



THE SEARCH FOR MEANING: EXAMINING THE IMPORTANCE OF RELATIONSHIPS IN ANTOINE DE SAINT EXUPERY'S NOVELLA *THE LITTLE PRINCE*

Tutumoni Boro

Ph.D Scholar, Department of English, Rajiv Gandhi University, Doimukh,
Arunachal Pradesh, Rono Hills, 791112
Email: tutumoniboro93@gmail.com

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Abstract

The human ecosystems constantly look for meanings and purposes in their life for regeneration to reactive the urge for living. They experience different shades of emotions in the process thus adjusting to the shifting scenario. Man in order to feel significant and to understand the nature of their existence, they look for motivations. In some point of their life, they suffer from existential crisis and existential frustration, leading to depression, anxiety, and distress. Therefore, they look for inspiration in order to acquire a sense of emotional accomplishment and emotional fluidity. It is universal to the human essence. Relationships are a vital aspect of human constitution where it involves the process of healthy interactions, strong connections, and trust. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the dynamics of emotions reflected in the novel *The Little Prince*. Moreover, the paper unearths the moral ethics that are required in human constitutions that produce harmony. The paper would also inquire into the goal of human lives to achieve fulfillment, and in addition, the intention of the paper is to uncover the importance of human relationships in building a capacious society.

Keywords: The Little Prince, Human Ecosystems, Meaning of life, human relationships, and Existential frustration

Introduction

Victor Frankl in his book *Men Search for Meaning* (1984) writes, "Man's search for meaning is the primary motivation in his life and not a "secondary rationalization" of instinctual drives. This meaning is unique and specific in that it must and can be fulfilled by him alone; only then does it achieve significance

which will satisfy his own will to meaning (Frankl 105). Many a time, humans underwent inner conflicts masking the potential self-causing detachment. Human beings can't escape the inevitable realities of life; the loss of close ones, tensions, conflicts with self, grief, and sorrow which are painful facts of human existence. Therefore, in the process of

undergoing these emotions, sometimes human beings suffer from a lack of purpose to live. Therefore, human starts questioning their life, struggle with their thoughts, and are also engrossed in deep retrospection to find motivations. The great philosopher Osho's book *Destiny, Freedom, and the Soul: What Is the Meaning of Life* examines the complexity of life and urges readers to abandon the repressive belief system that restricts their potential to enjoy life at maximum. Zuhul Çelikurk Sezgin and Ceyda Gunes in "Analysis of The Little Prince Book of Antoine de Saint-Exupery from the Perspective of Value Transmission" write "Regardless of the purpose for which it is to be made, value education is of great importance in the formation of the features that make human beings human, in the continuation of social life and in the provision of cultural transfer" (Sezgin and Gunes 179). Human beings explicitly look for meanings throughout their existence. During childhood, they search for love, and care, in adulthood they look for stability and growth, and in old age, they look for peace. Their search for purpose is infinite. We as humans are built in such ways that require each other through thick and thin. Dependency is a reality that we can't escape. We are all nested in dependency. At some point in time, we need others to take care of us for protection and survival. Abiding by moral codes is what makes us humans.

The Little Prince is a novella written by Antoine De Saint Exupery during World War II in the year 1943. Antoine de Saint-Exupery was an exemplary writer born on June 29, 1900, in Lyon, France. He is profoundly remembered for his novella *The Little Prince* (Le Petit Prince) *Wind, Sand, and Stars*, and *Night Flight*. Saint-Exupery was a successful aviation pilot and a writer. His famous literary piece *The Little Prince* is translated into over 250 languages and dialects. He earns further widespread recognition with the international translation of his other works. The story revolves around a boy who looks for meaning regards to existence and along the line he comes across six different

things that provide him with different perspectives about life. But at the end of the story, the quest for meaning is finally fulfilled. Therefore in order to look for motivations, he visited six different planets. The writer portrayed a six-year-old boy possessing a curious mind and engaged in deep questioning, regards to grownups and society at large. All the planets he visited hold different moral values that a human contains. So then the seventh planet is the Earth. Earth is an extraordinary planet. There are 111 kings (not forgetting, to be sure, the Negro kings among them), 7000 geographers, 900,000 businessmen, 7,500,000 tippers, 311,000,000 conceited men-- that is to say, about 2,000,000,000 grown-ups.

