

Importance of Nature as portrayed in Ernest Hemingway’s “Islands in the Stream”.

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Abstract: Ernest Hemingway is one of the renowned authors in the literary world. He got both the Pulitzer and Nobel Prize for Literature in 1953 and 1954 respectively for the same book “The Old Man and the Sea” He is one of those literary personal who has encountered both the world wars (WWI and WWII) and the Spanish Civil war. Most of his writings are about his personal experiences. The language he employs in his works is simple, direct and easy to understand. The book “Islands in the Stream” has got lots of natural elements present in it and the way humans behave towards nature is also beautifully portrayed by the author. The researcher here is trying to find out the importance of nature in the book.

Keywords: Hurricanes, Casuarina trees, Indian Ocean, Royal Palms.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Ernest Hemingway is one of the most powerful short story writers and novelist of America. Most of his stories and novels are based upon his personal experiences. He occupies a prominent place in the American Literary history for his never ending role in the areas of fictional writings. Hemingway has written in a simple but unconventional style, with the problems of war, hatred, violence, relationship of man towards nature and death as the themes. His novels present a symbolic interpretation of human life. Ernest Miller Hemingway was born on July 21, 1899 in Oak Park, Illinois in a typical higher middle class American family as the second of six children to Dr. Clarence Hemingway and Grace Hall Hemingway. His father was a physician and her mother a musician. His early venture before becoming a writer was that of a musician as influenced by his mother. His father on the other hand introduced him the art of hunting and fishing, thus becoming the two dominant interests in his life.

II. ABOUT THE BOOK

It is a novel consisting of three parts. The central figure in the novel is Thomas Hudson, painter. The first part is set in “Bimini”, where the painter is seen working on the island. A writer- friend named Roger Davis has a brawl which leads to his joining Hudson at his home. Then, Hudson’s two divorced wives and three sons visit him for five weeks and Davis helps to entertain the boys. During their visit, on an unlucky day, David one of the son got almost hit by a shark and a week later he almost catches a sword fish. The story in Bimini ends with a cable that the boys had been killed along with their mothers in a car accident and Hudson goes to Europe to close their affairs. The second part of the novel is set in Cuba. The painter is now engaged secretly in military affairs and his current wife was away to some place. He further bears an oppressive private burden: his eldest and third son was shot down in Europe. He then goes to Havana to drink away his sorrow. He then does a lot of erotic reminiscing until his wife shows up and goes with him to the Finaca for lovemaking. Then, with a great difficulty he shares the news of their son’s death there. The third part, “At Sea” follows. Hudson along with a crew of about seven men patrols the Gulf Stream looking out for German submarines. Then they find a small fishing village destroyed by German survivors from a sunken submarine and they set off in pursuit. The novel ends with the shootout and the destruction of the Germans with Hudson badly wounded.

III. IMPORTANCE OF NATURE

Nature plays an important role in the part of a man’s life. Here, too in the novel many natural elements are associated in the life of the protagonist Thomas Hudson, the painter.

“The house was built on the highest part of the narrow tongue of the land between the harbour and the open sea. It had lasted through three hurricanes and it was built solid as a ship.” (1) The above lines are the

opening lines of the novel. The author is a nature loving person and beautifully portrays how he loves nature in the above lines. The house was located in such a place that nature it was surrounded by water on all the sides and on top of this any person living in such a house will have easy access to the harbour where one can buy, go on a sea trip etc easily. Though the house was situated in such a beautiful place, it was not free from natural disaster like hurricane, tornado, cyclone and flood. But due the advancement of technology the house was made in such a way that it was able to survive from any natural calamities especially the hurricanes. This shows man's love of nature and wanted to be in close relation with it.

"It was a safe and fine place to bathe in the day but it was no place to swim at night." (1) The relationship of man and nature is beautifully portrayed in the above line. However the danger of nature is also portrayed. The author wants to convey that daytime is the best time to bathe in the wide open sea while it is dangerous to do in the night time as various ferocious water animals loves to hunt for prey during this time. It further suggest that during day time many human activities happen like that of fishing, travelling of ship, swimming of people and the noise of various kinds make the sea animals keep aloof from coming out of their homes but as the night time approaches the sea animals would love to come out and prepare to hunt down for food and seems like these animals love the calm conditions. The above line further shows how men acknowledge the importance of other products of nature, their habits and respects them.

