



WWJMRD 2018; 4(5): 47-49

www.wwjmr.com

International Journal

Peer Reviewed Journal

Refereed Journal

Indexed Journal

UGC Approved Journal

Impact Factor MJIF: 4.25

E-ISSN: 2454-6615

Dr. Chrissie Gracelyn David

Assistant Professor of English

Women's Christian College,

Nagercoil Affiliated to

Manonmaniam Sundaranar

University, Abishekapatti,

Tirunelveli Tamilnadu.

India

Transcending Self in A.G.Cronin's Two Gentlemen of Verona And The Best Investment I Ever Made

Dr. Chrissie Gracelyn David

An Abstract

There is a choice for every human being when handling life situations. When hardships come they can succumb and ruin their life or overcome and become strong. They can put the self before the other and live a stagnant life or other before the self and make the world a better place. Cronin's protagonists choose the latter. They suffer but they finally cross the overwhelming flood by wading with their individual strength or by holding to a life line. Transcending self is not rejecting self. Motivation helps the self to transcend to a great extent to meet every situation that comes in life. If a person accepts suffering and failure as part of life, the result is life- changing.

Keywords: Transcend, self- preservation, self- actualization, self- conquest, motivation

Introduction

The world is full of trials and temptations, successes and failures, triumphs and defeats. It is inevitable that every human being learns to face these situations. While encountering the above, one has to undergo pain, suffering, joy, pleasure and such feelings. If a person takes the suffering as a burden in his/her life, he /she may turn violent or may even try to kill his/her precious life. On the other hand if he/she takes the suffering as a part of his/her life, the result is life- changing.

The violent self, sometimes, turns against the community, family or even the world. This results in all sorts of violence like genocide and war that results in bloodshed and death. Lack of proper love, guidance or even care maybe the cause for the violent behavior. If the person continues to live with hatred his life would be a failure, and they make the world a hell. On the other hand, if they succeed in building their 'self' in a proper manner, a better world can be created. A Theorist, William James defines 'self' as 'the sum total of all that he/she can tell his/ her's. It can be anything one owns, such as one's body, psychic properties, clothes, house, family, friends, reputation, work, the land and whatever one owns. It consists of three parts: its constituents, the feelings and emotions they arouse (i.e) self-seeking and self-preservation.'(125)

The protagonists in Cronin's Short stories, who put aside their comforts, desires or aspirations for the good of others, are not people who are saintly or special. They are ordinary mortals who had their share of suffering and woes. These people, who transcend their self, suffer and struggle to reach one's goal even to the threat of death.

Nicola and Jacopo in The Gentlemen of Verona are the youngest of the protagonists of Cronin. They are thirteen and twelve when Cronin meets them. Even though they are young, they have undergone many problems in their life. They lost their mother when they were very young. Soon they had to face the attack of the German troops. In the early part of the war itself, their father, a well-known singer was killed in the early part of the war. Their home was destroyed and they were thrown into the streets. 'They had suffered horribly from near starvation and exposure to the cold Veronese winter' (45).

Correspondence:

Dr. Chrissie Gracelyn David

Assistant Professor of English

Women's Christian College,

Nagercoil Affiliated to

Manonmaniam Sundaranar

University, Abishekapatti,

Tirunelveli Tamilnadu.

India

The boys joined the resistance movement and took great risk in carrying messages across the hills to the liberation forces. The end of the war did not free them from trouble. Lucia, their only sister had contracted tuberculosis of the spine. The two boys suffer day and night, trying to find odd jobs so that they could pay the hospital which is treating their sister. They have no proper shelter. This can be realized in Cronin's words.

One night, we came upon them in the windy and deserted square, resting on the stone pavement beneath the pale arc lights. Nicola sat upright, his face drawn by fatigue. A bundle of unsold newspapers lay at his feet, while Jacopo, his head had pillowed upon his brother's shoulder, was asleep. It was nearly midnight (43).

