

SPIRIT IS THE CORE OF THE AMERICAN DREAM: AN ANALYSIS OF SANTIAGO'S STRUGGLE IN *THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA*

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ABSTRACT: *This article is a careful study of 'spirit', tireless effort for success, as the cardinal linchpin to lay foundation of the American Dream of a man irrespective of his social class, race, age or religion to lead a life in freedom and to change the life to a particular extent by virtue of which an individual can gain a befitting social recognition and feel ensconced thereby. It also focuses on the struggle through which an individual has to fulfill the American Dream. It shows how the protagonist of The Old Man and the Sea, Santiago, an old American makes indefatigable effort to become successful in securing a place in a competitive society where it is difficult to survive fighting enormous adversity. This paper uses qualitative research strategy counting upon text-based analysis to find out the unexplored aspect of the American Dream. Moreover, to facilitate its argument, this paper takes help from published research articles as secondary source. In fact, it challenges the traditional perception that success is the crux of the American Dream, and presents the fact that spirit for amelioration is the core of the American Dream.*

KEYWORDS: American dream, spirit, freedom, functioning catalyst, competitive society, core, adversity, amelioration

INTRODUCTION

The American Dream offers freedom to everyone – the freedom to do anything, of course, not subversive of American national interest - on the way to gaining the things they aspire for. The American Dream is about freedom. Though we find the American Dream reflected in many researches only in terms of 'success', the core of the dream is - as this paper considers – 'spirit' irrespective of success and failure of a man on the way to getting to his goal. Jon Meade Huntsman Sr. says "Never quit believing that you can develop in life. Never give up. Don't deny the inward spirit that provides the drive to accomplish great things in life." This spirit, for the American Dream, leads anyone's life, forward where success is merely a logical by-product, and enthusiasm is pivot of the ideology which, with great yearning, galvanizes anyone relentlessly. As it is commonly believed, success is the essence of the American Dream; however, basically

spirit for development is the core of the American Dream which would remain empty if only success is considered to be the yardstick of the significance of life. Researches so far done on the struggle of Santiago have stressed success as the basis of the American Dream, but 'spirit', to our mind, a subtle aspect and the real basis of the American Dream has gone beyond those researches. This research will certainly fill the gap in the literature and contribute to the level of professional development of the researchers enthusiastic to do any further research on the reflection of the American Dream in literature.

METHODOLOGY

The thesis will follow qualitative method because this type of method generally focuses on 'narrative' and 'concept analysis' approaches. Since the thesis needs to analyze the idea that spirit of success is at the center of the American Dream, it requires the help of qualitative mode of research. Moreover, in some cases, it may require to analyze the critics' comments regarding the selected topic. The research will follow MLA Style Sheet to cite sources and to develop the Works Cited chapter. The concept analysis approach, therefore, will be the main methodology by which the research will try to achieve its end. The paper brings into focus why the inner activation of human psyche should be considered for the estimation of the personality of a man. Additionally, it shows how Ernest Hemingway as a novelist applies the techniques such as dialogue, simile, imagery, internal monologue, Images etc. to explore the psychological realism of the protagonist of the novella. To do the research as primary sources the books– Hemingway: A Life Without Consequences by James R Mellow and Ernest Hemingway by Philip Young –have helped us write the part, Santiago's struggle to achieve the dream. Moreover, Twentieth Century Interpretations of *The Old Man and the Sea* by Katharine T. Jobes and others have assisted us to explore the American Dream reflected in the ideology of the old man. As secondary sources the paper has taken information from two websites to infuse new thoughts and developments of the American Dream into the research.

CONCERN OF FREEDOM OF SANTIAGO

Throughout the novel, *The Old Man and the Sea*, Santiago upholds the freedom for his existence. In fact, the reflection of the freedom, as evident in Santiago, is the essence of the American Dream. The genesis of this individual freedom goes with the crisis lying in the context of the novella that concerns a time when America was affected by great depression caused by a downfall in American stock market in the year 1929. Soon after the crash, millions of investors got panic affected by the downfall and ultimately found themselves waling in great depression across the Wall Street. An industrialized economic system suddenly broke down causing much ambivalence in American society in the context of which Hemingway presented Santiago before us.