Objectives

- to determine the importance of meaning in the human constitution in order to obtain fulfillment reflected in *The Little Prince* based on characterization, plot, and theme.
- to find out the different dynamics of emotions that human beings experience and how moral ethics helps them in acquiring full potential.
- to find out how existential frustration often leads to detachment and despair resulting in a sense of loneliness.
- to understand the novella *The Little Prince* from existential perspectives and how human connection built on trust, care, and love helps them to achieve equilibrium.

Methodology

This paper requires an analytical understanding of Antoine De Exupery's novella *The Little Prince*. This research pertains to extensive reading of Exupery's primary works and secondary sources, and also various articles written on the concept of the meaning of life. Victor Frankl's book *Man Search for Meaning* (1984) would be thoroughly study to understand the significance of human existence.

Review of Literature

Sezgin Çeliktürk Zuhul, and Ceyda Gunes in "Analysis of The Little Prince Book of Antoine de Saint-Exupery from the Perspective of Value Transmission" investigates the novella *The Little Prince* with regards to values. The paper explicitly focused on the ethics of love, friendship, and responsibility as root values.

Vineet Gairola in "The Little Prince: Big Lesson" explores in terms of society, childhood, and identity. The paper talks about the problematic notion of development in modern times. Moreover, the paper examines the psychology of a child from the little prince's perspective.

Ana Roldan Riejios in "Visiting *The Little Prince* and some English Related Versions" chronicles the various publications of this novel in English and French and investigates the ways in which English translation differed from French and how readers received it.

Harit Ratna's book *The Purpose of Life: Find Your Path to Oneness* talks about genuine happiness which could be achieved through attachment. The spiritual leader further suggests embracing human connections to achieve fulfillment. Without strong bonds, trusted relationships, and good friendships, life becomes meaningless.

Analysis

Antoine de Saint-Exupery in *The Little Prince* writes, "It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye." (Saint Exupery 102). Moral ethics are immeasurable and unquantifiable entities. The novella mirrored the importance of human relationships from the little prince's perspective. Viewing the world from children's eyes offers clarity regarding the operation of the cosmos. This novella reflects the undeniable importance of love, friendship, and relations that bind us together. The little prince is set out to look for meaning and intentions of his existence. He has an inquisitive mind and is never satisfied with

vague answers. Therefore, he questioned the pertinent the very existence of each of us including human to nonhuman' entities. The little Prince meeting the Rose is a significant episode in the novella as it turns out to exemplify the dynamics of social relationships that exist in society. Different types of love and forms of relationships independently exist in the world. Every one of us is built on various levels of character. We react to things, and sometimes we show extreme emotions, and act differently. Here, Rose, the flower is represented as overly self-righteous, and cunning, which reflects the nature of some people in the society. But, the little prince adjusted himself and loved the rose without complaining, thus demonstrating the sacrifice and unconditional love of some good people. This episode also illustrates the art of accepting the flaws in human beings.

The Fox teaches the little prince the importance of human relationships. In order to have meaningful existence, it is primary to develop a strong bond with people; whether it is in the form of friendships or familial connections. A powerful bond often brings joy and helps in understanding the beautiful art of appreciation. When the bonds are genuine, respect, love, and care automatically develop for the other people. This episode also pointed to the facts that with enormous experiences gain abundant knowledge.

The little prince came across a king which symbolizes abstract rule under harsh authority. "He did not know how the world is simplified for kings. To them, all men are subjects" (50). Ordering and ruling over others are only the activities the king does, and hence no real connection is being made with the subjects. The authority doesn't permit disobey, or disrespect. The little prince seeks permission to view sunsets for which the king purposely makes lengthy conversation and changes the topic in order to skip the prince's desire. This also reflects how government policies and promises are delayed and most of the time remains unfulfilled. "Then you shall judge

yourself”, the king answered. “that is the most difficult thing of all. It is much more difficult to judge oneself than to judge others. If you succeed in judging yourself rightly, then you are indeed a man of true wisdom” (56). The little prince met a conceited man whose only wish in life was to collect praises. He is full of vain and expressively vague. This anecdote tells us about some people within us who are constantly fickle whenever there is a matter of receiving praise. They want attention and applaud for their looks, dress up, and personalities. This type of character is somewhat not approved and doesn’t benefit society.

