The Impact of Houses & Living Spaces During the Second World War in Gail Tsukiyama's The Samurai's Garden

Ressy Anugraha[1], K. Shanthi Clement[2]

[1]Research Scholar, Bharathidasan University, Department of English, Bishop Heber College, Tiruchirappalli (Tamil Nadu), India.

Email ID: ressyanugraha7@gmail.com

[2]Associate Professor, Department of English, Bishop Heber College, Tiruchirappalli (Tamil Nadu), India.

Email ID: shanthi.en@bhc.edu.in

ABSTRACT

The terms "shelter" and "home" are closely intertwined, each reflecting complex constructs that extend beyond human society to encompass all ecological beings on our planet. Michael Foucault, in his work *Of Other Spaces*, asserts that "the present epoch will perhaps be above all else the epoch of space" (Foucault 20). Thus, gaining a broader understanding of the relationship between individuals and their environments is crucial. The spatial dynamics of a house are particularly significant, as these spaces are where people's lives, psyche, and overall development unfold. The discourse surrounding the built environment represents a novel and under-explored area within literary studies. A more profound comprehension of how human actions interact with various environments can contribute to fostering sustainable practices, especially in the Anthropocene era. This paper examines the impact of the built environment, such as houses and living spaces, during the tumultuous period of the Second World War, focusing on Gail Tsukiyama's historical fiction, *The Samurai's Garden*. The researcher incorporates concepts from Environmental Psychology, which expands the definition of 'the environment' to include built spaces as integral components. This theoretical framework diversifies and enhances the discourse within literary environmental studies. This study aims to illuminate pro-environmental behaviors, advocate for sustainable environments, and explore the emotional resonance that the built environment holds for its inhabitants.

Keywords: *Houses, Homes, Built Environment, Historical Fiction, Sustainable Environment, Environmental Psychology, Wars*

1. INTRODUCTION

T. S. Eliot, in his poem *Four Quartets,* asserts that "Home is where one starts from" (Quartet 13). Home represents one of the most intimate, private, and personal spaces an individual cherishes and creates. From early childhood, a person's home serves as the foundation where they begin to understand the universe. Gaston Bachelard elaborates on the nature of the home environment in his book *The Poetics of Space*, stating, "For our house is our corner of the world. As has often been said, it is our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word" (Bachelard 26). The house symbolizes a personal version of the universe that individuals strive to comprehend. The space of home offers people a niche on the planet that they can claim as their own. This environment cultivates a sense of belonging and a deeper rootedness within individuals. Without this significant structure, people may question their identities, and their sense of purpose may become jeopardized. A 2023 study on Ukrainian war refugees conducted by Gulnaz Anjum and colleagues suggests that "broken homes, disrupted infrastructures, and resulting displacement can lead to a loss of sense of place and a disrupted identity among people who experience war-related disasters" (Anjum 04).

The Samurai's Garden, published in 1994, is a significant work in Asian American literature by Gail Tsukiyama. As an American author of Sino-Japanese heritage, Tsukiyama explores her ancestral roots through her novels, which are often set in countries such as Japan, China, Hawaii, and the U.S., particularly during the World Wars. Her stories focus on characters living on the periphery—those whose lives are often overlooked in mainstream discourse. Tsukiyama notes, "I've always been fascinated by social groups who live and work outside the mainstream… which soon grew into an exploration of culture, family, the inhumanity of war, and the perseverance of the human spirit." Her novels delve deeply into wartime experiences where people and their environments undergo life-altering changes and destruction, from which they must rebuild and

reconstruct themselves. This paper focuses on the built environment, which is often neglected in discussions about people and the environment in literary studies. It explores the various impacts of housing, including the built environment, the concept of home, unwelcoming homes, and homelessness, through an analysis of *The Samurai's Garden.*

2. METHODOLOGY

This paper explores the various impacts of a house, including the built environment, the concept of home, unwelcoming living spaces, and homelessness, as illustrated in the novel *The Samurai's Garden*. The idea of a house or habitat is a primal instinct and a fundamental construct shared by all species on Earth, including both flora and fauna. The concepts of habitat, locale, place, and belonging are common to every species in the animal and plant kingdoms. Each species has its unique environment, which creates a sense of belonging. This vast environment houses all the species on the planet. Species choose specific spaces based on various factors, including climate, geography, availability of natural resources, and their origins. These spaces later transform into places when meaning and experience are attributed to them. A sense of place fosters belonging, as it is essential for constructing life experiences. This habituation also contributes to a sense of identity, referred to in environmental psychology as place identity. When place identity is applied on a broader scale—a larger geographical area defined by specific cultural and social constructs—it contributes to the idea of a nation, with which people identify. Individuals develop attachments to certain places, forming a foundation for their sense of belonging.

