



MAN IS ICONIZED THROUGH HIS SUPER ACTION: THE CORE IDEA IN THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA

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ABSTRACT

The present Study starts with the concept of Existentialism with a historical literary background of the early nineteenth century , and it is a real philosophy which focuses on individuality of the protagonist through *The Old Man and The Sea*. The study also deals with Santiago, as an individual character in conflict with Society and Nature, which makes him able to overcome the frustration and remove the constraints imposed by destiny and society. Resolving that conflict makes Santiago respected by the society and his people regardless of his living far away from the community .

The research paper confirms that despite fighting with nature, conflict, isolation, freedom of choice enable him to prove that he did not lose hope of catching a challenging fish in the middle of sea. It proves all these barriers actually help him to survive and be successful in his quest. The study examines through analysis, the protagonist as an individual figure in the novel who struggles to prove his existence. It also deals with features of existentialism and its values.

Key words: Existentialism, Individualist, Freedom, *The Old Man And The Sea*

المستخلص

تعظيم الإنسان من خلال أعماله الجبارة: المحور الرئيسي في رواية الشيخ والبحر

تبدأ الدراسة الحالية بمفهوم الوجودية مع خلفية أدبية تاريخية في أوائل القرن التاسع عشر ، وهي

فلسفة حقيقية تركز على الفردانية للبطل من خلال رواية الشيخ والبحر. وتتناول الدراسة أيضًا سانتياغو ، بصفته الشخصية الفردية التي تتعارض مع المجتمع والطبيعة ، مما يجعله قادرًا على التغلب على الإحباط وإزالة القيود التي يفرضها القدر والمجتمع. وحل هذا الصراع يجعل سانتياغو محترما من المجتمع وشعبه بغض النظر عن معيشتة بعيدا عن المجتمع.

ويؤكد البحث أنه على الرغم من القتال مع الطبيعة ، والصراع ، والعزلة ، وحرية الاختيار تمكنه من إثبات أنه لم يفقد الأمل في صيد سمكة صعبة في وسط البحر. إنه يثبت أن كل هذه العوائق تساعد فعليًا على النجاة ويكون ناجحًا في سعيه. تبحث الدراسة من خلال التحليل ، بطل الرواية كشخصية فردية في الرواية تكافح لإثبات وجوده. كما أنه يتعامل مع ملامح الوجودية وقيمها.



1. Introduction

Ernst Hemingway contributes greatly to literature with his copious production of novels and short stories. But the most influential work among his works is the novel *THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA* which is widely spread across the whole world, This novel is a real embodiment of Existentialism. It is a unique effort to uncover the implicit features of individualism: how the individualist sees Liberty. According to Sartres, existentialist proves himself through difficult situations.

Individualism and Interdependence are the main concerns of Hemingway's theme in *THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA*. Abstraction cannot be a solidarity and one cannot understand it. Solidarity is a must to live life, without it life is nonsense. Man must learn to be supporting. He learns this willy-nilly through the hardship of life. Life forces him to get help and learn to give it to others to make life bearable for all alike.

In the same time, individualism is a distinctive feature of humans. It is a philosophy and an attitude sometimes, desperately needed by individuals to prove themselves, to attain their desired goals without being interrupted, exploited or criticized by others whomsoever.



2. EXISTENTIALISM

Existentialism can be defined as a set of attitudes which focus on reasons of existence and meaning of life. Philosophers of this doctrine hold the view that beliefs are based on the subjective attitude and not the objective one. This philosophy is based on the notion of finding the meaning of life without linking the existence to the Supreme Being .

Writers of existentialism concentrate on the ideas of individuality, alteration, Liberty, and self-consciousness. In the recent time, the meaning of life can be determined by the individual himself/herself. This is very clearly indicated by scholars like, Soren Kierkegaard in the beginning of the 19th century. The coinage of the term existentialism is first initiated by the French philosopher Gabriel Marcel in about 1946.