Freedom of choice, the core of existentialism is evident in the uniqueness of individuality of Santiago. Day after day, he got up, pushed through, and kept fishing even when people told him he was not good enough. "They sat on the terrace and many of the fishermen made fun of the old man and he was not angry." The fishermen teased him constantly and Santiago didn't care. In fact, his choice not to change or give up made the old man an individual. He chose to fish, to stay, and to endure. He had opportunities to walk away, however he stuck through the sweet agony. He chose to kill a fish which was like his brother. He says, "Fish, I love you and respect you very much. But I will kill you dead before this day ends.". The mental make-up of the old man is, as such, uniquely built facilitating him to go for the freedom of his individual existence. He, as a representative of existentialists, enjoys freedom in taking decisions by his own. His decision does not follow the so-called trends of the society. He finds the uniqueness in individualism, takes to liberty, and bears responsibility for his actions. He says, "I am a strange old man" esteeming the natural uprightness in his decisions. Though old, his cheerful eyes look forward for decisions at his sweet will as is found in the statement of the writer - "Everything about him was old except his eyes and they were the same color as the sea and were cheerful and undefeated." It is Santiago who decides his mode of life because despite his great strength and abilities, he is living humbly. He lives in poverty, owning a small shack with no running water; yet he never complains. He is, basically, keen on freedom of taking his own decisions in face of the challenges of the humble life he leads.

SANTIAGO'S DREAM OF BETTER LIFE

Galvanized with the essence of the American Dream Santiago dreams of a better life. The philosophy of Santiago's better life has its radix in the American Dream as it is inferred from the statement of James Truslow Adams who, in 1931, of the American Dream, says, "...life should be better...for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement..." regardless of social class or circumstances of birth. In fact, Santiago's struggle for his dream does not come to an end because the word, 'better', comparative in degree alludes to the comparison between the things he has achieved and things more desirable to him to be achieved. That is why his effort for better life is dynamic, and as such, a continuous process that can end only in death.

Santiago's dream of better life counts upon his positive attitude and efforts irrespective of their being fruitful or abortive. Santiago starts for catching a big fish though it is not sure whether he can be successful. Moreover, it is quite unsure whether he can come back at all. He keeps searching for a big fish in wide open sea risking his life. Ultimately, he becomes successful; he can catch a big marlin. When Santiago ties the dead marlin to his skiff, he realizes it is massive. It is larger than the boat itself. As far as catching of a big fish is concerned, first part of Santiago's dream in the sea comes true. Now the second part of the dream in the sea appears and it is to bring the fish ashore undestroyed. He, with an eye to doing so, strives a lot though fails because of heinous attack of the sharks. However, failed, tired but not crestfallen, Santiago

comes to shore remaining unconcerned of what happened. This is possible only because he always looks at his dream of a better life with a positive attitude to his own life.

The better life Santiago dreams of is free from sad feelings and full of sublimity. He always keeps himself aloof from mental ailments that bring about unhappiness. For Santiago, dream is life which should have continuity with dynamism. Though old, he dreams of 'lions', he thinks of the days of his youth that gives him an impetus to vigorously lead his life forward. At different situations he undergoes a lot of sufferings, yet the dream always helps him remain unfazed. To save his marlin he fights the sharks to his level best, but cannot protect the fish he has so long vehemently desired because of the extreme attacks of the sharks. No doubt it is a heartbreaking loss for him. Nevertheless, Santiago sails 'lightly now', and he has 'no thoughts nor any feelings of any kind'. He concentrates purely on steering homewards and ignores the sharks. Moreover, for better life, he wants to be in oblivion of the sad past. He does not want to think of anything of the past which can make him emotional and weaken him. In fact, Santiago is alone in the world; his wife has passed away, and he refuses to have a photograph of her in his hut, for it makes him feel lonely. Keeping his love for her intact at a corner deep in heart he pays attention to his dream because he is aware of the reality of life which is measured with actions and finds its significance in dreams for betterment. Indeed, Santiago's philosophy and dream make him unconventional in his society as critics such as Bickford Sylvester have mentioned. He is devoted to a profession he esteems as a more spiritual way of life and a part of nature's order in the eternal cycle that makes all creatures brothers in their common condition. Come what may, Santiago, therefore, tackles his failure and sorrows with his philosophical sublimities and struggle.

