

Santiago's Discovery of Self and Life in the Sea

Dr O G Basavana Gowda

PG Coordinator and Asst. Prof. of English
Smt. Indira Gandhi Govt. First Grade Women's College
Sagar 577401, Shimoga Dist. Karnataka

An Abstract: Astonishingly, Hemingway's super hero, Santiago ends his toilsome sea venture in vain almost after eighty four days sans a fish in hand. Yet, it was necessary for him to meet the ends of life and further by a sheer determination and will. See stands as source of life. He was never undeterred by the usual threats posed by the sea and determines to achieve by a strong will. Some of the meritorious writers have made all such difference in literature to show the world, how and why the food is the primary means of livelihood.

The Old Man and the Sea (1952) underwent two hundred revisions by the author, and known as one of the best novels among the readers worldwide. In the novel, the affordable and rich fishermen set their comfortable voyage into the sea with all necessary properties and return to the shore with a success story. But, the old man had to keep up with the situations. For Santiago, a fish in hand is worth million than variety of fish in the sea and the worthiest would be the raw fish in his mouth. Hence, he determines to trust, "Man may be destroyed, but not defeated" (71). Apart from his old age, he had every experience, determination, and will to achieve alone on the turbulent sea. I have tried to explicate the tragic saga of experienced fisherman. Interestingly, sea is the major source of food for those who live in marine and on earth. On the other hand, the author had a point to clarify the extinct of sea creatures too. Further, the focus is on how the old man's physical stamina and the mental will win the skeleton of the marlin – a Gulf fish. Theme of crucifixion and the concept of Christianity are explored in further discussion. Naturalistic approach has been adopted for the study. This is an attempt to probe the protagonist's discovery of self and the discovery of life.

Ernest Hemingway (1899) is a versatile writer of yester years of the United States who had reached a greater height soon after his first publication. He is well known for *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) and *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952). The latter is a novella which brought literary acclamation in the American literary world. On the other hand, Mark Twain had brought a lot change to the American fiction writing by publishing *The Adventure* series of *Tom Sawyer* (1875) and *Huckleberry Finn* (1884). These two novels were a great success and received well by the readers of him. The next best literary height was claimed by Hemingway. He established a celestial literature in the mid Twentieth Century. Also he has retained an equal or more recognition in the field of fiction writing through the vivid description of fishermen which is well crafted in his final work, *The Old Man and the Sea*. Though the writer commenced his career as a reporter, at the age of eighteen, he volunteered to serve as a Red Cross ambulance driver in the First World War. Later he fictionalised his experience in Italy in what some consider his greatest novel *A Farewell to Arms*.

The Old Man and the Sea is a masterpiece about a Cuban fisherman who was dragged out to sea by a great marlin, a game fish that typically weighs hundreds of pounds. The novel won the 1953 Pulitzer Prize and the Nobel Prize in 1954. While some critics have adored *The Old Man and the Sea* as a classic that takes its place among such established American works as William Faulkner's short story "The Bear" and Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*, others have attacked the story "imitation Hemingway" and find fault with the author's departure from the uncompromising realism with which he made his name. Because, he is a writer who always depends heavily on autobiographical sources. The more compelling interpretation asserts that the novella is a parable about life itself; in particular man's struggle for triumph in a world that seems designed to destroy him. *The Old Man and the Sea* is the story of an epic struggle between an old, seasoned fisherman and the greatest catch of his life.

The book had achieved an astonishing reception from the readers of its simple and altruistic explanation. Though the work was written in Cuba in 1951, it was published in 1952.

Paradoxically, Hemingway's super hero, Santiago ends his toilsome sea venture in vain almost after eighty four days, yet it was necessary for him to meet the ends of life and further he determines to venture again. In the novel, the affordable and rich fishermen set their comfortable voyage into the sea with all necessary properties and return to the shore with a great haul of catch. But, there are noticeable hurdles for the old man to keep up with the situation. Though, there are no direct references found on self in the explanation, I have tried to explicate how the very objective of the experienced fisher man has ended in a tragic saga. The current methodology of MLA Handbook for Researchers has been adopted in completing the task.

Interestingly, the writer had introduced a new kind of narrative technique as he has disguised himself as an anonymous narrator. However, the narration is shifted frequently to provide Santiago's -- the protagonist -- inner dreams and thoughts. The story is developed around a small fishing village near Havana, in Cuba; that is known to be the last work of the writer comprising the images such as the Crucifixion, life from death and the lions on the African white beaches. The fish like marlin and shovel nosed sharks play a vital role as Santiago sails farther into the sea as ever before, which foreshadows his destruction, "because the marlin is linked to Santiago, the marlin's death encompasses Santiago's own destruction by the sharks." Of course, the old man has a sportive spirit like a famous baseball player Joe DiMaggio and retained the same spirit ever.