Home acts as the starting point for people's initial interactions with the outside world. A house acts as a cradle, providing a nurturing space for an infant from which the child grows and matures. It is within these walls that individuals often spend their entire lives. Gaston Bachelard notes, "A house that has been experienced is not an inert box. Inhabited space transcends geometrical space." Although settings may differ across the globe, it is within the built environment that human life flourishes. Understanding the profound impacts of these living spaces presents a fascinating avenue for study, especially as it remains under-researched in literary studies. While the natural environment has been extensively examined, the built environment is often overlooked, highlighting a research gap that this paper will address through an analysis of *The Samurai's Garden.*

3. SETTINGS IN LITERATURE

The setting is a crucial literary element utilized in various works of literature, serving as the backdrop against which the plot unfolds. As defined in *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, the setting encompasses the "general locale, historical time, and social circumstances in which its action occurs; the setting of a single episode or scene within the work is the specific physical location where it takes place" (Abrahams et al 362). Settings can be categorized into individual and overall settings. Numerous writers have harnessed this element, crafting their fictional worlds or drawing upon real-life locations for their narratives. Examples of overall settings include R.K. Narayanan's Malgudi, Thomas Hardy's Wessex, William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha, and J.K. Rowling's Hogwarts.

However, settings extend beyond being mere literary components; they play a vital role in shaping the understanding of the plot and locating the characters within it. They encapsulate the geographical, historical, and social contexts that reflect the living conditions of people at a given time and place. A deeper examination of these settings enhances our grasp of the cultural constructs and geopolitics inherent in those environments. Works such as historical fiction shed light on the true nature of events that might otherwise be overlooked, offering perspectives from the viewpoints of the individuals and settings affected by the turmoil. *The Samurai's Garden*, a piece of historical fiction, will be analyzed and segmented based on the various environments referenced throughout the text. The settings will be examined through a spatial lens, focusing on the impact that different places have on the characters and their experiences.

Environmental Psychology

The term "environment" originates from the French word "environment," which means "to surround." Traditionally, psychological studies have relegated the environment to a mere backdrop. However, Environmental Psychology has decisively shifted this perspective, placing the study of the relationship between individuals and their built and natural environments at the forefront. This field emerged powerfully after the World Wars in the 1960s, spearheaded by pioneers like Egon Brunswick and Kurt Lewin, who examined the significant impact of both environments on human behavior. Environmental Psychology tackles critical issues such as crowding, pollution, urban design, and sustainability, underscoring the intrinsic inter-connections of humans and their surroundings. While discussions surrounding the natural environment have been prevalent, research into built environments has been vastly under-explored and urgently requires attention. Society began to recognize the serious consequences of environmental neglect when beloved spaces—homes, workplaces, and community areas—fell into disrepair. The deteriorating state of these environments directly influences human behavior and psychology, making it imperative that we address these issues. This paper will assertively explore concepts of spatiality and placeness, particularly through the lens of the novel *The Samurai's Garden*.

The Sociological Disaster: War

A house represents a constructed environment, while the concept of the home embodies an emotional, psychological, and

cultural construct. In literary theory, philosophies such as Existentialism and Nihilism began to emerge in the aftermath of the World Wars, reflecting the turbulent mental states of individuals affected by the brutalities unleashed upon both people and the environment during these conflicts. War stands out as one of the major disasters humanity has faced throughout its history and is categorized as an anthropogenic disaster, as it results from human actions. These lamentable actions have wrought havoc on society and led to irreparable damage to the environment. Additionally, wars are often referred to as sociological disasters due to the significant social, political, and economic strife they generate. Researcher Madhan Jha, in his work *Natural and Anthropogenic Disasters: Vulnerability, Preparedness, and Mitigation*, characterizes sociological disasters as encompassing "criminal acts, riots, war, stampedes, etc." (Jha 15). The distortion of ecological balance resulting from the loss of life forms, widespread destruction of the built environment, and the subsequent displacement of populations contribute to the myriad ill effects of war. This large-scale destruction leads to homelessness, giving rise to refugee crises, as individuals are forced to leave their homes and homelands, either through coercion or voluntary displacement. This paper aims to examine the impact of war from the perspectives of both the built environments and the individuals who have suffered its losses.