The subjective experience of life is focused on and not the objective experience by Kierkegaard and Nietzsche in the first place. Kafka sees that struggling with hopelessness and absurdity is the core of alienated characters. Objectively speaking, alienation refers to the facts which are different types of disconnection between humans and their belongings.

Subjectively speaking, they refers to states of loss of equilibrium which are matching, agitation, strangeness and anxiety. In spite of the fact that certain explanations imply alienation, which are built on supposition according to those who make them.

Aiming at liberation from alienation is the central goal of Existentialism. The views held by Hegel and Marx are proved fruitless in fighting alienation so this leads to the emersion of Existentialism. They sound to endanger the process of alienation. Hegel engulfs the individual with all his inner feelings.



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The proletarian revolution suggested by Marx causes tyrannies of the proletarian creed and totalitarianism which demolish individual liberty. As a reaction to Hegel and Marx ideologies, Existentialism rises instead, but with some mutual ideas such as the idea of saving men from his estrangement. These thought of alienation are frequently found in Hemingway's stories. His heroes are embodiment of distress, agony and despair which are harbored in Hemingway's mind.

The German philosopher Martin Heidegger formulated a system of all pre-existential reflections. In the twentieth century, a group of intellectuals investigate individualist view. In the second war the fame of doctrine in question becomes widely spread. Existentialism as a term is associated with the movement of culture that emerged in the atmosphere of war. Albert and Fanon are the pivot of the movement at the end of the second world war. Existentialism is related to numerous intellectuals who support the movement with their ideas and views.

The Christian Kierkegaard and the atheist Nietzsche are combined with their unanimous agreement on the notion that individual must be the centre of attention rather than society. The core views of existentialism comprise the credibility of a person's ideas on a daily basis with others, and the connection between facts and experience as objective and subjective topics respectively. It assures the demise of life. It also focuses on the fundamental disposition of the relationships that related people to their society.

Sartre holds the view that the central value of ethics is humanity. It is noted that Fanon combines lots of thoughts such as poetry, political polemic, literary criticism and philosophical reflection to construe concerns of liberation of human beings from racism and colonialism .

The nature of literature in America is concerned with colonialism in the beginning of establishment of America that led to the white man. Ernest Hemingway is an eminent figure in the American literature in connection with writers of the lost generation. His fame is drawn from his style, courage, eccentricity, economy and adventurous writing. The philosophy of Ernest Hemingway is affected by the Existentialism at the world war I. His character seeks meaning of life, happiness, and uselessness of existence. Ernst Hemingway is born in 1899 July 21, in Chicago. His father is a physician, his mother is a musician. His mother forced him to learn playing the cello. This insistence forms a source of struggle to him. In his novels, Hemingway depicts the concerns of violence ,individuality and death as the main theme. His novels are incarnation of the symbols of life. Hemingway's writings are influenced by the doctrine of Existentialism. That is very clear in his short stories and novels where the theme ascertains this ideology. Some of writers say that the novel *THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA* is regarded as the most successful existential novel. Models of Existentialism can be seen in the novel and is symbolized by Santiago's decision with fish, to assure to Manolin his existence and his triumph against the sharks. This story invites everyone to be steadfast and courageous against the hardships of life until their dreams come true. Endeavors will be rewarded at the end. It depicts the struggle of man in various ways of life and how he can overcome the obstacles and impediments that hinder him from attaining his goals. Freedom and awareness are twins of human's dream through which he fulfill the authenticity of life. Sartre holds that "Authenticity is form of a story about self-shaping. It contains fact and consciousness" (Heter, 2006: 49).

In accordance with the above –mentioned ideas, man is the authentic being that is put in situation of life without being forced to be in such situations, but rather, he chooses to be in such challenge to prove his existence and his being

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through struggling with the forces of the nature. Santiago is able to establish his existence through his character by being a man in the state of victory.

