



## INFLUENCE OF 'SPIRITUALITY' IN THE NOVEL 'THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA' BY ERNEST HEMINGWAY

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### Abstract

Ernest Hemingway (July 21, 1899- July 02, 1961) was an eminent American literary giant. He was a prominent journalist, novelist, sportsman and short story writer. He published seven novels, six short story collections and two nonfictional works. He was awarded Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1953. He won the Nobel Prize in literature in 1954. His novel 'The Old Man and the Sea' has generally been regarded as a classic of American literature. It is doubtlessly an outstanding work. It tells a story of rare fortitude and heroic endurance. The message and learning of the novel is that while a man may grow old and be wholly down on his luck, he can still dare. He can make his life fruitful with love, truth, honour, loyalty, pride, humility and spirituality.

Keywords: Outstanding, endurance, doubtlessly, loyalty, pride, honour, humility, learning and spirituality.

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*'Some are born great some achieve greatness and some have greatness thrust upon them.'* - William Shakespeare

### Introduction

Hemingway's world-view adds up to something more than a philosophy or an epic. He had always been religious. But his religion was not of the orthodox or organized kind. If we observed minutely, we can see that 'The Old Man and the Sea' is the book which elevates the philosophy to a religion by the use of allegory. He illustrates the spiritual sufficiency of life. In fact 'spirituality' is a way in which a person seeks to connect to the divine. Traditionally, the word 'spiritual' signified having an attachment to religious values. It is the matter of spirit rather than worldly or material interests. But now 'spirituality' means to reach higher levels of communication using meditation or yoga. I think

that 'spirituality' is such type of state in which we are connected to God, nature or soul. And it is essential for us that all aspects of our- selves must be balanced. Above all our mind, body and spirit have to be in harmony with each other. When we are in tune with God, nature, each other and ourselves, we are being spiritual

Santiago's isolation-

The very first line in the novel 'The Old Man and the Sea' is that-

'He was an old man who fished alone in a skiff...'

The above lines expresses the essence of the novel that we are squarely confronted with a world in which man's isolation is the most insistent truth. In the beginning of the novel the old man knew that he was going far out. He left only the smell of the land behind, rowing out into the clean early morning

smell of the ocean. On the sea he talks to himself aloud on many occasions about several context. But all his strength come from insight. He considers about the boy and African lions which partly sustains about the boy, his life, courage, confidence and strength.

Santiago says-

'A man can be destroyed but not defeated.'

Likewise, A.L. Tennyson also says-

I can not rest from travel ; I will drink life to the lees.

- Ulysses

Further He says-

To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

- Ulysses

John Keats also says-

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard are sweeter.

- Ode on A Grecian Urn

Resolve and persistence of old man-

The old man has a quest for a big fish. Although he has continuous struggle mentally and physically both for the fish. A lesser fisherman would have let go the line and sailed back to the sea- shore. But the old fisher man (Santiago) lets the Marlin have its way, allowing it to tow his boat as long as it can. At last he is eventually able to kill it. His resolve, persistence, patience, self- confidence and invincible will-power shows his faith in spirituality. At no stage does he think of giving up the struggle.

Santiago says-

" now is no time to think of what you do not have. Think of what you can do with that there is."

Doubtlessly, Santiago has faith in the concept of ' Do or die.'

The use of numerology-

Ernest Hemingway has full faith in Christianity. Because the numerology is not formalized but it is carefully set forth. As we know that three, seven and forty are key numbers in the both The old Testament and The new Testament. And as the novel opens the old man, Santiago has fished alone for forty-four famine days and with the boy (Manolin) for forty more. The old man's trial

with the great fish (Marlin) lasts exactly three days. The fish is landed on the seventh attempt. Only seven sharks are killed. So there is a consistency in the equal importance of the numbers themselves.

Santiago himself says-

"Eighty five is the lucky number."

It spells out that Santiago has faith Christianity and in numerology both.

Solitariness of the old man-

In the novel 'The Old Man And The Sea', Hemingway expresses his faith in the spiritual sufficiency of life. Santiago is more or less a lonely old man. He has been deprived even of the boy, Manolin's company. He is absolutely alone on his epic voyage. This reclusiveness is *highly emphasized*. In fact Hemingway believes that the pressure or the agony of life can never be shared or passed on to others. But it must be alone. Now Santiago's hands are wounded and he feels that the Marlin is killing him. He is completely exhausted. But he is essentially alone. Santiago has confidence in his own spirit and inner resources. He is the symbol of the struggle between individual man and the natural world. The same theme is expressed by John Keats in his well-known sonnet namely 'When I Have Fears That I May Cause To Be'-

When I fears that I may cease to be  
Before my pen has glean'd my teeming brain,  
Before high piled books, in charact'ry,  
Hold like rich garners the full- ripen'd grain;  
When I behold, upon the night's starr'd face,  
Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,  
And think that I may never live to trace  
Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance;  
And when I feel, fair creature of an hour!  
That I shall never look upon thee more,  
Never have relish in the faery power  
Of unreflecting love! Fair creature of an hour!  
That I shall never look upon thee more,  
Never have relish in the faery power  
Of unreflecting love !- then on the shore  
Of the wide world I stand alone, and think  
Till Love and Fame to nothingness do sink.

