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Heartfelt Gratitude of a dog in two Selected Movies of Lasse Hallstrom

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Abstract

Humans often form strong bonds with non-human animals and vice versa. In the contemporary society, love comes in many forms, including the attachment between people and their pets. Animals, especially pets, have a positive influence on humans' physical and psychological well-being, as well as their close relationships. Animal companionship is an integral aspect of life. Humans have many reasons for owning pets. It is because pets provide a highly reliable association in a person's life, which is more consistent and reliable than human-human. They enter into a relationship of mutualism with their owners. Owners receive love, affection, and there is no risk of betrayal. Apart from emotional benefits, pet ownership improves one's physical and mental health. It reduces stress, lowers blood pressure and helps to prevent heart diseases...This paper attempts to approach two films, namely *The Dog's Purpose* and *Hachi: A Dog's Tale*. The dog is portrayed as the central character in both of these movies. This study delves into the concept of exploring the bond and unconditional love of the dog to its master. Dogs were early companions of human beings, and they have been known for their loyalty ever since. *A Dog's Purpose* follows a dog named Bailey and his journey through several lives of incarnation. A remarkable story of one endearing dog's search for his purpose throughout several lives. As a charming dog story, it touches the universal quest for an answer to life's most basic question: What is the purpose of life? It teaches that love never dies, that our true friends are always with us and that every creature on Earth is born with a purpose. The movie is high on emotions. It has many moments of delightful canine joy and goes beyond the clichés. *Hachi: A Dog's Tale* is an immensely appealing drama

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about the extraordinary devotion of dogs to their beloved human companion. As the bond between the dog and the master grew older and deeper, a beautiful relationship unfolded, embodying the true spirit of family and loyalty while inspiring the hearts of the entire town. The movies play on a natural human weakness for dogs. The story has a larger message for its audience – of empathy, unconditional love and companionship. To conclude, both movies have the elements of mutualism, gratitude and unconditional love.

Keywords: Human-animal bond, Mutualism, Loyalty, The Dog's Purpose

A DOG'S PURPOSE

A Dog's Purpose by Lasse Hallstrom is an awesome and amazing movie which came out in 2017. This is a remarkable story of a captivating dog's search for his purpose over several years in his life. More than just another alluring dog movie, *A Dog's Purpose* touches on the universal quest for a solution to life's most basic question: What is our role in this beautiful world, and why are we here? This movie is based on one of the bestselling novels of Bruce Cameron, titled *A Dog's Purpose*, in which Lasse Hallstrom, the director, shares the profound and emotional story of one devoted dog who finds the meaning and the needs of his existence through the lives of various humans.

It is noticed that the movie *A Dog's Purpose* by Lasse Hallstrom is not only a heart-warming and penetrating movie but also an emotional, psychological and often very funny story of many lives. It is basically a commentary on a dog whose relationship with man is portrayed. It is seen that the story depicts human relationships and imperishable bonds between humans and pets. This inspiring and elegantly fabricated story teaches we people that love never fades and every creature in this universe is born with some sort of purpose. Remarkably, the movie *A Dog's Purpose* gives an insight into the wholehearted love, caring, faith and loyalty that canines naturally share with human beings in their lives. It is told from a dog's point of view, and the dog imparts life lessons and inspires people to reflect upon their relationships and bonds. It also indirectly conveys that everything in this world, whether animate or inanimate, has a purpose in its life.

Bruce Cameron, in his novel *A Dog's Purpose*, successfully elucidates the breadth of American dogs' capacity. Though the novel is classic, it portrays a beautiful, tenderly told, and exquisitely moving story in which every reader will definitely have a tear of recognition that all dog lovers will shed after they read this extraordinary book. The same is the case in the movie. Lasse Hallstrom put forth a heartwarming and life-affirming story of a dog, who through a series of incarnations, investigates the enigmas, joys and challenges of life; and through this he finds his ultimate purpose in his own life.

It is seen that, in this typical dog story plot, the reincarnation was a cool twist. Because of this reincarnation, the dog lives several lives that include life as a stray dog, being avoided and

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marginalised, being loved and pampered and being the guide of someone. The dog undergoes multiple roles and tasks. He must have lived every type of life a dog could live. The movie begins with the story of the dog as a puppy in a stray litter. This young dog has his first interaction with a human being in a dog hoarder's yard. It is from this yard that he understands people and learns to love them. But that love didn't last long. Because he was taken by the Animal Control, he understands the sad news that dogs are no longer being adopted and pampered. After being marginalised and euthanised, he awakens with a new life ahead from a typical native litter. And there begins his other life, and so on.

As it is seen, the main structure of the movie *A Dog's Purpose* is the story of a typical dog that goes through four incarnations as four different dogs. In all these four lives, the dog seeks his purpose in life. The dog is named as Toby, who is a mutt in his first incarnation. Then in the 2nd incarnation, he is a Golden Retriever and is named Bailey. Then he appears on the screen as a female dog in the 3rd incarnation, whose name is Ellie. And in the last and final incarnation, his name is Buddy, who is a black lab.

It is seen as interesting when the twist happens in the last incarnation. It is in the final incarnation, the dog meets up with his beloved owner Ethan. The dog (Buddy) already knew Ethan when Ethan was a boy and a young man. But now, in the last incarnation of the dog, Ethan is an old man. Ethan used to have a lover named Hannah. Buddy, Bailey brings two of them together by their smell. In each of his incarnations, the dog learns something more about what *A Dog's Purpose* is and towards the end of the movie, he feels he has fulfilled his purpose.

