



Isolation & Luck in Hemingway's novel 'The Old Man and the Sea'

***Anchal Sharma**

Research Scholar

Department of English

Mewar University Rajasthan

Isolation & luck plays a very important part in Hemingway's novel *The Old Man and the Sea*. He struggles a lot in his life to catch the fish and got a lot of success in a battle with marlin by his hard work. He spent his 84 days in the sea it shows his unluckiness. After the unsuccessful reception to *Across the River and into the Trees*, Hemingway wrote his Pulitzer Prize winning novel to defend his reputation as a writer. Based on his experiences in Cuba, he created a character of an old fisherman. Alone in a skiff, the old man catches a great marlin, only to have it destroyed by sharks. The old man, who had been a champion arm-wrestler and a successful fisherman, was, like Hemingway, trying for a comeback.

The old man embraces the code for living that Hemingway first developed based on his experiences in World War I--the experiences in which a man confronts an unconquerable element. In fighting the sharks, the old man exhibits courage and grace under pressure, believing "a man can be destroyed, but not defeated."

The reviews and success of the book were nothing less than phenomenal. Appropriately, Hemingway was aboard his boat and out on the Gulf Stream when he heard via the ship's radio that the book had been awarded the Pulitzer Prize.

The Old Man and the Sea creatively tells the story of an old man who struggles to reel in an enormous marlin. But, it is actually about much more than a guy and a fish. We're going to examine how Hemingway uses this seemingly simplistic plot to convey two important themes: there's dignity in determination and religion can connect people to the cyclical nature of life. This novel also gives us a glimpse into Hemingway's mind, as it was sadly the last novel he had published before killing himself in 1961.

Hemingway wrote this novel ten years before his death while living in Cuba. He was a big fan of Cuba, but he wasn't Cuban. He was a native of Illinois who traveled a great deal and often lived abroad in places like France and Cuba.

He also went on hunting safaris in Africa and enjoyed big fishing trips. Hemingway's love of fishing and his time in Cuba presumably inspired this novel.

The Old Man and the Sea was first published in its entirety in *Life Magazine* in 1951. It received a great deal of praise from critics and became a bestseller. Even Hemingway (who had become quite a morose alcoholic) was proud of his work, and in 1953, he won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. And, thanks in part to *The Old Man and the Sea*, Hemingway won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1954.

Hemingway was often praised for his minimalist style, which meant he was able to convey a great deal while using very few words. He avoids lengthy descriptions and focuses more on context. Hopefully, after you learn more about this novel, you will want to read it yourself to see just how skillfully Hemingway uses his minimalist technique.

Santiago and Manolin

The main character in *The Old Man and the Sea* is an old man named Santiago, who is a fisherman in Cuba. Santiago hasn't had any luck at sea for 84 days. He's poor and looked down on by the younger and much luckier fisherman.

He would be completely alone were it not for a young boy named Manolin. Manolin used to be Santiago's apprentice and still believes in him, even though Manolin's family wishes he wouldn't.

Even though Manolin now works for a more successful fisherman, he continues to spend time with Santiago, bringing him fresh bait and food. Santiago humbly accepts these gifts and enjoys talking with the boy.

As a fan of the Yankees and of 'the great DiMaggio', whose father was a fisherman, Santiago likes talking about baseball with Manolin. Santiago seems to admire baseball legend Joe DiMaggio as much as Manolin admires Santiago. Manolin even declares that Santiago is the greatest fisherman. Santiago is touched by this.

That night he has a recurring dream in which he sees lions playing on an African beach, which is something he saw as a child. This may seem random right now, but it's actually significant and we'll come back to it.

Santiago & The Marlin

The next day, Santiago takes his skiff way out beyond where the other fisherman's boats are, hoping to catch a big fish.

Fortunately, he hooks a giant marlin. This fish is so big that it pulls his boat along. Determined to wear this marlin out by playing a very strategic game of tug-of-war, Santiago engages in a battle with the fish that lasts two days and two nights.

