



The Dynamism of Courage, Comradeship and Humanity, to Face Evil in *The Green Mile*.

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ABSTRACT:

It is said that, a pen delivers the flow of words directly from the writer's heart. The major crux of any literary work is to stimulate the purpose of life in readers, and to enrich the ultimate sublimity of living. Every novel has certain characters that seems to get glued to the minds of the readers, who are often influenced or obsessed by these dynamic characters. One such exclusive character is that of John Coffey from *The Green Mile* (1996) by Stephen King. This character carries an absolute originality with much limited features of evilness of humankind, whereas more of divinity and harmless serenity among the callous persecutors. The novel is a series of six volumes with thriller suspense, that binds the plot and leads the story to a moving end.

Keywords: Humanity, strength, goodness, John Coffey, and purity.

Introduction:

Most of the literature from the primal times procures to give the message of goodness over evil. The divinity of human nature is always encouraged in such literary works, where the writer tries to break the tendency of mankind to turn towards evil, rather pushes us towards the threshold of goodness and move our hearts with the treasures it opens to.

One of the legendary contemporary writers is Stephen King, whose writing style is much unique and astounding. Much of his works are scrutinized and read by many, for its rule over its themes and variety of genres like horror, science fiction, thriller, crime and fantasy balancing with realism. In his book *The Green Mile*, Stephen King has laid down cards on the universal theme of goodness over evil, with a touch of reality.

The novel travels back to 1930s, to the memories of Paul Edgecombe, to the days of his service as a guard of death row at the Cold Mountain Penitentiary in the state of Louisiana. By the course of time he meets one of the prisoners, John Coffey, who was convicted for raping nine year old Deterick twins. Coffey introduces his name as:

'Coffey like the drink, only not spell the same way'. (40)

As John is introduced in the scene he would be crying in pain with guilt splashed all over his face and his arms carrying the dead bodies of twin girls with tangled blood matted hair. His giant massive self though scared the guards in the Cold Mountain, however they were also able to understand his humble and angelic disposition. This lead Paul to investigate deeper and ponder on to find out whether Coffey was truly a criminal or a victim.

The novel gives a clear picture of how good and kindly the prisoners on the death row are treated, but Percy Wetmore never took the kind path, instead he was pitiless and brutal to the inmates, also arrogant to his colleagues for having connections. His evil plans lead to a terrifying execution of Eduard Delacroix. His attitude was pretentious and he had racist and fascist beliefs. By the time Percy tries his hand on Coffey he gets his share of punishment for his brutal cruelty.

The novelty of John Coffey lies in his acceptance of crime which he never did, and his loneliness in the world as a person and the pain that he went through everyday. The main characteristic of this character is that he was gifted with supernatural power to feel the pain of others and take it to himself by releasing them from the pain. Coffey was always low and crying because he was not able to bear the pain that others went through around him, it affected him much more than the pain of a blame laid on his true innocence. Despite of all the pain and sufferings, Coffey never stood back on making friendship with the guards as well as inmates like Del, Allen and Mr. Jingles the mouse, they were all pleased by his humility and had pity on him. He took back the agony of Melinda's brain tumour and also of Paul's urinary infection. He did the best to save and protect the good hearted ones but never ceased back to punish the evil ones. Though his miracle was to save people from pain and sufferings, he himself was not able to get rid of it. He still remained kind and humble to face the worst of nightmares.

“I’m rightly tired of the pain I hear and feel, boss. I’m tired of bein on the road, lonely as a robin in the rain. Not never havin no buddy to go on with or tell me where we’s comin from or goin to or why. I’m tired of people bein ugly to each other. It feels like pieces of glass in my head. I’m tired of all the times I’ve wanted to help and couldn’t. I’m tired of bein I the dark. Mostly it’s the pain. There’s too much. If I could end it, I would. But I can’t.” (491)

The character Paul Edgecombe can seem relevant to the Mariner from *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798) by Samuel Coleridge. Paul and his other colleagues after the execution of Coffey resigned from their jobs and took jobs of training boys in schools, but Paul seems to carry a part of Coffey’s miracle, which saves him from death, on the other hand it causes him to witness the deaths of his near and dear ones. And he tells mystery story of his past to them under the witness of the last miracle that he has. This curse of Paul can be viewed adjacently with the curse of the Mariner, as both of them come across various people or strangers and amaze them by their pasts.

The novel jumps to a new level of curiosity in each volume and it creates a different perspective on the criminals and the guards who take over their duty of execution with kindness and sincerity. The novel also unwinds and rectifies the stereotype that people in the society channel on criminals sentenced for capital punishment.

Concisely the novel is a complex amalgamation of intricate themes and ideologies, where though death of Coffey creates a challenging perplexity in the plot, but the purity of his soul made a confounding impact on the people who were acquainted to him; with a new spirit of humanity, courage and invited new aspects on life.

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