



## THEORY OF OMISSION IN HEMINGWAY'S THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA

Rufus Sathish Kumar\* Dr. K. Ravichandran\*\*

\*Ph.D., Research Scholar, – Research & Development Centre, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu.

\*\*Associate Professor of English, Thiruvalluvar University, Vellore, Tamil Nadu.

### Abstract

The real scope of this inscription is to elicit the eminent elements which are out of sight to the reader but known to the writer of the novel. Theory of omission is otherwise called as "Iceberg Theory" coined by the American writer Ernest Miller Hemingway. Akin to other American writers, he worked as a journalist before becoming a novelist. Hence, he knew the necessity of this theory as something has to be hidden in order to create a literary talk by the critics of his age. This theory makes a reader to do a cavernous study and research to comprehend the hidden elements and to write commentary on the novel. This self-reliant review paves way to read and know an assortment of subordinate elements chained in the novel *The Old Man and the Sea*.

Hemingway's life was not a bed of roses; he suffered a lot because of his personal and family life. This made him to hide few pessimistic aspects of his life in his writings. This kind of omission is seen in all of his writings. In fact he started to exclude things after he attempted for suicide. In order to reinforce his idea he needs a new theory of hiding things in his writings and so he coined this "Iceberg Theory" which helps him to omit and hide things. As only one-eighth of the ice cubes are seen on the upper surface of the water and the rest is engrossed in the water.

This theory demonstrates that ignorance and laziness are not found in the writings of the Hemingway, but attest his uncomplicated elegance of writing through this novel *The Old Man and the Sea*.

**Key Words:** Culture, Religion, Customs, Resolution, Practical ability, Iceberg Theory.

Ernest Hemingway is a man of pragmatic who put pen to paper his individual happenings and the occurrence of customary life's incidents and accidents with his unsophisticated style of language which could be understood by a single reading of a new reader of his novels. Though he wrote on practicality and on his own experiences he left behind some piece of significant things which ought to be explored for the readers in order to taste the real quintessence of the characters and to recognize the real value of the novel. This manner of omission is good enough for many writers of his age in American literature. It is true that hiding a small number of episodes in life gives us an immense notice over it and hangs around for the declaration. Hence omission makes an incident additional fascinating.

Ernest Hemingway in his novel *The Old Man and the Sea* applies the theory of omission in scores of places in order to grasp the attention of the readers. His gentleness is well perceived in his writings though he writes on the wars in his novels. Upholding expectancy in the novel is one more way of executing the theory of Iceberg. Hemingway in his essay "The Art of the Short Story," opines:

A few things I have found to be true. If you leave out important things or events that you know about, the story is strengthened. If you leave or skip something because you do not know it, the story will be worthless. The test of any story is how very good the stuff that you, not your editors, omit. (3)

As said by Hemingway in his short story, from the opening till the end of the novel *The Old Man and the Sea* a reader discovers the theory of omission with the textual confirmation. A reader could be very assured that the omission part of the story was well known by Hemingway because he wrote his own practice in his writings. The story which was hidden could be exposed by the stuff of the reader with or without the textual evidences. In the opening of the novel, Hemingway talks about an old fisherman Santiago, the protagonist who is not recognized by the writer to the core. The valiant qualities of Santiago are not well uncovered in different way and highlighted to the readers. The fisherman at his old age brawls with the nature for his sustained existence throughout the novel. Fisherman's toil has gone astray to the peak. Hemingway knows the worth of the old fisherman but he has not given credit to him by using the adjectives in praise of him. The fisherman has to be cherished with the superlative form of sentences. But it is hard to find the treasure of praising the hero in the novel. He used his formal way of expressing the labor of an old fisherman. It is quiet complicated for an old man to do fishing single-handedly without the help of others in the sea. The real back round of the old man was dwelled in the novel which could be seen in the other context of the story. But in some cases it is not seen anywhere in the story which could be understood by the reader only but not by the writer of the story: "He was an old man who fished alone in a skiff in the Gulf Stream and he had gone eighty-four days now without taking a fish". (1)



The practical catastrophe of the old man is not publicized on the screen. Eighty four days was not a trouble-free event to conceal on the screen. But that was happened in the novel in order to make the reader investigate the grounds at the back of the omission and to construct a creative mind to get an assortment of scope of ideas on the labour of the old fisherman. A reader has to concentrate on the daily desires of the old fisherman on the sea which was not exposed such as the food, preparation, health conditions, water, and money and about natural disaster like waves, wind, rain and cyclones. Despite all things he won the epic struggle with his terrific strength, bravery, and moral.