During that time, Santiago deals with the pain of wounded hands, since they get cut by the fishing line. He also endures an aching back and a painfully cramped up hand all while keeping a firm grip on the fishing line that has hooked the massive marlin. Though he struggles to maintain his hold on the fish, and repeatedly wishes that Manolin were there to help him, he never

considers giving up and letting the fish go. Thankfully, Santiago wins the man vs. fish battle. But now he faces an even bigger challenge: getting the marlin back to shore.

The Sharks and Santiago's Return

It turns out that the fish is so big that he can't load the carcass into his boat. So, Santiago straps the bloody fish to the side of his boat. By doing that, Santiago basically invites every shark for miles around to come enjoy a ton of free fish. Try as he might to bravely fend off the sharks by stabbing them in the head with his spear, Santiago loses more and more of the fish as each shark takes massive bites out of the marlin.

Although there's nothing left of the fish but its 18-foot skeleton, Santiago is grateful to have made it back to shore alive. Too weak and exhausted to deal with the remains, he leaves the fish skeleton by the boat and slowly carries the boat's mast back up the hill to his little shack where he falls asleep. In the morning, everyone is impressed by the extensive fish skeleton and Manolin is relieved that Santiago is okay.

After talking to Manolin, Santiago goes back to sleep and has the same dream that he had before going on this adventurous fishing trip. Remember the dream about the lions playing on the beach? Well, that's what Santiago dreams of again as the book ends. The memory of lions playing like young cats on the beach represents Santiago's yearning for the past, for easier times.

Let's not forget that Hemingway wrote this during a difficult time in his life. Though he had become a very successful writer, he suffered from alcoholism and depression, was on his fourth marriage, and he hadn't had a major literary work published in ten years before he wrote 'The Old Man and the Sea.'

So, a little reminiscing about the good old' days seemed in order for Hemingway, and similarly for old Santiago.

we know and understand what happens in 'The Old Man and the Sea', we must discuss two of its powerful themes, or central ideas.

Catholicism is used in different ways to point to the cyclical nature of life. When the fishing line cuts Santiago's palms it is reminiscent of Christ's stigmata.

Santiago also promises God that he'll say 100 Hail Marys and 100 Our Fathers in the hopes that God will help him to endure and survive the struggle with this fish in spite of his pain and exhaustion.

Santiago's success with the marlin gives him hope for his future. He will no longer be the failing fisherman but the victor of his village. His religion helps him experience a sense of renewal.

Later, when he sees the first shark he lets out a sound that is described as, 'a noise such as a man might make, involuntarily, feeling the nail go through his hands and into the wood.' When an exhausted Santiago struggles to carry the skiff's mast up the hill, he carries it across his shoulders, much like Christ was forced to bear a wooden cross.

Finally,

In *The Old Man and the Sea*, is a story of a man's struggle against a marlin, it is tempting to see the novella as depicting man's struggle against nature and man's relationship with nature. This novel presents the feeling of isolation and the favour of luck through the other masterpiece of Hemingway, *The Old Man and the Sea*. The book unfolds great courage of an old man who shows that honor can be achieved. The old man is a unique in his relationship to and understanding of the natural world. He talks about the seas though it were a women, the birds as friends, the sharks as personal enemies. He examines the relationship between turtles and jellyfish, between birds and fish. This is the story of an epic battle between an old man, experienced fisherman and a large marlin. Hemingway wanted to use the story of the old man Santiago to show honor is a struggle and to draw biblical parallels to life in his modern world.

The Old Man and the Sea served to Hemingway's literary reputation and prompt a re-examination of his entire body of work. The novel is initially received with much popularity. Ernest Hemingway has a great place among the American novelist because in his novels he has described the realistic portrayal of American society *The Old Man and the sea* was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1953. IN this novel he present the outstanding courage of a old man 84, Hemingway has made Santiago a portrayal partly of himself and partly of his hero. Santiago is also taken partly from the bible, his name and profession being the same as that of St. Santiago who was also a poor angler and his character being similar to the Christ in terms of love and respect for all gods' creation, persistence, perseverance and determination.

