



Heroic and Spiritual Appeal in Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* and Keshava Reddy's *He Conquered the Jungle*

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Abstract:

*Every worth mentioning work of literature is judged by readers in general and critical readers in particular. In that process many works of literature are compared to and contrasted with life and the other literary works. Sometimes, they are analysed in the light of a work of literature from another culture or language to appreciate and judge the value of the work. The article highlights the heroic and spiritual aspects of the characters by comparing them from close quarters. The characters in question are Santiago, the hero of the novel *The Old Man and the Sea* and 'the old man', the hero of the novel *He Conquered the Jungle* (English Translation of a Telugu novel named 'Atadu Adavini Jayinchadu').*

The two great heroes 'Santiago' and 'The Old Man' have many heroic and spiritual characteristic traits in common. This article focuses on a few of them. Both of them have extraordinary skills in their respective fields. They have exceptionally staunch, positive, warrior like attitude in doing their respective jobs. They have the rare and unique combination of physical and mental strength and endurance. These two, when they are on a mission, have unusual perseverance beyond any measure. In the same way, they have a strong and strategic vision that they meticulously plan and execute, especially when they are in crisis.

These two heroes, at any stage in their life, do not get under the pressure of the compulsive comparison. They maintain a happy disposition as they accept life as it is; as it happens; as it offers. These two have another very good virtue, that is, to appreciate and admire the other life as it is; be it a friend or foe. Above all, these two are pragmatic and equally philosophical.

Keywords: *Character, Heroic, Spiritual, Comparison, Vision, Philosophical, The Old Man*

1. Introduction

1.1. *The Reason Why Works of Literature are compared*

In the field of art and literature, there are quite a few prominent theories about the purpose of any piece of work. One of those theories is "Literature for Society". The title of the theory is quite revealing that any piece of work is called literature if it contributes to humanity or society in one way or the other. In that sense, the contribution of literary work/s is seen in the improved understanding of life on the part of the individual or society. The individuals are society may accept or reject the ideas suggested in literary works, but, somehow, learning is guaranteed (Apoorva Bharadwaj, 2013).

Learning in life is inevitable and it is primarily internal. There is no exacting rule or theory which gives us the reasoning behind any learning. In the narrowed down context of literature, human beings can appreciate the sense and suggestion of any work of literature by analysing it with their existing experience

and understanding of life. In turn, their experience and understanding goes on to the next higher level. In a broad way, this is the significance and contribution of literature to the society (Rani, 2016).

Every reader, either general or critical, has his/her own way of receiving or rejecting a work of literature. However, some literary works stand the test of time and own greater significance forever or for a fairly longer stretch of time than the other ones. They become a bench mark in themselves so that critical readers can use them as a yardstick to value and judge the literary work/s in question. Therefore, the notion, that a well-read man has an edge over the other in appreciating life or literature, has come into being. It is a mere popular notion, not a hard and fast rule. Perhaps, literary critics initially may have gained ground in this way and grounded themselves well in the domain of literature.

Thus, every worth mentioning work of literature is judged by readers in general and critical readers in particular. In that process, many works of literature are compared to and contrasted with life and the other literary works. Sometimes, they are analysed in the light of a work of literature from another culture or language to appreciate and judge the value of the work. In turn, it leads to enhanced understanding and experience to individuals and society (Yan, 2011). The purpose of the present article is to juxtapose two different protagonists from two different novels of two different languages. The article highlights the heroic and spiritual aspects of characters by comparing them from close quarters (Vandhana, 2016). The characters in question are Santiago, the hero of the novel **The Old Man and the Sea** and 'the old man', the hero of the novel **He Conquered the Jungle** (English Translation of a Telugu novel named 'Atadu Adavini Jayinchadu').

2. A broad track of critical reviews of the old man and the Sea

2.1. *The Old Man and the Sea has initially been called a classic and compared to William Faulkner's The Bear and Herman Melville's Moby-Dick*

Its publisher, Scribner, on an early dust jacket, called the novella a "new classic", and many critics favorably compared it with such works as William Faulkner's *The Bear* and Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* (Yan, 2011).

