

Nature's Role, Decision Making and Actions in Human Beings Life: The Philosophy of Existentialism by Paulo Coelho and Thomas Hardy's Novels

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Abstract

This paper is about the role of nature, decision making and actions by Paulo Coelho's novel "*The Alchemist*" and by Thomas Hardy's novel "*The Return of the Native*". These three elements are the major themes of Paulo Coelho and Thomas Hardy's novels. They have presented human existence in a vast range in their novels. From the perspective of existentialism philosophy, this paper explores the role of nature, decision making and action in human beings life. These three aspects appeared as the basic sources for human beings success and disaster. Thus, these novels reveal Coelho's optimistic views and Hardy's pessimistic ideas regarding human beings in this universe. The contrast in their ideas about human beings in this universe is figured out from their selected novels.

Keywords: Nature's role; Decision making; Actions in human being life; Philosophy; Existentialism; Paulo Coelho; Thomas Hardy's

Introduction

Existentialism is a great philosophy regarding human conditions and their problems in this world. A great deal of work has been done in the field of existentialism. Jean Paul Sartre states, in this universe just man is real than anything. He suggests that nothing is superior to the existence human beings in this world and he also believes that there is no supernatural powers and God and man is only responsible for his own life. According to Sartre, the philosophy of existentialism is a moralistic theory. The main concern as well as focus of existentialism is humanity and it takes humanity as the fundamental moral value. It recognizes humanity in a better way that is why it is different from other forms of humanism. To improve on our accomplishments, increase our wealth, extend our lives, complete our wishes, it should not be our moral aims [1].

Human beings are free as well as independent in their actions. Man's freedom and loneliness is the result of his well awareness about his free will. The majority of existentialists including Jean Paul Sartre think that man is free in his action as he claims: "I am condemned to be free". We all have free will to perform actions in our lives while, this freedom does not accepted by us. With the help of conscious freedom man builds himself. According to Sartre, freedom and responsibility are interlinked.

Paulo Coelho (1947-till now) is the Brazilian writer, whose ideas are optimistic about human existence in this world. He is a great modern writer whose writings are being transformed into various languages and are widely read all over the world. Paulo Coelho is a learner in the field of literature in contrast to Hardy. Both the writers have different attitude and views about the human existence in this universe. In spite of their fame, his novels, could not win any serious critical praise of critics till now. His views towards human beings show his positive thinking.

In the 21st century, "*The Alchemist*" by Paulo Coelho considered as a psychological novel. The basic theme of this novel is the self-realization and accomplishment of dream with the help of nature's positive role, actions and strong decision making. Paulo Coelho reveals the comfortable life of human beings and his many novels are full of adventure as well as successful positive thinking of human existence. His novel "*The Alchemist*" (1987) is a reflection of his thinking. In the novel, the protagonist, Santiago, travels for a long distance in search of

his treasure in Egypt for the fulfillment of his dreams. He visits to many places and faces many challenges for the sake of his goal. Coelho's world human beings have power to change, and recover their lives according to their desire. Alternatively, he also believes that our unconscious is as powerful as our conscious in changing our personality. According to Coelho, all the things of this world are linked with each other. The art of living is a major concern of Coelho's novel in which he describes how we can make life more attractive by following and attaining our dreams. Coelho thinks that to focus on one's unconscious, is also very essential element which is visible in the types of dream and desires and we should accept the journey of life with love, and patience because we do not know when something can happen to us [2].

Coelho's vision towards life is that when you want something in your life, the whole universe acts as a leader as well as supporter for you to achieve that thing. This paper carries on the role of nature, decision making and action in Santiago's life on the basis of the philosophy of existentialism and reveals Santiago's adventures during his journey leads him towards success. This paper has provided a new technique to understand *The Alchemist* and Paulo Coelho.

On the other hand, Hardy's origination of human life was formed partially by his broad critical reading of his work. Hardy's rationality of life asserts that Hardy built up a fixed world vision through the ideas of poor decision making, the negative role of nature and actions. This feeling has just changed throughout the years in spite of the fact that critics translated Hardy's perspective of life from different philosophical and moral views. In Hardy's vision nature, poor decision making and actions are responsible for one's tragedy.

He depicted both human suffering and immorality in his writing in a well manner. In Hardy's world, man's life is controlled by nature. In his

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writing, human beings are mere victim of cruel nature and fate because their actions and deeds are decided by nature not by them.