Similarly in *The Best Investment I Ever Made* Mr. John is an orphan who has lacked proper parental care. He does not get any love from his uncle who considers him as an unwanted responsibility. He finds a position as a clerk in a solicitor's office. In London where John finds himself utterly friendless and so he is with bad companions. He begins to bet on horses and loses all his savings. This leads him to steal money from his office safe. When his last gamble, in which he was assured to win fails he is sick at heart. Sunk in despair, he shuts himself in his room and turns on the gas fearing the prosecution which must follow stealing money. When Cronin finds him, he is 'apparently lifeless' (35) quite beyond recall. Cronin calls John's regaining consciousness as "a resurrection from the grave, a miracle [...]" (35).

In *Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *The Best Investment I Ever Made* love serves as a motivating factor to transcend the protagonists. Nicola and Jacopo are able to keep away their necessities and desires as secondary. The love for their sister Lucia makes them to work night and day, running errands and selling newspapers even though they were brought up in a cultured and comfortable place. Their only sister Lucia suffers from Tuberculosis of the spine and needs a prolonged treatment in the hospital. In the post war world work is scarce. The little they earn they do not spend for themselves. They dress in cast-off clothes and eat only black bread and figs. To visit their sister and make the weekly payment they cycle 60 kilometers every Sunday. This makes Cronin to call Nicola and Jacopo 'gentlemen of Verona'.

The Best Investment I Ever Made shows the love extended by Cronin, a sergeant and a land lady towards John, a young man who had tried to put an end to his life. By placing the welfare of John before their comfort they were able to help him to love himself, to motivate him to live a better life and also to induce him to create a better society. When the three people heard the confession of John they were moved. Cronin says. "The sergeant, at considerable risk to his job, resolved to make no report on the case, so no court proceedings would result" (35). The land lady also promised to give him a month's freeboard until he became well again. A. J. Cronin, the doctor revived him and gave him seven pounds ten shillings, the money he had stolen from the office safe. Unlike Nicola and Jacopo, here is an instance where love is offered to a stranger.

The love shown to John helps him to transcend himself. He has been active for 15 years in the field of youth welfare when Cronin meets him again. By profession he is a solicitor but in addition he finds time to act as a director of an organization devoted to the care of boys and girls from

slums, who had fallen under the ban of law. The feeling with which he and his wife speak to Cronin shows how they love the work of healing the derelict adolescents in their mind and body. The love shown to John has paid its dividends.

Like love and duty, the need for self-actualization also can make one transcend self. Christopher Monte explains self-actualization thus:

In his or her drive to self-actualize, the individual moves forward towards growth, happiness and satisfaction. His self-actualization include acceptance of self and others, spontaneity and simplicity, independence of culture and environment, appreciation and creativeness, humor and intimate personal relations. (488)

The protagonists of A. J. Cronin's chosen short stories have the possibility of responding to the stimulus in a different way and that could have been detrimental to the self and the society. Any stimulus can bring about different responses. The responses can cause positive result to the person but not to the larger community. Or it may be negative to both. The proactive person responds in a way which enriches himself and the society where he lives.

Nicola, Jacopo and their sister became orphans because of the war. They not only lost their parents but were driven to the streets with no way of earning their livelihood. They could have become spiteful and have the intention to take revenge upon the German troops. Or they could have been selfish to look after themselves alone and not care for the sister who was affected by Tuberculosis in the spine. They could have stolen money to help their sister because work was scarce in the post-war world and working was hard. Nicola and Jacopo did take revenge on the Germans in their own way during the war. Cronin records, "The boys grew to hate those harsh, unwanted masters and when the resistant movement began secretly to form they were among the first to join" (45). Because they were young and small they were used to find information on the movements of German troops and they carried messages to the forces of liberation. But the Germans were invaders and once the war was over the hatred did not remain in their hearts. They did not even try to win sympathy from the kind visitors like Cronin.