SANTIAGO'S STRUGGLE TO ACHIEVE THE DREAM

Santiago is characterized as someone struggling for turning his dream of prosperity and success into realization with an eye to causing upward social mobility for himself. In the beginning of the novel, he, though facing barriers, is found dreaming of changing his future. Dream as a catalyst regulates his everyday activities. The cuts of his fingers bear testimony to his struggle to change his ill fate and to stand upright with honor and dignity. For him, life refers to the continuous struggle for existence and so he is still dreaming of finding a place in the adverse world by virtue of his enterprise. He dreams of availing every opportunity, whenever possible, to lead a life deeming his right to better life as some people do in the contemporary American society. In fact, struggle, the essence of prosperity and success, embedded in Santiago pushes him forward to take to any dangerous course of action jeopardizing his life.

Patience is the basis of the struggle Santiago is carrying on for gaining triumph over his fate. In fact, he has to undergo two kinds of struggles – one is internal while the other is external. The internal struggle refers to his effort to keep himself unshaken in continuous failure. As the novel opens, we see Santiago struggling for eighty-four days failing constantly to catch even a single fish. He still has a previous record of such instance of struggling for eighty-seven days without

catching any fish, but he did not give up. However, that instance seems to be surpassed by the present situation. Though the flag of the small boat the old man sailing is considered “the flag of permanent defeat”, the old man is, with patience, making effort to prove it wrong. In such a situation a common old man is expected to leave the idea of going further expecting a fish. As the American Dream is evident in the characteristics of Santiago, he does not act as a common old man does in the critical situation. He, therefore, continues sailing further to where the biggest fish promises to be. He has to struggle with himself to remain composed in the face of antagonistic situations. He expects sympathy from others; on the contrary, during his failure to catch a fish, Manolin, his only companion, is compelled by Manolin’s parents to leave him only because he is undergoing prolonged non-success. The other fishermen mock at his bad luck and come to a conclusion that he can never be successful. This attitude of others brings Santiago mental ailment, but with patience, he has to absorb the mockery. Bearing the heart sorrow stricken he points at the situation of his and that of the older fishermen, “I hope no one has been too worried...Many of the older fishermen will worry.”

The external struggle is what we see with Santiago while he is catching marlin and trying to bring it to shore. He stays three days alone in deep sea to catch the fish. After he has caught the fish, he tries to bring it to land unharmed. Actually, the fish is dragged by his dream. While dragging the fish, it is attacked by sharks. He feels dogged to secure his dream, the great fish, in his hand. Here Santiago is found motivated and thus driven fully by the tenacity which enables him to continue utmost fighting even when there is no single chance to protect the fish. At last he fails and almost the whole fish is eaten by the sharks. Alas, all his efforts turn in vain!

SPIRIT OF SANTIAGO A YARDSTICK OF THE AMERICAN DREAM

Santiago’s vigorous efforts represent the American Dream the yardstick of which is indomitable spirit. In fact, a man can make effort but he cannot ascertain his success. Santiago, fixing up a target, works ceaselessly and he remains indifferent to the result of his work. Though much old, Santiago bears every pain on the way to attaining his dream. During his failure he finds no one standing by him and condoling his bad luck; still he keeps his dream radiant. This spirit induces him to undertake his adventures of sailing far for fishing for which other fishermen feel unnerved. Because of this invincible spirit Santiago stands as a symbol of the American Dream. From his own words, while he is struggling to drive away the sharks, we can elicit the ideology of his life - “...I will try as long as I have the oars and the short club and the tiller.”

