

## **CHAPTER - IV**

### **THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA**

'The Old Man and The Sea', illuminates the old but brave fisherman Santiago's struggle with nature. The novel deals with the theme of the undefeated old man. The novel presents the story of moral triumph over odd circumstances. As Philip Young observes to the old man, "Particularly he is related to men like..... Mauel Garcia, 'The undefeated' bullfighter who lose[s] in one way and win[s] in another. Like Maniel, Santiago is a fighter whose best days is behind him, and worse is wholly down on his luck but he still dares, and sticks to the rules, and will not quit when he is licked. He is undefeated, he endures, and his loss, therefore, in the manner of it, is itself a victory."<sup>1</sup>

The old man is a code hero who behaves courageously in critical situation. The novel is a legendary story of an old man who, with strong desire and will power struggles alone with fate, and mighty force of Nature.

The protagonist of the novel is an old but brave Cuban fisherman. He is lonely and poor. He calls himself strange and

strong. He has technique and skill of his profession. He has been called an expert fisherman. Since eighty-five days, he can't catch a fish. He is labelled as Salao - Most unlucky ! Every day he goes on fishing but fails to catch a fish. The old man is accompanied by a young boy Manolin for fishing. Since childhood Manolin has been staying with the old man aiming to learn techniques and skills of fishing.

Up to forty days, the boy accompanied the old man for fishing. Due to the failure of the old man's in fishing, Manolin's parents forbid him to fish with Santiago. The boy takes care of the old man like a son. On eighty-fifth day the old man goes to sea for fishing with full of confidence.

Santiago hooks a big fish Marlin, with the help of his lifelong experiences and techniques in fishing. After struggle, he kills the fish. While returning from voyage, the Marlin' carcass is attacked by the sharks. The old man tries to save the carcass of the Marlin from the attacks of the sharks. He struggles with the sharks with his tired body and imbalanced mind. Tiredly, the old man returns with the skeleton of Marlin. The boy nurses and feeds the old man

and promises his services to the old man. The old man dreams about the lion.

Katharin T. Jobes writes in the introduction of 'Twentieth Century interpretation of The Old Man and The Sea' that the plot of 'The Old Man and The Sea' deals with Santiago's adventure with the Marlin and Sharks, is man's capacity to withstand and transcend hardships of time and circumstance. Hemingway depicts in circumstantial detail elemental tests of endurance that is physical struggle, fatigue, solitude, old age, impending death to which Santiago is subjected and his courageous responses : The novel depicts the character Santiago's struggle with nature for survival."<sup>2</sup> Santiago, the old Cuban fisherman's life is solitary. He is a widower and childless. He is helped by Manolin, the boy.

The old man, leads the life of retirement. He simply passes his old days peacefully. His dreaming for lions shows his memories of youth Carlos Baker writes, "In his old age and the time of his suffering, Santiago is supported by the memory of his youth and the strength of his youth living so, in the past, he is happy."<sup>3</sup> The old man has crossed all worldly affairs. He begins his work as a routine. The author describes him as, 'He no longer



dreamed of storms or of women, or of great occurrences, or of great fish, nor fights, nor contests of strength, nor of his wife. He only dreamed of places now and of the lions on the beach. They played like young cats in the dusk; he loved them as he loved the boy.’<sup>4</sup> (P.No. 19) He is innocent like a child. He isn’t ambitious. He is neither disturbed by the failure in fishing nor humiliated for calling unlucky. He leads life peacefully. He perhaps acknowledges the meaning of the life.

Though Santiago is criticized by his community for his failure in fishing and he has been called unlucky for not catching a fish for eighty four days still for Santiago every day is a new day. He is not upset and disappointed for the failure in fishing.