4. NOVEL OVERVIEW

"The Samurai's Garden" unfolds in Japan and China during the early stages of World War II, presented as a series of diary entries by the protagonist, Stephen Chan, a 20-year-old university student. Stephen, a Chinese national, is the son of a businessman in the import-export sector, with operations centered in Japan. To facilitate their business dealings, his grandfather acquires a beach house in Tarumi, leading to a family tradition of summer vacations there. The narrative takes the form of a first-person perspective, chronicling Stephen's experiences from September 15, 1937, to October 29, 1938. As the novel commences, Stephen is afflicted with tuberculosis while attending university in Canton, China. As his condition deteriorates, he is sent to his family home in Hong Kong in July for recovery, against the backdrop of the escalating Second World War, during which Japanese forces are aggressively advancing into China. The following quote encapsulates this tension: "While my fevers advanced and retreated. A heavy stillness descended on our house as if everyone was moving in slow motion… Two days later, the news came over the radio that the Japanese had captured Tientsin and surrounded Peking" (4).

Facing his son's illness, Stephen's father, stationed in Kobe, Japan, recommends that Stephen be sent to him, as the climate in Kobe is more conducive to recovery: "Send Stephen to me in Kobe, and I will take him to Tarumi. The climate is drier there, and the air is much fresher than in Hong Kong" (4). Thus begins Stephen's journey to Tarumi, where his family possesses an ancestral beach house. Despite the war's encroachment and his significant health challenges, Stephen's journey to Tarumi symbolizes the onset of his healing process. He reflects, "It seems a small victory, but I've won so few in the past months that it means everything to me—perhaps even the beginning of my recovery" (1). The journey is multifaceted; it represents not merely a physical displacement but an essential 'journey' rooted in safety and the promise of recovery. This contrast highlights the significance of place; starting from the security of his home to the anticipation of a welcoming destination, Stephen perceives these spaces as vital sources of solace amidst turbulent times.

Conversely, the narrative also sheds light on the dire circumstances faced by refugees and the leper community in China and Japan, respectively. The concept of home is starkly differentiated for these groups, often displaced through force or desperate choice. Unlike Stephen, who is assured of a haven, refugees encounter the harsh reality of homelessness as they seek refuge from violence and instability in their native lands. Compounding this are the lepers in Yamaguchi, Tarumi, who exist as social outcasts, creating a semblance of community amidst exclusion. Their experiences diverge significantly from those of Stephen and the refugees; despite their displacement, they navigate their circumstances by establishing a new self-determined environment that allows them to exist with dignity. This analysis will delve into the housing and living conditions of both groups, exploring the varied impacts of their built environments and the implications for identity and community in periods of upheaval.

5. BEACH HOUSE, TARUMI – JAPAN: RESTORATIVE ENVIRONMENT

The novel begins with a haiku by the renowned Japanese poet Oshima Ryota: "None spoke, / The host, the guest, / The white chrysanthemums" (Tsukiyama). This haiku symbolically represents the quality of silence and peace that characterizes a Japanese house. It foreshadows the journey of Stephen Chan, who comes to recuperate, and Matsu, the caretaker and gardener of the Tarumi beach house. Upon arriving at Tarumi, Stephen immediately senses a shift in his environment as he catches his first glimpse of the sea: "The salty sea air filled my head, and from beyond the dune came the steady surge of the waves" (9). After being confined in closed spaces for a long time due to tuberculosis, Stephen's first contact with the open natural environment of the sea brings him a sense of openness and freedom. This illustrates the transformative power of nature. As Alain de Botton explains in his book *The Architecture of Happiness*, a house serves not only as a physical entity but also as a psychological sanctuary that helps individuals create a sense of identity. He writes, "It has provided not only physical but also psychological sanctuary. It has been a guardian of identity. Over the years, its owners have returned from periods away and, on looking around them, remembered who they were" (Botton 10 & 11).

