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STRATEGY OF ONE'S LIFE: DEVIATION FROM MORALS AS PORTRAYED BY PAULO
COELHO IN *ELEVEN MINUTES*

EZHIL G¹, T K HEMALATHA²

¹Research Scholar, Nirmala College for women, Coimbatore, Tamilnadu.

²Associate Professor, Department of English, Nirmala College for women, Coimbatore, Tamilnadu.



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ABSTRACT

The paper analyzes Alfred Adler's concept of Personal Individuality which speaks of a strategy employed by the characters as a means of survival. The novel taken for the study is Paulo Coelho's *Eleven Minutes*. The idea professed is the individual psychology proposed by Alfred Adler which can be traced in the characters of the novel *Eleven Minutes*. Maria is the protagonist of the novel. Her life, as portrayed in the novel serves as an interesting ground for different kinds of psychological analysis. The study traces the main elements of an individual to survive and different means to lead a life of dignity

Keywords: Individual, Survival Strategy, Psychological, Inferiority

Discussion

One of the most reputed of Paulo Coelho's novels *Eleven Minutes* was published in 2003. It is translated from the Portuguese language by Margaret Jull Costa. The main inspiration to pen the novel by the novel *Eleven Minutes* is Irving Wallace's *The Seven Minutes*. The novel focuses on the survival of an individual named Maria, who turns out to be a counselor from being a whore.

Eleven Minutes is an interesting story of the journey of a prostitute who struggles to survive in the country. Coelho narrates the protagonist, Maria is a Brazilian woman who finds a strategy of her own to survive in Switzerland; by deviating from the normal accepted moral code of life. Maria takes up to prostitution to live a comfortable and decent life in Brazil. The language and the style are simple and direct. The message he conveys to his readers is lucid. To Coelho, life is alluring to the extent of doing anything that would not hurt anyone so as to cope with the problems of life.

The protagonist takes up to prostitution to lead a life that suits her best. Her beauty is an added advantage. The novel stands as a good application to Alfred Adler's theory of personality called 'Personal Individuality'. The theory emphasizes on the need to overcome the feeling of inferiority.

In the novel, Maria feels inferior owing to her poor financial and educational background. Coelho writes:

Maria is the only woman who is poor in her education. She could continue her studies only till her secondary school. Maria's hometown is in the interior of Brazil. She grew up in a poor condition. Her

father is a travelling salesman with low wages, and her mother a seamstress. Therefore Maria had to help her family economically after finishing her secondary school. (*Eleven Minutes* 8-17).

It is evident that Maria is shattered and totally emasculated due to her state. According to Alfred Adler, striving for superiority is “the fundamental law of Human life, a something without which life would be unthinkable” (Adler,104) (Hjelle and Ziegler, 143). Striving for superiority is seen when she struggles to survive in Switzerland after involving in a fraudulent case at her workplace. She was fired out of her job for moving beyond the rules of her employment. As she moves out Roger’s accommodation, she finds no better place with no basic facilities at all to scale great heights. She aspires to fulfill her goal of having a good and comfortable life till the end.

Her source of income is only the ‘compensation’ which of why she takes up to prostitution. Her aim knew no bounds for she was inclined to have a farm house to support her parents and make them happy. Maria, to excel in communication acquires French through reading magazines and listening to radio programmes. Her visit to library is an added point in assisting her.

At any point in time the scholar does not applaud her taking to prostitution. Striving for superiority is seen through her struggles to survive in Switzerland after the fraudulent affair. The novel stresses on the idea of that “the strategy of life is one of the elements to survive and cope with the problems of human life”. So as to deliver a significant message, the writer creates his characters and places them in a particular setting. The plot aids his theme. The novel can also be looked at from the psychological point of view. To climb the ladder of comfort and dignity, Maria is forced to take up this profession, though it is amoral.

The study takes a stand not to justify the strategy adopted by the protagonist but strives to make the readers understand that though she takes prostitution due to her life’s climate, it is not morally justifiable. Maria could have opted for profession that is morally accepted by the universe.

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