



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vol. 4. Issue.2., 2017 (April-June)

INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA
2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

COURAGE, WAR AND VIOLENCE IN URI ORLEV
THE ISLAND ON BIRD STREET

ATHUNGLO D EZUNG¹, SHALINI²

¹Research Scholar (B.A), ²Assistant Professor

Department of English, Lovely Professional University, Punjab, India



ABSTRACT

Holocaust has been practiced tremendously during the WW-II started by Adolf Hitler with the belief of superiority towards the Nazis also deemed inferior towards the Jews. This has led a huge loss of people and their lives and hence the Jewish people lived a miserable life. This paper talks about the life of a child reflected during the WW-II and the enormous bold and courage he has shown at that time, from the book *The Island on Bird Street* by Uri Orlev. It includes the psychological mind-set of a child during the turbulence times of war and violence and highlights of WW-II faced by the Jewish people.

©KY PUBLICATIONS

The Holocaust or Shoah in Hebrew, in Greek 'holos' signify as 'whole' and 'kaustos' as 'burnt'. It means burning of people in a large group or killing of people on a large scale (Oxford dictionary I). The year 1941-1945 is known as the deadliest genocides in history where the Jewish people were systematically murdered by the Nazi regime. The Jewish people were considered as 'deemed inferior' whereas the German people considered themselves as 'racially superior'. This started due to the racial discrimination amongst the people towards the race, culture, colour, creed etc. also the German during the World War II dominated Europe which lays a great impact in the life of the Jewish people. However, this continued till the end of World War II in Europe from April-May 1945. There were also some 10% survivals of children during Holocaust where they were left with trauma which had led a great effect in their life.

Adolf Hitler, a German politician who was the leader of Nazi party WW-II Germany was responsible for killings of Jewish people as he held the leadership of Nazi party where he dominated the whole of Europe. Having grudges towards the Jewish people during the First World War in the year 1918, Hitler blames the Jews for the defeat over their country and so he took advantage of the weaker sections i.e. the Jews and suffered them to death. Such obsession holding the superiority of the German people where he named them as 'Aryan', initiating the World War II in Europe with the invasion of Poland in September 1939 was a central figure of the Holocaust.

Lives of the Jewish people at the time of Hitler reign were at stake as the people were brutally harassed and defiled. One can never imagine having such life nor would ever think about it. For instance, even living under such rules and regulation in a democratic country is sometimes suffocating to some people so thinking

about Holocaust during WW-II would be a nightmare and can never assure prosperous life. In fact it will be a reflection of dare dead game and never return to live.

However, liberation from Nazi tyranny brought no end to the sufferings of the few Jewish children who survived the Holocaust. The sufferings which started during the Nazis reign lead by Hitler continued till the end of the WW-II which resulted in numerous killings and bloodshed of the Jewish people. Many faced the future without parents, grandparents or siblings or end up in an orphanage where they are being adopted by some people. Generally it has been known that WW-II has brought a great depression in the lives of the Jewish people also it has left a horrific trauma in the life of the survivors.

The sufferings and pain Jewish people went through was intolerable and disruption. Hitler didn't spare any, but brutally killed each and every person either by shooting them or burning them alive. This has led a great impact in the life of the Jewish people where the Germans took away the jolly days and nights of the Jewish people and left the people in trauma and their life at stake.

Where there is love there is peace, but where there is enmity and egotism there is war and violence. The word 'war' can be of just three letters but holds a very dangerous and powerful impact which brings tragic change in the life of the people. There are no such things as war unless people create among themselves due to their antagonism and worldly pleasure. The horror and tremor, the screaming and bloodshed, the echoing of bullets and guns flee the birds away and cleanse the streets with blood flowing from different walks of life. Separation of families and loss of beloveds injects negativity and hamper the psychological mindset of an individual which leads to a massive emotional breakdown and thus put lives to an end.

American writer and politician Harry Edson Browne expressed his views on war, in his article "What is War?"