The design of a traditional Japanese house is built on ideals of simplicity, tradition, and family closeness. These houses reflect three key Japanese concepts: wabi, sabi, and shibui. Wabi signifies simple quietude, sabi denotes elegant simplicity, and shibui refers to refined austerity. Additionally, Japanese architecture centers on material minimalism, which sharply contrasts with Western homes that showcase material abundance. Japanese houses compartmentalize space according to need, avoiding areas that exist solely for luxury and excess. Inge Maria Daniels explains the simplistic structure and interiors of traditional Japanese houses in her article *The 'Untidy' Japanese House*:,"There is no ornament for the sake of ornament, no woodwork or carving not demanded by the exigencies of construction, no striving for picturesque effect through fantastic irregularity, no overloading of unnecessary decoration, no confusion of furnishings, and no litter of trivial and embarrassing accessories" (Daniels 203).

The beach house at Tarumi is maintained by Matsu, a fifty-year-old man who has been its caretaker and gardener since he was a teenager. Born and raised in Tarumi, Matsu's family has lived in the area for generations. The beach house reflects traditional Japanese wooden architectural styles, preserving its intricacies. When Stephen enters, he notes, "The house appears smaller than I remember, though it feels comfortable here, with a simplicity I could never find in the crowded Hong Kong" (9). For the first time, Stephen can relax and detach himself from his illness and the war as he steps into this calming space in Tarumi. After a prolonged confinement due to tuberculosis, the environment of Tarumi begins to revive and rejuvenate him: "A sense of freedom emerged which had been buried under my illness" (14).

The Tarumi Beach House heightens Stephen's awareness of his immediate surroundings. It serves as a reminder to appreciate everything around him for the first time, as he observes, "Even the light is revealing; you can't miss the smallest nuance, the slightest sound. It's as if the world were concentrated into just these small rooms" (20). This effect exemplifies the psychological principles behind traditional Japanese house design. Designer Bruno Munari discusses Japanese houses in his book *Design as Art*, noting the entrance space called Genkan: "There is a space, nearly always a small space, between the street and the door. It may be six-foot square, but this space is enough to create a sense of detachment that is, I should say, more psychological than physical" (Munari 104). This psychological detachment allows Stephen to rise above the constraints imposed by his illness, instilling a newfound sense of freedom. Instead of feeling othered, he embraces his connection to the environment for the first time.

The Tarumi Beach House exemplifies traditional Japanese architectural principles, integrating the sukiya and shoin styles, heavily influenced by the spatial and functional paradigms of Zen Buddhist teahouses. As Daniels describes, Japanese residences emphasize an open plan with a focus on light architecture, promoting a harmonious relationship between built space and garden (Daniels 207). This architectural approach is predicated on resilience, particularly in response to Japan's susceptibility to natural disasters such as earthquakes and tsunamis, which necessitates the use of lightweight materials like wood and paper. The flooring, typically composed of tatami mats, is adaptable, allowing for customized layouts that serve the multifunctional needs of the occupants.These structures inherently promote natural adaptability, permitting seamless transformations among living, dining, and leisure spaces as required. When not in active use, these areas remain uncluttered, devoid of elaborate furnishings that would otherwise impose rigid functionality. This fluidity mirrors the natural cycles of the environment, resonating with the idea that, "In such natural surroundings, a person stands out and dominates" (Munari 108). The term "dominates" here is contextually vital; it implies that the space enhances rather than overwhelms the inhabitant's presence, enriching the overall living experience.

In stark contrast to the opulence observed in Stephen's Hong Kong residence, the Tarumi Beach House embodies a minimalist ethos that fosters comfort without imposing a constant reminder of the occupant's convalescence. Its design philosophy aligns closely with notions of environmental integration; the architecture does not merely coexist with the landscape but rather appears as an organic extension of it. This connection is pivotal, as the design encourages occupants to reflect on their relationship with nature, reinforcing the idea of interdependence. Matsu encapsulates this concept succinctly: "We aren't so different, human beings and plants. We are all a part of one nature, and from each other we learn how to live" (193). Such co-existence fosters pro-environmental behaviors, crucial for developing sustainable living practices. Homes like the Tarumi Beach House serve as models for enhancing these qualities, thus contributing to a more integrated and sustainable environment.

