

who gives birth to kings?" (*What the Body Remembers*: 428) Roop knows that old stories infer teachings and warn the danger of aspiring to more knowledge than a husband needs in a wife. Though Roop is exploited, humiliated Satya, nevertheless, does not enjoy complete independence and happiness. She always lives with guilt that "my husband does not want me." (*What the Body Remembers*: 380) She compares herself with things kept for beauty not for their use. Living separately in Rawalpindi her position is like a "peacock that dances alone in a forest" and nobody can see the beauty of that dance. (*What the Body Remembers*: 402) Free spirited Satya feels that women are birds trapped inside the *haveli* wanting to flutter and fly scaling new heights. Sardarji's indifference has made her bolder and she starts behaving like a free bird. She turns cynical, often wears the dress of a widow. Not able to comprehend what to do with her aimless life she talks like an insane-

I am not wife, for my husband has abandoned me. I am not widow, for he still lives. I am not mother, for the son he gave me is taken away, I am not sister, for I have no brother. With no father, I am but daughter of my Bebeji." (*What the Body Remembers*: 401)

At this juncture of 'no one' status death is welcome but body does not "know how to die, body that shrinks from death as if blinded by its infinite beauty." (*What the Body Remembers*: 401) Her natural resilience and strength help her to overcome the crisis. She goes with *jathas* of pilgrims and embraces tuberculosis and dies. She feels that without *Izzat* it is better to close the chapter of her life. She can hope that there will come a time when a "woman will be allowed to choose her owner, when a woman will not be owned, when love will be enough payment for marriage, children or no children, just because her *shakti* takes shape and walks the world again." (*What the Body Remembers*: 403) The author also mentions Jallianwala Bagh massacre and various other incidents during partition that had torn the soul of the people. While traveling from Lahore to India Roop and Sardarji undergo heart rending and pathetic scenes before they reach. The author painfully depicts that it was not only a geographical division of India and Pakistan but the hearts of millions of families, friends were irrecoverably divided. The slaughter for slaughter continued across the subcontinent. When Sardarji is escorted through Punjab Regiment *Subedar* at the railway station Sardarji witnesses among the clusters of despaired people the piles of discarded bicycles, carts, tongas, bedding rolls, suitcases. Depicting the atrocities of partition Baldwin writes that as every one gets the wind of it that there is going to be a division of India erstwhile living peacefully Hindu Muslims and Punjabis turn hostile to each other and every one witnesses "the tandav dance of destruction everywhere." After reaching Delhi Roop's Papaji bitterly recalls how under compelling circumstances he had to evacuate his family from Pari Darwaza. His family becomes a refugee in his own country. Like millions of people he bears the pangs of uprootedness. The author narrates how women were the worst suffers. He is not able to forget the heinous incident when his daughter-in-law Kusum's body has to be sliced in to six parts to save her honour from

local mob. Papaji had, himself, seen how old women were giving opium to the younger women preparing them for martyrdom. This reminds us how women were easy targets on either side during partition turmoil. After reaching Delhi he loses all hopes and does not feel like wearing turban the very symbol of *Izzat*. Even today every one feels the kinks in one's psyche for partition.

Apart from Shauna Singh Baldwin, the first Muslim woman author Attia Hosain (*Sun Light on a Broken Column*) and Pakistani Parsi writer Bapsi Sidhwa (*Ice Candy Man*) have also nostalgically experienced the partition era. They have also depicted how the people of India and Pakistan had become beast and moral ethics and principles turned to naught. Bapsi Sidhwa asserts in one of her interviews in the context of the character Ice Candy Man that "I had conceptualized the Ice-Candy Man as a representative of the common man and tried to show how evil lies close to the surface of normalcy in ordinary individuals. When there is anarchy, the evil spurts, but as soon as things settle down, he reverts to his natural, normal state of goodness."<sup>2</sup> This is true of Ibrahim, Jeevan's boyhood friend who surrenders to the dictates of frenzy mob and betrays. Even today every one feels the kinks in one's psyche for partition. After partition Sardarji is made the chief Engineer of Punjab in India. He now turns from an idealistic, ambitious Engineer to a hardened, more realistic human being. His sprawling lawn becomes home of refugees. Roop also shelters widows. He now realizes the importance and value of Roop in his life and readily agrees to visit a doctor for her hearing impairment. The novel ends with a hope to usher in an era where girl- babies will be equally welcomed.