Santiago also represents the life struggle that Hemingway himself went through the struggle that everyone faces in his or her daily lives. "Success" is all too often assumed to be the indicator of the values of a man. But success, in and of itself, merely speaks to a particular status and may have nothing to do with the journey that the man took to get there, or whether or not he retained his integrity along the way. Among the many aspects of the story, it is the idea of redefining success and victory that makes *The Old Man and the Sea*, Ernest Hemingway classic novella, so profound.

Hemingway presents a major role of luck in man's life. Luck plays a major role in the story and in everybody lives and to a superstitious lot like fishermen, poor luck can seem paralyzing. In Santiago's little Cuban fishing village he is labelled "salao, which is the worst from of unlucky," after having gone eighty four years without taking a single fish.

This makes him a outsider among his peers, and it costs him his trusty partner, the boy Manolin, whose parents forbid him for fishing with the old man While Santiago deals with the suffering of being hungry and poor, other boats from his village continue pulling in good fish every day. According this novel anyone can have luck of course, but not everyone one can have

determination, skill, and perseverance. Santiago knows this and therefore believes in his ability rather than chance. We cannot attain success simply by waiting for good things to happen. It is when we move forward towards a goal that we open ourselves up to opportunity. As *Santiago muses*, "*It is better to be lucky. But I would rather be exact. Then when the luck comes you are ready.*"

It is a seemingly simple story that deals with an old fisherman who hasn't brought in a catch for months. On the 85th day of this dry spell, he heads far out into the Gulf of Mexico where he hooks a giant marlin. A simple story on the surface, but also a tale with a much deeper message and relevance that transcends time and place. It speaks to the universal truth of a man's existence within this world where pride, respect, tenacity, and dreams fuel a man in his quest to thrive in the face of struggle. It is a story about the indomitable spirit of man; Santiago stands as a symbol of an attitude toward life, and his fight with the mighty marlin offers numerous lessons to all men. A man continues to do what he must do to the best of his ability, no matter what tribulation befalls him. While challenges and setbacks can strip a man of all outward signs of success, still his spirit can remain undefeated. For it can will a man to never give up and to keep on trying. This novel gives us courage that old age is a common excuse, and for certain things it is legitimate, but all too often it is used either where it has no place or before any effort has been made to prove the assumption wrong.

Hemingway spends a good deal of time drawing connections between Santiago and his natural environment: the fish, birds, and stars are all his brothers or friends, he has the heart of a turtle, eats turtle eggs for strength, drinks shark liver oil for health, etc. Also, apparently contradictory elements are repeatedly shown as aspects of one unified whole: the sea is both kind and cruel, feminine and masculine; the Portuguese man of war is beautiful but deadly; the mako shark is noble but cruel. The novella's premise of unity helps succour Santiago in the midst of his great tragedy. For Santiago, success and failure are two equal facets of the same existence. They are transitory forms which capriciously arrive and depart without affecting the underlying unity between himself and nature. As long as he focuses on this unity and sees himself as part of nature rather than as an external antagonist competing with it, he cannot be defeated by whatever misfortunes befall him.

Heroism

Triumph over crushing adversity is the heart of heroism, and in order for Santiago the fisherman to be a heroic emblem for humankind, his tribulations must be monumental. Triumph, though, is never final, as Santiago's successful slaying of the marlin shows, else there would be no reason to include the final 30 pages of the book. Hemingway's vision of heroism is Sisyphean, requiring continuous labour for essentially ephemeral ends. What the hero does is to face adversity with dignity and grace, hence Hemingway's Neo-Stoic emphasis on self-control and the other facets of his idea of manhood. What we achieve or fail at externally is not as significant to heroism as comporting ourselves with inner nobility. As Santiago says, "man is not made for defeat....A man can be destroyed but not defeated".

