 224-227). He again asserts that the old mariner himself is a ghost. He tells the old Mariner-**"I fear thee and thy glittering eye,/ And thy skinny hand, so brown."**

The old mariner was going through untold suffering and he was in a fix. He tried to pray to God-but a wicked whisper barred him and turned his heart as dry as dust. So, he could neither pray nor speak. It was a ghastly atmosphere with two hundred dead bodies lying before, two crew of the phantom ship and a wicked whisper. The narrator mentions the supernatural elements in the following way-

**"I looked to Heaven, and tried to pray;
But or ever a prayer had gusht
A wicked whisper came, and made
My heart as dry as dust."** (Lines-244-247)

In lines 253 to 256, the narrator gives us another dreadful description of supernatural environment. In our normal life, we can never feel any cold sweat, unrotten and unrecked dead body, active eyesight after death. All these are possible only in the world of supernaturalism. The above mentioned things are found in the dead bodies of the two hundred

sailors. Even in the lines 270-271, the poet has associated the moon with the supernatural agents. Because of the spell of the moon, the colour of the sea water became awful red that can be found and thought only in unnatural world. The poet depicts the scene in the following way-

**“Her beams bemocked the sultry main,
Like April hoar- frost spread;
The charmed water burned always
A still and awful red.” (267-271)**

The supernatural elements often appear before us having the shape of natural things-like cow, goat, horse, bat, crow, fish, snake and so one. In the poem ‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’ it is just again confirmed. The water snakes seen by the old mariner in the shadow of his ship were nothing but the supernatural agent sent by God to testify whether the old man’s heart is ready for redemption or not. The old man was lucky because he could see the water snakes as a natural phenomenon. The old man then felt a great love for the water snakes without any intension and he got released from his sin. The poet very skilfully draws our attention to the fact in the following line-

**“O happy living things! no tongue
Their beauty might declare;
A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware.” (Lines-282-285)**

The falling of the dead albatross from the neck of the old mariner and its way of drowning really surprise us. The dead albatross, with the passage of time, became a dry, weightless feathered bird and an object not to be drowned instantly. But the albatross after falling from the neck of the ancient mariner -directly sank as a piece of lead which is possible only in the world of supernaturalism. The poet delineates the scene very nicely-

**“The Albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea.” (Lines-290-291)**

The returning of the souls, in the dead bodies of the two hundred dead sailors, their groaning, the sailing of the ship without wind, their stirring and the uprising of the dead sailors, bewildered the old mariner. These things

cannot even be seen in dream but it really happened in the life of the old mariner. The dead sailors were working in their previous place and they were not uttering any word; though the old mariner himself was working and asking something to the sailors. The poet narrates this unimaginable scene in a plausible and convincing way by creating an atmosphere of suspense and willing suspension of disbelief. This horrible and ghastly things are described by the poet in the following way-

**“They groaned, they stirred, they all
uprose,
Nor spake, nor moved their eyes;
It had been strange, even in a dream,
To have seen those dead men rise.” (Lines-331-334))**

**“The body of my brother’s son
Stood by me, knee to knee:
The body and I pulled at one rope,
But he said nought to me.” (Lines-341-344)**

In line number 343, the poet uses the word ‘body’ against his brother’s son. It means that the body was not a normal human body rather it was a human corporal with supernatural blissing and behavior. The dropping of the sailor’s dead bodies in the morning and rising again in the evening create a dreadful and awestricken environment that obviously made the old mariner nervous. The old mariner had nothing to do except staying and counting days for death. He depicts the situation in the following way-

**“For when it dawned- they dropped their
arms,
And clustered round the mast;
Sweet sounds rose slowly through their
mouths,
And from their bodies passed. (Lines-350-353)**

In lines 377-380, the old mariner gives us the description of the water spirit that followed the ship of the old mariner from the South Sea with a view to punishing the old mariner for killing the harmless albatross wantonly. The spirit is now happy to punish the old mariner and its present duty is to send the mariner back to his

country as it is the wish of God. The poet reveals the identity of the spirit, a supernatural agent in the following way-