The central parts of Hardy's work are nature's role, decision making, and actions. In his writing, Hardy depicted his personal views about the philosophy of nature, decision making and actions, he claims that these three elements can change and shape one's life. For him nature plays a crucial role in one's life and man has no control on it. In human beings life tragic events occur when their desire collides with nature. This clash is occurred unconsciously in one's life. According to Hardy, nature decides one's life and it has no mercy for innocent people.

In his writings, Thomas Hardy has portrayed the weakness of human beings. He additionally demonstrated the contrast between human desires and fate. His philosophical views were absolutely deterministic, pessimistic and dreadful [3]. In Hardy's views, all the life of human beings is full of suffering. From the day of his birth to death man faces different problems in his life. There is no one who attains more than what he deserves however there are many people who do not attain a great deal as much as what they deserve in their lives. Everywhere in nature, a merciless, wicked struggle for existence is paid. Along these lines all life of human being, is matter to this law of misery and none can get away from the operation of this law in this universe [4].

"In the Return of the Native" Clym Yeobright the "Native" of the novel's title, Clym is the son of Mrs. Yeobright and the cousin of Thomasin Yeobright. He travels to another country to work as a diamond merchant in Paris, yet gets back home when he understands that his desire is not towards material wealth. He is required by Eustacia Vye, and in the long run weds her, yet their marriage goes bad when her aspiration to move to Paris clashes with his arrangement to remain on Egdon Heath and to teach in school. Clym is disappointed with his life and needs a change. He spends a significant part of the book suspecting that he's found a way to change his life. Disappointingly for Clym, he's featuring a disaster. So it's nothing unexpected that his arrangements don't go so well. Hardy has an extremely pessimistic philosophy of life as can be found in his characters that appear to have little control over their own particular lives. We can see Hardy's pessimistic approach in "The Return of the Native" through the character of Clym. Clym who has just returns from Paris to teach the native people despite the fact that he is acquiring a considerable earning in Paris. In such manner he will make great job however we see later in the novel that he confronted a sort of tragedy, for example, passing of his mother, faithlessness of Eustacia; his wife and his own eyesight all these things portray tragic event in his life. So, we can portray his character more in such manner.

Literature Review

This research paper has dealt with three basic issues: the role of nature, decision making and actions by Paulo Coelho and Thomas Hardy's in the light of Existentialism. So, in this section, we review some relevant piece of literature about these three fundamental issues.

The term "existentialism" has mostly been associated with a cultural movement that grew out of the war time intellectual atmosphere of the Left Bank in Paris and spread through fiction and art as much as philosophy and it flourished at the end of the Second World War. Central themes of existential thought therefore include the reliability of our everyday views of us and other people, the relation between objective facts and subjective experience, the significance of the temporality and mortality of life, the basic nature of relationships between people, and the role of society in the structure of the individual. The term existentialism is defined as: "Man is condemned to be free; because

once thrown into the world, he is responsible for everything it is up to you to give (life) a meaning [5].

In the development of existentialism philosophy, Jean Paul Sartre has a vital role. The most important and first rule of existentialism is man shapes his life through actions. Therefore, existentialism philosophy first of all makes to everyone conscious about the meaning as well as responsibility of his life in this universe. In this universe man is not only responsible for his own actions but he is also responsible for others [6].

The basic issue which is presented by Paulo Coelho in "The Alchemist" is decision making. It is depicted through Santiago, the real character of "The Alchemist", who faces the difficulties. To defeat his problems, he needs to stay determined and stuck to his own decisions. Not at all like many individuals who simply give up their dreams has Santiago had strong decision power. This described Santiago has the opportunity to pick. The opportunity allows him to comprehend his reasons of choosing anything. In spite of the fact that his choices are definitely not the same with the group's views, Santiago is not worried of making such choices in light of the fact that the most vital thing for him is to offer intending to his life. In addition, the flexibility of selection requires Santiago's duty towards his decisions by being steady to survive and continue battling despite the fact that he confronts numerous barriers. The way that Santiago does not focus on the decision of the group implies that his subjectivity assumes vital part in decision making. The subjectivity implies that Santiago is the person who is expert to choose what he needs. He is the controller of himself, not the group [7].