The Tarumi Beach House exemplifies traditional Japanese architectural principles, integrating the sukiya and shoin styles, heavily influenced by the spatial and functional paradigms of Zen Buddhist teahouses. As Daniels describes, Japanese residences emphasize an open plan with a focus on light architecture, promoting a harmonious relationship between built space and garden (Daniels 207). This architectural approach is predicated on resilience, particularly in response to Japan's susceptibility to natural disasters such as earthquakes and tsunamis, which necessitates the use of lightweight materials like wood and paper. The flooring, typically composed of tatami mats, is adaptable, allowing for customized layouts that serve the multifunctional needs of the occupants. These structures inherently promote natural adaptability, permitting seamless transformations among living, dining, and leisure spaces as required. When not in active use, these areas remain uncluttered, devoid of elaborate furnishings that would otherwise impose rigid functionality. This fluidity mirrors the natural cycles of the environment, resonating with the idea that, "In such natural surroundings, a person stands out and dominates" (Munari 108). The term "dominates" here is contextually vital; it implies that the space enhances rather than overwhelms the

inhabitant's presence, enriching the overall living experience.

In stark contrast to the opulence observed in Stephen's Hong Kong residence, the Tarumi Beach House embodies a minimalist ethos that fosters comfort without imposing a constant reminder of the occupant's convalescence. Its design philosophy aligns closely with notions of environmental integration; the architecture does not merely coexist with the landscape but rather appears as an organic extension of it. This connection is pivotal, as the design encourages occupants to reflect on their relationship with nature, reinforcing the idea of interdependence. Matsu encapsulates this concept succinctly: "We aren't so different, human beings and plants. We are all a part of one nature, and from each other we learn how to live" (193). Such co-existence fosters pro-environmental behaviors, crucial for developing sustainable living practices. Homes like the Tarumi Beach House serve as models for enhancing these qualities, thus contributing to a more integrated and sustainable environment.

6. REFUGEE SETTLEMENT IN HONGKONG, CHINA: HOMELESSNESS

The onset of the Second World War severely impacted urban centers such as Peking, Nanking, and Shanghai, particularly as these cities were under British sovereignty, rendering them strategic targets for Japanese military operations. The extensive bombing of Shanghai is vividly captured in the novel as, "Warplanes have bombed Shanghai incessantly. What the bombs don't destroy, the fires start to do. So many innocent lives have been lost" (21). As devastation unfolded, many refugees fled Shanghai to Hong Kong, another British settlement known for its strategic harbor. A diary entry by Stephen dated March 28, 1938, includes correspondence from his sister Pie, who volunteers at the Red Cross Refugee Centre in Hong Kong. Her observations provide a poignant insight into the dire living conditions faced by refugees.

Pie notes that "the mountains near Wan Chai have become home to thousands of refugees" (118). The stark contrast between the housing conditions in Shanghai and those in Hong Kong is alarming; refugees in Hong Kong reside in makeshift shelters constructed from salvaged materials such as wood scraps and cardboard. These structures, described as "filthy, dark boxes" (118), highlight the extreme impoverishment of refugees. This description of their living conditions resonates with historical accounts of other refugee populations, including Jewish communities during the Second World War. Polish sociologist Marta Cobel Tokarska, in her book *Desert Island, Burrow, Grave: Wartime Hiding Places of Jews* in Occupied Poland, articulates the existential plight of individuals in life-threatening circumstances, emphasizing how their fundamental right to occupy space and be visible is compromised. She asserts that those deprived of this right are compelled to conceal their existence, suggesting a binary of existence versus non-existence, with no middle ground (Tokarska 1).