“Under the keel nine fathom deep,
The voices in the sky again gives us the flavour of supernatural elements. The two



Two voices in the sky

voices discuss over the subject of the old mariner's punishment, repentance and redemption. The old mariner could hear their conversation and became satisfied that his punishment was over as he had had penance and he would do more. The poet describes the voices in the following way-

**“Is it he?” Quoth one, ‘Is this the man?
By Him who died on cross,
With his cruel bow he laid full low
The harmless Albatross’.**” (Lines-398-401)

**“The other was a softer voice,
As soft as honey dew:
Quoth he, ‘The man hath penance done
And penance more will do.’”** (Lines-406-409)

Thousands of writers, dramatists and poets have mentioned the influences of the moon on human life and its direct influence on the sea. In “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”, Coleridge has also reflected its supernatural power on human life and on the ship of the old mariner. In the whole night, the ship was running without the help of wind or current. The ship was moving because she was under the benign care of the Moon. This type of power application of the moon is rarely used by

**From the land of mist and snow,
The spirit slid: and it was he
That made the ship to go.”** (Lines-377-380)

other writers. Here the poet opts to mention the supernatural power of the moon. The poet tells-

**“Still as a slave before his lord,
The ocean hath no blast;
His great bright eye most silently
Up to the Moon is cast”**
(lines -414-417)

The two hundred dead sailors died but they did not spare the old mariner. They, even after death, were cursing the old mariner for their punishment and death. The old mariner narrates the thing in the following way-

**“The pang, the curse, with which they died,
Had never passed away;**

**I could not draw my eyes from theirs,
Nor turn them up to pray.”** (Lines-438-341)

The old mariner then bluntly declared that the spell (supernatural power) was over as he felt that he could view the green sea again. He tells-
‘And now this spell was snapt: once more / I viewed the ocean green.’(Lines-442-443).
The old man again mentions an unnatural thing which can never be felt or imagined in our practical life. Breeze or wind is free for all. It is generous and blows over all without making any discrimination. But in this poem, the poet uses this wind as a supernatural element. Here we can see that the breeze is blowing only on the old mariner and even it did not touch the ship he boarded. The old mariner narrates in the following way-

**“Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship,
Yet she sailed softly too:**

**Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze-
On me alone it blew.”** (Lines- 460-463)

Then the last grand show of the supernatural element appeared before the old mariner. The old mariner was in his own country and the job of the supernatural elements particularly the function of the spirits of the dead sailors was over. So, it was the time of going back of the spirits. The old mariner again could see the crimson shadows departing together from the ship and their departing scene was so sweet, pleasant and horrible. The seraph men went away waving their hands towards the old

mariner and their signal was like a lovely light of the earth. The old mariner describes the event in the following way-

**“A little distance from the prow
Those crimson shadows were:
I turned my eyes upon the deck-
Oh, Christ! What saw I
there?”**(Lines-484-487)

**“This seraph band, each waved his hand,
It was a heavenly sight!**

Pleasure dome Of Kubla Khan

**They stood as signals to the land,
Each one a lovely light;”** (lines-492-495)
The Pilot’s boy became bewildered watching the old mariner rowing the boat of the hermit, He took the old mariner as a ghost and cried in fear. He cried loudly- **‘The Devil knows how to row’**. (Line-569). Here the word ‘devil’ is used not for man but for a ghost that is a supernatural element. Even the Hermit who is accustomed to meeting seafarers, gets puzzled and wants to be confirm whether the old mariner is a man or a supernatural element. The Hermit ask the old mariner – **“Say quick’ quoth, he, ‘I bid thee say-**



What manner of man art thou?” (Lines-576-577)

The old mariner himself at last makes it clear that he has strange supernatural power of speaking and reading the mind of man. Whenever he looks at a man, he can easily tell and understand whether the man will listen to him or not. This is supernatural power. In lines 587-590, the old mariner confidently tells the marriage guest –

**“I have strange power of speech;
That moment that his face I see,
I know the man that must hear me:
To him my tale I teach.”**