Mr. John also has the possibility of remaining a solicitor and earning money and fame. But he was helped once. If the sergeant, the land lady and A.J. Cronin had not helped him at the right time, he would have ended his life in his young age and his potentiality and goodness might have become useless. John was an orphan and his uncle found him an unwanted responsibility. He was lonely and friendless. All this might have made him angry at the society which had served him only disaster after disaster. Even after having been given a lease of life he could have lived to make money and attain power. Then he would not have become the social worker and he would not have rescued many children who were under the ban of law.

There is a choice for every human being when handling life situations. When hardships come they can succumb and ruin their life or overcome and become strong. They can put the self before the other and live a stagnant life or other before the self and make the world a better place. Cronin's protagonists choose the latter. They suffer but they finally cross the overwhelming flood by wading with their individual strength or by holding to a life line.

Nicola and Jacopo are very strong-minded to shoulder

responsibilities. . They are self-willed and never expect any help from others. All their sacrificial hard work was to help their bed ridden sister Lucia. They maintain dignity and this contributes to a great improvement in Lucia's health. As the nurse said to Cronin there was every hope that one day she would walk and sing again. The children may live together again and they may have a happy home with better living conditions. This is all because they transcended themselves and this impressed Cronin so much that he calls 'the two gentlemen of Verona'.

The help rendered to John by the Sergeant, the land lady and Cronin in *The Best Investment Ever Made* is a turning point in his life. They might have gone without helping. But they transcended their self, in order to create a new and better John. This posed a challenge in his life. In turn he thought of transforming children who have no one to care for and have strayed into evil ways. This challenge makes him a social worker while working as a solicitor. He and his wife " [...] took derelict adolescents from the juvenile courts and placing them in a healthy, environment, healed them in mind and body, sent them back into the world trained in a useful craft and fit to take their place as worthy member of the community" (33). The sergeant, the land lady and Cronin have been instruments in fashioning a better society. As individuals also several find their way in life's maze through the services of John.

Cronin's protagonists differ widely in their education and choice of profession. While Nicola and Jacopo are not much educated due to the disturbances of war and are not skilled or trained to do any job, John is a solicitor by profession but he is passionately committed to the boys and girls of city slums. They are blessed with the nature of transcending themselves.

In the article "Unless You Deny Yourself" Cronin writes, 'Transcending self' means moving beyond the individualistic and pathological notion of self-versus other. It is not a suppressing of the self. It is the willing extension of oneself, to put the interest of the other before that of the self' (52). It is self-conquest which demonstrates manhood. The disciplined man has acquired that strength which comes from inner mastery. He has chosen between the two freedoms: the false, where one is free to do what he like, and the true, where he is free to do what he ought (53). Nicola and Jacopo in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* disciplined themselves by having the cheapest food and clothing. In the same article Cronin says 'To be morally free, man must master his instincts' (52).

Self-conquest is not automatic. There were possibilities for the protagonists to choose to pamper their self which might have had a negative outcome. John with no support could have slipped further into the mire of crime. Cronin's protagonists made right choices because there was a motivation from within or without. The external motivation in the form of timely support, advice or remarks ignites the protagonist to seek the true moral freedom. Some have sparks within them that help them to be self-disciplined. Love, a sense of duty and the need for self-actualization are the motivators which help them towards their choice.

Cronin believes in this principle of transcending self and its positive consequences to the self and others. Hence the message is authentic and serves as a motivation to the readers. The stories reveal the truth that if we transcend ourselves we not only create a better society and thereby prevent the evils prevailing in the society but also achieve

self-actualization.

Works cited

1. Cronin, A.J. "Two Gentlemen of Verona." *Images of Life. An Anthology of Prose.* New Delhi: Foundation Books, 2006. 41-46. Print.
2. "The Best Investment I Ever Made." *Current Prose for Better Learning.* Mumbai: Macmillan, 2008. 32-36. Print.
3. "Unless You Deny Yourself." *Reader's Digest.* New York: Trusted Media Brands, Inc, April 1969. 52-54. Print.
4. James, William. *The Philosophy of William James.* New York: Modern Library, 1925. Print.
5. Monte , Christopher F. *Beneath the Mask : An Introduction to Theories of Personality.* New York: Praeger Publishers, 1977. Print.