It is your children or your grandchildren dying before they're even fully adults, or being maimed or mentally scarred for life. It is your brothers and sisters being taught to kill other people -- and to hate people who are just like themselves and who don't want to kill anyone either. It is your children seeing their buddies' limbs blown off their bodies. (Browne 1)

War and violence leads to poverty, loss of lives, mourning, depression and all those negativity thinking in one's life. There are no such good things in war. War is full of antagonism and bloodshed, it is a selfishness act of oneself who only thinks for itself and forgets the welfare of the other people. It changes the mind-set of the people living in a society, it compels people in becoming avaricious, it injects fear and anxiety in people's mind also shows an act of inhumane because everybody wish to survive on their own and care less about others but themselves. If only people have great minds and knowledge to understand the deeper meaning of war and violence. And many Jewish people at the time of WW-II had experienced the same.

Many Jewish opted literatures to share their own experience of holocaust, their writings are not merely a literary form but it contains their sorrow, agony, sufferings, reality of war and its effect on people who faced it and survived it. Among them there are writers like Uri Orlev, Elie Wiesel, John Boyne, Viktor Frankl and many others.

Uri Orlev is an Israel children's author born in Warsaw Poland, a son of physician. He lost his mother during the World War II and that is where he had to leave Warsaw Ghetto and move to Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. He started his career being a writer and an author in the year 1976 after the World War II where after he moved to Israel. He is known to be one of the famous children's literature writers and has published over 30 books so far which has also been translated from Hebrew into 36 languages; he is also known to have been translated Polish literature into Hebrew. He has also received his writing award in 1996. As an experience of Jewish boy, he wrote in such a way that all the background of his writings reflects about the Holocaust and how he had faced the World War II. His sets of stories settings are in the Warsaw Ghetto and Israel where he writes in a higher level literature and also a great sense of humours and understandings. One great thing about Orlev's writings is that in every of his children's literature he has talked about the courage of children and how they can survive without unpleasantness situation or a terrific times. He won the Batchelder Award in English language under his books *The Island on Bird Street*, *The Man from the Other Side*, *The Lady with the Hat and Run, Boy, Run*, published from 1984 to 2003. All of his four books are considered as

the most outstanding works of his all and it has been known that they are originally published in English and foreign language.

Orlev has contributed a lot about child experience's in World War II also he has made an example of his own, based on true story because he himself as a child witnessed the situation in the time of Holocaust. In his novel *The Island on Bird Street* has presented war in such a way where holocaust and WW-II interlinked with each other. The war and violence in the book has left a great consequences and effects in the life of the Jewish people.

Orlev's *The Island on Bird Street* portrays the life of Jewish boy during the holocaust period where the story takes us back to a terrible time in history and tells us the story of a boy named Alex who had gone through all kinds of warlike situations and where he summed up bold and courage to face the war and violence. *The Island on Bird Street* by Orlev is indeed a reflection of his own life story where he picks out Alex (the main protagonist in the novel *The Island on Bird Street*) as his reflection and all his characters depicts the life of Orlev's during holocaust when he was just a boy.

The story revolves around an 11 year old boy name Alex who is brave and strong and also intelligent where he struggles in Ghetto for his survival day to day. The main title of the book comes from the street where Alex lived. Alex is the main protagonist in the novel whereas the rest of the characters just come and go away. His optimistic attitude and love for his father made him go through the difficult time in terms of war and Holocaust where he waited for his father and his hopes never turned out despite the humiliation and sufferings he has faced in the Ghetto all alone, fearless until his longing to meet his father suddenly happened for real at the end.

In the book, Orlev talks about the war where Nazi or the Germans under the leadership of Hitler occupied Poland and eradicated the Jewish people residing in that area and separated them from their beloved. It was a war where the Jewish people suffered and struggled for their survival, a war where Hitler was behind these entire scenes and horrible tragic, it was a war where brutal killings and inhuman act was done by the Germans towards the Jewish, it was a time of savages and genocides reign. He has thus presented war situation in two ways i.e. he talks about the war situation between Hitler and the Jewish which comes under outward war whereas Orlev's concept of inside war focuses on the Jewish people, their emotions, loneliness, their struggle to survive during the war and the faith and hope to let the war come to an end and prevail peace in the country. Though the Jewish were being highly tortured yet they hoped for the best.

Precisely, Orlev has shown the sufferings and pain that Jewish people tolerated during the WW-II. He also has elaborated the situation in the form of many characters on how they have faced the situation of war and violence and how the people and children have showed courage into many ways in order for their survival. Thus, by the end of the novel Orlev has showed the fruit for being bold and courage through a character Alex where he meets his father at the end after a long run of struggle and hardship also who have gone through war and violence bravely.