The last speech of the old mariner resembles the holy gospel of a holy soul, a speech from God’s agent or a supernatural agent. The old mariner finishes his speech with a universal message of God and becomes a mysterious agent to the marriage guest. He tells-

**“He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us
He made and loveth all.”** (Lines- 614-617)

2.2 Literary review on the poem “Kubla Khan”:

Coleridge’s use of supernatural elements in the poem “Kubla Khan”, is little bit complex. The pleasure dome, built by Kubla Khan by the river Alph, is a mysterious one and the caverns of the river are so deep that the poet calls it measureless to man. Practically, is there any river that’s caverns cannot be measured? The answer is ‘no’. It means that the caverns are full of mystery and man dares not dive there or use any instrument to measure the depth of it. The speaker tells-

**“In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure- dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man.”**
(Lines-1-4)

The environment depicted in the lines 10-14, reminds us of the unhaunted and secluded ghastly place that denotes us the supposed memory of the pre-historic period. The forests and hills, mentioned here, are savage places,

make the readers puzzled and bewildered and they take these places as the abodes of supernatural, eerie or spectral elements. In the lines 15-16, the poet transforms the natural element to supernatural element and the spirit (demon) of that horrible ancient place makes love with a woman in the dim light of the waning moon. The woman here though a human being, becomes supernatural Sami-staff for having love relation with the demon. The poet tells-

**“As e’ver beneath a waning moon was
haunted
By woman wailing for her demon lover.”
(Lines-15-16)**

The sacred river Alph runs through the forests, dales and measureless caverns and goes to the Yellow Sea. Kubla Khan can hear the voices of the ancestral kings and get the message of the impending war ahead. This is obviously a supernatural touch- skilfully delineated by the poet. The poet in the last of this unfinished poem imagines a pleasure dome of his own and again we can see the flashing eyes, and floating hair that weave a circle round him thrice. In conclusion, the poet uses a reference to the milk of paradise which is heavenly and unearthly thing. The abrupt finishing of this poem and its source always thrush us into a supernatural environment.

2.3 Literary review on the poem- “Christabel”:

Coleridge wrote **Christabel** Part-1 in 1798 but Part -11 remained unfinished. In the poem ‘**Christabel**’, the poet has narrated a folklore and it is mainly based on supernatural vein. Here the heroine, Christabel is haunted by a



dream and gets appeased visiting in the dream-forest at dead night as it is associated with her would be marriage with a knight. So, she makes an errand alone and goes to the desired oak tree and finds a beautiful lady groaning in pain.

2.3.1 Gothic Setting:

The setting of this poem evokes a supernatural atmosphere. Midnight is traditionally known as a ‘witching hour’ and it is associated with ghost and supernatural phenomena. The reference to owl and crowing cock suggests an unnatural order but suitable atmosphere for the supernatural elements. The poet starts this poem with a fearful gothic environment in the following way-

**“Tis the middle of night by the castle clock
And the owls have awakened the crowing
cock” (lines-1-2)**

2.3.2 Christabel’s Dream and the Barking dog:

Christabel dreams at midnight and this dream seems prophetic as it sets a supernatural intervention. The ‘angry moan’ of the sleeping dog suggests the presence of gothic trope that cannot be seen by human being but it can be felt by the dogs. So the dog barks as the supernatural intrusion has happened and it is obviously working against Christabel. The poet narrates the situation as-

**“The mastiff old did not awake,
Yet she an angry moan did make!” (Lines-
147-148)**

2.3.3 Mysterious appearance of Geraldine:

Geraldine, a paranormal character, is introduced by Coleridge as an ominous figure, engaged herself to harm Christabel and deprive her from the blessing of her dead mother’s spirit, hovering around Christabel to save her from all impending dangers. Geraldine is a supernatural character by whom Coleridge has applied his ‘Willing suspension of disbelief’ to make us believe the unbelievable things. Coleridge introduces this fictitious, satanic, motiveless malignant- spirit to prove that the spirit of darkness is always against the Supreme law of God. The poet delineates the unnatural beauty and dress of Geraldine in the following way-