On the fifth planet, the little prince meets the lamplighter. “When he lights his street lamp, it is as if he brought one more star to life or one flower. When he puts out his lamp, he sends the flower, or the star, to sleep. That is a beautiful occupation. And since it is beautiful, it is truly useful” (69). The Lamplighter's tedious task of lighting and putting out of street lamps signifies the society’s mediocre lifestyle. Nowadays, people are entrapped in their duties and responsibilities so much so that they become dull and boring. Because of the changing style of culture, they couldn’t take a minute to introspect and appreciate the little things in life. Their wants become bigger than their needs. Then – the planet now makes a complete turn every minute, and I no longer have a single second to repose. Once every minute I have to light my lamp and put it out!” (71). The prince is indeed understood as the selfless nature of the lamplighter whose only aim in life is to brighten others’ life. Therefore he wanted to befriend him. The businessman in the novella represents materialistic people whose obsession is with making money and collecting assets.

It is also lonely among men,” (85) the snake said. The snake represents a renewal of life and mortality. It is a universal truth that we cannot escape death. Death is for all. Nowadays, human beings are undoubtedly alienated and lonely and refuse connections. They are trapped

in their shallow cocoons, festering in isolation. Therefore, the problems are becoming subjective and love is not shared by all. What a queer planet.” He thought. It is altogether dry, and altogether pointed, and altogether harsh and forbidding. And the people have no imagination. They repeat whatever one says to them. .. On my planet I had a flower; she always was the first to speak... “(90). Here, the Price called out human beings who desperately chase success rejecting the exact purpose of life. Their motives involve the extraction of profit and denial of reality. He also exposes people becoming uninteresting who are reduced to ordinary lifestyles, and not want to explore the fundamental aspects of existence. This novella also objectively portrays the importance of interdependency in human relationships. To establish ties (96). But if you take me, it will be as if the sun came to shine on my life. I shall know the sound of a step that will be different from all the others” (97). Relationships built on trust, love, and care last longer. They provide the utmost joy, and comfort and add smiles to our lives. Building connections is paramount to human existence. Without relations, our lives become dull and unattractive breeding emotional frustrations. Lori Gruen in *Ethics and Animals* (2011) notes:

Being in ethical relation involves, in part, being able to understand and respond to another’s needs, interests, desires, vulnerabilities, hopes, perspectives, etc. not simply by posting, from one’s own point of view, what they might or should be but by working to try to grasp them from the perspectives of the other (224).

In all cultures friendship is an essential part of human life. They are like the sunshine on a gloomy day. It is a good thing to have a friend, even if one is about to die. I, for instance, am very glad to have had a fox as a friend...” (106). They love us when are not lovable. It is built on mutual respect, affection, trust, and love between two people. “It is the time you have

spent with your rose that makes your rose so important (102). Responsibility is an important factor in relationships. Human beings must be responsible for the things they love and care. Taking responsibility fosters growth, and brings liveliness and maturity to a relationship. "You know- my flower... I am responsible for her. And she is so weak! She is so naïve! She has four thorns, of no use at all, to protect herself against all the world..." (125).

Conclusion

The present paper demonstrates human beings' continuous search for meaning in order to find motivations in their monotonous life from the prince's perspective. In doing so, he came across different shades of emotions that are vital to human survival. Different types of humans exist in our world, and it is important to understand the purpose of our life that makes it meaningful. Taking responsibility, sharing love, friendship, bonds, and concern for others are a few things that add meaning to human existence. These are effective extensions of human needs securing vitality in human relationships. Society would not survive without these moral values. The absence of moral values and existence without meaning renders paralysis and dysfunction of the social system. Emotional frustrations are nowadays common in our lifestyle leading to depressions and other forms of mental illness. Human beings in modern times are confined to isolation, delivering insecurity regards to existence. Because of volatile connections, people lose interests and easily muffled into their cocoon shell denying any kind of interactions with outside world. Therefore, it is necessary to build a strong relationship from where to draw continuous motivations to experience a fruitful existence.

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