- John Keats

Furthermore, the same theme is expressed in the poem 'Ulysses' by Alfred Lord Tennyson-

He says-

"All times I have enjoyed  
Greatly, have suffered greatly, both with those  
That loved me, and alone; on shore, and when  
Through scudding drifts the rainy Hyades  
Vext the dim sea."

Further A. L. Tennyson Says-

This is my son, mine own Telemachus,  
To whom I leave the scepter and the isle,  
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfill  
This labor, by slow prudence to make mild  
Rugged people, and through soft degrees  
Subdue them to the useful and the good.  
Most blameless is he, decent not to fail  
In offices of tenderness, and pay  
Meet adoration to my household Gods,  
When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.

-Ulysses

In this way we can see that Earnest Hemingway, John Keats and Alfred Lord Tennyson all have similar attitude about isolation, motto, action, confidence, faith, belief and loneliness at some extent.

Moreover John Donne also expresses the same view in his poem 'No Man in an Island'

He Says-

No man is an island,  
Entire of itself;  
Every man is a piece of the continent,  
A part of the main.  
If a cloud be washed away by the sea,  
Europe is the less,  
As well as if a promontory were:  
As well as if a manor of thy friend's  
Or of thine own were  
Any man's death diminishes me,  
Because I am involved in mankind  
And therefore never saved to know for whom the bell tolls;

It tolls for thee.

Santiago's dependence upon the boy (Manolin)-

Manolin always keeps up Santiago's confidence and hope. The boy brings him clothes, food and soap. He

sees that the old man has fresh bait for his fishing. During the voyage, the old man thinks again and again about the boy. He always wishes that the boy must be with him. He desires companionship of the boy. Moreover, the boy fulfills an essential emotional need of the old man. That is why he comes to feel that the boy keeps him alive. Santiago feels sure that the boy will not lose confidence in him.

The boy, Manolin says-

"It was papa made me leave, I am a boy and I must obey him."

So the boy has full faith in Santiago and his skill of fishing.

The creed of interdependence-

It is not only the creed of individualism but also the interdependence which receives the emphasis of Hemingway. Beyond Santiago's heroic individualism, love and brotherliness, there is a further dimension of the old man's experiences. He realizes the sin into which men fall by going far out beyond depth or beyond their true place in life. Even after killing the Marlin, he feels no pride of victory.

Santiago says -

"I am only better than him through trickery and he meant me no harm."

Santiago's dependence upon Di Maggio Martin and Perico-

Santiago's source of inspiration are some champions like DiMaggio and Perico.

Santiago himself says -

"But I must have confidence and I must be worthy of the great Di Maggio who does all things perfectly even with the pain of the bone-spur in his heel."

Santiago is not only depend on DiMaggio but he is depend on Martin, the restaurant owner who sends him food. He is also depend on the wine shop-owner, who gives him newspapers so that he can read about baseball. His humility prevents him from thinking such aids to be below his dignity.

Allegorical Meanings-

The most obvious symbolic significance of the novel 'The Old Man And The Sea' is that life is a continuous struggle in which a courageous and steadfast individual may win a moral victory against the difficulties and problems of existence. It may be that in a worldly sense, he may suffer a defeat. So the novel upholds the integrity, dignity and invincibility of the human- mind.

But in another point of view this novel is a parable of youth and age. Doubtlessly, Santiago is an old man but he managed to preserve an inner youth which promptly responds to such stimuli as the boy Manolin and the thought of lion whom Santiago had in his younger days seen on the African beaches.

Furthermore the novel 'The Old Man And The Sea' is a personal parable pertaining to Hemingway himself. It is an account of Hemingway's personal struggle, resolute and grim. Hemingway sees his art of writing exactly as Santiago sees his craft of fishing. This novel is also known as Christian allegory. There are several allusion to Christian symbolism as use of numerology, the crucifixion and spirituality in the novel.

Affirmation and outlook of life-

'The Old Man And The Sea ' is a novel of affirmation. It is a tale of courage, pride, confidence, humility and endurance. The world is no longer a trap in which man is doomed to struggle to suffer and to die as bravely as he can. Now the world is a meaningful place where a human being can show the stuff he is made of. And thus he can achieve something of supreme value and importance. It is an affirmative attitude of life which runs through the novel. And this novel becomes a great human document which has an inspiring and tonic like effect on us.