On the other hand, nature also plays an important role in one's life. Coelho claims, "I believe that we are beginning to get significantly more aware about, you know, the significance of the otherworldly way, and we are satisfying it by focusing on ourselves, by focusing on, well, the association that we have each and every day with the spirit of the world. This is the language of symbols and omen for us. It is a sign that motivated to us if we do not fear about commit errors, if we take the signs as an advice, as a supporter to cross that specific day, and then we begin to get further and more profound into the spirit of the world. All things considered, to discover, not the importance of life since I have faith in mysteries, I trust that there is a mystery that goes far beyond our ability to realizing. But we must realize that there is something for us that we have needed to do".

In short, Coelho's vision towards life is that when you want something in your life, the whole universe acts as a leader as well as supporter for you to achieve that thing. There is very little work existing to clarify Coelho's optimistic approach towards human existence. The above review of available literature on him explains not only the optimistic vision of his philosophy of life but also little bit critical material.

Thomas Hardy is a deep pessimistic writer. Pessimistic occurrence and the strangeness of destiny are profoundly established in his vision of life. His pessimism was generally a reaction to Victorian hopefulness. All life is distress in Hardy's view. Man faces miseries from birth to death. Human beings are victim to this law of suffering and no one can run away from this law of nature. In his novel and verse Hardy expressed the failure of man tackle with the visually harm powers of nature. His novel exhibits his pessimistic approach with reference to human beings' life in the world.

"The Return of the Native" is an appearance of Hardy's miserable attitude towards human existence. The character of Clym Yeobright,

from the novel has certified Hardy's pessimistic and miserable perspective towards the condition of human actions. Characters are, in this novel, appeared to be hopeless creatures that are continuing their lives, rather than enjoying them. The short-lived and unrelated nature of satisfaction is expressed and life is prominent to be a difficult way on which humankind is waiting in a dreadful condition. His characters are appeared to be minor puppets in the hands of divine beings who think of it as a play to demolish humanity. Thomas Hardy's view regarding the freedom of human beings is that a nature is authoritative over mankind and man acts as dummy in the hand of natural powers.

Statement of the Problem

Paulo Coelho's views regarding the role of nature, decision making and actions are totally limited as well as different to that of Thomas Hardy's views. As far concern the issues of human beings, Coelho's views are optimistic as compared with Thomas Hardy who tackles these issues from a pessimistic point of view.

Significance of the Study

This research paper is an important from various points of view. Firstly, the study is useful for the readers to understand existentialist philosophy of life and the artistic works that are composed by or affected by, the existentialist thinkers.

Secondly, the study is useful to realize the creative writing of Paulo Coelho whose works have a great place in the field of literature. His comparison with Hardy makes his readers concentrate on his works basically and find new features in them.

Thirdly, the study deeds to upgrade the knowledge and polish the intellectual interest of the students of English Literature at BS and MA level at Pakistani colleges about Thomas Hardy because he is a section of syllabi at all the universities of Pakistan.

Delimitation of the Study

It is impossible to cover all the aspects from their novels in this specific study. In this way, we have limited ourselves to the targeted aspects of both novels. For this purpose, three major elements from each novel are selected to be evaluated and compared in this research paper.

Methodology of the Study

The method of data collection in this research paper is descriptive analysis. It is also a qualitative and comparative one. The foundation of comparison in this research paper is philosophical on the grounds that existentialist structure is utilized as a foundation of comparison. The purpose of this research paper is to study the role of nature, decision making and actions of human beings with reference to the each novel of both writers.

This is the methodology that is utilized to investigate Hardy's and Coelho's views regarding nature's role, decision making and actions in one's life. So, the existentialist framework is selected as a foundation of comparison. The comparisons and contrasts of their views about the description and explanation of human issues are made clear. Particularly, Hardy's pessimistic nature and gloomy outlook towards human existence is contrasted with Coelho's optimistic and bright nature through reference to human life.

Paulo Coelho's Views Regarding the Role of Nature

A world, as portrayed by Paulo Coelho in his novel through the

character of Santiago, is the universe of accomplishment possessed by the successful people and because of this entire he considers as an optimist whose optimism is endless. He gives the message of hope and struggle to his readers and accepts the life as a blessing gift by God. He is a fearless follower of trust who regularly teaches not to give up to troubles and to look for success in the universe.

"The Alchemist" is a description of Coelho's particular philosophy of life through the depiction of the occasions of the hero's life. Its hero, Santiago has been introduced by Coelho's as a model successful individual who sets out a tour for the sake of searching treasure lying, according to his dream, covered up near Pyramids. Among the protagonist journey, there shows up an old ruler, Melchizedek, who grants important guidelines to him. There he, the old lord, expresses a sentence that contains the heart of Coelho's vision of the world.