"Soon after you saw the dark blur of casuarina trees above the line of the sea, you would see the white bulk of the house." (2) The white represents the colour of the house and such colour distinct itself from others. One can easily find out any object from very far with such colour painted upon them. The place where the house was built was on the highest part of the place above the sea and the surrounding was filled with beautiful casuarina trees which were dark in colour. The shading of the house was such that it looks odd but can be easily point out by any from a distant place. The quoted line also conveys man's distinct creativeness and the level of art where the manmade objects can be easily identified from the natural ones.

"As he lay on the floor he felt under the wind although, really, the wind whipped at the lower corners of the house and at the lowest grass on the island and into the roots of the sea grass and the cockleburs and into the sand itself." (3) The above lines shows man's sudden realisation of nature, its activities and close relationship. Further, the lines also clearly suggest that the painter has a great regard for nature and wonders on the relationship between the nature-man-natural elements. The painter was lying simply on the floor suddenly he could feel sudden thrust of wind passing through his lovely corners of the house which were further travelling to the grasses on the islands, to the roots of the sea grass, sea weed and lastly to the sand. The author has a great sense of power to sense such nature's element and displays them through his writing. This shows that man could feel the nature and enjoy the natural phenomenon occurring around them.

"Sometimes he would leave the island to fish off Cuba or to go to the mountains in the fall." (6) The above line signifies that the painter loves to travel by sea or go to trekking by the nearby mountains. This further suggests man's love for nature, its beauty and seems like both of them have a deep interaction for each other. The relationship of man and nature is also beautifully shown. This also shows the dependence of man upon nature for pleasure, travel and rest. In the quoted line, the painter loves to travel by sea to Cuba or climb the mountains nearby to take his day off. Here nature plays an important role in the life of the painter by providing him the sea water through which he could travel and provide him the mountain to which he could climb and a peace in mind.

"Water's rising all around the island and hammerheads and mackerel sharks and tiger sharks and shovelnose sharks are swimming round and round and feeding on those who try to swim away to keep from being forked down the big open hatch that has steam rising out of it." (17-18) The above lines shows how the various residents of nature are hovering around the island waiting for their prey to come out. The water residents include various kinds of ferocious sharks. This was the time of the year when the islanders were not suppose to swim around as these animals would hurt them or have them as their meal. This shows that nature has its own way to harmonise between the various species living together and human should have respect for it.

"When Thomas Hudson woke up there was a light east breeze blowing and out across the flats the sand was bone white under the blue sky and the small high clouds that were travelling with the wind made dark moving patches on the green water." (47) A beautiful morning scene is described in the above lines by the author. The breathtaking beauty of the sea water, clear sky and small high clouds is described too. The painter woke up early in the morning and he could feel the light breeze inside his house and he could also see the clear blue sky under which the gentle breeze was blowing through the sand and further the small clouds was also travelling with the wind across the vast green water. Through this one can easily know that the writer is a man which has high regard and respect for nature. Through the book the author wants to advice man to have a good relation with nature and one could find the inner beauty of nature if one is intact with nature.

"There was only a light wind and the water over the reef looked light and creaming, with the reef showing brown and the dark blue water beyond." (77) The colour of the sea water changes suddenly from green to dark blue water. This shows the activity of human on the surface of the water. The sons and various other

people of the island were happily swimming on the surface of the water and above this the daily activities makes the water change its colour. Through the above lines the author tries to convey message to the readers that whatever activities we do we should have a thought of conserving nature and its allies after all we are living under the same home called earth.

"Thomas Hudson came up slowly to almost touch the reef, seeing the big brown coral heads, the black sea urchins on the sand, the purple sea fans swaying towards him with the tide." (79) Here the painter and his sons were going for fishing. He was trying to start the engine of the boat and went down to start it. Suddenly while coming up he could feel the touch of the reef surrounding the island and could also see the corals, sea urchins and lovely sea fans coming towards him along the tide. The painter could feel it and thought of as if nature is trying to stop his fishing day in the boat. The perfect setting of nature is portrayed in the above lines. Further the feeling of nature is beautifully portrayed here and it seems that the author is trying to convey that we as humans should sometimes take out some time from the hectic and busy regular schedule and feel the nature and its beauty. So, in this way we could have a great relation with nature and feel what nature is telling us.

