

## **A STUDY ON THE THEMES AND MISLEADING CONCEPTS IN THE STORY “A VERY OLD MAN WITH ENORMOUS WINGS”**

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### **Abstract**

*The paper entitled “A STUDY ON THE THEMES AND MISLEADING CONCEPTS IN THE STORY “A VERY OLD MAN WITH ENORMOUS WINGS” is a critical study on the theme of the story related with various elements of supernaturalism and the response of human in real life. The author has a negative opinion towards humanity and his characters mainly represent the propensity to maltreat those who stand different. The old man with enormous wings can be considered as one of the suitable example of magical realism. The author combined the natural life of an ordinary couple with fantasy elements such as the old man with wings and a spider with human head. The author shows the misleading concept that hangs human’s life and he mocks at general human nature. It also point outs the human beings who doesn’t know about the significance of life and towards the story he concludes that most of the people lives their life without knowing the significance. In Christianity angels are the one who has wings and it represents limitless freedom and power but the wings represented in the story contradict this concept because it is the same wings of the old man that made him prisoned in the chicken coop. The old man with wings brings prosperity and happiness to the couple but due to the inhumane nature the old man who bought prosperity struggles throughout the story. The paper aims to be a depiction of the human nature and the unquenched greed and negativities of mankind.*

**Keywords:** Comparison of human nature, analysis of literature at the time of Gabriel Garcia Marquez, the themes of Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Supernatural elements in the story.

### **Introduction**

The very old man with enormous wings is a story written by Gabrielle Garcia Marquez. The story can be considered as a portrayal of cruelty by humans towards a very old man with wings because of the greedy and selfish character. The nature of humans is that they always look for wealth and try to market their capability for wealth; this character of humans can be clearly seen in this story. In the story there is a couple who finds an old man with wings in their shed and they lock that old man in their chicken coop with hens without considering that he is old and needs more care. At first the people who came to see the old mad did not consider him super -natural, they threw food waste at him by considering the very old man as an animal from the circus. Some people in the story considered him as an angel and to confirm it they called for a priest from the church, the priest talked to the old man in Latin dialect which was considered to be the dialect of God but the man couldn’t understand it and replied to the priest in an unfamiliar dialect. From this incident the priest proclaimed that it may be a devil from the hell because the man cannot understand the Latin language spoken

by the God. Here we can see the priest who firmly believes that the language of God is Latin and the old man did not speak Latin so the priest thinks that it can be a devil who is in disguise. Nowadays most of the people have some misleading concept and they use to hang on it without studying further about it, and this concept may start small fights and lead to great wars. The supernatural creature is another major attracting source in the story the old man with wings at first attracts a huge crowd and the couple started to make money by charging a certain amount of entry fee. They did not try to make the man comfortable as they were greedy for money; they even built a two-storeyed house and started a new business, by marketing the man. The visitors who visited the old man made him suffer, some considered the old man as a form of God, and they lighted candles and made a wish. Besides all these the man suffered a lot due to the heat from the candles and he didn't receive much food. Due to this the man fainted and he slept to the corner of the chicken coop but the cruel nature of human didn't end here, the old man was poked with a hot iron rod and was forced to make himself visible to the visitors. From this we can understand that there is no humanity in front of money, the visitors or the people who locked him in the chicken coop neither cared him nor they had time to take care of him as they were busy in collecting the money. By the time there arise another supernatural species, 'a girl who turned into spider' and it attracted all the crowd from the old man and very soon the old man got little bit of peace as there were no more crowds. It can be associated with the short span interest of human beings to a particular object. It is told that the spider girl was a normal human being and she turned into a spider because of the curse that she didn't obeyed her father and mother, and the crowd was allowed to talk to the girl in order to clear their doubts which eventually gained more popularity. After all the crowds left the old man and the couple started to observe his condition and they concluded that he was about to die, but by the winter he gained energy and went away. The story can also be compared with the movement magic realism where the place, satire, people setting etc. are real and there are some extra ordinary magical elements which attract the readers.