**“There she sees a damsel bright,
Drest in a silken robe of white,
That shadowy in the moonlight shone;
The neck that made that white robe wane,
Geraldine in the forest night Her stately neck,
and arms were bare;**

**Her blue-veined feet unsandal’d were,
And wildly glittered here and there
The gems entangled in her hair,
I guess, ‘twas frightful there to see
A lady so richly clad as she-
Beautiful exceedingly!”** (Lines- 58-68)

Geraldine’s entrance is unexplained. She claims that she was abducted by five unknown warriors and left in this wilderness. But the lack of footprints or sound of others implies something unnatural. The ambiguity of her backstory and her perfect, unearthly beauty indicates that she a supernatural character. Again, the description of the devilish character Geraldine reminds us the supernatural character ‘Life in Death’ in **“The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”** and Archimago in **“The Faerie Queene”**.

According to Shakespeare, the evil spirit gives us a little facility only to harm us. This concept is clear in ‘Christabel’. Geraldine, a harmful spirit, pretends to be helpless and wounded only to get her entry in Christabel’s palace. She makes a fervent appeal to Christabel to help her and rescue her from her present danger. The spirit becomes successful.

2.3.4 The guile of the spirit:

When Christabel asks the feigning spirit the cause of her coming there, she (It) replies very subtly and makes Christabel believe that she is abducted abandoned. She replies-

**“My sire is of a noble line,
And my name is Geraldine;
Five warriors seized me yestermorn,
Me, even me, a maid forlorn;
They chocked my cries with force and
fright,
They tied me on a palfrey white”** (lines-80-84)

The supernatural elements are always afraid of God or angels. They are all like the ‘Spiritus Mundi’ as mentioned by W. B Yeats. When Christabel asks Geraldine to bestow thanks to Virgin Mary, She (G) refuses cunningly showing her weariness. Coleridge thus proves her a supernatural element and tells-

**“Alas, alas! Said Geraldine,
I cannot speak for weariness.”** (Lines- 141-142)

2.3.5 Christabel’s dead mother’s Spirit, a supernatural thing:

The reference to Christabel’s- dead mother’s spirit and virtuous wine prepared by her highlight the presence of supernatural element. Christabel’s mother died at her birth and she promised to protect Christabel from evil power till her marriage. She wanted to visit Christabel on her day of marriage at twelve of night. The presence of the dead mother at twelve o’clock at night and virtuous wine prepared from wild flowers, indicate paranormal activity.

2.3.6 Geraldine’s control over Christabel:

Coleridge then thrusts us to a ghastly atmosphere of horror and presents Geraldine as a guardian spirit in place of Christabel’s mother. Geraldine defines her as a master spirit who is capable-enough to take care of Christabel. She affirms her (Chr)-

**“Off, woman, off! This hour is mine-
Though thou her guardian spirit be,
Off, woman, off! ‘tis given to me.”** (Lines-211-213)

2.3.7 Fight between supernatural elements:

In the lines 216-219, Coleridge takes us to the fairyland where the two supernatural elements fight to establish their possession on Christabel. The spirit of Christabel’s mother tries to keep her dear child in her grip while Geraldine, the negative spirit struggles to keep the control of Christabel under her possession and at last she wins. Geraldine makes Christabel sure that her struggle is over and she is the winner. She tells –**“Tis over now!”** The poet depicts the paragonic but serpentine beauty of Geraldine that bewitches Christabel as she is quiet

unaware of the identity of the supernatural element. Coleridge represents her as -

**“Her silken robe, and inner vest,
Dropt to her feet, and full in view.
Behold! Her bosom and half her side-
A sight of dream of, not to tell!
O shield her! Shield sweet Christabel!”**
(Lines-250-254)

2.3.8 The spell in the bed room:

Geraldine casts a strange spell on Christabel while they were in the bedroom chamber. Here we feel the presence of supernatural power in the language, enchantment and control of Geraldine over Christabel. The poet describes the situation in the following way-