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## **Nature, Culture and Man in W.D. Valgardson's *God Is Not A Fish Inspector* and Earnest Hemingway's *Old Man And The Sea***

**- M.S. Palaksha**

**Abstract:** Canadian William Dempsey Valgardson (1939) and American Earnest Hemingway (1954) are well known writers of fiction of twentieth century. Valgardson's well-known short story collection, *God Is Not the Fish Inspector* (1975), depicts the struggle of seventy year old Fusi Bergman, a stubborn fisherman. His pride and spirit of struggle against Nature attains heroic stature like Santiago in *Old Man and the Sea*, an American classic. Both Valgardson and Hemingway portray the struggle of old men, Fusi and Santiago to reveal man's strength, courage and spirit against all odds. In this paper, an attempt will be made to examine how both the writers depict man's inevitable struggle for survival to explore the meaning of LIFE. How the old men stand as testimony for human 'pride' and how their pride becomes a source of strength to know their place in the world will be examined. Issues like man v/s Nature, man v/s society and man's search for a meaningful existence in life will be the focus of attention along with the strategies of narration, handling of the plot, the moral centrality and the relevance of these two well know writers in the present day context.

**Keywords:** Migration, Nature, culture, man, society, existence.

Canadian William Dempsey Valgardson and American Earnest Hemingway are well-known writers of fiction of twentieth century. This paper attempts at examining how these two writers portray their protagonists, Fusi Bergman in *God is Not a Fish Inspector* and Santiago, in *The Old Man and the Sea*, their pride and struggle against the Nature, and how they attain heroic stature. The protagonists, depicted by the writers, are normal human beings involved in normal situations. Yet under certain circumstances, the protagonists are in a situation, which leads them to face the hardships inevitably. The stories, *God is Not a Fish Inspector* and *The Old Man and the Sea*, are similar in theme and technique. Both Valgardson and Hemingway grapple with the theme of Nature, Culture and Man. Both Fusi and Santiago struggle against Nature and circumstances, which pose them serious challenges. In these stories, one can find powerful Biblical allusions and symbolic allegories. The protagonists, Fuso and Santiago can be considered as 'Code Heroes.' (The code heroes are the persons who exemplify certain principles of honour, courage and endurance which enable them to conduct themselves well in the losing battle in their lives), what Hemingway terms, "grace under pressure". The main issue about the protagonists, in these stories, is the fashion in which they behave, face the situations with great endurance and courage. W.D. Valgardson's *God is Not a Fish Inspector* (1975) is a thought provoking and perhaps one of the finest short stories. The story can be called, *Old Man and the Lake*". It is a story of the struggle between a seventy-year-old stubborn fisherman,