Santiago’s negligence for food, status, and insult reveals his act of renunciation. Mark Schorer writes, “The old man was simple to wonder when he had attained humility. But he knew he had attained it and he knew it was not graced and it carried no loss of true pride Humility - the assumption without self consciousness and therefore without sentimentally is the old man’s strength.”<sup>5</sup>

His performance of daily routine without boredom is his strength. Confidently he begins his duty. He maintains his strength by drinking a cup of shark liver oil every day. He worships his profession and that is his strength. He has brought up perfection in his profession carefully. Alongwith confidence, he possesses technique experience. He considers about numbers. It shows his religious outlook. Fishing without eighty-four days was not his first experience of failure in fishing. Once before, he could not catch a fish for eighty-seven days. His belief in eighty-five number perhaps boosts his hopes for success. He also prays God for his success in catching the great fish. He prays : 'I am not religious'. He said, 'But I will say ten our fathers and ten Hail Mary that I should catch this fish and I promise to make a pilgrimage to the virgin De Cobre if I catch him. That is a promise.'<sup>6</sup> (P. N. 54) The old man accepts that he is not religious yet his prayer to God and belief in numbers reveal that he doesn't want be victimized by so called luck.

Santiago hooks and kills the fish. His voyage back to the seashore with the carcass of the Marlin expresses his view on various aspects. They reveal the nature of the old man.

Introspectively, He thinks on various issues such as the bond between Man and Nature, and his profession. His approaches regarding man's strength and his position in the Universe make him philosopher of life. Santiago's four days on the sea reveal his various aspects of his nature as per Earl Rovit's opinion, "Hemingway has successfully narrated a journey and return of the fisherman that almost any incommunicable experience may be suggested to the reader. The travail can be seen as a religious one or an aesthetic one."<sup>7</sup> Santiago is away from the land to search out his luck for four days. Within these days, he is searching for the truth of his own existence. Perhaps his voyage is his soul's voyage.

Santiago appreciates beauty of stars, fishes, birds and sea. He is aware of the bond between man and Nature. Santiago's brotherly affection for fish shows his kindness. He addresses the fish as friend, as brother. Against of his wish, he kills the fish to wash out the label unlucky. He justifies his killing of the fish, you were born to be a fisherman as a fish was born to a fish.'<sup>8</sup> (P.No. 90) To perform his duty, he has to kill the fish. To him, duty is important than personal feelings.

Marlin, the great fish is the prey of Santiago. But he is generous to appreciate the size, strength and beauty of the fish. He doesn't want to destroy the beauty of the fish. He knows that it is sin to kill the fish. Santiago's killing of the fish shows his dilemma in his act due to it, He is psychologically imbalanced. He kills the fish for his profession. But he thinks, 'you killed him for pride and because you are a fisherman. You loved him when he was alive and you loved him after'<sup>9</sup> (P.No. 90-91) Santiago sets two options before him - his profession and his Nature.

Besides his honesty towards his profession, Santiago's caring for Marlin shows his attachment with the fish. He worries about the wound, the hunger of the fish.

The old man struggles with the strength of beast. Santiago is physically wounded. He is tired; he is lonely, old and hungry. But he has strong urge to prove his skill and techniques in fishing. He struggles with the fish. He thinks, 'I will show what a man can do and what endures.'<sup>10</sup> Santiago is aware of the strength of the Marlin. Santiago has nobility to praise his enemy. He says, 'He is a great fish and I must convince him, he thought, 'I must never let him learn his strength nor what he could do if made his run. If I

were him I would put in everything now and go until something broke. But thank God, they are not as intelligent as we who kill them; although they are nobler and more able.'<sup>11</sup> (P.No. 55)

Santiago's knowledge to handle the huge fish helps him to kill Marlin. Because of the jerks of the fish, Santiago is physically wounded. He tries to maintain the balance of mind and the strength of the body. He says, 'It is not bad'. And pain doesn't matter to a man I can control mine. But his pain could drive him mad.'<sup>12</sup> (P.No. 53)

Santiago has Franciscan quality. He loves man, bird and beast. He loves Manolin, interacts with fish and birds. He constantly thinks for fish and thinks for the life of the bird. 'He thought the birds have a harder life than we do.'<sup>13</sup> (P.No. 45)

Santiago is an aesthetic. He appreciates the beauty of the moon, the sun, stars, the bird, the wind, the sea, fishes. He satirically remarks on man's destructive nature. He expresses his pleasure on not killing stars and the moon and the sun.