Upon displacement, these refugees often inhabit hideouts that are equally impoverished and devoid of necessities. They are forced to reconstruct their lives from the ground up, facing the profound psychological burden of losing their identities linked to their homelands. The places they once occupied become mere echoes of memory, elusive and unattainable. Salman Rushdie, in *Imaginary Homelands*, posits that such physical alienation forces individuals to accept that reclaiming their lost identities is unfeasible: "Our physical alienation…… almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, ……of the mind" (Rushdie 21). These accounts collectively underscore that the systematic loss of the built environment and familiar landscapes results in a profound deprivation of belonging and identity for displaced individuals. The juxtaposition of the Beach House concept with the plight of refugees highlights a profound dichotomy in experiences of displacement—one voluntary and the other coerced. As the Japanese military commenced its offensive against mainland China, significant numbers of civilians—fleeing the violence—sought refuge in strategically important urban centers like Hong Kong.

In this context, the complexity of migration emerges, encompassing both voluntary and forced elements, as these individuals are often compelled by dire circumstances to abandon their homelands. The text illustrates these refugee crises vividly: "Late in August, the Japanese invaded Shanghai where a bloody standoff continued. Thousands of refugees have fled China and have built their makeshift homes in the crowded streets of Hong Kong. On the way to the harbor, we smelled their greasy street cooking and saw their gaunt, desolate faces begging for money and understanding" (Tsukiyama 4). This narrative reflects the historical realities of the 1937 invasion, where the Japanese initially targeted Peking and advanced toward Shanghai, leading to horrific civilian consequences. The strategic selection of target cities was not arbitrary; these locations held significant political and economic value. In his research article, *Where the Courtyard Meets the Street,* Samuel Y. Liang delves into Shanghai's geopolitical landscape, offering insights into the intertwined histories that shaped the refugee situation. Following the Opium Wars, which were precipitated by the British imposition of opium sales, China experienced severe losses leading to the Treaty of Nanking in 1843. This treaty ceded Shanghai to British and French control, catalyzing its transformation from a frontier town into a modern metropolis characterized by the commercial allure of the Bund and Nanking Road (Liang 482).

Liang describes Shanghai as a "hybrid colonial environment" (Liang 486), underscoring its complex spatial structure, which catered to transient merchant populations who nonetheless sought to establish residence. The settlements, described as a "fluid space," experienced a redefinition of social hierarchies, blurring the boundaries between the elite and the impoverished (Liang 482). Following the revolt of the Small Sword Rebels, these settlements transformed into a refuge for Chinese

migrants fleeing civil strife, thereby morphing Shanghai into a pivotal host environment for refugees. In the wake of the Taiping Rebellion, approximately 8,740 temporary dwellings were erected in the early 1860s as burgeoning numbers of refugees streamed into Shanghai, raising the Chinese population in these settlements to 110,000. However, the cessation of the rebellion in 1864 precipitated a brief real estate downturn as many refugees returned to their original locales (Liang 483).

This particular urban settlement of Shanghai—an established British enclave with a growing Chinese demographic—became a key target for the Japanese assault due to its economic significance and its historical role as a sanctuary for fleeing populations. A meticulous examination of the city's planning and housing frameworks reveals that the refugee accommodations were largely traditional structures, designed and constructed by Chinese artisans for tenancies, characterized by the san-heyuan architectural style. Typically, these dwellings were single-story brick and timber constructions, often comprising three to five jian (the measurement denoting spacing between two sets of columns), with primary living spaces oriented southward and central jian serving communal or reception functions (ketang). This organic approach to construction, arising from spontaneous building initiatives, often resulted in an aesthetically layered urban landscape (Liang 484). Ultimately, this architectural modality not only facilitated the housing of large populations under single-roof structures but also laid the groundwork for subsequent imperial and governmental edifices in China, while foreshadowing the modern high-rise apartments that characterize urban residential architecture in the 21st century.

7. YAMAGUCHI – JAPAN: UNWELCOME HOMES

The village of Yamaguchi mentioned in The Samurai's Garden is a leper settlement. Matsu the caretaker has a friend there called Sachi whom he visits often and delivers ration supplies and essentials. Sachi happens to be the childhood best friend of Stephen's late sister Tomoko. Tomoko became the first person to get afflicted with the leprosy contagion in the Tarumi village and those were the times when knowledge of the disease was not very prevalent in that region. From the words of Sachi we learn that due to the contagion Tomoko decides to go into confinement inside her house and never left the place, "when it began to spread, Tomoko didn't know what to do. She became quiet and wouldn't leave her house" (78). Later as the contagion progresses Tomoko decides to put an end to it and takes her own life, "Tomoko had committed seppuku. She had sliced herself open with her father's knife" (79). Tomoko's outlook on life before the contagion seems entirely different, she is portrayed as an outgoing, smart, and independent girl who has big dreams about her life. "She always had plans to move to Tokyo and work for some large company. Tarumi had always been small for her" (79).