"His life was built solidly on work and on the living by the Gulf Stream and on the island and it would stand up to the right." (93) A man's life is all about doing work and here too in the novel Mr. Hudson is lived by this. But his location is in such a place that was filled with natural surroundings. He really loved to work in an island surrounded by the sea. To work in such a place means that the painter really wants to have close relation with nature rather than working in the cities. One can have a peaceful mind, breathe clean air and have a really good time to enjoy with nature. This further shows that Hemingway was a man who loves nature and wants to be intact with nature to enjoy it. It seems that the author wants the readers to also have a good time with nature and feel the pleasure of spending some time with it.

"The run boat was loading live crawfish and conches and a deck load of conch shells and empty gasoline and Diesel oil drums and the islanders stood in line in the heavy wind waiting their turn in the cabin." (146) As the human civilisation grows, the need of more food is needed and this too was depended heavily on nature and its allies. Further the dependence of oils to run the engines of various machines might be mentioned. The above line clearly shows heavy activities on the island like that of loading the live sea animals for food, decoration and various other things. Then, the people living in the islands too were waiting for their turn to go to the cabin and take their share of food items, medicines and various other needed items. The boat was the only mode through which the people can go in and out. Sea water plays an important role in the transportation. Thus the author wants to convey a message that nature has given humans all their needs and we should at least try to have a good relation with them for without nature no human can survive alone. The bond of relationship should be kept intact.

"It had been a jolly trip, too, with the Indian Ocean blue and the ship coming out slowly from the new harbour and then Africa was behind them, and the old white town with the green trees and all the green behind it, then the sea breaking on the long reef as they passed and then the ship gained speed and was in the open ocean and flying fish were splitting out of the water and ahead of the ship." (219) Mr. Hudson was on a travel trip to Southampton on a ship and on their way they had a stoppage in a new harbour and after pausing for few moments they sat on to travel the remaining journey. The painter could see Africa behind. Africa is a virgin continent filled with beautiful forest and landscapes. Though he wished to have a few moments down there, he could not do so as they had a distance to cover. As the ship gained speed, they passed along the beautiful reef and in the vast ocean he could see flying fishes swimming swiftly faster than the ship. During certain time in the past the only mode of travel was through ships and boats on seas and oceans. The water bodies play a vital role in the mode of communication so, without water there would have been communication gap. Thus, the importance of nature represented by water is shown beautifully by the author in the quoted lines.

"The only green now on the land, in this country of so many greens, was along the water- courses where the royal palms grew tall and grey, their green tops slanted by the wind." (237) A watercourse is channel created either by naturally or artificially through which the water flows. Cuba was a country which was filled with various natural surroundings before becoming a colony of Spain. After becoming the colony most of its natural beauty was reduced to such an extent that the only green part of the country was along the watercourses where one could see only the tall royal palms with their tops slanted by the wind. The quoted line shows clearly how man has destroyed nature to satisfy their needs and wants. The country which was filled with green was now reduced mere grey colour part. This shows the extensive exploitation of nature not only this all the living creatures which depend on nature also must have been destroyed with it. Through the book the author wants to show the impact of man's greed on nature and further conveys that the grey colour of soil is due to exploitation and to convert nature to its original state humans need to nurture nature through conservation to replenish it. This shows that human should conserve nature not only for himself but for future generations and also for other beings living on the planet. "There was a long white beach with coconut palms behind it. The reef lay across the entrance to the harbour and the heavy east wind made the sea break on it so that the entrance was easy to see once you opened it up." (321) The beautiful natural landscape is shown in the above lines with all the natural

items one could find while visiting a beach. The painter was travelling there in search for his lost comrades but to his dismay he couldn't find them. Though he felt dejected was awestruck by the natural beauty and beautiful landscape. Thus this shows that nature can sometimes be soothing to the mind of an individual for an instant. Through this the author tries to convey the readers to have a good relation with nature.

IV. CONCLUSION

Thus, the author believes that after reading the story people would realise the importance of nature and the role it plays in the life of a person. Further he believes that natural beauty lasts that the artificial one for a longer period of time. Further, the unbreakable bond between nature and humans are beautifully portrayed. The effect of war and exploitation of nature by humans for their own benefit is depicted and it is seen that such activities is of great concern. Hemingway further describes the beauty of various natural elements in his own style to mesmerise the readers. He believes that man should take a break of his busy schedule and feels the natural environment so that they can observe the beauty of nature. He also believes that it could help man to understand nature and develop a bond between them.

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