That the old cannot keep them upright in the face of challenge is a prejudice of old age, and Santiago has uprooted it by virtue of his challenging spirit. Though he is not successful altogether, ultimately, he has won the age-old negative concept of old age. When he wins the fight against the fish, a new struggle, to bring the fish ashore undestroyed, starts. He gets engaged in a tiresome battle against hungry sharks. He fights them with oar and harpoon, but they overwhelm him. They consume most of his prized catch, the marlin. Yet he does not rage

against his fate. He does not let bitterness and disappointment subvert him. He hopes that he will survive. He has to undergo a lot of trouble, but he does not feel daunted. To glorify this spirit of Santiago and to show Hemingway's point on cherishing a spirit Patricia Dunlavy Valenti in *"Understanding the Old Man and the Sea: A Student Casebook to Issues, Sources, and Historical Documents"* says, "If readers judge Santiago only in terms of his material success, then he is indeed a failure... But Hemingway prevents readers from accepting that position by taking them through every moment of Santiago's three days and nights at sea and forcing them to assess the worth of Santiago's actions and the eventual outcome of his efforts by other than exclusively material standards. Readers come to respect Santiago for his indomitable will" In fact, Santiago has proved that an old man is not destined to be neglected; instead he can duly bear challenges with his endeavors and mettle.

Santiago's spirit reflecting the American Dream is contained in his resolution of achieving rare glory. The old are commonly seen giving away their endeavors *and hopes* and being subdued in the face of adversity whereas Santiago sails again and again for catching big fish. As far as he looks at deeper in the sea, he gets new hope for surviving flouting his dotage. Unlike other people who do not dare do anything to fight shy of failure, Santiago dares embark on enterprises whether he loses or gains. Fishing in May does not mean much to him, but September is the month he likes to be at the sea. This time he is able to challenge himself with the great fish. Santiago's adventurous nature is manifest in the conversation- 'Keep warm old man,' the boy said. 'Remember we are in September.' 'The month when the great fish come,' the old man said. 'Anyone can be a fisherman in May.' However, in contrast to his hope, Santiago practically gets pain instead of love from others. Nevertheless, this pain makes his determination firm. This is, as such, the spirit of the American Dream alluding to the fact whatever the situation it may be, goal will be reached through challenges. In the attitude of Santiago, American ingenuity and resilience are evident. He cannot be called a loser because facing new challenges he gains more strength and knowledge than the other fishermen do. For his endless dream to survive into the natural world, he becomes able to read the signs of nature only because of his lifelong experience of the sea. In *Inside the Current: A Taoist Reading of "The Old Man and the Sea"*, Eric Waggoner about Santiago's spirit of the American Dream says, "...Hemingway depicts Santiago as a spiritual traveler who wishes to remain in the...path of correctness and right action." There is nothing that can stop him to go where he wants to. Santiago shows no fear. He is not like the other fishermen who stay within the surrounding they know best. The old man shows the grace of spirited personality throughout his three days' adventures for catching rare kind of fish. He does not give up though tired. Constraints do not matter to him at all and so he can say - "...but I must have confidence and I must be worthy of the great DiMaggio who does all things perfectly, even with a bone spur in his heel". In fact, an undefeated attitude toward life makes Santiago dogged to catch an exceptionally big fish with an eye to bringing him rare glory.

Santiago, thanks to his indomitable spirit, stands as a symbol of an undefeated attitude. Battling alone with the marlin he proves himself and his capabilities once again. When the sharks begin

attacking Santiago's marlin, at first, he feels befuddled, but before long, he gains his spirit and gathers his tools to use as weapons to combat the sharks. He does not give any place to fear and hesitation on the way of his struggle. He feels confident that he has the ability to overcome the obstacles for he knows he is born not to be stopping in despondence. He, though isolated, is not dejected, and even at the time of fishing in deep sea he consciously sets his loneliness aside so that it cannot confound him. This isolation defines who he is, and points at the unique spirit of his character. Actually, the isolation creates an avenue for him to test his ability which is based on his unbeaten attitude towards life.

