

Undeclared Spirit in Hemingway's Novel "The Old Man and the Sea"

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Abstract

The aim of the paper is to explore Hemingway's undeclared spirit in his novel The Old Man and the Sea. His statement "A man can be destroyed but not defeated" sums up the sum and substance of the undeclared hero who is in fact none but the hero of eternity Earnest Hemingway himself. He, by the help of this undeclared spirit, reaches the climax of his success. He shows "Grace under Pressure" by facing all the adversities manfully and proves that "man is not made for defeat". Santiago, the fisherman, knows that a big fish is a big problem, therefore, after the eighty four unlucky days, finds his big fish, fights with it, with the help of his tenaciousness triumphs over all obstacles of sharks on the way of his destination and becomes a symbol of invincible spirit for human kind. The method used is descriptive and analytical. The theory of code hero provides the theoretical back ground of the study. Through this theoretical and analytical study the research concludes that undeclared spirit is necessary for winning any inward or outward battle of life.

Keywords: Undeclared spirit, grace under pressure, tenaciousness, invincible.

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Introduction

The 20th century was the age of development in the United States in all the different spheres of life. The First and the Second World Wars played havoc and shattered the people of America. But the courageous Americans rose from the dust and made their mark in the world. In the history of America this period is known as golden period or golden twenties. Many American writers rebelled against the set social traditions and abandoned long held social values that had a great impact on American society. Progress in technology, revolutionary social theories and two destructive World Wars changed the world altogether. These World Wars changed not only the social and economic conditions of America but also motivated the American writers to adopt new literary techniques. Equality of human beings, rights of women, democracy, folk tales, and discovery of truth became the favorite subjects of the writers. Stream-of-consciousness was also utilized by the novelists to explore the character's thoughts. Ernest Hemingway and his contemporaries like T.S Eliot, Ezra Pound, and Gertrud Stein rejected the American traditions and culture and turned to sophisticated literary creations especially the novel. With the radical and heroic themes, Ernest Hemingway earned an everlasting name and fame in the realm of American literature. Ernest Hemingway is different from the other writers due to many reasons. First of all, it is difficult to distinguish between Hemingway the man and Hemingway the writer. Secondly, his faith in life is his code and it describes the role of man in the drama of life. Thirdly, his experience and personality is reflected in his works.

Ernest Miller Hemingway's style is unique all over the world, because most of his works come from his experiences and personal life. He has chosen his characters from different walks of life, age, sex, and professions including soldiers, bull-fighters, warriors and fishermen, etc. Most of the novels of Hemingway present the war and its ravages. This war may be inner as well outer, between man and his self, optimism versus pessimism and man's destiny versus his free will, man's existence versus death, man versus Nature and man versus his adversaries. The present study portrays this heroic war in Hemingway's novels *The Old Man and the Sea*, and the role of man's endurance and unconquerable will in the battle of life. In this work, he wants to show: "What a man can do and what a man endures" and "A man is not made for defeat. A man can be destroyed but not defeated".

Research Objectives

The objectives of the study were;

1. To portray Hemingway's life and its resemblance to his literary career.

2. To investigate undefeated spirit in Hemingway's novel, "The Old Man and the Sea".

Literature Review

Hemingway's works are famous for their interesting composition because he has tied his personality and morals into his characters that follow a code. His code hero handles violent situations with praise worthy patience and endurance. He defined his Code Hero as "a man who lives correctly, following the ideals of honor, courage, and endurance in a world that is sometimes chaotic, often stressful, and always painful." (Hemingway, 1966)

His Code Hero follows the code of honesty; honor, courage, endurance, undefeated spirit and the ability of bearing pain with undefeated spirit are the hallmarks of a Code Hero. This Code Hero acts in a dignified way even in the lost battle and testifies his unwavering resolution. The phrase "grace under pressure" is often used to describe the code of the Code Hero. He creates meanings out of meaningless life. The code hero is recognized how he endures the misfortunes and pains of the meaningless life. Hemingway has added a new branch to the theory of heroism by the introduction of this new type of hero. By using the theory of code hero, this study wants to illustrate endurance and unconquerable will in Hemingway's work.