In the poem 'Prospice' -

Robert Browning says -

I was ever a fighter, so-one fight more,  
The best and the last !

I would hate the death bandaged my eyes, and  
forbore,

And bade me creep past.

-Prospice

The above lines show that just like Robert Browning, Santiago also has the same feeling, invincible and unshaken heroism in himself to uplift dispirited and sinking individuals.

Santiago's faith in Christianity-

Hemingway has employed Christian symbolism through the novel. There are Santiago's Christian virtues of piety, charity and humanity. Santiago shows a compassionate nature towards the various creatures of the sea. He deeply loves and highly respects Marlin. It is like a friend and a brother to him. There are also the images of the crucifixion. The cry "Ay" when he sees the first of the sharks is just such a noise as a man might make on feeling the nail go through his hands and into the wooden plank. As Santiago climbs the hill to his hut, he stumbles under the weight of mast, he is crying. He collapses on his bed with his arms out straight and the palms of his wounded hands upwards. There is the part played by prayer in the cause of Santiago's ordeal. He promises on several occasions to say 'Our Fathers' and Hail' Marys ; if he succeed in his task. The prayer has deep effect on the will-power of the old man.

Human struggle against the forces of the world -

The novel 'The Old Man And The Sea' is the story of the human struggle against the unconquerable forces of this world. There is such a struggle in which man can only lose. But even the lose can be viewed as in itself a victory. So from this point of view, the novel becomes an epic metaphor. It is a contest between man and all those forces which stand in the way of the attainment of his goal. For an individual to the victim in this struggle is no disgrace if he fights well according to his abilities and powers. Although lose is inevitable but one may transcend defeat by displaying an invincible courage and an unconquerable spirit. Santiago is determined to show what a man is and what a man can endure. The novel tells us the story of a moral triumph. Santiago's faith, determination and hope rest upon his belief in man's infinite capacity to endure suffering.

Devotional attitude of the boy-

The boy has a great admiration for Santiago's qualities as a fisherman. He thinks Santiago to be 'the best fisherman'. The boy feels solicitous about the old man's welfare. The boy always attends to the physical needs of the old man. He has managed to bring some food as black beans, rice, fried bananas and some stew. Early in the morning when the old man is preparing to leave on his fishing trip, the boy gets some coffee for him. Finally, he wishes the old man's good luck. Indeed the boy's devotion, feeling and emotion to the old man is heart-touching unique and tremendous.

Santiago's love and respect for the Morlin-

Santiago comes to feel his deepest love for the creature that he himself hurts and kills. He feels to urge to conquer this great fish not only for the sake of his physical need but even more for his pride and his profession. The great Marlin is a spiritual more than the physical necessity. Santiago comes to pity and then to respect and love the Marlin.

### Conclusion

In this way we can see that Earnest Hemingway's novel 'The Old Man And The Sea' is such type of novel in which spirituality, dedication, devotion, loyalty, determination and such type of heavenly and human qualities are everywhere. The theme of the novel is 'A man can be destroyed but not defeated.' In fact Santiago is a code hero grown old and wiser. Like P. B. Shelley, Hemingway is also hopeful for future.

P.B. Shelley says-

If winter comes! Can spring be far behind.

- Ode To The West Wind

Santiago's suffering is acute and so painful to necessitate the use of crucifixion imagery of Jesus Christ-

Santiago says-

"You are killing me, fish, come on and kill me. I do not care who kills who."

Finally, when the Marlin is circling the boat, Santiago is able to haul it close enough to be able to harpoon it. His act of killing the Marlin comes as a climax to his ordeal. Santiago is able to beat an adversary as strong courageous and resolute as he himself

because of his inner- power, trick, skill, love, responsibility, humanism and spirituality. His spirit remains unconquered. Santiago attains the moral stature of Hamlet, Tess and other heroes or heroines in literature. Although on literal level Santiago's experience is much more limited in scope and range than theirs. Santiago 's attitude is very similar like John Milton. He has full faith in his duty and Christianity both.

John Milton says

They also serve who only stand and wait.

- On His Blindness

Likewise God Shrikrishna says-

'Karmanya vadhikaraste ma phaleshu kada chana'.

- Bhagwad Geeta

So it is quite clear that 'spirituality' is everywhere in the novel 'The Old Man And The Sea.' And Santiago has all the saintly attributes in himself by heart, lever and brain. Moreover, Santiago is the embodiment of compassion, loyalty, kindness, patience, dutifulness and so on. He is exceptional and unsurpassed among the heroes of Earnest Hemingway.

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