

Journey towards the dream in Henry's Behrman and Hemmingway's

Santiago: A comparative study

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This paper tries to bring out a similarity in the characters of Behrman and Santiago in the classics of Henry and Hemmingway. Both the writers belong to twentieth century American literature. O. Henry, the most famous short story writer and Ernest Hemingway, the legend in American Literature especially for his novels. The protagonists of these two stories are old but courageous, even though they have confronted failures in their profession, their persistence drove them towards their dreams. The dreams distance them from their society that believes in mediocracy and survival but these are the characters who surpass all their physical and social barriers to attain their dreams and drive through all the uncertainties of life. Behrman to create his masterpiece and Santiago in search of his biggest catch as a fisherman. This makes the two protagonists apt for a comparative analysis of their characters.

Keywords : American literature, dreams, failures, voyage

“There is no greater power in heaven or on earth than the commitment to a dream.”

- A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, *Ignited Minds*

Literature permits the readers to acquire intimate emotional aspects of a person's character that would not be evident otherwise. Prompting the intimate emotion is the main aspect of literature which reflects the dream and misfortune of the character's life. Dream analysis is one of the important concept in Freudian theory. Freud considers dreams as possible entrances for repressed ideas. They are indispensable symbols of the unconscious desires and wishes. Dreams, sequentially become symbolic texts which want to be understood. This context helps to make this paper with the dreams of two American Characters.

American literature reveals the spirit of the character. The spirit of the characters painted to a great extent of courage and buoyancy. It deals with truth and not with fiction. Strong durable shift wants, and pains nursed by stony men with territory. The characters are inspired by the readers for their problem tackling the style. It has delineated the dangerous adventures and difficult decision making to achieve their dreams.

This paper is about the comparison of the dreams which is beyond the age limit like Tennyson's *Ulysses*. Tennyson pictured Ulysses as the old adventurer who is unwilling to accept the settling of old age and longing for quest. Ulysses has given a speech when he planned for the voyage into sea with a group old men. In spite of their age, the spirit showed the thrust for knowledge and with that same energy he addressed his troops:

We are not now that strength which in old days

Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are--

One equal temper of heroic hearts,

Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will,

To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield. (66-70)

Like Ulysses, Behrman and Santiago are searching their dreams until they achieve it. These two characters are also old enough who lost their physical strength but the fire within them is still alive. That helped them to achieve their dream.

The Old Man and the Sea is the story of struggle between an old fisherman and the greatest catch of his life. “An Essay in Criticism: Virginia Woolf on Hemingway” she says, “Mr. Hemingway’s writing, one might paraphrase, gives us now and then a real emotion”. In 1954, the Nobel academy said it was honoring him “for his mastery of the art of narrative, most recently demonstrated in *The Old Man and the Sea*, and for the influence that he has exerted on contemporary style.” The classic portrays the struggle of Santiago, an aged prominent unlucky man writhed in extremities, by which even the parents of his young, devoted pupil Mandolin, had forced the boy to leave the Old Man in order to fish in a more prosperous boat. Even though he was a fisherman for decades he was unsuccessful for nearly three months which made him a

An old artist who lives downstairs from Sue and Johnsy. He has been painting for four decades without any profitable success, but still he hopes in his “masterpiece”. He gets money by posing as a model for artists in the neighborhood. He is initially contemptuous of the view that leaves on a vine could have anything to do with Johnsy’s health, but eventually goes outside on a cold and rainy night to paint a realistic-looking leaf onto the wall outside her window so that she will think one last leaf has miraculously survived the storm. As a result of this sacrifice, he catches pneumonia and dies—but Sue remarks that he had finally painted his masterpiece.

O.Henry’s “The Last Leaf”, finds a prime place in the American Literature. This short story is about two young women and about an old man named Behrman. This paper deals with the character of Behrman and his journey towards his dream. He was in his past sixties and leading his life alone in an apartment. He encountered failure in his profession as an artist. Even though he did not lose his hope in his dream and the persistence to pursue his dream.

On the other hand, Hemingway’s Santiago in *The Old Man and Sea*, is the protagonist of the novel. The whole story speaks about the journey of the old man Santiago. Like Behrman, he

is also a failure in his profession as a fisherman. He is considered as an old man with bad luck. Even his pupil, Manolin's parents did not allow him to go along with the old man because he didn't earn anything considerably in his past life. In his eighty-four day's journey as a fisherman he did not even get a single fish. He feels tired physically but his mind does not lose its energy.