Cuba has been renowned for its fishing at least since the days of Ernest Hemingway, and foreigners by the thousands come each year to fish in waters largely protected by Cuba's lack of development. Much of Cuba's coastline remains free of the large-scale building that has damaged ecosystems in the rest of the Caribbean. The island's industrial fishing fleet was devastated by the fall of the Soviet Union. Cuban anglers living off the country's average salary of \$25 cannot afford to cover the cost of boats and fishing equipments needed to catch fish. Some fishermen cannot even afford to pay the price for gasoline needed to fuel motorboats. Their lack of assets and money has led some Cubans to try out an innovative and interesting way to provide for their families. The social setup of the fishermen community is in disaster which is not pictured in the novel entirely but with some indication it is read. The paucity of the old fisherman Santiago is pictured as

"May I take the cast net?"

"Of course."

There was no cast net and the boy remembered when they had sold it. But they went through this fiction every day.

There was no pot of yellow rice and fish and the boy knew this too. (5)

A cast net, also called a throw net, is a net used for fishing. It is a circular net with small weights distributed around its edge. The net is cast or thrown by hand in such a manner that it spreads out on the water and sinks. This technique is called net casting or net throwing. Fishes are caught as the net is hauled back in. This simple device is particularly effective for catching small bait or forage fish, and has been in use, with various modifications, for thousands of years. The old man is under pressure without the fishing net to fish on the seas. Hemingway talks on the professional of fishing to some length and discontinues abruptly. The real condition of the Cuban fisherman was not crystal clear in the writings of the Hemingway. Another way of understanding their traditional status is by understanding their food habits. It is said in the novel about yellow rice which is the easiest and cheapest food of Cuba people. The below lines stand as the perfect evidence:

"What do you have to eat?" the boy asked.

"A pot of yellow rice with fish. Do you want some?"

"No. I will eat at home. Do you want me to make the fire?"

"No. I will make it later on. Or I may eat the rice cold." (5)

As said in traditional-Cuban-food, being Cuban, the household often served yellow rice. It is traditional to garnish yellow rice with pimientos. Yellow rice with Cuban-style roast pork or cooked chicken pieces is the most used and cooked food items. Even the normal and traditional yellow rice was not obtainable for the old fisherman to eat in the state of starvation. The poverty of the old fisherman was yet again said in the novel as petite information about the fisherman and about his family life: "The shack was made of the tough bud shields of the royal palm which are called guano and in it there was a bed, a table, one chair, and a place on the dirt floor to cook with charcoal." (5)

The picture of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the picture of Virgin of Cobre are seen on the walls of the old fisherman's hut. These two gods are said to be the patroness of Cuba. Lady of Charity known as Our Lady of Cobre is a popular Marian title of the Blessed Virgin Mary known in many Roman Catholic countries. Several known Marian images with the same title exist around the world while a particular Hispanic image is pontifically designated by Pope Benedict XV as the Patroness of Cuba. A devotional image of the Lady of Charity was featuring the two Indians and an African passenger on its legendary ship. The spiritual belief of the protagonist Santiago is seen in the novel. At one stage a reader could find that the old fisherman was the strong believer of God. Hemingway has not talked about the presence of God in the life of the Santiago in detail. The photos of these two Gods are the symbol of protection and giving. The lord of charity was also known as the patroness. Patroness is a woman who protects, supports, or sponsors someone or something. Though the old fisherman does not believe in the luck and fate, he believed in God. As other fisherman he worshipped God for his safe journey on the seas: "On the brown walls of the flattened, overlapping leaves of the sturdy fibered guano there was a picture in color of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and another of the Virgin of Cobre". (5)

But on the other side of his regular life, one cannot see his religious touch in his profession or in his other works like binding the nets, preparing for the journey, search of fish, food or friendship. When he was getting caught in the hands of fishes on the seas, he believed his own strength, determination and his greatness. When he was cursed by the fellow fishermen also he did not lose his determination, he decided to work without any hesitation. In all the circumstances he has not believed God



for his rescue instead he sweats physically and mentally. Hemingway was raised as a Congregationalist, converted to Catholicism for his second wife, but seems to have been an atheist at heart. His atheist quality was exposed by one his biographer. According Paul Johnson's book *Intellectuals*: "Hemingway did not only believe in God but regarded organized religion as a menace to human happiness... [he] seems to have been devoid of the religious spirit... [and] ceased to practice religion at the earliest possible moment." (144)