It is Hemingway's belief that a man can never affirm the meaning of life unless he confronts death. He stresses that if life is not contrasted with death, life itself becomes death and all of us know that we are to die. A common man thinks death a difficult process and avoids the consciousness of death, runs away from it to save worldly values because he has no courage to give up them. On the other hand, the courageous man faces death heroically because he knows the importance of the meaning of death (Ghasemi, 1984). In *The Old Man and the Sea*, Santiago faces pain courageously. "I must hold this pain where it is", he says. "Mine does not matter. I can control mine. But his pain should drive him mad" (Hemingway, 1952).

It means that life gets its meaning from its opposite, death. So, it is necessary for man to continue repeating death experience to maintain its intensity. For the very purpose the old hero, Santiago, continues repeating the same exhausting experience. Gurko (1955) says that most of the Hemingway's novels lay stress on the limitations of man what he can't do and emphasize on man's helplessness, cruelties and evils. *The Old Man and the Sea* is different from other novels as it lays stress on what a man can do and this world is a place where there is a space for performing heroic deeds. Santiago is a Cuban fisherman whose world is not free from

tragedy and troubles but it is quite different from the pessimism of *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell to Arms*

Gurko (1955) says that there are two classes of every species in Hemingway's world: the big marlin and the smaller, the big sharks and the smaller ones. Hemingway divides human beings also into two kinds, the heroes and the ordinary human beings. The heroes dare more than the ordinary men. They face greater dangers, risk their lives and grapple with defeat and death. And their adventures provide them a chance to prove their worth with the help of their courage and endurance. In fact, Santiago is the real hero of the novel in a sense because he is not permanently defeated, wounded or disillusioned. He is the hero from the beginning till end as he is undaunted and faces all the pains with endurance and will. His exemplary endurance in defeating a negro in hand game, and thinking of DiMaggio, a great baseball player are a source of courage and undefeated spirit during his fight with the great marlin and then with the sharks (Gurko, 1955).

Ansari (2012) says that Hemingway's literary genius is colored by his personal experiences of life. His writings reflect his personality which passes through many stresses and storms, the emotional quarrels of his parents, his injury in school, his experience as a crime reporter, the pain and agonies of war which he himself fought. All these experiences shaped his personality. He took these experiences for his themes, and passed them to his own generation and the coming generation. Hemingway brought his own vision to the world. His hero passes through sadness, pains, death and pressure, but it is his grace under pressure in facing these increasing difficulties that is the striking message Hemingway leaves for his readers. A man cannot escape death, but it is test of man how he lives his life and how he endures these gigantic sufferings and drastic pains which are inflicted upon him. This concept of heroic courage frames the background of thematic philosophies of the novel, *The Old Man and the Sea*.

Santiago shows grace under pressure in his fight. It is true that no man is complete but it is also a fact that he touches perfection when he faces catastrophic circumstances with determination, endurance, will and courage. Santiago courageously struggles to create hope in many apparently hopeless situations. He is an embodiment of Hemingway ideal of showing "grace under pressure" "because he does not submit himself to the increasing difficulties of life. Throughout the story whatever the circumstances are, the old man shows inflexible determination to achieve his goal. It is his determination to fight and never to yield which saves him from defeat. Although he returns to the shore without the great Marlin which was reward

of his battle yet he returns with the knowledge that he has shown his manliness in this fight. The novel reveals the truth of man's existence in the world. In this world pride, respect and dreams inspire a man to face the struggles of life heroically. *The Old Man and the Sea* is a story about the unconquerable and undefeated will of man (Ansari, 2012)