Manhood

Hemingway's ideal of manhood is nearly inseparable from the ideal of heroism discussed above. To be a man is to behave with honour and dignity: to not succumb to suffering, to accept one's duty without complaint and, most importantly, to display a maximum of self-control. The representation of femininity, the sea, is characterized expressly by its caprice and lack of self-control; "if she did wild or wicked things it was because she could not help them". The representation of masculinity, the marlin, is described as "great," "beautiful," "calm," and "noble," and Santiago steels himself against his pain by telling himself to "suffer like a man. Or a fish," referring to the marlin. In Hemingway's ethical universe, Santiago shows us not only how to live life heroically but in a way befitting a man.

Pride

While important, Hemingway's treatment of pride in the novella is ambivalent. A heroic man like Santiago should have pride in his actions, and as Santiago shows us, "humility was not disgraceful and it carried no loss of true pride". At the same, though, it is apparently Santiago's pride which presses him to travel dangerously far out into the sea, "beyond all people in the world," to catch the marlin. While he loved the marlin and called him brother, Santiago admits to killing it for pride, his blood stirred by battle with such a noble and worthy antagonist. Some have interpreted the loss of the marlin as the price Santiago had to pay for his pride in travelling out so far in search of such a catch. Contrarily, one could argue that this pride was beneficial as it allowed Santiago an edifying challenge worthy of his heroism. In the end, Hemingway suggests that pride in a job well done, even if pride drew one unnecessarily into the situation, is a positive trait.

Success

Hemingway draws a distinction between two different types of success: outer, material success and inner, spiritual success. While Santiago clearly lacks the former, the import of this lack is eclipsed by his possession of the latter. One way to describe Santiago's story is as a triumph of indefatigable spirit over exhaustible material resources. As noted above, the characteristics of such a spirit are those of heroism and manhood. That Santiago can end the novella undefeated after steadily losing his hard-earned, most valuable possession is a testament to the privileging of inner success over outer success.

Worthiness

Being heroic and manly are not merely qualities of character which one possesses or does not. One must constantly demonstrate one's heroism and manliness through actions conducted with dignity. Interestingly, worthiness cannot be conferred upon oneself. Santiago is obsessed with proving his worthiness to those around him. He had to prove himself to the boy: "the thousand times he had proved it mean nothing. Now he was proving it again. Each time was a new time and he never thought about the past when he was doing it". And he had to prove himself to the marlin: "I'll kill him....in all his greatness and glory. Although it is unjust. But I will show him what a man can do and what a man endures". A heroic and manly life is not, then, one of inner peace and self-sufficiency; it requires constant demonstration of one's worthiness through noble action.

Santiago as Christ

Mandolin has an almost religious devotion to Santiago, underscored when Manolin begs Santiago's pardon for his not fishing with the old man anymore. Manolin says, "It was Papa made me leave. I am a boy and I must obey him," to which Santiago replies, "I know... It is quite normal. He hasn't much faith". Mandolin's father forced his son to switch to a more successful boat after 40 days had passed without a catch for Santiago; this is the amount of time Jesus wandered in the desert, tempted by Satan.

Just as Christ resisted the temptation of the devil, Santiago resists the temptation of giving in to his exhaustion as he battles the marlin. "It was a great temptation to rest in the bow and let the fish make one circle by himself without recovering any line." But he is committed to beating the fish, to proving his strength is more steadfast, thinking, "He'll be up soon and I can last. You have to last. Don't even speak of it."

Work cited

1. *Ernest Hemingway: The Old Man and the Sea; Cuba, 1952.*
2. *Ernest Hemingway: Island in the Stream posthumously ; Charles Scribner's son, 1970.*
3. *Ernest Hemingway: True at first light ; Patric hemingway,1999.*