**“In the touch of this bosom there worketh a
spell
Which is lord of thy utterance, Christabel!”**
(Lines-266-267)

2.3.9 Sudden change in Sir Leoline’s character:

Sir Leoline is betrothed to Christabel and he loves her very much. But the uncanny and unearthly beauty of Geraldine fascinates him and he gets enthralled with the beauty of the witch. This is nothing but the influence of the supernatural power of the spirit. Sir Leoline expresses his fascination in the following way-

**“Ah, woe is me! Was it for thee,
Thou gentle maid! Such sight to see?”**
(Line- 455-456)

2.3.10 The mysterious ending and fragmentation:

Coleridge’s abrupt finishing enhances its supernatural aura. The unexplained events, Geraldine’s ambiguous identity, and Christabel’s loss of agency -hang the readers suspended in uncertainty. It is done to give this poem again a supernatural flavour.

3. Research Methodology:

This study ensures a qualitative and analytical approach to explore the supernatural elements in three renowned poems of S T Coleridge- ‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’, ‘Kubla Khan,’ and ‘Christabel’. The methodology is designed to investigate the Supernatural things

as romantic elements in the Romantic poetry of 19th century literary framework focusing simultaneously on textual analysis and thematic interpretation.

3.1 Research Design:

This study follows a descriptive- analytical design with a view to examining the selected poems as primary texts. This research investigates Coleridge’s use of supernatural elements, their narrative function, and their symbolic significance within each poem. Secondary critical works and scholarly articles are used as literary support and contextualize the analysis.

3.2 Data Collection:

Coleridge’s poems “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”, “Kubla khan” and “Christabel” are meticulously analyzed to find out the use of supernatural elements to perpetuate this study.

3.3 Secondary Sources:

Relevant literary criticism, journal articles, and above mentioned poems are read and consulted to get a clear concept on the theme supernatural elements to complete this article. The study owes to the scholarly works of Thomas McFarland, A.C Swinburne, Maurice Bowra John Worthen, M.H. Abrams and other literary works to provide a critical framework.

3.4 Analytical Framework:

The analysis is mainly focused on Coleridge’s romantic literary theory that is ‘Willing suspension of disbelief’, Gothic elements in all these three poems, explanation of dream and its effects, symbolic interpretation of the supernatural elements that reflects psychological, moral and philosophical concerns.

3.5 Procedure:

Close reading of all texts of the targeted three poems to identify and catalog instances of supernatural elements (e.g. spectral appearances, magical transformations and visionary experiences), thematic analysis of how these elements contribute to character development, narrative structure and moral or metaphysical commentary and comparative

analysis across the three poems to judge Coleridge's art in using supernatural elements in his poems.

4. Conclusion:

Coleridge's treatment of supernatural elements in his poems- "**The Rime of the Ancient Mariner**", "**Kubla Khan**" and "**Christabel**", usually bewilders us. In these three poems, the poet is not similar in his use of supernatural elements. In '**The Rime of the Ancient Mariner**', the poet is fabulous and here his literary weapon 'Willing suspension of disbelief' is used as in '**Christabel**'. But in the poem, '**Kubla Khan**' he tries to drawback our attention to the 13th century Mongol Empire and uses some imaginary things and supernatural elements to hypnotize the readers. Obviously, Coleridge's skill surpasses the aptitude of the contemporary poets-even William Wordsworth particularly in the field of using and adopting supernatural elements in romantic poetry.

5. References:

1. Samuel Taylor Coleridge's selected poetry, Penguin Classics
2. Supernaturalism in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's Major Poems- Nurbati Ali, Doni Efriza, Jurnal Humaniora Teknologi.
3. Treatment of Supernatural in the Poetry of S.T.Coleridge- Quest Journals
4. Romanticism- Nikola Benin, Ph.D.
5. S.T. Coleridge: Interpreting the Theory of Supernaturalism- Namita Singh
6. Treatment of Supernatural in the Poetry of S.T Coleridge- Ishtiyah Ahmad
7. Natural Supernaturalism-M.H.Abrams
8. The Romantic Imagination- Maurice Bowra
9. Samuel Taylor Coleridge- John Worthen
10. Edmund Spenser-The Faerie Queene'
11. W. Shakespeare- Macbeth
12. W B Yeats- The Second Coming
13. Online sources- Images