Santiago's struggle doesn't end with Marlin's death. He has to struggle with sharks. They attack on Marlin's dead body. He curses himself for the piteous condition of the Marlin's dead body.



'I shouldn't have gone out so far, fish', he said, 'Neither for you nor for me. I'm sorry, fish.'<sup>14</sup> (P.No. 95). He repents for going into the deep sea.

He kills some of the sharks but without weapon, he couldn't continue his struggle with sharks. Santiago forgives sharks, thinks for Nature's ecology. 'This was a fish built to feed on all the fishes in the sea, that were so fast and strong and well armed that they had. No other enemy.'<sup>15</sup> (P. No. 80) The old man's thinking for weapons and for a boy and his dreams of lions show his tiredness. He is physically and mentally tired. He wants to regain his strength and balance of mind. His delirium takes him away from the ecstasy of mind. 'He crosses all the worldly affairs. He sailed lightly now and he had neither thoughts nor any feelings of any kind. He has past everything now and he sailed the skiff to make his home part as well as intelligently as he could.'<sup>16</sup> (P. No. 103)

He returns with the skeleton of Marlin. He wants to sleep with dreams of the lion.

The old man has accepted his age with honor. His desire for the boy's help is circumstantial. It doesn't seem that he

expects the youth. Old age has given him experiences and tricks. As he says to the boy : "may not be as strong as I think, but I know many tricks and I have resolution. Again and again he asserts : There are plenty of things I can do."<sup>20</sup> (P.No. 180) The old man can go to fishing without the boy but the boy wants to learn many tricks by him. The old man has lifelong experiences of the fishing. His tricks are more important than the boy's strength. The old man is proud of his 'being'.

The old man is lenient. He never shows his superiority to others though he calls himself a strange and acknowledges his potentialities. Whenever he speaks about his superiority to the fish, he mentions it very politely. 'I am only better than him armed'.<sup>21</sup> (P.No. 103) The old man's speeches are kindly spoken.

The old man has tolerance to sustain. His hands are wounded. He knows that his mind is imbalanced. Hence he tries to control and regain his physical and mental stamina and strength. And pain does not matter to a man.<sup>22</sup> (P. No. 72)

The old man is aware of his own ability and the strength of Universe as he says, 'The Ocean is very big and a skiff is small and hard to see'<sup>23</sup> (P.N. 107) The old man with his resolutions rise

over his limitations and he remarks, 'a man can be destroyed but not defeated.'<sup>24</sup> (P.N. 108) It shows his faith in the dignity of man.

Robert P. Weeks describes, "Santiago is the only human being in the story, depicted as a natural phenomenon, a strong old man whose heart beat like a turtle's whose "feet and hands are like theirs" whose eyes are "the same color as the sea and with which he could once see quite well in the dark."<sup>25</sup> Santiago becomes one of the elements in the Nature.

Santiago is rather different from Hemingway's early hero. Delmor Schwatz writes, "In other novels, 'his characters are expatriates in the forest, prize fighters, matadors, soldiers and sportsman. But the old man surpasses his prior characters.' Santiago is a Cuban fisherman. He is an ordinary man. He is leading life as a sage. His story is the story of the old age, of fishing community. It has universal appeal."<sup>26</sup>

Hemingway's characters pass the message of courage, honesty and confidence. Santiago, too is the model of strong will power. Earl Rovit writes, 'Santiago is not just a fisherman. He is the fisherman because of his superior merits and skills.'<sup>27</sup>



