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THE MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN SANTIAGO AND MANOLIN IN  
"THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA" OF HEMINGWAY

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ABSTRACT

Mutual understanding means understanding and comprehension between the two concerned persons or more. Actually it indicates how they understand each other and how they are strong and stable in their friendship and their personal sensibility. In any kind of friendship, may be between two men or a man and a woman, mutual understanding and concern is the basic criterion to stabilize the relationship between them so that no third party can destroy that mutual understanding or relationship. The trust or belief between the friends is very essential to understand the deficiency in their real life situation as far as their friendship is concerned. The same is true in case of Hemingway's notable work, "The Old Man and the Sea". It is his masterpiece and largely responsible for Nobel Prize which was awarded to him in 1954. This novella actually inculcates nothing but a mutual bonding or may be called understanding between Santiago and Manolin almost all over the novel. The mutual relationship or understanding between Santiago and Manolin dominates all over the novella. The interdependence between them ultimately helps an old, isolated individual to be the greatest fisherman among all Cuban fishermen. Almost the similar relationship is found in case of Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay's novel "Srikanta" where there is a mutual understanding between Indranath and Srikanta though the plot carries a different context.

**Key words:** understanding, mutual, sensibility.

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INTRODUCTION

Through mutual understanding, sincerity and goodwill, and with great knowledge and broad views, the persons on both sides jointly initiate new opportunities for attachment, stability, cooperation and mutual benefit. The most definite, real and important friendship is between Santiago and Manolin in Hemingway's novella, "The Old Man and the Sea". It deals with a simple story of an old Cuban fisherman who caught alone along the Gulf Stream. The novella also proffers a close mutual attachment between the hero of the novel and his fishing associate Manolin. The loving, caring, devotional attitude of Manolin makes the protagonist Santiago very active agent of the novel. They are actually friends in need than friends indeed. Their

relationship is built on mutual understanding and respect and bonding. Manolin in spite of being a young boy and immature boy as far as age is concerned had a lot of admiration, love, respect and what not for Santiago. For example, Manolin's one comment is very weighty and considerable now: "There are many good fishermen and some great ones. But there is only one you." This comment basically shows his inner love and respect for Santiago. This is not a question of love and respect, rather it is a matter of how Manolin is inspired and guided by Santiago. Again Manolin's inspiration, faith, company, and true guidance- all these help Santiago, an old unfamiliar fisherman to be the hero among all other Cuban fisherman. In the real life situation it is very easy to assess the qualities and compliment a person apart from self but very tough to complete the assessment living or working with the person himself. Manolin very honestly has done it.

The durability of a relationship depends on how they are committed to each other and whether they are equally proportionate in their relations. Towards beginning of the novel they are much perpetrated to each other. Manolin, the boy had come to the old man learn how to fish as a young boy of only five years old. They had been together till Manolin became adolescent. The novel opens with Santiago having gone eighty four days without catching fish, and at the end forty days the boy had been force by his father to go on another boat even then they are still very much together bound by a deeper love and self-respect:

"The old man had taught the boy  
to fish and the boy loved him."

Thus the disciple and tutor relationship transcends to a father and son relationship. In Manolin's words:

"If I cannot fish with you, I would  
like to serve in some way."

The boy serves every way and takes care all parochial needs of the old man. The boy is worried about the long run of bad luck of Santiago. He offers his tutor to purchase sardines to use as his bait, Santiago boldly refuses to take that help. But he insists him to take his help. The old man gets pleasure when disciple said:

I remember everything from  
when we first went together.

Not only are Santiago and Manolin companions, Santiago also serves as Manolin's counselor, a person who instructs and teaches another person. Hemingway writes, "The old man had taught the boy to fish and the boy loved him." Santiago provided Manolin with an inestimable efficiency and advices and was teaching him about the fishing industry prior to his parents requesting that he works on a different fishing boat due to the old man's unlucky streak? But Manolin had deep regard and concern for the old man and he respects his whims also. Manolin takes care of all the needs of his master. He helps Santiago to carry his equipments, his lines, harpoons, gaff, and soil furred around the mast. The boy also brings food, black beans and rice, fried bananas and some stew for his master. He offers the old man coffee, beer. But when the old man refuses to take food Manolin makes his *korunakuti*:

"You will not fish without eating while  
I am alive."

The supremacy of his love comes true when Manolin says:

"Keep the blanket around you, as it  
Was still September."

Manolin covers the sleeping old man with blanket. Not only covering the sleeping man's body but also he decides to "bring him another and a jacket for the winter and some sort of shoes and another blanket."

Mutual understanding is something that requires participation on both sides when they face problems and difficulties. In order to carry on mutual understanding it is very urgent that both the parties should show their concern and interest in each other's problems and necessities. It may be that they have some limitations and in many fields they do not feel comfortable but they should take attempts to be united with each other without other people opinions. In *The Old Man and the Sea* Manolin is sometimes interrupted by his parents in the question of helping to Santiago. But he has fixity in his aim to help "the best fisherman" ever. Sometimes Manolin is very dominative over Santiago regarding his physical care when Manolin says that "you ought to go bed now so that you will be fresh in the morning." The situation is just like the adult son advising his old father.