Life after the leprosy contagion has been the same for the people who were afflicted with it. They either confined themselves inside their houses or left their homes in fear of disgrace and moved away. Stephen accompanies Matsu during one such visit to the Yamaguchi settlement and on reaching there he recalls the living conditions of lepers back in China, "In China, lepers had always been feared and shunned. I had heard stories of how they were forced to live on the streets, left to beg or eat rats, while they simply rotted away" (24). People with illness and contagions for a sub-section of society with no place designated for them in a normal household and a housing situation. The way of treatment of these people is alienating and they are often kept under confines or away from common residence. Once they lose their identity of place their entire identity gets stripped away from them leaving them with the identity of an invalid with no strings attached to their family or society. More often than not their new life isn't a promising one as they lack financial and emotional support from others around. "When some of those who had the disease were no longer wanted by others in town, they took what few belongings they had and went up into the mountains hoping to die peacefully. Away from the cruelties of the healthy" (23).

The regular housing setting of the people suffering from ailments that disturb their physical, mental, and emotional health seems distant and harsh. These places serve as a constant reminder which leads them to a daunting feeling of othering. From Matsu's explanation about Yamaguchi, we understand when the contagion first broke out people from all over Japan left their places and found refuge in Yamaguchi, "After all, lepers from all over Japan found their way to Yamaguchi, simply hoping to be accepted, to be swallowed up by the mountain" (24). The mountains of Yamaguchi offer them comfort and shelter which the common households couldn't offer them. Yamaguchi becomes a restorative environment for these people which we understand with more clarity through the words of Sachi, "it can be a cure for some and a refuge for others" (28). The vastness of the mountains helped them escape the narrow walls and confines that were erected around them and freed them.

The Austrian poet Rainer Maria Rilke explains the vastness of the outside environment and

the freedom it offers as follows, but outside, everything is immeasurable. And when the level rises outside, it also in you, not in the vessels that are partially controlled by you, or in the phlegm of your most unimpressionable organs: but it grows in the capillary veins, drawn upward into the furthermost branches of your infinitely ramified existence……. you flow from yourself, and your lack of hardness or elasticity means nothing anymore (Bachelard 244). The architectural planning and execution of Yamaguchi though a fictional landscape has close semblances close to real-life contagion communities. "The village of Yamaguchi stood in a clearing on the gradual slope of the mountain, hidden away by tall pine trees. Small wooden houses sat in a cluster like any other village…. Only with closer scrutiny did I begin to see that the houses were painstakingly pieced together with mismatched scraps of wood" (24). The houses are very simplistically made with no traces of luxury. These houses lack the fine finish made by builders which shows the communal and group involvement prevalent in the

village. The village lives as a community where people stand for each other and hold each other's back. This community gives the inmates a sense of freedom and identity and helps the people there live with dignity.

It adds a sense of purpose and meaning to their lives. Susan L. Burns in her essay titled, *From Leper Village to Leprosarium: Public Health, Nationalism and the Culture of Exclusion in Japan* evidentially explains the existence of such contagion communities in Japan in the late 1800s. The settlement is called Yu No Zawa which was located in the village called Kusatsu. Yu No Zawa is a leper community where people have co-existed even during times of war and civil wars. "In 1902 Yu No Zawa had a population of 126 people, which included thirty-two married couples. Five children had been born there in the preceding year. The residents worked at a variety of professions" (Manes 51). This community is mentioned to be a sustainable environment where people live a life of their own making with happiness and dignity. Another study done by Marcia Gaudet, in Carville, Louisiana discusses the Leprosy community. It describes the residents of the place thus, a "true folk community …....isolated from the rest of the world with their traditions, celebrations, stories, and views of the outside world" (Manes 51).