Life is an integral part of the mankind, yet there is a complex situation in the modern society. For the hungry, life is reconstructed with the help of self and for the rich; it is not so difficult to be constructed. Moreover, the nature has bestowed life unto all the living beings. There are many studies, through which the civilised society adopted the paraphernalia of life and struggled to survive. It is a different phenomenon for the developed and the underdeveloped countries. Some of the meritorious writers have made all such difference in literature to show the world, how and why the selfless life has no meaning livelihood. Interestingly, sea is the major source of life risking life for those who associated with the marine life. On the other hand, the author had a point to clarify the extinct of sea creatures. Further, the focus is made on how the old man's physical stamina and the mental will win the skeleton of the marlin -- a Gulf fish. For Santiago, a fish in hand is worth million than variety of fish in the sea and the worthiest would be the raw fish in his mouth. Hence, he determines to trust, "Man may be destroyed, but not defeated" (71).

Yet, we tend to relook the episode of the old man's daily life as he is a lonely survivor and well supported in all respects by a young friend and a boy, named Manolin. Moreover, Martin, the owner of Terrace of his village has supplied food to the old man through the boy. The old man enquires about their supper and the boy responds that they would eat "Black beans and rice, fried bananas, and some stew," also confirms that he "... brought them in a two-decker metal container from the Terrace" (09). Also the old man counts all regards to Martin and pays tribute by sharing some of the fish turned out of his luck from his sea adventure. The small boy also has a greatest regard and respect for the old man and affirms that "the best fisherman is ..." his friend. Further confirms saying "There are many good fishermen and some great ones. But there is only ..." the old man. (11)

This novel seems to be a matured art in its own compassion. The author had revealed that the work had undergone two hundred revisions and who has given a special importance to the language and diction. The fresh flow of language has enthralled the readers with distilled imagination out of refined thoughts of Hemingway. The novel opens with a simple and direct explanation as the protagonist and the situation is clearly described. In the beginning, Hemingway portrays the pictorial view of old man's fishing for a living without mentioning his name.

The central theme of the novel lies in as the protagonist ventures into the sea expecting a large haul of fish after eighty four successive days sans catching a fish as he promises his former assistant Manolin -- a boy. Finally, he encounters marlin which takes the bait, but the old man is unable to pull him in, which leads to a three-day struggle between the experienced fisherman and the fish. The very context reminds us that how the poor person struggles for a square meal for a day and the affluent society neglects the worthiness of the food. Today, we are living in the world of food politics, as we are dictating on each other's food preferences. The ideology is quite opposite when we visualise the life of the old man. He has left with only option to catch fish and has a little cloth to wear unlike any of our political representatives and bureaucrats. The old man's very struggle against the greatest fish, of his long concern seems not only the need but also envisages the self and life of an ordinary man.

The old man's infallible efforts of almost eighty four days, almost three months, went in vain which is a timely punishment for an ordinary fisherman. This denotes that the old man's failures never subdue his efforts though the villagers take him to be a failure. The writer denotes that his eyes were "cheerful and undefeated" (01) as they have been active and enthusiastic to feed thousands of hungry stomachs earlier with a vibrant experience of catching fish. Although it is considered that the days spent without catching a fish as unlucky and believed to be superstitious. This could have been a common phenomenon for the downtrodden people. Yet the old man has an unfathomable faith in Manolin despite what others think and though the boy has caught fish in another boat. The village thinks Santiago is a failure because he has caught no fish which is a metaphor for money; and if he has caught no fish, he is worth nothing and therefore not a man. What if the old man is not identified by his gender? Rather he never bothers for such allegations and he minds his duties without any iota of failure in his mind. Also we could notice the strongest bondage between the boy and the aged man which is beyond the considerations. The narrator puts this as "The old man had taught the boy to fish and the boy loved him" (02). This could well be justified with a proverb "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." On the shack, while fishing, Santiago says kind words by that the