The appearance of these two photos could be the ideas of his forefathers and the completion of the society. It was dead clear that the protagonist Santiago was also in the hands of social bounds. Though Hemingway does not encourage these kinds of bounds, his characters slowly go under the societal circle. He says that people who talk against the religion and God are said to be the atheist but a man who thinks in deep is also an atheist. As he said in his novel *A Farewell to Arms* 'All thinking men are atheists'. (7)

The wives of Ernest Hemingway are often enemies, they are often also friends. Mary Welsh, Hemingway's fourth wife says that all wives of her husband are the graduates of Hemingway's literary stuff. From the beginning of his first marriage, Ernest Hemingway was never without a woman. He needs the companion of a woman in all stages of his life. He has four wives but his family life was not satisfactory with his wives. He was satisfied with the company of his wives and not more than anything else in his life. In the novel *The Old man and the Sea* Hemingway made the character Santiago to talk about his fourth wife Mary Welsh. The photo of the fisherman's wife on the wall makes the critics to talk and discuss about the wife of Santiago. The story of the Santiago's wife was out of sight in the novel. It was said that the photograph of his wife was dangled close to the pictures of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the picture of Virgin of Cobre. It seems that he was immeasurably in love with his wife at his old age. He recognizes the relics of his lovable wife on the shelf of his hut. He takes the photograph of his wife which interrupts him mentally because of his real affection. He considered her as a good better half of him. He took the photograph because it desperately made him feel alone. The hero's real love is shown in the lines of the novel as: "These were relics of his wife. Once there had been a tinted photograph of his wife on the wall but he had taken it down because it made him too lonely to see it and it was on the shelf in the corner under his clean shirt". (5) Hemingway tries to implement that a companion is must for all age group of people to survive. Loneliness could tutor a person wrong idea than the good one. As Francis Bacon said that loneliness is detrimental to an individual.

Another important aspect shown in least amount was the good friendship between the Cuban old fisherman Santiago and the young boy Manolin who was the apprentice and devoted attendant. At the age of five Manolin is with his master Santiago. It is not clearly stated in the novel about the relationship between them. Manolin acts as a good assistant when the old man ventures into the sea. He is a good apprentice when the old man drains his fish nets on the shore and again he has proved himself as a good lovable friend to the old man when he is in distress and finally he confirms him as a good servant to the old man whenever he rests at home by providing proper food, water, wine and need able things. Hence Manolin acts as good supporter in multi angles and helped him. The relationship between these two characters is real and true. As Walter Winchell says on real friendship "A real friend is one who walks in when the rest of the world walks out." (1)

"Now we fish together again."

"No. I am not lucky. I am not lucky anymore."

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

"What will your family say?"

"I do not care. I caught two yesterday. But we will fish together now for I still have much to learn." (62-63)

According to the quote mentioned above both are together when the community of fishermen scolds them. Manolin walks in the life of Santiago when the village people leaves him and said that he is the unlucky on the seas. He is not ready to hear the words of his parents and starts to assist the old fisher man on the sea and soil. Finally the old fisher man emerged as a good teacher of fishing. Manolin has finally decided to learn still more from the old man. It was quiet unusual to maintain a good rapport between an aged one and a young one. But here Hemingway shows a miracles connection between these two age groups in the novel.

Resolution a word or a key which was said in least amount creates a good awareness about the concept among the new readers. A resolution means a firm decision to do or not to do something. Hemingway in his novel talks about the determination and the resolution of the old fisherman in a few sentences. A work could be done successfully without hope but with the resolution. Resolution could make a good change in one's life whereas hope follows the resolution in the normal life. Santiago made a good resolution of going to the sea alone without the help of others made his assistant to assist him without hearing the words of his parents. Because of his resolution and action Manolin decided that he has to learn more from his master regarding the fishing techniques. Resolution made the old fisher man to fight with the fishes and to bring the success to the shore. Resolution has made him the real champion of the soil in fishing at the old age. His resolution educated



the village fishermen and demolished the superstitious belief of the people who talked about the luck and fate of life:

“I may not be as strong as I think,” the old man said. “But I know many tricks and I have resolution. (9)

He hit it without hope but with resolution and complete malignancy. (50)

The old man’s head was clear and good now and he was full of resolution but he had little hope. (50)

Resolution is the deciding factor which controls everything in one’s life. Success and failure depends upon the resolution one makes in his life. Resolution is a key but it is used at three places only in the novel. The whole story moves with the stability of resolution of the old fisherman but the usage of the core meaning of resolution is minimized and hidden which is completely known to Hemingway who coins the theory called the Iceberg theory. In this context, when the writer knows of the hidden part of the story, it could be a successful one. But the real effort of the word resolution could be developed by the reader of the story.