3. *Santiago as an individualist*

Santiago reflects his existence through sailing for 84 days without catching a fish in the middle of ocean. The reality of Existentialism starts from that nature which sympathizes with the sea to create a poor fisherman character. His dream and powerful spirit are inspired by association with the nature or environment. The concept of Existentialism starts with external conflict between the old man and his fellow fishermen, it is also between Santiago and the fish. That struggle leads to metaphorical and literal perception in its fundamental aspect. Through eighty-four days, the old man has gone in the Gulf stream without getting the fish. Day after day, he continues trying to catch the fish but he fails. On the other hand, he does not listen to those fishermen who try to annoy him .

From another aspect, Freedom of choice is the first motivation for sailing or internal conflict. The struggle with the fishermen may be the most important factor to achieve his aim whereas some people envisage sea as a place full of hardships, social isolation and atrocity of nature. They believe that man cannot invade nature but Santiago does not give in to nature. This spirit makes him different from other people and the eternal conflict inside him is an incarnation of requirement of imagination for fighting in any condition. As well as, struggling with the fishermen and the battle with the fish make him a hero in Manolin's eyes. Finally, the old man has a great charisma and he does not allow negative concept to take him down.

“self-making in a situation” (Sartre, 1984). Freedom is fundamental for all substances and makes human be very keen to get his own potential. That freedom makes Santiago and Manolin commence their lives. The story begins with a Spanish word (*salao*) that is the worst shape of misfortune. This made Manolin’s parents stop their son from working with the old man, and the old man’s bad luck prevents him from catching the fish. All these factors make him insisting to attain his dream. His dream is the embodiment of subconsciousness, according to Freud. Feeling loneliness makes him need encouragement. He hopes that these lions come in his dream. The appearance of lions gives him willingness to live and it is a symbol of human spirit as well. The struggle of individuality starts in fighting a shark with a simple tools such as oar, spear, and knife despite of his miserable conditions of thirsty, wounds and scars of his body. The climax of the novel is reached when sharks eat the old man’s great fish so he fights by his existence and dignity without giving up. “A man can be destroyed but not defeated”. (Jeffares, 2012:87) Santiago is undefeated psychologically but he is broken physically. Believing and inspired by Christ through his trip when he stops to take a rest time then carries tools, nest, mast and spear on his shoulder similarity with the story of crucifixion: “then he shoulder the mast and start to climb”.(Gerry, 105). Sleeping on bed, emotional religious, pain inside him and self –sacrifice refer to crucifixion . “Then he lay down on the bed...and slept face down on the newspapers with his arms out straight and the palms of his hands up.” (Gerry. 105). The relationship of love and kindness between Manolin and the old man is parallel to the relationship between Jesus and his disciples.

The story begins with the sea which represents a symbol of life and universe itself. Isolation is a feeling that drives him to believe in a Spanish word *La mar* which refers to the fact that sea has the same features of that of a female as mother who carries within herself feelings and food for all creatures in this

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universe. Further, some fishermen believe that Sea is a male and an enemy, but for the old man his romantic attitude portrays sea as a female for all creatures. The reality of struggles start with the formidable marlin after hooking or hunting in eighteen feet but he can catch and hold it with great teeth and nails. His believing and faith in Christian values such as kindness patient and determination make him strong in the universe. Marlin represents resistance and strength, it also represents the mirror image for the old man. That power for Marlin is equal to him then leads to fight and struggle for three days. Paradoxically, the fighting starts with that term "I wish, I could the fish ,he thoughts .He is my brother. But I must kill him and keep strong to do it". (Hemingway,49). Killing the fish represents his individuality so killing brother is the only opportunity to stay alive in this universe, he also emphasizes the concept of being far from urbanized society.

The battle represents the decisive decision with shark who is a symbol of evil. Evil destroys the meat of fish but cannot eat its skeleton or Santiago's victory. The battle with sharks continues for three days by simple tools and believing in Christ as Savior. He never gives up with a shark by believing in his pride or contrasting with baseball player Dimaggio . "A man can be destroyed but not defeated". Hemingway illustrates in the story: man is not for defeat; as a hero he keeps fighting until the end regardless whether he is exhausted and broken physically, he reaches his desire.