The story of the novel is not the story of a man Santiago but the story of every courageous man who struggles for the best in life and tries to win this battle of life no matter he fails or succeed. The main theme of the novel *The Old Man and the Sea* is thus concluded "It is not the winning or the losing that matters; it is how one plays. Santiago's courage and valor are worth mentioning. The fight between the old man and the sharks is also the fight of righteousness. Santiago claims his right on the Marlin whereas the sharks think it to be their right. It seems that the fight between them is the fight of two hunters fighting over their prey. He continues to struggle with them and fights with them a heroic fight and says "I will fight them until a die" his valor and strength of his will is same that of the last splinters of the candle which fight against the cruel tempest and refused to blow of. He fights till he has left no help, no weapon even no hope to save the fish but he has an unconquerable mind "never to yield or submit" (Ghasemi, 1984)

Santiago is the "superman as he has seen all, felt all and experienced all like a champion. He is not a common man to cherish idle fancies. He has passion, follows his goal and fights for his possession, preservation and destination. He is defeated and disappointed but not disheartened. (Chakraborty, 2013). Santiago fights not only with courage but also with determination to show that man is invincible. Once Hemingway wrote a story *The Undefeated* to show how Manuel fought the storm bull. It attacked him again and again. At last, he struck his sword into the heart of the bull to save his honor. Now Santiago is in the place of Manuel and the bull is replaced by the big fish. He also is unconquerable and undefeatable like Manuel. At one time, he is at the point of death but he faces the threat of death with determination and will. He struggles against defeat to show that he is undefeated even in his defeat. His dignity does not lie in his material victory but in his unyielding struggle and determination to win. In the end, he was not able to save his fish but to save his invincible spirit and dignity (Huang, 2010).

Young (1952) says that the novel presents life as a constant struggle against those forces of nature which cannot be conquered but Hemingway turns the table by proving that nothing is impossible and unconquerable before the courage, wisdom and undefeated spirit of man. In *The Old Man and the Sea*, Santiago proves Hamlet's hymn of man "what a piece of work is

man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty!” In fact, Hemingway, has added to this hymn of man “man is not made for defeat; a man can be destroyed but not defeated” (Young, 1952).

In fact, Santiago is the true representative of John Milton’s concept of heroism in *Paradise Lost* where he describes unconquerable will beautifully;

“_____ What though the field be lost?
All is not lost _____the unconquerable will,
(Milton, 1667)

Himanshu (2013) says that Hemingway’s heroes have certain similar characteristics among them. They have the similar courage, similar personalities, similar tastes and the same attitude to society. The term code is used to represent these characteristics. According to this code, “a man is defined by will, pride, and endurance: the ability to accept pain, even loss, when loss cannot be avoided” (Himanshu, 2013).

Research Methodology

The researchers used qualitative research design to analyze the selected work to explore the undefeated spirit in Hemingway. The primary data will be the text of the selected work. The technique of textual analysis for the analysis of the texts of the selected work. However, for this analysis different works quoted in the analysis.

Analysis and Interpretation

In *The Old Man and the Sea*, Ernest Hemingway has introduced a matchless hero Santiago who is a free actor wants to achieve his goals and takes risks in life. His most distinguished quality is his unquenchable spirit: no matter how age has weakened his body, how the big fish has wounded him, his spirits are alive and active and he remains resolute in his trials. Whatever difficulties he faces, he is resolute. The old Cuban fisherman Santiago had gone on fishing continuously and hopefully for eighty-four days without any success but never lost hope. Perhaps he had a firm faith that his “big fish must be somewhere” in the sea. He was worn out by many years’ efforts and hardships of life. He was considered “salao” (unlucky) by other fishermen and the parents of the boy who had been with him for the first forty days. The sail of his empty boat “looked like the flag of permanent defeat” but he was on the way to prove himself undefeatable. He was old, weak and sun-burnt with wrinkles on his face and neck. And scars on his hands witnessed his experience of fishing and tough life. Despite his old age, his

eyes were cheerful, hopeful and of unyielding spirit. “Everything about him was old except his eyes and they were the same color as the sea and were cheerful and undefeated”. (Hemingway, *The Old Man and the Sea*, 1952)