Two literary elements have found half-hidden in this novel. Firstly a hero of a story was made by the good determined and ideal opponent. In this story a character Santiago was shown as the super man, fetches the companionship of Manolin, proves his talents on the seas, and breaks the beliefs of the village people because of his determined opponent Marlin, shark and other fishes in the story. One could be made popular by the defeat of other especially the opponent. One has to succeed and other has to fail is the universal sayings. Behind every success there would be a good failure. Hemingway writes the novel in formal and easily readable way and in realistic manner. The importance of the Marlin or the shark was not shown in the lines of the novel. The fishes fight equally with the old fisherman in order to escape from the nets which in turn made a superb hero of the novel. Fishes are not ready for defeat but they are ready to get destroyed as soldiers in the battle fields. Hemingway used the following lines for the heroic work of the old fisherman but possibly it was applicable to the fishes on the seas and perfectly matches for the work done by the fishes: “But man is not made for defeat,” he said. “A man can be destroyed but not defeated.” (51)

The above said lines of Hemingway fit for the fishes because in the story the fishes were died but not the hero of the story. A reader could see that the fishes were fighting and giving a good counter to the old fisherman and not trying to hide or run away from the places. The fishes made bloody wounds on the hands of the old fisherman and spoiled the fishing nets and to the core shark played a vital role in opposing the hero of the story. Finally the meat of the Marlin is successfully eaten by the sharks and the left skeleton is taken away by the hero of the novel.

The second element of the novel is about the death which gives life according to the evidences and belief of the novel, books and writers. Death is an unavoidable force in Hemingway novels and stories. In fact one has to face the death at a particular point of time without skipping it in his life. No living creature could make an excuse from death. But according to Hemingway, death is not an end to the living creatures. There is always a chance of new life from it. The sayings of Hemingway could make the reader think about the Biblical verses which always talk in detail about the death. When an individual is succumbed to death, he gets a vigorous strength than ever. At the closer it was seen in the story that the fishes came alive again with strong and powerful wings. These lines were shown as:

Then the fish came alive, with his death in him, and rose high out of the water showing all his great length and width and all his power and his beauty. He seemed to hang in the air above the old man in the skiff. Then he fell into the water with a crash that sent spray over the old man and over all of the skiff. (46)

Hemingway describes the valorous force of the fish in the novel. It actually seems to be going higher than the old fisherman and finally falls on the water. Death is an indispensable welcoming guest in every one life which has a special reason but the reason is single. Hemingway as said above did not have any religious touch at the time of writing the novel, but he was basically hailing from orthodox Christian family. His parents are ardent believers of Jesus Christ and follow Bible. During his childhood, he was taught about the subject of death. According to the Holy Bible, in Philippians 1:21: “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain”. (NT-814) Death is a gain which would give a new life with God according to the Bible. Though he was atheist, Hemingway believed in some of the doctrine of Jesus Christ and in turn he manipulated the preaching in his novels without any literary decorations. Hence one could find Biblical allusions are hidden in the lines of Hemingway.

The novel The Old Man and the Sea is dwelled with the theory of Omission which is easily found even with a perusal of the novel because the lucidity of Ernest Miller Hemingway’s language is simple and direct. The researchers has diagnosed many a themes in the novel such as the religion, atheist, friendliness, family, poverty, tradition, love, death, life, heroism, determined opponent, hope, resolution, luck, Individuality and hard work. It is his last piece of writing which gives him a good fame and popularity. The exploitation of Omission theory is the real key behind the success of this novel. This theory is



not only found in this novel but also in other novels too. His Contemporaries also used this theory to bring about a good change and awareness among the reader to find the hidden part of the story with or without the textual proof. This theory makes the reader and writer joins in finding the climax and the real moral of the story.

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