Both the characters have struggled in their entire life to achieve their dreams. Behrman, who has been waiting for his dream for forty years but the similar struggle felt by Santiago in his eighty-four days of his journey in sea. Behrman and Santiago dared to dream in a society where they were criticized for the struggles they had to undergo in the pursuit of their dreams.

Behrman is described as a drunken and only being close to these two girls, named Sue and Johnsy. Behrman in the course of achieving his dream of creating a masterpiece, sacrificed his own life for the same.

He was past sixty. He had no success as a painter. For forty years he had painted, without ever painting a good picture. He had always talked of painting a great picture, a masterpiece, but he had never yet started it... He drank too much. He still talked of his great masterpiece. (7)

In, *The Old Man and The Sea*, the writer introduced the character of the old man with the same description. It shows Santiago's old lifeless figure with passion about his profession.

The old man was thin and gaunt with deep wrinkles in the back of his neck. The brown blotches of the benevolent skin cancer the sun brings from its reflection on the tropic sea were on his cheeks. The blotches ran well down the sides of his face and his hands had the deep-creased scars from handling heavy fish on the cords. But none of these scars were fresh. They were as old as erosions in a fishless desert. (33)

But their dreams drove them through all the hurdles without letting them lose hope. Their persistence made them pursue their dreams even at the face of failures. Behrman created his masterpiece in a stormy midnight on the canvas of a wall. He even contracted the deadly ‘pneumonia’ which ultimately took his life. Santiago, on the other hand makes a voyage to the depths of the sea to catch the biggest fish Marlin, the fishermen on his shore has ever seen. He was amidst roaring seas accompanied by heavy rains, thunder and lightning, but nothing deterred him in achieving his dreams. The prey was chased by sharks in the midst of the sea. He always stood strong and never comprised to let off the fish even to the extent of getting his boat drowned. The sharks attacked from all sides but he fought for three long days, finally reaching his shore with only the skeleton remains of the largest catch he ever had.

The journey of both Behrman and Santiago where full of struggles both internal and external. Their dreams gave them a tough time but their passion and persistence prevailed thus making them victorious at the end. Behrman finally drew his masterpiece ‘The Last Leaf’ as the story is titled that saved a young girl, Johnsy’s life and evoked hope in her. Even though the masterpiece priced the artist his own life. Santiago whereas caught the biggest fish after travelling to the midst of the sea. Although he was unable to bring the whole fish ashore being, attacked by the sharks, but the remains of the fish proved him to be a master in his profession. Thus, both the characters achieved their dreams with their struggle and persistence.

Behrman and Santiago can be seen as Christ-like figures. The first one in the course of achieving his dream of creating masterpiece, sacrificed his own life for the life of a young girl by painting the last leaf. He didn’t think twice before risking his life for the girl. Whereas Santiago did not forgo with the fish until the end even risking his life in the course. He struggles for three days to save the carcass of the fish whom he cares for more than himself , as he relates himself to

the fish. Thus, the sacrifice is seen in two life's where Behrman offers his life for Johnsy's whereas Santiago does that for the fish that he has caught after a long struggle.

The characters Behrman and Santiago are driven by their passion to achieve their dreams. In this persistence, they were disconnected from the society being more focused on their dreams. The society criticized Santiago as an ill-luck fisherman. Even once the character itself shows that negative vibrations, which shows his physical weakness. ““You better be fearless and confident yourself, old man,” he said” (19). But the next optimistic thought, is evident for his spirit of attaining the dream, it reflects his passion for his profession.

Only I have no luck any more. But who knows? Maybe today. Every day is a new day. It is better to be lucky. But I would rather be exact. Then when luck comes you are ready. (21)

Even Santiago has only a small boy named Manolin, who was close to him. Whereas Behrman drunk a lot to suppress his miseries and showed fatherly love for Sue and Johnsy. This is how, both are isolated from society but more connected with humanity which is the basic concern of the society.

Behrman primarily differs from Santiago in the climax of the works. Behrman dies at the end being contracted by pneumonia in the course of creation of his masterpiece. On the other hand, Santiago risks his life to get the fish ashore but ends up with its skeleton. He is finally acknowledged by his society as a master in his profession though he didn't gain profit from his huge catch or the struggles undergone. Both the characters journeyed a tedious way to achieve their dreams and, in the process, Behrman lost his life. Henry's stories are famous for the astonishing endings but Hemingway's stories are famous for his uproot endings.

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