Most of the critics happen to see **The Old Man and the Sea** as an optimistic novel where the will of man is unconquerable. On the other hand, **Moby-Dick** is seen as a pessimistic novel.

2.2. *In the recent times, the hero of the novel The Old Man and the Sea is compared to that of a Canadian fantasy adventure novel Life Of Pi. In this journal article the survival instincts of Santiago in The Old Man and the Sea and Pi in Life Of Pi are at the center of attention*

The Old Man and The Sea by Ernest Hemingway and *Life Of Pi* by Yann Martel share the common theme that is the theme of survival (Vandhana, 2016).

The Present Comparison

The specific purpose of the present article is to draw a close comparison, in terms of heroic and spiritual points of view, between Santiago and the hero of the novel 'Atadu Adavini Jayinchadu' (Reddy D. K., 1984, 2017) (which is translated into English with the title **He Conquered the Jungle** (Reddy & Prada, 1997)). First, let us have the stories of the two novels in a nutshell. Then we will be able to see the comparison in detail, in the proper perspective.

2.3. *The Old Man and The Sea*

Santiago, an old and aged but talented and skilled fisherman, is the hero of the novel. He has not caught a single fish for 84 days and is branded as **salao**, extremely unlucky fellow. As a result, his only companion

on fishing, Mandolin, has left him. However, he has made up his mind to go far into the sea to fish on 85th day. After a long waiting, he hooks a giant fish but it overpowers him and tows his boat in the North-West direction much too far into the sea. He handles the huge fish very patiently and skillfully. He gets control over it thanks to his experience and patience, after a waiting of almost two days and two nights. He manages to tie the huge fish to the outside of his boat. Unfortunately, on his way back, he is forced to fight a series of sharks that haunt the tied down huge fish. He puts up a great spirited fight against the sharks and drives some of them away. But in the process, he loses all his weapons and energy. Then, in the night, on the sea, he quietly steers his boat to the shore. When he returns to the shore only the skeleton of the huge fish remains with the boat. His heroic adventure in the midst of such ill-luck and hostile situations ends with no substantial material result. On reaching his shack, he falls on to his bed and into a sound sleep only to dream of African Lions (Hemingway, 1952, 2004).

2.4 He Conquered the Jungle

‘The old man’ the hero of the story is nameless but he has great name and fame in terms of his understanding of the life in jungle. He is a swineherd who has exceptionally and unusually great physical endurance, sharp intellect meant for jungle life, strategies and skills which help a man in a jungle in almost every situation.

It is a short novel about ‘the old man’ and his obsession with and love for the pigs, which are next to his heart. He does everything and anything possible for the pigs and their wellbeing. The story starts at the sun set and ends by the sun rise. Thus, it all happens literally overnight. What he does and what does not do during the few hours in the night thrills, arrests and haunts the readers mind.

The old man, on his mission of locating the ‘sukka pig’ and protecting it and its newborn piglets, walks into the forest with a knife and a spear. After a fairly long and skillfully meticulous search, he finds the newborn piglets and the pig in a thick bush. For about a week after the delivery, the ‘sukka pig’ goes irrational and rough with anyone comes anywhere near to its piglets. The old man is fully aware of it yet he goes a bit close and gets severely injured in the assault made by the ‘sukka pig’. Somehow, he gets on to a tree despite bleeding thighs and legs. He decides to be there and protect them from the wild beasts of the jungle.