In the novel, Orlev has defined courage in several ways by emphasizing on various characters in his novel, starting from the main characters to the minor characters. This little boy, Alex, witnessed the war situation during the WW-II. His daily live was at stake where he has to live for his survival all alone and every day. Alex was a boy who was very determined and courageous. He managed to survive during the holocaust without the help of anyone. Orlev described Alex as a brave boy who managed to seek shelter on his own throughout the WW-II. Orlev has shown how courage of Alex saved the life of a little girl who was caught by some robbers, also the first ever gun shot by him. The screams "Leave her alone!" (60) by Alex when the little girl was bullied shows the courage in him though he was little scared from inside. Also the scene where Alex shot down a man in chapter 13 "The soldier cocked his rifle. Just then he slipped on a loose brick and I cocked my pistol too. You can't hear a safety catch being released. I aimed at him while he aimed again at them, and then I fired quickly three times, one shot after another" (98), it shows the courage Alex showed at a critical situation.

Not everybody has the courage to face critical situations in life, courage is earned by oneself and it just doesn't come out of nowhere. In order to achieve something one must lose something. Courage is a

magnificent word and it is appreciated by the bold people who overcome rough patch in lives. People risking their lives for the sake of others are probably the biggest example of courage. It is an action that will always be deeply respected by other people and touches every single one of us to the core. Courage is a state of heart, when dignity is the ruling force.

Orlev successfully has taken this novel to the next level where he was awarded the Hans Christian Andersen Award particularly for this book *The Island on Bird Street* in the year 1996.

Conclusion

The reign of Nazi rule towards Jewish during WW-II as mentioned in the novel *The Island on Bird Street* was terrific and unbearable. The way Nazis treated the Jewish people were an act of inhumane. The Germans enormously slaughtered and murdered the Jewish people in order to please themselves and relieve their pain from stress. The Jewish were being treated worse than dogs, the Nazis do not consider the Jewish as humans in fact they were considered as slaves and the inferiors. However, the worst part of WW-II is that, it was the century where numerous of killings and murders took place. Though it had lasted for so many years it resulted in the failure of Hitler's leadership where he lost the WW-II and it thus came to an end and peace prevailed in the life of the Jewish people and the world.

Orlev has represented courage in numerous ways by implementing on several characters in his novel *The Island on Bird Street*. A man without courage and fear cannot be called as a man because courage is the beginning to overcome fear and step up into a new level. Courage and fear always come along and meet the end. Courage is something which is inside every individual but not everybody gets to utilise the ability within them. In order to face a situation a person must sum up his or her courage and let the world know what they are made up of. It is something where one must be bold enough to face the critical situation no matter how hard the circumstances leads and no matter whatever it takes.

Works Cited

Browne, Harry. "What Is War?" *Antiwar.com*. N.p., 24 Aug. 2000. Web. 16 March 2017.

"Holocaust." *Oxforddictionaries.com*. Oxford Dictionaries. n.d. Web. 15 March 2017.<<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/holocaust>>

Orlev, Uri. *The Island on Bird Street*. Trans. Hillel Halkin. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1984. Print.

Bibliography

"Adolf Hitler and The Holocaust." *Auschwitz.dk*. The Holocaust Crimes, heroes and Villains. n.d. Web. 17 March 2017. <<http://www.auschwitz.dk/hitler.htm>>

"Famous Jew Victims of the Holocaust." *infomory.com*. Infomory.com. 24 July 2013. web. 12 March 2017.<<http://infomory.com/famous/famous-jew-victims-of-the-holocaust/>>

Przybysohn. "Holocaust Survivor Describes Life in Nazi Concentration Camps." *Las Vegas Review-Journal*. N.p, J., 25 Jan. 2014. Web. 18 March 2017.

"Remembrance and Beyond". *un.org*. The Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme, n.d. Web. 18 March 2017. <http://www.un.org/en/holocaustremembrance/docs/paper18_Bio.shtml>

"The Island on Bird Street." *prezi.com*. Prezi, 10 Jan. 2014. Web. 21 March 2017.<<https://prezi.com/41nubzuyd4xp/the-island-on-bird-street>>