### **Portrayal of super natural elements before, during, and after the flourishing of Gabriel Garcia Marques.**

The change in the pattern of supernatural elements can be clearly seen through the literary works from the past centuries to the present. Supernatural elements can be seen in horror stories and novels, vampire novels, fantasy fiction etc. From the very old age itself supernatural elements were a part of storytelling in order to create a mood of horror and safety to children and other people in the family, there were both negative and positive supernatural characters in order to balance the nature of story. And it has been passed down to generations. This trend was captured by authors in order to gain attention of the readers, there are readers who took the supernatural elements as real ones and continued their belief in it. The great epics such as Mahabharata and Ramayana can be considered as a book which contains supernatural elements and people believe it as a real story. In English literature 'The Castle of Otranto' by Horace Walpole is the first gothic novel written in the year 1764. In this novel there are elements like ghost, curse on family, prophecies which makes the story supernatural. From 18<sup>th</sup> century the authors of horror and gothic fiction started to analyse the dark theme of natural and supernatural elements. Gabriel Garcia Marquez is an author of 20<sup>th</sup> century who gave supernatural elements to mundane character. It is said that the writer was

influenced by his grandmother, who narrated the stories about ghost and supernatural creatures to the young author. He combined historical facts with fantasies that portrays and showcases the involvement of cruel society, people of a particular period, their mind setting etc. The authors from 18<sup>th</sup> century changed their pattern of creating supernatural species, that is from after death concepts like ghost gradually changed to living supernatural powers which is clearly shown in the story 'a very old man with enormous wings', the character of the old man with wings and a spider with human head can be considered as the one of the major example. But the supernatural creations of Gabriel Garcia Marquez were mostly unharmed and positive creatures. A change in the existence of physically unharmed ghost to harmful vampire characters came in literature by Bram stoker in his famous work 'Dracula'. Most of the supernatural stories especially the stories including vampires and human with supernatural power (Harry Potter) gained a lot of popularity and they were converted to movies and series.

### **THE HUMAN NATURE MANIFESTED BY GABRIEL GARCIA MARQUEZ IN THE STORY 'A VERY OLD MAN WITH ENORMOUS WINGS'**

Marquez through his short story revealed the action of human beings to a dependent living being. In the story the old man with wings was dependent and needed help, but the cruel character of the couple did not show any kindness to him and they also find out a way to make money through him. Human nature has changed through century, in the early period ancient books and records shows us about the humanity that our ancestors used to keep; they were so humane to their own species and to others. But now there is no humanity for humans, it is clearly shown by the author. The people lived in and around the city came to see the very old man with wings and treated him as a puppet. Nobody showed any sympathy to the man because he was not one among them, the only exception he had is a wing. Some of the people from the crowd threw food waste at him and some lighted candles and prayed in front of the very old man for their own sake. The priest from the church also examined the old man but was not ready to treat him well. The gluttonous and remorseless nature of human beings is being pointed out, reflecting the same and giving a blow on the face of these natures by Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

### **CONCLUSION**

Taking everything into consideration, there is no doubt that Gabriel Garcia Marquez was a prominent writer of magic realism. The presence of supernatural elements and human being's approach towards them is clearly reflected, and it can be compared with the present human nature of the world which is not similar to them. The story depicts the declining values of kindness, concern to others, empathy, and greed as the dominating factor of human mind. Humans always show sympathy to their own similar species even though there are exceptional cases. The writer portrayed the life and characters of his time. He added supernatural and unrealistic elements to gain the attraction of people and to show them about the real world and nature of humans they were living with and to make them understand how they were. From 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards writers got more ideas in creating supernatural elements. The supernatural elements attracted more people than the realistic story. Some supernatural stories were passed down to generations, the fairy tales and the stories of children with magical powers gained popularity among children. The depiction of fairy tale-

like characters brings out the resemblance of the story with fables. Obviously there may be no child who hasn't read the winged humans and fairies in Aesop fables and much more.

#### **AUTHOR'S NOTE**

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