At that juncture, a fox eyes on the piglets and gets killed in the fierce attack by the ‘sukka pig’. The old man was vigilant and in position to kill the fox but the pig acts quickly leaving no scope to him. Sometime later, a group of four foxes reaches the scene with a strategy to defeat the old man. Two of them get killed and the other two take two of the newborn piglets away. One of the foxes is killed by the old man, who is deeply hurt by the fact that two of the piglets are cruelly eaten by the foxes. After a few moments, a herd of forty to fifty foxes is seen coming towards the bush. The old man notices them and visualises the unfortunate predicament of the pig and the piglets. Unwillingly but firmly decides and kills the ‘sukka pig’, much before the foxes near the bush, in order to protect the remaining eight piglets. Then, driving the foxes away, he keeps the piglets into the then and there made bamboo basket and rushes to the shack back. He wants to place the piglets with another ‘sukka pig’ which has delivered piglets at home. However, all his efforts come to nothing as the piglets die on his way back.

The old man curses himself for not being able to protect neither the ‘sukka pig’ nor the piglets. Then, he reassures himself that it is just one unlucky day and it is not the end of life (Reddy D. K., 1984, 2017).

2.5 *Santiago on the Sea and 'The Old Man' in the Jungle*

The two great heroes 'Santiago' and 'The Old Man' have many heroic and spiritual characteristic traits in common. This article focuses on a few of them.

Both of them have extraordinary skills in their respective fields. Santiago is quick to observe and understand the meaning of the birds circling near his boat. He measures the depth at which the hooked fish is just by holding the line in his hand. He estimates what exactly the fish is doing 600 fathoms down and accordingly presents the bait and allures it. When the hooked fish starts towing he evinces his experience by playing a waiting game knowing well anyway in the end it has to succumb. He conducts himself so well when he finds the huge fish unmanageable in the small boat by tying it outside the boat. He uses the harpoon very efficiently as he fights the sharks. He withdraws himself the moment he finds himself to cut a very long distance weaponless in the wake of the haunting sharks (Hemingway, 1952, 2004).

"...what can a man do in the dark without a weapon? (p. 91)"

'The Old Man' estimates the pig's choice of direction in which it must have gone and he is dead right in his efforts. On the way, when he feels hungry he throws his spear onto a rabbit and kills it in one shot. He traces the foot marks of the pig so accurately and reaches the destination so effortlessly. Despite being severely attacked by the pig, he climbs the appropriately positioned tree within no time and he is on target of being vigilant. His casual hurling of the knife ends the life of the noisy bird. He makes basket then and there from bamboo sticks to carry the newborn piglets home (Reddy D. K., 1984, 2017).

They have exceptionally staunch, positive, warrior like attitude in doing their respective jobs. With the track record of 84 days of fishing without catching a single fish, Santiago starts very early in the morning with great enthusiasm on 85th day thinking positive. He believes that every day is a new and fresh day with its own luck in store. Even after noticing the huge size of the fish, he continues to be positive and ties it outside the boat and risks his life but he does not succumb to the negative pressure (Apoorva Bharadwaj, 2013). He strongly misses the support of the boy and weapons and yet quickly comes to terms with the present reality and he determines to respond to the situations alone and with what he has from where he is (Hemingway, 1952, 2004).

'Aloud he said, "I wish I had the boy." But you haven't got the boy, he thought. You have only yourself and you had better work back to the last line now... (p. 37)'

'The Old Man' also goes through almost the similar situations with the same kind of attitude. He knows the irrational and rough acts of the pig in that phase of its life but he continues to face it and face it with the same love and admiration as in the normal times. He is severely attacked by the pig yet holds on to the job. He loses both his weapon and still waits for the opportunity to get the spear back. He gets the spear back with lightening speed being conscious of the fact that if anything goes wrong the pig can kill him in a split second (Reddy D. K., 1984, 2017).

They have the rare and unique combination of physical and mental strength and endurance. Santiago aged and old fisherman, despite injuries on his hand continues to dare and handle the huge fish. It is a sure sign of both physical and mental strength. As he plays the waiting game, he makes sure that he does not lose focus. He warns himself and calms himself with his clarity of thought and self talk (Hemingway, 1952, 2004).

'Be calm and strong, old man,' he said (p.69).