After watching the whole movie, it is understood that the main theme is the concept of unconditional love. Though a dog, the protagonist, who is first Toby and then Bailey, Ellie, and towards the end Buddy, exhibits unconditional love and affection to the owners, especially for the boy Ethan, whom he meets in his second lifetime as a Golden Retriever. Both Ethan and Bailey love each other immensely, and it was a kind of love at first sight. They show their love for one another over and over. And this true love remains towards the rest of his life during his remaining incarnation as other dogs. It is evident in the last part of the movie. That is, Buddy, as Bailey recognises Ethan even in his old age. Buddy even realises Hannah, and he reunites both Ethan and Hannah. All the characters are grateful to one another in many ways. And towards the very end of the movie, Bailey is at Ethan's side when he dies. And Ethan was comforting, panting and tending Bailey and showing him how much he is loving and caring.

HACHI: A DOG'S TALE

Have you ever heard of the name Hachiko, the dog? Indeed, Hachiko is a famous character in the films of Lasse Hallstrom. Lasse Hallstrom has directed several movies that are heartwarming and worth watching. One of the most beautiful movies is Hachi: The Dog's Tale, which is written by Stephen P Lindsey. It is an American drama film which is an adaptation of the 1987 Japanese film Hachiko Monogatari. The movie premiered at the Seattle International Film Festival.

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It is important to remember that the movie Hachiko: A Dog's Story is based on a true story that took place in the first half of the 20th century in Japan. And Hachiko, the real name of the dog, was very popular and famous throughout Japan. He is like a national hero to the Japanese. Because of this reason there have been several movies made about him. In Tokyo, near Shibuya Train Station, a bronze statue of Hachiko is seen, where hundreds of people take photographs with it. There is also another statue of Hachiko in the USA in Rhode Island, where the American version of the film was made.

Eizaburo Ueno was a professor of agricultural science at Tokyo University in Japan. The professor wished and longed for a purebred Japanese Akita dog. He had been looking for one for many days. But he didn't get one. At last, with the help of his students, he thought to adopt our dog, Hachiko, from Odate City in Japan. Within days, both Hachiko and the professor became close friends. He was nick named as

Hachi was by his owner. Eizaburo was very much concerned about Hachi that he loved Hachi, cared and pampered him like his own son. Both of them were inseparable.

Being a small puppy, Hachi was well-bred in the professor's family. As he grew older, he noticed and understood each and small doing of his owner. He started to see his owner off to work in the morning at the Shibuya Train Station in Tokyo. Hachi had the habit of going to the station and picking up his owner when he returned from work. The care of Hachi lasted for many days. But sadly, his owner departs one day, passes away and never returns to the station. But without knowing the bad news, Hachi visits the station, waiting for his lovely master. Each day, he visits again and again to the same spot at the station, and this lasted for ten years, to see his beloved master. This indicated how closely they were in their life.

In the film version, it is Parker Wilson who is the professor. He gets Hachi from a railway station, which was in a state of abandonment. With lots of care and affection, he took Hachi over to Carl, who was the station master, to let Parker know if anyone had been looking for Hachi. But there was no such person, and the station master was not ready to keep Hachi under his custody. Since Parker had a kind of love and soft spot for the dog, he could not leave the dog alone. So he thought to take it home until the owner comes to claims it. But no one came. Thus Hachiko grew with his new master. Both were in deep love and cared for each other. Their affection was so immense that no one could separate them but death.

It is understood that dogs are loyal and loving creatures, so in return, we love them unconditionally. The same happened in the case of Hachiko. Hachiko had an amazing demonstration of dedication. During his daily visit to the station for the last ten years, Hachiko touched the lives of many who worked nearby. He taught the local people love, care, compassion and above all, unyielding compassion. As a result of this unconditional love and care for the master, statues of Hachiko are built in various places as a permanent reminder of his devotion and love. It is noticed that by analysing the reviews and feedback of this movie, it is seen that it is one of

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the most emotional movies that touched the entire human who watched it.

Sincerely. What this four-legged creature did was something that a normal human cannot do. In the real life of Hachiko, after the death of his owner Eizaburo, Hachiko was adopted by the professor's wife, but Hachiko ran away from the house and waited for ten years at the same spot where his master left him last. It is a faithful story of Hachiko, whose love and devotion towards his master are portrayed. He touched the hearts of many Japanese people and soon became their hero. Certainly, our heart melts easily once we watch this particular movie of Hachi. He is such a symbol of extreme loyalty and affection. And the climax was so heart-touching and excellent when Hachiko remembers the first time he discovered his master, and he laments and finally closes his eyes, still in pain, longing to be with his master again.

Conclusion

Lasse Hallstrom's movies, especially *The Dog's Purpose* and *Hachi: A Dog's Tale*, teach us a lot of things. There is so much we can learn from the dogs in both movies. It is clear from the two movies of Lasse Hallstrom that both Bailey and Hachiko are remarkable dogs in the sense that the commitments they share towards their masters. Dogs are often more than just loving and caring. They sometimes tend to devote their very lives to their masters, whom they always see as their God. As far as such creatures are concerned, their love for their master is more important than their life itself, which is the main motive of these movies. Generally speaking, there is a common notion regarding animals which are characterised as ruthless beasts, wild and so on. But contrary to these beliefs, Lasse Hallstrom portrays that a dog can manifest a love so deep that it can serve as a role model for all human beings.

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