Santiago maintains a code of life representing his spirit that keeps him indifferent to any earthly loss. In fact, this code refers to particular values for furtherance of a human. As Gerald R. Lucas in World Literature says, "...many of Hemingway's heroes search for a code — values that give their lives meaning. The artists of modernism turned inward to find the truth since the external world was one of chaos." Santiago remembers his connubial love and bears strong feelings for his deceased wife; nevertheless, after the death of his wife he has removed her picture from his shelf because it makes him sad. He has a lot of memories of her, yet he does not want to think of them. Now he wants to think of the memories of the lions because dreaming of them he can recall his youth when he had no fear, no guilt, and no sorrow. He retains many good qualities of this kind which, in modern times, are considered to be rare. Sara Munson Deats and Lagretta Tallent Lenker in their "Aging and Identity: A Humanities Perspective" notes a "Hemingway Code" which emphasizes on the spiritual treatment and notion to success. Their expression of the code is - "A pragmatic and "good faith" mode of existential behavior, of conducting one's life in accordance with a code of proper conduct, of living virtuously and courageously, and of confronting adversity with grace under pressure". Moreover, dynamism and mobility represented in his adventure add much to the code of Santiago's life. Tenacity and dreams drive him in his quest to thrive in the face of struggle. His fight with the mighty adversity offers numerous lessons to all men. About his values in "Earnest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*" Harold Bloom says, "A symbolic character, Santiago embodies only virtues that ask for moral approval. He is selfless, thoughtful, courageous, durable, reliable, and, above all else, gentle. ... He shows no anger toward the fishermen who make fun of him. And he respects Manolin's father's decision that the boy fish with someone else after forty fishless days with Santiago. Even his dreams are innocuous, filled with mating porpoises and frolicsome, not fierce ..." In fact, the code of Santiago's life referring to his spirit makes him stand out with values which prepares him exceedingly composed in the face of adversities.

It is Santiago's spirit that carries him successfully through miseries and failures. By dint of his regulable temperament, he has had his triumph over decrepitude and fragility of old age. Though old, he has shaken off the typical dependency of the time with the invigorating spirit. To him old age is not a subterfuge; instead he has proved it to be more fertile with his experience of age. He is once labeled 'salao' meaning the worst form of being unlucky after having gone eighty-four days without taking a single fish. Yet Santiago never loses hope. When he cannot catch fish near

the coast, he has not sat idle; he goes for fishing far in "great well", a sudden drop of seven hundred fathoms; but this effort proves abortive too. Now he decides to go farther out leaving 'the smell of the land behind'. This time he is able to hook a big marlin. However, when it grows difficult for him to control the marlin, expressing his resolve, Santiago says, "Fish, ... I'll stay with you until I am dead". Santiago does not lose his heart even though he has lost his prized fish and so we find him stepping out of the boat carrying the mast. He starts to climb again and at the top he falls and lies for some time with the mast across his shoulder. He tries to get up. But it is too difficult and he sits there with the mast on his shoulder. When he finally arises, he has to sit five times before reaching home. He has not left his mast. That Santiago carries his mast back to his shack alludes to the fact that he has not lost his hope yet. He always dreams of changing his luck and getting himself successful in his society. Catching a huge marlin singlehanded from far in the Gulf he has established his hierarchy in the society of the fishermen. In fact, it is his spirit that makes him feel that one might be lucky but one can be determined, perseverant and skillful for one's aim.

CONCLUSION

However, though success is seemingly the pivot of the American Dream, through the struggle of Santiago, it is proved to be true that it is the spirit in pursuit of goal – irrespective of success and failure - which is the basis of the American Dream. Santiago, by his concern of freedom for and dream of better life, has upheld the dynamism of the American Dream while he, with a view to ensuring that expected life, has to undergo harsh course of struggle. Santiago has, for his life, gone by a particular 'code' maintaining values which have not let him be distracted. The dream he has is certainly of success, yet the nucleus of the dream is his spirit preparing him composed. Since success cannot be easily grunted, to ensure it, endurance and patience as apparent in Santiago are must. That the novella starts with struggle and comes to an end with the same refers to the essence of the American Dream which is, as such, synonymous to a universal spirit that glares forever. Santiago, therefore, believes in his ability instead of chance. "To hell with luck," he thinks. "I'll bring the luck with me."

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