fish are his “brothers” and still predicts the “brothers” are in need for the needy(30). His three brothers are fish and his two hands; hence he trusts them (41). Meanwhile, extending the coil with bait to the fish he says, “‘Eat it a little more,’ and said. ‘Eat it well.’ Eat it so that the point of the hook goes into your heart and kills you, he thought. Come up easy and let me put the harpoon into you. All right. Are you ready? Have you been long enough at table?” This shows the desperation and the suffering of the hungry old man (27). This would very much applicable for the fish in fear of being caught and for the old man of being not able to catch it. Hemingway ensures the theory of “survival of the fittest” by saying through Santiago “If I would put in everything now and go until something broke. But, thank god, they are not as intelligent as we who kill them; although they are more noble and more able” (41). Further, Hemingway questions of what would be defeat and victory in life. According to him, failure would not be failure as the other say so; defeat cannot be defined because he fails to catch fish for over eighty four days. Defeat has to be defined by what others think is defeated by their own personal values. That is what Santiago wanted to instigate in the mind of boy but he made no efforts to do so. Here is a lesson with a general cause. With the same inclination the writer explains the characteristics of the sea and the different methods of deep sea fishing. His protagonist goes out to sea before dawn so as to be at the right place at the right time to haul fish. Fish is nothing but the source of food and they have been less considered to be the entity of the nature. Also, they have been the sources of income, showcased in aquariums and have been greatly worshipped as equal to godly spirits among the fishermen community. The narrator has made a mention of variety of fish ranging from edible to the large sharks which have their own food chain. The variety of them include sardines, tuna, albacore flying fish, dolphins, sharks, marlin, jelly fish, big blue runner, barracuda, dolphins, yellow jacks and so on. The need of food is much realised by the sailor who “Under the stars and with the night colder all the time he ate half of one of the dolphin fillets and one of the flying fish, gutted and with its head cut off.” Santiago feels without the salt and limes his food will never be complete. He exclaims “‘What an excellent fish dolphin is to eat cooked,’ ... ‘And what a miserable fish raw. I will never go in a boat again without salt or limes’” (53). The importance of cooked food is also felt. The absence of his friend, the boy is felt on each stage of Santiago’s venture on the waters and in the deep sea too. As his own thought haunts him “If the boy were here” with him.

Hemingway employs a limited stream of consciousness where events are recollected in disproportion to the regularity but as free association brings them to mind. He shows how an aged mind might think when he is all alone in the deep, with one except his memories. He further tries to envisage the intelligent man on the water surface and the aimless fish in the deep waters. The real battle of skill and stamina begins as both the old man and the fish for being “beyond all people. Beyond all people in the world” (32). The aged protagonist is lonely and isolated as the fish which has decided to pull far into the deep waters and drag the old man along with it.

“Fish” he said “I have you and respect you very much. But I will kill you dead before the day ends” (34). Life is compared to a small bird as he addresses it to “Take a good rest . . . Then go inland take your chance like man or bird or fish” (35). Ever since he comes across the bird, it is a real source of inspiration for the old man in the absence of the boy he relied upon in his earlier ventures. Moreover, the old man has in his mind for what he is meant for!

Santiago tries to prove his capacity as an experienced fisherman to bring justice to his profession by fulfilling his own goal of catching fish and feed himself mentally with the satisfaction and physically by consuming it. In accordance, the old man rehabilitate his physical strains through the means of pleasant thoughts of baseball and soothing dreams on lions of African islands from his early visits. Through which he obtains the mental and physical solace. “But” he addresses himself that “you have not slept yet, old man” he said aloud in his head (51). Also his way is clear and the speed is reduced that the flow of water against his hand has become less strong which suggests that the fish is either tiring or wanting to rest. This is some relief because it allows him to sleep as well. But he drops off to sleep fearing the approaching storm. Further, this leads him to dream of porpoises and of the long yellow African beach but not of lions.

Many times, stories by Earnest Hemingway have much religious influence and symbolism. The characters in *The Old Man and the Sea* are actually, major figures in the New Testament. One of the critics points out that, “Santiago is an old man, yet he has young eyes. No matter how defeated he was, he would never show it and he would look on the brighter side of things.” The Biblical references are vital in the explanation. Such as, Santiago’s badly injured hand, climbing shack bearing the mast on his shoulder, falling out into his bed with “his arms out straight and the palms of his hands up”(84), Santiago saying “ten Hail Marys and ten Our fathers” (42) and finally hooking the fish. One or the other way these instances are Biblically connected. Among the human there are few personal affairs, such are, of marriage, of food, and of politics. The belch flavor is the result of what we have eaten and the product is the outcome that how we have crafted. Though Santiago fails in bringing an alive or dead fish, he has proved to be a hero of his life.

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