4. *Existential conflict in The old Man and The Sea*

Paradigm of existentialism can be seen obviously in the story *THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA* when Santiago saves no efforts to catch the great Marlin trying to prove his existence with a little opportunity as a fisherman . Firstly, his internal conflict with himself is incarnated in his endeavor to overcome the great fish, he captures the worse of his old age when his hands cramp again and again.



He is always ridiculed by younger fishermen who know his age and laugh at his fishing manner. He attempts to convince his fellow fishermen in his village that he is still capable of catching a huge fish but Santiago is well aware that travelling through a wide sea has its own hardships. He makes up his mind to challenge the sea and its creatures. A little boy of Santiago keeps an eye on the old man taking care of his food and stuff despite of the fact that his parents enforce the little boy to work with another boat.

Another aspect of the conflict is that due to the necessity to the huge fish for staying alive, it makes him sailing for a long distance to Marlin territory. Paradoxically, he calls that fish “my brother” and he shows respect for its innocence and beauty but in the same time he kills it for his living. All of a sudden, sharks destroy the meat therefore the old man returns with no more than a skeleton; this makes the old man feel remorseful for going too far.

The central struggle in the story happens among man, nature, the fish, the ocean, the shark, and the weather. “He was shivering with the morning. But he knows he would shiver himself warm and that soon he would be rowing.”(Elizondo, 2019:1-18) Santiago is strange with nature and Ocean because he makes his living by them. However, the sea is not the only main source for providing him with food. He has the ability to combat the huge fish in his trip, but the ocean will not allow him to get it. He drops his lines and after a conflict of a few times, a huge fish swallows the bait, but Marlin tows the boat for 48 hours. During these 48 hours, Santiago feels thirsty, hungry, with injured and cramped hands, still he endures the pain to win the great fish. He also knows that these lines will torn up his hands by their speed. Therefore, he makes them pass through the calloused parts and he does not let these lines slip into the palm nor cut the fingers. Struggling with death, Santiago finds himself doomed by predators and nothing can evade this dangers except by dying. Here, Hemingway depicts the world as a place of death but it is not the case with brave

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men who will never give in no matter what power they face. Conflict will go on with all creatures around when one feast on the other in a circle manner. Suffering, as Hemingway puts it, is a must-have component of life and the protagonist has to come to terms with his sufferings and repeat the cycle of life struggle.

5. *Features of Human existence*

Series of existence's states can be seen through the characteristic of a human being. Without these characteristics a human beings cannot go through the stage of life. As it can be seen through the character of Santiago in the old man and the Sea, that man cannot live without exposing his own features such as, bravery steadfastness, persistence, dogmatic character, and socialism which are the production and evidence of human existence.(www.asiaing.com)

1. **Bravery**

Santiago's bravery is shown is his challenging the sea with all its dangers and hardships. It also expresses confidence that leads him to be assured of achieving his task of catching the fish. He seeks without any intention. It is obvious that he is very brave through sailing alone "He was an old man who fished alone in a skiff in the Gulf Stream and he had gone eighty-four days without catching a fish". (Gary, 1973: 22). Hemingway is alone for dozens of days in the wide sea, he feels loneliness. "He looked across the sea and knew how alone he was now. But he could see the prisms in the deep dark water and the line stretching ahead and the strange undulation of the calm. The clouds were building up now for the trade wind and he looked ahead and saw a flight of wild ducks etching themselves against the sky over the water, then blurring, then etching again and he knew no man was ever alone on the sea". (ibid:19) Santiago's mentality makes it clear that he is a courageous sailorman . No matter



what he is going to face, he is ready for any hardships and difficulties. Confidence and bravery are twin in human character. When there is courage there is confidence and vice versa.