'The Old Man' feels hungry on the way in his search for the pig; he patiently withstands and at the right time kills the rabbit, cooks it on fire and enjoys the fresh food. Despite being subjected to extreme physical pain, with bleeding thighs and legs he keeps his composure and continues to focus on the possible threats to the pig and piglets from the wild beasts of the jungle. At that old age, with meager health, being in an injured condition, being extremely anxious about the safety of the pig and the piglets, he goes through a sleepless night being alert and vigilant (Reddy D. K., 1984, 2017). All this is a hallmark of physical and mental stamina.

These two, when they are on a mission, have unusual perseverance beyond any measure. In the same way, they have a strong and strategic vision that they meticulously plan and execute, especially when they are in crisis. In the midst of the sea, having little physical energy and being up against the daunting task of controlling and taking the fish to the shore, Santiago plans and executes meticulously with regard to food management and rest management. He banks on his intelligence which is surely superior to that of fish. He wants to make sure that his injured leg and wounded hand are not exposed to the fish so that it feels that it has to beat a full-fledged man (Hemingway, 1952, 2004).

'The Old Man' takes a very quick decision to eliminate the noisy bird which proves to be a danger to the pig and piglets safety and kills it with a casual hurl and in the process loses the only weapon he has. As a recovery measure, he decides to get the spear back from the ground. He is fully aware of the fact that the danger of being attacked by the pig second time looming large. Such is his skill he safely gets his spear back using his agility and wind sensitivity. He senses the possible danger of the big group of foxes overpowering the single pig and at same time realises that he cannot climb down from the tree and face the second attack by the pig. He takes a crucial decision and within no time executes the decision of killing the pig first and protecting the piglets. Thus, they always have clarity of their goal and they are geared up for the unplanned and sudden eventualities.

These two characters, at any stage in their life, do not get under the pressure of the compulsive comparison. Even in the moments of crisis, Santiago warns himself and calms himself, with his self talk and clarity of thought. He does not get in to self pity and compulsive comparison

But I must get him close, close, close, he thought. I mustn't try for the head. I must get the heart. 'Be calm and strong, old man,' he said (p.69).

Thus, he beats death like loneliness, with his spiritual outlook, by being completely on his own uninfluenced when he is alone on the sea. Similarly, he is completely on his own in the midst of all on land uninfluenced. Therefore, it is no strange thing to find him calling himself 'strange old man'. He is strange because he can be ordinary and extraordinary as the situation demands; he can be normal and abnormal as it suits the occasion. He can be quiet and composed with people and unstoppable in thoughts in isolation, as it comforts his independent soul and enhances his performance. He knows that high quality life is lived within and alone. So, we find him a staunch practitioner of: meditative calmness in the midst of outward turmoil; and plain innocent exuberant inner life in loneliness.

'The Old Man' also has the same spiritual temperament in his nature. His mind is full of thoughts that make him grow inch by inch in character. It is obvious to the readers that he continues to have a happy disposition irrespective of what he has done and what he has not done, which is a strong indication that he is beyond compulsive comparison. Living in isolation, working in a low profile profession, facing a series of unexpected and unthinkable challenges have made him strong and stoic. He takes the most serious decision in his life to kill his 'sukka pig' in a fraction of a second. When his war is complete and he has

failed to protect what he has wanted to, he clears it all off his mind with single thought and frees himself of the emotion. He feels that it is just one unlucky day, it is not the end of life. That means he just lives in the present and in the mind with the much needed spiritual detachment (Reddy D. K., 1984, 2017).

They maintain a happy disposition as they accept life as it is; as it happens; as it offers. Santiago chooses to fight against or accept the life situations but he does it consciously and takes complete responsibility. The following lines throw light on this fact in a vivid way:

I shouldn't have gone so far, fish,' he said. 'Neither for you nor for me. I'm sorry, fish (p. 85)."

'I wish I had stone for the knife,' the old man said after he had checked the lashing on the oar butt. 'I should have brought a stone.' You should have brought many things, he thought. But you did not bring them, old man. Now is no time to think what you do not have. Think of what you can do with what there is (p. 85).