This is really very expected in such a relationship based on mutual understanding. Manolin sometimes nurtures the old man's hope and confidence when he says that "tomorrow is going to be good day with this current." Here Manolin actually performs the role of true instructor/aspirator to his master.

Again the understanding between Santiago, the protagonist of "The Old Man and the Sea" and Manolin, the second in command of the same is nothing but a kind of ability to sympathize the feelings of two. Santiago is to some respect is a Christ figure in the novel. He performs the role of a trainer and Manolin a trainee. So quite naturally a trainer could have some qualities to understand and sympathize the emotions and passions of the trainee and the reverse is also true. Though the boy appears on the scene in the beginning and concluding section but his presence is felt throughout the text and the old man thinks of him at every point of his struggle with marlin and the sharks. The old man when towed by a fish said: "I wish, I had had the boy to help me and to see this." Later during the 2<sup>nd</sup> day the fish is still towing him and the old man has to eat raw tuna in order to keep his strength he says: "I wish the boy were here and that I had some salt." Santiago repeatedly feels the necessity of the boy. It is only because the boy can easily wipe away his loneliness, boredom, fatigue in course of his fishing. If the boy were with him, he would help the old man waiting the coil and also by managing the cramped left hand of Santiago. Santiago collects his vigour, strength from his thought of Manolin. So what a deep love for him is expressed in the novel. His wish for the boy is very relevant because at this point he is as important as salt, basic and necessity. When the old man is in danger and is stroked by the huge size of marlin he resolved to kill it by telling himself that: "I told the boy I was ca strange old man." Thus Santiago remembers the boy every time he needed inspiration. Manolin keeps the old man alive literally as well as figuratively. Interestingly, Manolin also supports him psychologically.

In the novel Santaigo recollects his childhood through Manolin realizing a mutual bonding between them. The old man depends on the boy at his greater level too as he invokes his past youth and inner strength by means of thinking about the boy. Manolin stands here symbol of youth of Santiago. Towards the end of the novel the old man comes home with the skeleton of a huge marlin that he had caught after three days hard fighting. Now he is injured, calloused hands. When he saw the old man laying face down on his badly lacerated hands stretched out with palms facing upwards, he began to cry. He ran crying to get him coffee. This incidents shows not Santiago alone miss the company of his boy but Manolin also has great concern for his master too. This is the eternal bonding and understanding between Santiago and Manolin. The true love and deep sympathy force Manolin weep at the painful injury of his master. Manolin weeps openly as the boy "went out the door and down the worn coral rock road he was crying again." Thus the boy's reactions show his deep love, affection, attachment and understanding between them. Manolin was waiting for the old man to wake up and offer him coffee. Thus Manolin decides to go to fishing with the old man, no matter what his father said because he had so much to learn. This again proves the better mutual understanding and bondage between them.

Though Manolin has no physical role as such in the old man's struggle with Marlin and the sharks but by staying constantly in the thought of Santiago throughout the adventure has a psychological impact on the novel. Manolin acts as a source from which the old man draws hope, courage and the determination to endure such an ordeal. They are deeply attached to one another. Through Manolin what is revealed that the old man was the best fisherman and that he knew many tricks though he was no longer strong. Towards the end of the novel Santiago says, "The boy keeps me alive." He keeps the old man alive by providing him not only with food and drink but also keeps him alive by being a psychological source, will, and resolution. Thoughts of Manolin are like magical invocations for the old man. He somehow draws new strength and vitality just by thinking about the boy.

Both Manolin and Santiago are very honest in their personal and professional life. In spite of his parents objection he goes to Santiago only to support and stay with him in his unfortunate days. Manolin knows very well how to worship his preceptor. Definitely this disciple-preceptor relationship depends on their better understanding; otherwise it would not be possible. Santiago very frankly admits that the boy, Manolin is his only guide and mentor who can keep him even alive:

"Fishing kills me exactly as it keeps me

alive. The boy keeps me alive. I must  
deceive myself too much.”

### **Conclusion**

The mutual understanding or friendship between Santiago and Manolin gets more priority than their professional relationship especially regarding sea, and fishing. This understanding basically depends on their trust, love and respect. To an adolescent, mutual understanding is a feeling of two persons related to each other. But here Manolin in spite of belonging to that category, they are committed to each other. That relationship lasts long which is equally proportionate from each other's side. Manolin though immature in age shows his maturity while representing inner strength and going against his family. He is a loving son, instigator, instructor, close observer as well as the old man's connecting link to the rest of the world. The old man communicates with the rest of the world through the boy. While revealing various sweet and sour experiences Manolin regrets at the inevitable death of the old man for his enormous loss- loss of father, loss of teacher, loss of companion and finally loss of his second self. Manolin inherits the Marlin's spear. This spear is the old man's legacy to the boy and symbolizes all the old man's skill, courage, grit, determination and resolve and now it is passing on the boy Manolin. Here is the mutual understanding, the eternal attachment between Santiago and Manolin. Thus they are made for each other.

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