He states to the boy:

"And, when you want something, the entire universe conspires in helping you to achieve it" [8].

Through this line Coelho claims that human beings are supported by nature in the every field of life. The old king has used by Coelho in this novel as a tool that assure that the positive role of nature in our lives [8].

Paulo Coelho's Views Regarding Decision Making

When you determine as well as make a strong decision in your life it leads you toward your goal. The reason behind the successful life of Santiago is decision making and his firm determination. The accomplishment of his goal is the result of his strong decision during the difficult situation. Coelho states his view about determinism and decision making in this line:

"When someone makes a decision, he is really diving into a strong current that will carry him to places he had never dreamed of when he first made the decision [8]."

While towards his voyage, the hero is deceived by a thief who flees taking his cash illegally. Now, the boy takes gathering of the circumstance to settle on a decision about his tour. Coelho depicts the scene of his reflection about decision in the difficult situation in this way;

"As he mused about these things, he realized that he had to choose between thinking of himself as the poor victim of a thief and as an adventurer in search of his treasure. "I am adventurer, looking for treasure, he said to himself" [8].

Santiago, the protagonist of the novel, Alchemist during his journey, worked at a crystal shop because a deception by a stranger depicts indecision to continue his journey towards his goal and believes to return to his home. Now, when boy fell into the difficult situation, he thinks over the circumstance. The scene of meditation moves Coelho's characters toward optimism:

"The hills of Andalusia were only two hours away, but there was an entire desert between him and the Pyramids. Yet the boy felt that there was another way to regard his situation: he was actually two hours closer to his treasure... the fact that the two hours had stretched into an entire year didn't matter" [8].

Paulo Coelho's Views regarding Actions

Action is the symbol of success for living things. Through the action

in our lives we can get everything easily. In short, in Coelho's views action plays a significant role for achievement. For instance, "There is only one way to learn. It's through action" [8]. This line from the novel, *Alchemist* shows Coelho views towards performing action as an important part of human beings.

Through the character of Santiago Coelho depicts a positive vision that how we should tackle the difficult circumstances from the constructive way. Santiago used the choices that are avail to him. Now, his actions shows his optimism because he decides to move forwards than return his home without attain his goal. Toward the end of the novel, when the protagonist effectively finishes his determined mission, Then Coelho states through his hero that: "life really is generous to those who pursue their destiny" [8].

Thomas Hardy's Views about the Role of Nature

Hardy (1840-1928) is one of the best authors among the later Victorians. He has a strange vision regarding the role of nature towards in human beings life and mostly his novels concern disastrous characters struggling against their social situations and his novels represent his philosophy about life. His most famous novel, "The Return of the Native" is selected for this research paper.

In Hardy's writings, Nature is a framework which incorporates the human movement, significantly adjusts it, and at last controls it. It is not just utilized as a foundation to his works additionally as a main character. It had a bigger influence in his books than in those of some other English author.

"The Return of the Native" is one of Hardy's most famous novels. It is a tragic story that narrates how nature controls life of human beings and how it plans against them. In the novel, the protagonist Clym Yeobright is introduced as insignificant sufferers of destiny who is spending his hopeless life in the heartless grip of it. He attempts his best to liberate himself from the pitiless grip of nature however useless. Nature subjects him to painful suffering and makes his life miserable. Egdon Heath, an image of the oppression of nature, assumes a significant part in this account of human clashes, chances, and destruction. The novel is an intense investigation of human condition that conveys Hardy's theory of determinism and his negative approach. Nature assigns them to awful suffering as well as pain and shapes their lives miserable.

Protagonist Clym Yeobright, character from the novel, "The Return of the Native" present Thomas Hardy philosophy of life and pessimism towards human condition. The occasions that are described and the characters that are depicted obviously show his gloomy outlook.