Thus, he realises his mistakes and admits them without any rationalisation. He quickly comes to terms with the present reality without any fuss over 'ifs and buts'. Further, as he finds that it is getting dark and soon his possibilities of protecting the fish intact and taking it to the shore are getting bleak. He is quite clear that his efforts may not be fruitful in those trying situations. However, he sticks to his duty as a fisherman on the sea (Chary, 2015).

'The Old Man' also has the same characteristic trait in the novel. He curses himself for letting the pregnant 'sukka pig' go out along with the other pigs. But, immediately decides the course of action which pushes him into a war like situation all through the night. Like a warrior he fights the self-imposed war which he could have avoided with one negative thought, but he does not. He fights with all the resources at his command that include his weapons, energy, and sharp intellect about jungle warfare. But, the moment he loses them he resorts to the next possible strategy. The moment he realises the situation is out of his control, he owns up the responsibility without any justification or rationalisation of his role or no role in it (Reddy D. K., 1984, 2017).

They feel unhappy when the other life is in trouble or pain. These two have another very good virtue, that is, to appreciate and admire the other life as it is; be it a friend or foe. As he sails on to the sea, Santiago broods on his experience with turtles and turtle boats. He reveals his thoughts on turtles and expresses to himself in a touching and honest way.

"...I have such a heart too and my feet and hands are like theirs (p. 25)."

At a later stage where things haven't yet come fully under his control, he continues his self talk and thinks in the following way:

'I'll kill him though,' he said. 'In all his greatness and his glory (p. 49).'

'The Old Man' knows well about the philosophy of jungle, that is, might is right and cruelty is part of it. However, as a man of true heart, he thanks the noisy bird that draws his attention to the location of the pregnant pig. He thinks of helping it as a gesture of gratitude but immediately realises that it is only man's intervention in its life, and no help at all. He considers the fierce and irrational behavior of the pig as its grandeur and valour. Finding his grandson fast asleep outside the hut with a mat in hand, he understands, in the proper perspective, what must have been felt by the young heart alone and awaiting him, the grandfather (Reddy D. K., 1984, 2017).

Above all, these two are pragmatic and equally philosophical. Towards the end of the story, Santiago is quite clear that his efforts may not be fruitful in those trying situations. However, he sticks to his duty as a fisherman on the sea (Chary, 2015). Then, with great natural ease, he declares his core philosophy of life in the following quotable expression:

‘Fight them,’ he said. ‘I’ll fight them until I die (p. 90).’

He is extremely judicious in his choice of accepting or fighting the life situations (Chary, 2015).

All through the story ‘The Old Man’ acts and thinks philosophically which is spiritual in nature. When he is lost in a series of thoughts, on being lost the war of the night totally, he reminds himself of the rare but fundamental philosophical thought.

“How strange! Formless mind is flying like a butterfly in a lush green plain, whereas the movable body in form is still and static (Reddy D. K., 1984, 2017).”

Ability to live in the present, forget the unpleasant past, hope for the best even after a disaster are great indications of his philosophical approach to life situation (Reddy D. K., 1984, 2017).

3. Conclusion

Thus, Santiago and ‘The Old Man’ have reflected the same heroic and spiritual metal in their respective lives. As it is discussed in the above comparison, Santiago and ‘The Old Man’ have many characteristic features in common. They are: extraordinary skills, fighting spirit till the end, being planned and flexible, optimistic, accepting life as it is etc.

However, it is a fact that they are two different protagonists from two different novels of two different languages. So it is quite possible, though this paper has not thrown light on them, they may have some features less in common or not common at all.

(Hemingway, 1952, 2004) (Reddy D. K., 1984, 2017) (Reddy & Prada, 1997) (Apoorva Bharadwaj, 2013) (Vandhana, 2016) (Lain-feng, 2015) (Rani, 2016) (Srinivas Madupu, 2015) (Chakraberty, 2013) (Sylvester, 1966) (Cotter, 1962) (Gurko, 1955) (Xie, 2008) (Bhoi, 2015) (Yan, 2011)

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