Various critics have given various opinions for Santiago. Joyce Cary thinks Hemingway's old man is profoundly original. F.W. Dupee thinks Santiago is pre-eminently natural man who is at the same time and by the same token entirely human, his human-ness manifesting itself partly in the various items that makes him an individual. Gilber Highlet feels the lonely fisherman here is old ascetic and noble Joseph Campell thinks like Bodhisatva, Santiago too renounces the final step and returns to the world. Richard K. Peterson writes, 'Santiago is not an American in a foreign land', but he is an expert in an exotic situation and country with which the reader is not likely to be so familiar. Santiago knows the sign of a hurricane at sea. Philip Young writes, 'Santiago is supported by the memory of his Youth and strength of Youth.'

Considering various opinions by different critics it can be said that an old man, Santiago is a man of courage and owner of heroic qualities.

Manolin, the disciple of the old man is impressed by Santiago's personality. The boy admires the old man, 'There are many good fisherman and some great ones, but there is only

you'<sup>28</sup> (P.N.21) Manolin takes care of the old man like a son. He manages his food either begging or stealing.

Manolin seems to be associated spiritually with Santiago. Santiago wants the boy's company for help on the sea. He wants the boy to show his strength, to speak, to share his views on fishes and fisheries. While fishing alone, he wants the boy's company for help, to show him his strength, to speak, to share his views on fishes and fishing. As Carlos Baker writes, 'The love of Manolin for Santiago is that of a disciple for a master in the arts of fishing.'<sup>29</sup> The skill in fishing of the old man binds him with Manolin.

Manolin, a caretaker of Santiago is a devotee of him. As an obedient son of parents, though he has left the company of the old man for fishing, he takes utmost care of the old man. He knows the old man is poor, hungry, has no clothes. He manages to provide all basic requirements to the old man. Manolin listens the old man's dream, his legendary stories of early life. Manolin's involvement in Santiago is emotional. He promises the old man by disobeying his parents and neglecting his community's opinion. He will go with the old man for fishing. He says to the old man,

**'Now we fish together again.'**

**'No. I am not lucky. I am not lucky and more.'**

**'The hell with the luck', the boy said, 'I'll bring the luck with me.'**

**'What will your family say?'**

**'I do not care. I caught two yesterday.'<sup>30</sup> (P.No. 107-8)**

**Manolin boosts the old man's courage and desire. When the old man is upset and accepts his defeat, Manolin encourages him.**

**Philip Young writes, 'A simple man is capable of such decency, dignity and heroism, and that his struggle can be seen in heroic terms, that largely distinguishes this book. For the knowledge that a man can be great, and his life great might be in itself an approach to greatness.'<sup>31</sup>**

**Santiago struggles against fate and Nature. His lifelong experiences, his skills and techniques of the profession, his perseverance, self confidence are his heroic qualities. The old man perhaps, needs tranquility. His dream of lions provides him peace of mind. His life is like a saint, who without bothering results performs his duties.**

His careless attitude for satirical remarks by the community and negligence for his piteous condition show his views of the life. But he is strange old man. He prefers starving than begging. He himself does not ask the boy for anything. He is aware of the problems of the old age. He maintains health. He is independent. He desires to maintain his dignity. He wants to dream of lion. Perhaps playing with lions he wants to nurture his strength and innocence.

"The present story is a moral triumph which has as its absolutely necessary condition an apparently smashing defeat."<sup>32</sup>

Santiago passes the message of morality. Santiago, at the old age too has potentiality to struggle with any odd situation. At the old age, Santiago lives alone. He never complains against anything. He takes care of his health. Santiago's struggle is a universal struggle. His loneliness at the old age; his desire for the boy, is a universal problem. The old man is able to win his sentiments. Neutrally, he tackles with the situation. Santiago is a successful man. Sea seems to be his companion. Santiago dreams to kill the huge fish. He never feels lonely on the Sea. He

has his own philosophy of life. He tries to seek the meaning of the life. He believes in himself.



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