Fusi Bergman, and his antagonist daughter, Emma. At the same time, it is a story of a struggle between the old man and the Nature. Fusi, by profession is an experienced fisherman. Fishing is his passion and obsession as well, like Santiago in *The Old Man and the Sea*. Being a man of action, Fusi naturally refuses to sit at home. At the same time, he has to face his quarrelsome daughter at home, who prevents him from fishing. Moreover, the Fish Inspectors have taken Fusi's fishing license away as he is old and senile. Hence, he is retired from his profession and has to go to an Old Age Home as his daughter wishes. Despite his age and physical weariness, Fusi gets up as early as 3 a.m., goes to the lake for fishing, as he wants to avoid both, his daughter as well as the Fish Inspectors. The fact is that, Fusi does not want to make money by catching fish but still he goes onto the lake every morning as a routine. Thus, the story talks about Fusi Bergman's condition, his struggle against Time and environment/ Nature. Fusi is selfish, weak and ultimately defeated like Santiago. He lives with his fifty years old daughter and the submissive son-in-law, John Smith, a clerk in a bank. His fear of retirement is the loss of his dignity and freedom. But his family squabbles affect his free life. His daughter stops her father, Fusi, when he sets out for fishing. She desists him with contempt by saying, "God will punish you" (5). Fusi retorts with contempt, "God is not a fish inspector" (5). The incorrigible daughter again taunts him, "you will not be able to prevaricate at the gates of heaven" (5). Fusi relies philosophically, "He made fish to catch. There is no place in the Bible where it says you can't fish when you are three score and ten" (5). Though he is physically weak and feeble, he steps out of the house in the cold and damp weather. Despite the pain in his knee, he pulls the oars. For each pull, the pain increases. Even in the cool weather, he sweats. To evade the Fish Inspectors, he hides fishing net while rowing the boat. The pain in the knee forces him to rest, which casts his precious time. However, he has to come back home before dawn or he would caught by the inspectors and fined. When the inspectors do not spot him, he feels elated, victorious and proud for not being caught by them. To avoid his daughter's dominance, he himself prepares his food and goes for fishing early morning. She is aggressive and overbearing, is a kind of 'dictator'. Her husband, John Smith's, humble and submissive natured personality further consolidates her position as a 'dictator'. She wants her father to quit fishing and move into the Old Age Home. Perhaps, she wanted to secure the home for herself and her husband. Fusi is very happy to be alone unlike Santiago in *The Old Man and the Sea*. He is proud of his confidence.

He trained himself to get up at that time and now, in spite of his age, he never woke more than five minutes after the hour. He was proud of his early rising for he felt it showed he was not, like many of his contemporaries, relentlessly sliding into the endless blur of senility... the good feeling lingered throughout the day. (6)

These lines show Fusi is enthusiastic and spirited. He recalls his youth as Santiago does in *The Old Man and the Sea*, when he was in his twenties a young man, strong and healthy, "He had thought nothing of rowing five miles from the shore to lift five and six gangs of nets and then, nearly knee deep in fish, row home again. He was still tall and thin, his arms and legs

corded with muscle. His belly was hard. His long face, with its pointed jaw, showed his age the most" (9-10). While others were amazed at his condition in his village, Fusi was afraid of the changes that had taken place inside him. This invisible deterioration was gradually shrinking the limits of his endurance. Fusi hates the old age home though the inmates in the building are of his age. He hates the very building and its architect. He comments, "There is a no way a man could be a man in there" (10). Because, in the old age home they do not supply Whisky to those people. Fusi makes fun of the people who are in the old age home and their condition. Because, the inmates have to wait for the bell for everything; breakfast, sleeping from morning till night, except for going to toilets. To Fusi, the old people are unhappy and unfortunate. He feels proud of himself because, "He would have none of it. He was not afraid of dying, but he was determined that it would be in his own home." After fishing, he cleans the fish and is relieved for not being seen by anybody. He wraps the entire thing in a brown paper. When he enters home, Emma questions, "Are you satisfied? I've had no sleep since you left". Fusi taunts her angrily, "leave, nobody is making you stay." She answers, "And who would look after you?" It shows a kind of love and hate relationship between father and daughter. Quoting from Bible, Fusi says, "honour thy father and mother that thy days may be long upon this earth" (14). She controls her emotions and tells him that she cares him much. Hence, she requests him to stop fishing. But the adamant old man replies, "And I still fish" (14). He still has the capacity row the boat, and boasts that, "I'm 70, and I beat the entire fisheries department....Not for four years. And I fish right under their noses" (15). This kind of sentiment and confidence makes Fusi adventurous even at that age. Fusi hands over the brown pack to Rosie Melysyn, the cook in the Old Folk's Home. When she asks him, "How are you?" With pride, the old man replies, "I'm feeling great" (16). She informs him about one of his friends, Jimmy Henderson's death, who was two years younger to Fusi, and used to walk with the help of a walker. It makes him for a while about death. His mind tells him that; "You give up, you're going to die, you believe in yourself and you can keep right on going" (16).