He was a “strange old man” with firm faith that every day was a new and good day. The boy believed him to be great and strong fisherman and it encouraged him and he says “I know many tricks and I have resolution” (p. 23). The fish had eaten sardine and stuck to his bait but it was too big to be pulled. The heroic fight had started in which each one of them, Santiago and Marlin, was to prove his power, prowess and worth. He grappled with the titanic fish alone successfully beyond the approach of the man of common mettle. His decision to fight the fish till the end is the first step to his ultimate success. The great fish was continuously towing the skiff and cutting the old man and he was enduring it bravely. On the one hand, he was enduring the jerks of the fish and, on the other hand bearing the pangs of hunger and thirst. “He rested on the un-stepped mast and sail and tried not to think but only to endure.” (p. 46)

He shows exemplary endurance and undefeated spirit like a true hero without any faltering in his resolution. He knows that it is not age but the resolution and unconquerable will that matters. He hopes to kill it till evening or till night or till sunrise.

He thinks that the fish is not only old like him but also experienced one to know how to face the difficulties of life. It seems that it has been hooked time and again and is an experienced one and knows how to fight successfully. He thinks that man is refined through experience. It teaches him how to overcome a crisis and how to win the battle. He himself had seen many ups and downs in life and fought many combats and knew well how to act in a crisis and now he was to face an opponent who had also faced similar conditions.

Now his battle with the fish was gaining momentum and he was to keep the stiff upper lip to win this battle. With every passing moment, his job was becoming tougher and he was to be more determined. The fish began to move suddenly and the old man got a cut. The wounded old man did not lose heart; instead, he endured the pressure of great marline with grace. He had made up his mind to fight it till his death. “Fish,” he said softly, aloud, “I shall stay with you until I am dead” (p.52).

He was not only enduring this grim situation manfully but also was determined to fight to the end and never to submit. Like Milton’s Satan, Santiago has also brought “a mind never to yield or submit” He also does not show his weakness of the body or the mind. For, to show weakness

in fight was a sin and a disgrace and he wanted to preserve his grace even at the cost of his life. Again, like Milton's hero he believes "to be weak is miserable doing or suffering."

He had pulled the line so much that it was near the breaking point. He settled his back against the line. He knew that both were fighting desperately and enduring the pain courageously. It shows that his unconquerable will was compelling his body to keep pace with its driving force to fight the battle of life till the end. Things like the old age, the cramping of the hand, hunger or thirst could matter nothing before his determination and unconquerable will. He soothes his hand and wishes it to stand by his will. "How do you feel hand," he asked the cramped hand that was almost as stiff as rigor mortis." (p. 59)

But despite the faithlessness and treachery of the hand he is committed and determined to do his duty and promises himself that he will stay with the fish forever if the stays forever. To him, the cramping of his hand is a treachery of his own body to him and he hates it. He thought that the fish was his brother as the two hands were brothers. Although his one hand deserted his brother but the fish did not prove faithless but was always with him and never left him in difficulty like his hand. The fish began to jump and he thought that he wanted to show him how big and great he was, he also wanted to show the fish how great and undefeated he was but, at the same time he was also ashamed of his hand's cramping and faithlessness which was not a man's quality. He says: "I wish I could show him what sort of man I am." (p. 64) What could be more proof of a man's manliness and undefeated spirit than this?