2. Steadfastness

Santiago is depicted by Hemingway as a steadfastness sailor when the former insists on catching the fish in spite of all that has been through of agonies and sufferings. He never quits and continues to the last moment of his fighting with sea, to attain his aim. “ So he did it. It was difficult in the dark and once the fish made a surge that pulled him down on his face and made a cut below his eyes. The blood ran down his cheek a little way. But it coagulated and dried before it reached his chin and worked his way back to the bow and rested against the wood. He adjusted the sack and carefully worked the line so that it came across a new part of his shoulders and holding it anchored with his shoulder”.(Bloom.2008:77). Killing the shark is another battle , he fights that manifests his persistence . His determination is unshakable to finish the sharks one by one. “He felt something seize the club and it was gone . He jerked the tiller free from the rudder and beat and chopped with it. Holding it in both hands and driving it down again and again”.(ibid: 184). In spite of his age , Santiago is so persistent and steadfast in his shouldering his way through his career . Catching his fish and killing the sharks, he never stops in his journey to the eternity.

3. Dogmatic Character

Dogma is well-established in Santiago’s character. He is a stubborn man. He insists on his opinion through his desire to prove to his fellow fishermen that he is still able to do the fishing in a perfect way as if he is a young man. “ My choice was to go there to find him beyond all people in the world. Now we are joined together and have been since moon. No one to help either none for us”.(

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Levin, 1957:16). Usually working alone, makes most of people get bored. But trying to find thoughts that can keep monotony at bay, is a typical way of getting rid of boredom. Santiago tries to focus on his priorities and neglects any other thoughts. This is crystal clear in his saying “ I wonder how the baseball came out in the grand league today, he thought, It would be wonderful to do this with a radio. Then he thought, think of it always .Think of what you are doing . You must do nothing stupid “. (Baker, 1962:7). Santiago has a doctrine and slogan that he uses as a torch to enlighten his way in life and slogan which says that man may suffer devastation, damage, and be ruined, but still he can fight back again and again.

4. Dependence

Man is sociable by nature . No one whatsoever can live alone forever. He is forced to depend on others and others depend on him. This is life. Santiago's relationship with Manolin is a cooperative one. He depend on the boy and the boy learns a lot from him “The old man had taught the boy to fish and the boy loved him”. (Bloom, 2008:16). The boy save no effort to help the old man by supplying him with his needs. “Can I offer you a beer on Terrace and then we will take the stuff home”. (Jeffars, 2012:13-14). The faculties of Santiago qualify him through his journey in life. These faculties of bravery, steadfastnessetc reflect the features of life that are represented in human being.

6. Values of Human Existence

Values of life can be seen through the noble achievements that human being reaches. Such values are exposed in Santiago's contributions in his life and his character of bravery, persistence , dogmatic features ..etc . In this way he proves his existence in life as a positive creature .

7. The Values of Conflict

Every goal in life has a price . Goals are also accompanied by pain and agony. Nothing in life with high values can be attained without suffering. Our hero goes through a lot of hardships and suffering. Firstly, his left hand cramps when he is trying to hold the rope tightly so as not to let go of the fish. Secondly, he takes pain to grasp the fish in spite of his old age until he does not feel his hand but never quits. This is a physical pain which cannot prevent our hero from pursuing his endeavor on the one hand. On the other hand, Santiago's psychological suffering can be so obvious when sharks eat up his prize in front of his eyes.

8. Conclusion

Existentialism, as represented by the protagonist in the novel, is of a high value when the individual tries to prove himself as a positive being in life. In this case , Santiago, the hero of *THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA* is a fisherman surrounded by many adversaries and negative criticism. Existentialism is clearly manifested in human when he tries to establish himself in the hardest situations, notwithstanding the shortage of resources and supporters. Man can make his name through patience , perseverance and resistance even if he loses some of his accomplishment. In defending his proposition through seeking inspiration of religious symbols like Jesus Christ , man has a good drive to go on with his endeavor and to be steadfast in his bad situations. Existentialism is depicted precisely in *The Old Man And The Sea* . Everything around the hero in this novella is hostile. This hostility inspired the protagonist to accomplish his aims. In spite of the fact that Santiago comes back with a skeleton with fish at all, still he is victorious. The real value of man is to fight to the last moment and never gives up no matter what conditions he goes through. Individuality stems from



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the innermost of human being. Jesus Christ as a religious symbol is a good source for inspiration in life for those who want to demonstrate their feats.



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