Rosie reminds him that, "Jimmy Henderson attempting to fly and failed" (17) which makes him think for a while. At the same time, Fusi, as Santiago does not bother about death though the thoughts of death comes to his mind. Because both the protagonists know, well that death is imminent in one's life and they have to face it bravely. Thus, both the stories acquire philosophical implications about death. Fusi goes back to his house to see whether his daughter has taken his things, then goes to his boat to see if it is properly tied, sleeps for three hours, eats and makes trip to the shore to collect information about inspectors and their movements. Again, he has to face his daughter as she threatens him that she had informed the fish inspectors about his fishing. At the same time, she also tells him to confuse him further that, he need not worry about being caught and they know his fishing all along. They have been watching him. The confused old man with surprise asks Rosie, "She is lying, isn't she?" (18). Rosie answers, of course she is lying. Fusi slides away from the scene. Rosie tells Emma that she should not have behaved

like that with her father, and she had no right to do so. Emma replies philosophically, "The Lord's work be done" (18). Thus, the story ends abruptly with these words of Emma. Fusi Bergman's resistance to old age and his attempts to maintain his dignity elevate his personality to heroic proportions. Despite his defeat at the end of the story, he evokes sympathy like Santiago in *The Old Man and the Sea*. He does not accept his age and weakness being a matured man. Thus, this story can be viewed as allegorical, philosophical and religious story.

Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952) is a parable of man's struggle against the Nature. It is a novel as well as a longish short story, a multi-dimensional short novel, and can be viewed or interpreted as an allegorical, religious, philosophical and adventurous sea story. It narrates the story of Santiago; an old and experienced, (Cuban) fisherman like Fusi in *God is not a Fish Inspector*. This eighty-four years old man's noble courage and endurance gives him a heroic status at the end of the story. Santiago, after eighty-four successive luckless days could not catch a single fish. "His sail patched with flour-sacks, looks like the flag of permanent defeat" (5) when it is furled. Yet his eyes are cheerful and undefeated. The boy's parents call him a "salao" (most unlucky). The boy was warned by his parents not to accompany the "salao" old man. In the beginning, he used to take the boy, Manolin, for fishing, with whom he talked of better days and about the great sport of baseball. Santiago tells Manolin that on the next day, he would venture far out into the Gulf Stream, and he is confident that he would catch a big fish. On the eighty fifth day, Santiago ventures with his skiff into the Gulf Stream in quest of Marlin. Now he is alone. Aged and solitary, he goes far out and hooks a great fish that tows his boat for two days. The old man bears the strain. But the fish pulls the boat all through the day. On the third day, he has to fight inevitably with the sharks start eating the fish. Despite being wounded and weary, the old man shows deep empathy and admiration for the Marlin and calls it as 'brother'. It shows Santiago is endowed with the Christian virtues. On the third day, the fish is tired; he manages to pull the Marlin and harpoons it. When he sees it, he feels that it was the biggest fish that he had ever seen and caught, 'little bigger than his boat'. Santiago feels proud for catching such a big fish and excited, the price that the Marlin would fetch in the market. At the same time, he feels that how many people the fish would feed and also he thinks who eat the fish are unworthy. The sharks snatch away from his possession his hard earned prize and the old man is left alone to think over the tragic thing has happened. More sharks were bound to appear since he committed an error in crossing the unusual human limits and courted to his downfall. More sharks were attracted to the blood of the Marlin and start eating. The old man manages to kill a few sharks with his harpoon. He has to fight the hopeless battle with the crude spear. He is all alone in the vast sea. Whenever he feels lonely, feels that, "No man should be alone in their old age" (39). To overcome this loneliness, to break the solitude he speaks to sea creatures; birds, fish, and turtles. Carlos Baker is of the opinion that, "His grateful sense of brotherhood with the creatures of the water and the air is through full of love, essentially realistic and unsentimental". He also remembers the boy, Manolin nearly eight times.