A study of these communities focuses on such sub-sections of people who do not come under the norms of common living and carry on with their lives. Throughout the world, these communities form a close-knit bond among themselves. This is the freedom that restorative environments offer for people who are recuperating. In contrast to a housing setting where they will be either quarantined or made to live in confines, these restorative environments give them access to continue their lives in normalcy. These communities give them a home-like environment that nourishes, acknowledges, and celebrates their entire being. Yamaguchi community also offers the same kind of experience for Sachi and all its residents. On entering Yamaguchi, we see how Stephen understands that the people living there are no different from everyone, "The villagers appeared just like Matsu and me. Men were gathered in small groups sipping tea and talking, while others worked in small gardens, and women sat mending clothes"(24). The people of Yamaguchi have reinvented and discovered themselves with the hope of living. The book Environmental Psychology: New Developments describes the home environment as,

A—heaven from the outside world, a retreat from daily life, and a source of psychological comfort. Continuity of residency and the opportunity to develop and cultivate social relationships over time are elements that contribute to the construction of a sense of home, by enhancing the sense of belonging rootedness, and identification with a place and place attachment. (159)

8. CONCLUSION

The 11th Sustainable Development Goal emphasizes the imperative of developing sustainable cities and environments that are safe, inclusive, resilient, and equitable for all individuals. This necessitates a rigorous examination of built environments and their socio-environmental impacts, a critical area of investigation at this juncture. This paper presents an in-depth analysis of built environments, specifically focusing on residential settings and the repercussions of homelessness, as articulated through Gail Tsukiyama's novel, *The Samurai's Garden*. The findings indicate that these constructed spaces can foster a profound sense of autonomy and belonging among their occupants. Moreover, the research highlights the therapeutic potential of restorative environments for individuals recuperating from illness or facing health challenges. A conspicuous absence of such environments contributes to the dislocation experienced by refugees, stripping them of their fundamental rights and relegating them to impoverished and marginalized conditions.This study aims to advance the discourse by exploring the role of policy making in facilitating the creation and enhancement of sustainable environments, alongside analyzing current trends in this domain. Furthermore, it sets a foundation for subsequent investigations into built environments and their evolving contexts, advancements, and future trajectories, encouraging further scholarly inquiry into this crucial field.

REFERENCES

[1] Anjum, Gulnaz, et al. "Life and mental health in limbo of the Ukraine war: How can helpers assist civilians, asylum seekers and refugees affected by the war?" *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 14, 2023.

[2] Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. Penguin, 2014.

[3] Botton, Alain D. *The Architecture of Happiness*. Penguin UK, 2007.

[4] Cobel-Tokarska, Marta. *Desert Island, Burrow, Grave: Wartime Hiding Places of Jews in Occupied Poland*. PDF file, Peter Lang Gmbh, Internationaler Verlag Der Wissenschaften, 2018.

[5] Foucault, Michel, and Jay Miskowiec. "Of Other Spaces." *Diacritics*, vol. 16, no. 1, 1986, p. 22.

[6] Jha, M.K. *Natural and Anthropogenic Disasters: Vulnerability, Preparedness and Mitigation*. Springer Science & Business Media, 2010.

[7] Lettersjournal Organisation. "FOUR QUARTETS T.S. ELIOT." *lettersjournal.org*, www.lettersjournal.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/fourquartets.pdf. Accessed May 2017.

[8] Liang, Samuel Y. "Where the Courtyard Meets the Street: Spatial Culture of the *Li* Neighborhoods, Shanghai, 1870–1900." *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, vol. 67, no. 4, Dec. 2008, pp. 482-503.

[9] Manes, Claire. "Triumph at Carville: A Tale of Leprosy in America." *Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 124, no. 491, 2011, pp. 103-105.

[10] Miller, Daniel. *Home Possessions: Material Culture Behind Closed Doors*. PDF file, Routledge, 2021.

[11] Munari, Bruno. *Design as Art*. Penguin UK, 2008.

[12] Rushdie, Salman. *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991*. PDF file, Random House, 2012.

[13] Steg, Linda, et al. *Environmental Psychology: An Introduction*. John Wiley & Sons, 2012.

[14] Tsukiyama, Gail. *The Samurai's Garden: A Novel*. St. Martin's Griffin, 2008.

[15] ---. *The Street of a Thousand Blossoms: A Novel*. St. Martin's P, 2007.