When the fish jumped, he saw it was two feet longer than his skiff. Up till now he was only guessing and facing his strength and steadfastness but now he could see his size and was astonished to see how big he was. He was a worthy opponent to prove his mettle and worth. He had told the boy that he was a very strange old man and now it was the time to prove it. "I will show him what a man can do and what a man endures." (p. 66)

His undefeated spirit compelled him to fight till death and never to submit. He also begins to think of his hand game at Casablanca with the Negro from Cienfuegos. The Negro was the strongest man there. One day and one night they had been contesting with their elbows on the table and their hands fast clenched. Each of them was trying his best to force other's hand on the table. There was a great betting over their game. The people were shouting and waiting emotionally to see the game won. The referee was changed after every four hours. "Blood came out from under the fingernails of both his and the Negro's hands." (p. 69)

At last he could force the hand of the Negro to table. After his victory, every one began to call him a champion as he had beaten down the strongest man at docks. After some time, there was again a match in which he defeats him easily as he had defeated him in the first match. Now he was thinking that he could beat anyone if he stuck to it. The experience had given him not only sportsmanship but also encouragement to win any game, if he was committed to it.

The fish had begun to jump again and again and the boat had also started to move fast. He was bearing its strain to the breaking point. But he also knew that all the three of them were at breaking point: he, the line and the fish. His right hand was also smarting with pain for constantly holding the pressure of the line. He washed it in the salt water and after sometime took it out again and observed it. "It is not bad," he said. "And pain does not matter to a man." (p. 84)

This is what Hemingway preaches from the beginning till the end of the novel. He contemplates that a man should be a man in every inch. He should endure pain courageously like a man. He should not whine and cry like a woman. Bearing pain with grace is his concept of "grace under pressure." And Santiago is a true embodiment of it. He even believes in the faith that anything which comes between man and his manliness should be removed or punished at least. When his left hand comes between him and his manliness, he says: "Why was I not born with two good hands? Perhaps it was my fault in not training that one properly. If he cramps again let the line cut him off." (p. 85)

Hemingway's concept of endurance is different from that of his contemporaries in a sense that it has a special charm in it. It is not the endurance of a coward who is compelled to endure but that of a brave person who endures willingly, bravely and manfully. It is the very quality of a man to be a man and to suffer like a man. He says: "You must keep your head clear and know to suffer like a man." (p. 92) His day and night's fight had made him nearly unconscious but it could not snatch his determination and fortitude. He tried again and again to subdue the fish but could not. Both the marlin and the old man were fighting a decisive war for their survival which was the lot of the fittest. At last he succeeded in subduing it with his undefeated spirit. The fish did not show itself to the old man but in fact showed Santiago's dignity, pride, fortitude and undefeated spirit to the other fisher men as well as other people. He had shown the people that he was not old but young and not unlucky but had paved his way to luck with the help of his undaunted courage, undefeated spirit and manly endurance.

But his happiness was the happiness of the short time because the greatest test of his will and endurance was about to start. And he knows it quite well that the world is full of trials and tribulations and life here is a series of unending tests of one's manliness. Only those who have a right and who show their worth with unending efforts, can live here with their heads erect. He had not yet taken a rest after his long battle with Marlin; he had to fight a fierce fight with the sharks. They had reached there to claim their right on the marlin which was part of the deep sea where they lived. It was, in fact, a price which the old man had to pay for crossing the limits of nature. But he paid the price with a smile, not like coward but like the brave. Sharks had attacked his big catch and now a new arena of battle had been set where he was to fight against many great enemies. Now his fight with the sea hunters, sharks, was not of gaining pride or reward but of saving his hard-won prize which the sea hunters wanted to snatch from him. It was the fight of two hunters. It might also be a punishment inflicted upon him by nature for crossing the limits and trying to destroy it. He had killed the marlin, his brother, and its blood invited the sharks to take his avenge. It was a kind of murder which brought his catastrophe and loss of his hard-earned prize. The first Mako shark attacked his fish and the old man tried his best to defeat it. "He hit it with his blood mashed hands driving a good harpoon with all his strength. He hit it without hope but with malignancy." (p. 102)