Nature spoke to by Egdon Heath, in addition, goes up against the part of a huge impact on the characters' connections and conditions, showing the constant way of human experience through its own particular regular movements. Hardy begins the novel by setting before the readers the scene, the climate, and regular changes, with the goal that one can be prepared for what is to come later on in the story. Most of the time in the novel we can see nature is merciless to Eustacia. Hardy declares, "The night and the weather had for her no terror beyond that of their actual discomfort and difficulty" [9]. In this line we can see nature's pitiless against Eustacia Vye. In Hardy's fiction, nature works as a puzzling power. In some cases it appears to help people, at others it appears to deceive them. At last, nature, as indicated by Hardy is an unbelievable power. It has numerous conflicted states of mind and faces. Once in a while it is lovely and generous to man and at different circumstances it is revolting, unconcerned, merciless and antagonistic to him. The way that nature is twofold confronted is clear in Hardy's

novel; "The Return of the Native." Hardy feels that man is in trouble with nature of which he is a segment. The individuals who can adjust to its ways carry on with a glad life and are satisfied, while the individuals who can't adjust are hopeless and even demolished. Hardy dependably focuses on that there is an incredible relationship amongst man and nature [10].

Thomas Hardy's Views about Decision Making

Thomas Hardy in this novel presented his characters as poor decision makers as we observe that their decisions played a disastrous role in their lives. Thomas Hardy has, in this novel, minutely considered over human beings' relations to natural and supernatural powers and demonstrated his opposition to the idea of decision making. His characters are appeared to be minor puppets in the hands of divine beings who think of it as a play to demolish humanity. Thomas Hardy's view regarding decision making of human beings is that a devious power is authoritative over mankind, so in the light of these sentences we can see the part of poor decision making which shows up tragedy for all characters. In this novel with the help of major characters Clym and Eustacia, Hardy shows that their poor decisions move them towards tragedy whether they do great and humble deeds. Eustacia Vye, heroine of "The Return of the Native", speaks angrily;

"She cried in a frenzy of bitter revolt, "O, world of putting me into this imperfect, ill-Conceived world! I was capable of much; I have been injured and blighted and crushed by things beyond my control! O how hard it is of Heaven to devise such tortures for me, who have done no harm to Heaven at all!" [9].

These words of Eustacia are an explicit claim of the helplessness of humanity and lack of strong decision making in her life because of natural powers. She considers Supernatural powers to be accountable for her control and for those tragedies which she faces in her life because of her poor decisions. Humankind, according to Hardy, is as a rule heartlessly dealt with mishap. We can see further more lack of decision making in the character of Clym, when he is arguing with his mother in favor of his decision of leaves Paris, says: "I get up every morning and see the whole creation groaning and travailing in pain [9]. The point towards of the expression is clear that man decision leads him towards terrible condition. Hardy's characters have no freewill in their lives and the lack of strong decision making ruin their lives. Poor decisions have produced an indirect entry for man to bring about continuous decay of him.

Thomas Hardy's Views about Actions

A desire turns into an aim when actions are made toward its accomplishment. So, actions are most important for successful life. But in Hardy's novel the actions of his characters proved idleness. Eustacia is a character who acts a lot from the beginning to end to live her life with freedom according to her wish. However, she was unable to attain her goal of freedom through her actions and dies during the struggle for attain her freedom. Clym takes action to leave Paris, in order to look for his actual self and comes to his homeland with his dream of setting up a school for the needy people.

He declares his action of leave Paris for the foundation of a school at Egdon Heath and, to clarify his arrangement, says to his neighbors:

"I would give it up, and try to follow some rational occupation among the people I knew best, and to whom I could be of most use. I have come home; and this is how I mean to carry out my plan. I shall keep a school as near to Egdon as possible, so as to be able to walk over

here and have a night school in my mother's house" [9].

In "The Return of the Native", both the characters Clym and Eustacia actions to look for their actual selves yet proved unable and bring tragedy upon them. They are denied of the right of making actions according to their own desires. They remain powerless to appear their dreams of accomplishing their own goals because they have no power of taking strong actions.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research paper is to portray the contradictions between the ideas of both writers regarding the role of nature, decision making and actions in human beings life. It is clear that Hardy's views are totally different to Coelho's because Hardy had pessimistic and tragic views on the other hand Coelho has optimistic and positive views regarding the role of nature, decision making and actions in human beings life. Clym's actions, decision making and nature's role in his life described by Hardy in this universe leads him towards the destruction of his dreams. Hardy has appeared, to be a strong pessimist because he was the artist of darker part of human life in this world and he has depicted the tragic events of his characters in his writings. On the other hand, Coelho's views towards human beings issues show his positive thinking. Santiago's actions, decision making and nature's role in his life described by Coelho in this universe leads him towards the

fulfillment of his dreams. All the aspects of their views regarding above three elements are discussed in the light of existentialism theory which showed that they are sharply different from each other in their views.

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