

**THE QUEER SECRETS REVEALED IN BENJAMIN ALIRE SAENZ'S
ARISTOTLE AND DANTE DISCOVER THE SECRETS OF THE UNIVERSE**

R. Gayathri, MA, MPhil.,

Assistant professor of English, Imayam Arts and Science College, Kannanur

Abstract:

This article is an attempt to explore the so called hidden secrets in human feelings. This novel is focused from the point of view of queer theory; it is an unique term or word in this conventional world. Here everything was decided by the followed traditions and cultures. The non living terms gets importance than the living beings. The point is that we people never focused on the feelings of a person. In this novel two young guys never get courage to disclose their inner feelings. They thought that they are unfit to this heterosexual world. The protagonists were much eager to discover the secrets of the universe. But ends with the finding of their own secrets. Queer theory becomes an unavoidable one in this modern world. In this kind of lifestyle the feelings were transformed from the traditional world of heterosexuals to homosexuality. People were attracted towards their same genders. They see this feeling as an usual one but the world never let them to live their own.

Keywords: Queer Secrets revealed, Gay, LGBT, Heterosexuality

Introduction:

This novel '*Aristotle and Dante discover the secrets of the universe*' got published in the year 2012. Benjamin Alire Saenz is an American writer who tries to explore the themes like masculinity, struggles to attain identity and gay love. It unveils the cover of the traditional world and its focus on homosexuality. The Queer theory focused on the LGBT studies which were always categorized under queer studies. This novel was divided into six sections and the major layer is about the homosexual love.

Aristotle Mendoza is one of the protagonists who wants to know about his family secrets. On the other hand Dante Quitana eager to be aware of the mysterious secrets of the universe. Their interests changed into something when they both met and that was quite

strange to the people. Each section of this novel begins with an epigraph at the beginning. This novel was categorized as a coming age of young adult novel.

The Domestic Life of Ari:

Aristotle Mendoza simply addressed as Ari who expose his inner feelings with the following painful words that the problem in his life was that it always be someone else's decision. He never enjoys his domestic happiness. He always surrounded by the deadly silence of his father. Ari wants to know about the history behind his brother's imprisonment. To escape from his unhappiness Ari drowned himself into a river though he does not know about swimming. When he jumped into that river he happens to meet another teenage boy named Dante. Dante Quitana teaches him about swimming, literature and poetry. They both become inseparable. Ari replaces his family love with the unexpected love of Dante's family. To him Dante that he wants to know the secrets of the entire universe. Here the novelist has portrayed the ambitions of knowing the covered secrets. On contrast to their ambition they both discovered their own secret feelings on each other. When Ari was suffered by an terrible fever Dante visits him and sketches the portrait of Ari. But refused to give that portrait to Ari.

After his recovery, Ari comes to know about Dante's plan of leaving the place. There was an unnamed affection blossomed between the two teenage boys. They want to have their company at the end of this life. The sparkle of their love was expressed when Ari risked his own life to save Dante from a terrible accident. The nature of homosexual people is that though they were belongs to the same gender, one person is considered as a female not by their physical appearance but by their psychological level.

The affection between those two boys seems to be quite strange. Because it is a custom in this world that the love should blossomed only between the boys and girls. If anyone fails to fulfill this rule and follows their own hormonal changes means they were considered as an outsider to this heterosexual world. Due to the enmity of people homosexuals tries to suppress their affection. In this novel Ari is become an object of suppression. Ari never tried to find out the affection between himself and Dante. He simply times their relationship as a friendly one. But Dante has developed his strong emotions on Ari.

The Secrets of Ari's Family:

After the departure of Dante, Ari spend his time on driving, learning fights and reading. One day Ari comes to know the secrets behind the imprisonment of his own brother. His mother revealed to him that his brother has attacked a prostitute after knowing that she is a transgender. Here comes the aspect of this article that the transgender were treated as a human beings. They have been dominated and suffered a lot by the so called humans. People forgot the reality that they too have their place in this earth.

The secret of his family is that his aunt was secluded by the relatives because she is having an oriental relationship. This all makes Ari to be away from his inner feelings on Dante. The fact is that he was afraid of this society. Unlike him Dante has expressed his strong emotions on boys. In his letter he revealed to Ari that he has kissed a boy and he enjoyed that incident. In one of the sections, the novelist has printed the lines that we people were turning the pages of life patiently in search of meanings. His words refers the findings of Dante and his his homosexual feelings.

The Understanding of Family Members:

During their meeting Dante exposed his love to Ari. But Ari did not give any attention to him but Dante forced him to a kiss. Out of compulsion Ari accepts, Dante said that he fully aware of their bonding. But Ari revealed that there is nothing like that between them. This upsets Dante very much. But the time has come for Ari to reveal his love. When he comes to know about the attack on Dante, Ari has attacked that person's by risking his own life.

After that incident both family came to know about the name of the bonding between those two boys. Mr. Quitana asked Ari that whether he knows about the love of Dante. To him Ari has answered that he was aware of Dante's condition but he believes that Dante will overcome by it when time passes. But now it was proved that he too loves Dante more than others. Both the family members accepted their feelings and support them. Ari was convinced by his mother by accepting the example of his aunt Ophelia's oriental life.

The Discovery of Secrets:

The prolonged silence has been broken at the understanding of Ari and his love. When Dante comes to meet him at the desert, Ari accepts his love. Out of happiness he asks Dante to give him a kiss. Ari confesses his lover that he was attracted towards at their very first meeting itself. The words of him are through all of youth he was looking for Dante without knowing what he was looking for. The secrets which he wants to know all through his life was approached in the form of his love on Dante. Both Ari and Dante enjoys their privacy without worrying about anything since they have been accepted by their parents. They no longer unfit beings in this society.

Conclusion:

The novel is ended with the striking question of Ari that how could I ever have been ashamed of loving Dante Quitana? This point is expressed the sadness of homosexual people. They felt ashamed and afraid of being homosexuals who are considered as a queer and strange to the heterosexuals. This article is an attempt to explore their sufferings and assures the freedom for them. Feelings never to be an option to decide that whether a person has the right to live or not. Similarly no one has the right to interfere into their inner feelings and the people have to let them live their own. Their journey of finding the secrets of the universe ends with their finding of their own secret.

References:

- Saenz, Benjamin Alire. *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2012. Print
- www.norwoodlibrary.org
- m.barnesandnoble.com