Being a skilled and experienced fisher man, he knew that the attack of the sharks was a bad omen. He knew it well that the blood of marlin would attract more sharks and it would be very difficult for him to save the fish. But he was determined to fight to save his Marlin; even he had to sacrifice his own life. "But man is not made for defeat," he said. "A man can be destroyed but not be defeated." (p. 103) When he begins to lose hope to save his fish, he curses himself, considering it a sin. "It is silly not to hope, he thought. Besides I believe it is a sin. Do not think about sin, he thought." (p. 105)

The sharks came then in a pack and attacked the fish. The old man tied his knife to the oar and drove it into the shark's yellow eyes. It plunged deeper and died. He wished he had a harpoon, a stone for knife and the boy to help him. But the next moment, he cursed himself for thinking of lame excuses. "Now is no time to think of what you do not have. Think of what you can do with what there is". (p. 110) Two more sharks attacked the fish but he clubbed them away courageously. He was fighting desperately against the sharks. After some time, a galano shark attacked his fish and he struck his club against the bone of his head. He thought, if he could use both his hands, he could kill them. "Fight them," he said. "I will fight them until I die." (p. 115)

Even when half of his fish had been eaten by the sharks, he was determined to fight against the sharks to the end. He thought himself unlucky as he had come too far out but again he consoled himself with a thought that he might have much luck. He thought that he could not buy even his lost harpoon, broken knife and his bad hands by selling the remaining fish. He cursed himself for nourishing such hopeless thoughts and said: "I must not think nonsense, he thought. Luck is a thing that comes in many forms and who can recognize her? I would take some though in any form and pay what they asked." (p. 117) It was night now and all the parts of his body were smarting with pain and hurting him in the cold night. Now it was the final round of his fight against the sharks and he fought it without thinking of victory or defeat but thinking of honor, dignity, pride and manliness. The old man could hardly breathe now and he felt a strange taste in his mouth. He spat into the ocean and said, "Eat that, galanos, and make a dream you've killed a man." (p. 119) He had lost his big catch, his harpoon, his knife and the oars but not his unconquerable will. Winning or losing were no matter to him but the real thing which mattered, was how he had fought and how he had endured his pain. He had proved that "a man can be destroyed but not defeated".

Conclusion

The *Old Man and the Sea* delivers the message like that of Darwin's theory of the fittest that only those have a right to live who prove them the fittest. It also conveys the message of existence, perseverance and dignity. God has given man ability to survive in the entire situation. And Hemingway relates man's situation of existence with his philosophy of life that "man can be destroyed but cannot be defeated"

The Old Man and the Sea seems to be a simple story of a fisher man who catches his big fish. But it is not a simple story of a fisher man but, in fact, an epic describing the heroic deeds of a hero fighting for his dignity, pride and existence. It also describes how the hero accepts the trials and tribulation of life with the smiling face and never complains against his fate. He sticks to his cause hardly, knowing that sometime success lies in hanging till last.

Through the analytical study the researcher explored that Santiago faced the suffering of life bravely in Hemingway's work *The Old Man and the Sea*. He faced the taunting remarks of the other fisherman of being unlucky and unskilled. Every day he sets out to forget his past and to try his best to change his luck. He dares more than others to go to the further areas and catches his big fish. After catching his fish, he fights a decisive battle against sharks to save his luck. During this fight the endurance and undefeated spirit of the code hero earns him a great respect

as a skilled fisher man and determined man. He has only two options; defeat or endurance until destruction, he chooses the later thinking that the death is better option than defeat. His stoic determination makes him a mythic hero whom no body of his village can forget. He prefers his dignity and pride to hunger, thirst, troubles and pains.

The message of bravery conveyed by him is full of wisdom and skill. He is not an ignorant brave but a believer of preparation. He is always prepared to fish skillfully and then to face all the circumstances. He knows that success depends on good preparation and struggle, and hope and courage is the key to success. Physical strength and weakness also matters but little, what matters is man's will power and endurance. The novel beautifully explains the inner as well as the outer strife of man in pursuit of his destination.

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