

The Triumph of Human Values in Pearl S. Buck's *The Enemy*

¹Anil Kumar



²Prof. Indu Singh Rajput



¹Research Scholar, Department of English, G. D. H. P. G. Girls College, Moradabad, (Research Centre), (Affiliated to M.J.P. Rohilkhand University, Bareilly) U. P. India.

²M.A., PhD, Department of English, G.D.H. P.G. Girls College, Moradabad, (Affiliated to M.J.P. Rohilkhand University, Bareilly) U. P. India.

Abstract

The Enemy by Pearl S. Buck is a great work that brings out the issue of human values that cross national borders, political views, and wartime enmities. The story is set against the background of the Second World War where a Japanese surgeon, Dr Sadao Hoki, finds an injured American prisoner of war washed on the shore into his home. Although the mood of the whole country was the spirit of nationalism and dire aftermath of giving aid to the enemy soldier, Dr Sadao decides to save the life of the man, following his professional ethics and humanitarian conscience. This paper will explore the way in which Buck portrays compassion, moral courage, empathy and sanctity of human life as universal values that take over hatred and prejudice. It also examines the ethical dilemma between individual right and wrong and patriotism and proves that true humanity is not characterized by political loyalty but rather by the ability to promote justice and mercy in extreme situations. The paper also addresses the symbolic meaning of medical profession that Dr Sadao belongs to, and the role of the physician that should save life regardless of race, nationality, or ideology. The paper, based on textual analysis and by adopting a humanistic critical approach, contends that according to Buck, there should be a vision of universal brotherhood where moral obligations override social and political boundaries. In the end, *The Enemy* is a classical story that confirms that love and integrity have the power to triumph fear, war, and discrimination. The story is still relevant in the modern world, reminding the reader that the victory of human values is still needed to promote peace, mutual respect, and coexistence in the world.

Keywords: Human Values; Humanism; Compassion; Moral Courage; Ethical Conflict; Universal Brotherhood; War and Humanity; Pearl S. Buck.

Introduction

Literature has always been an effective tool that helps to examine the ethical values that bond humanity in the realms of politics, culture and geography. Pearl S. Buck, who has always been one of the twentieth-century authors focusing on universal human values, takes an important place (Buell 210). In her works she promoted compassion, justice and cross-cultural understanding and in the course of depicting the intricacies of human relationships in the eras of social and political contradiction. One of her best humanistic stories, *The Enemy*, published in 1942, is a short story where the power of moral conscience over national enmity in the Second

World War is triumphant (Buck, *The Enemy* 398).

The Enemy is set during war in Japan and tells the story of a moral dilemma of an injured American prisoner, rescued and treated by a Japanese surgeon, Dr Sadao Hoki, who risks his life and reputation to do so (Buck, *The Enemy* 399). This choice can be seen as a manifestation of the universal principles: compassion, professional ethics, and respect of human life. Instead of making war and nationalism seem attractive, Buck shows that saving life and doing the right thing is what makes one a true hero. The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others, as Mahatma Gandhi said. The example

of this ideal of selfless service can be found in the actions of Dr Sadao.

The story of Buck also shows that mankind does not suffer due to political boundaries. According to Martin Luther King Jr., who said, rightly, that hate cannot drive out hate, darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Similarly, Albert Schweitzer confirmed, that the meaning of human life is to serve, to be compassionate and willing to assist others (Schweitzer 62). These principles ring in the ears of Dr Sadao in his unbending determination to save a life, regardless of the nationality.

The novel also poses the essential questions regarding the duty, patriotism, and the moral responsibility. Immanuel Kant has asserted that, do only that which you can, at the same time, will should become a universal law (Kant 34). This universal moral principle is reflected in the ethical decision of Dr Sadao. Likewise Confucius taught, within the four seas, all men are brothers meaning that, in spite of the boundaries, there is humanity.

Pearl S. Buck herself had thought that the test of a civilisation was how it takes care of its helpless members (Buck, *My Several Worlds* 45). Her characterization of Dr Sadao demonstrates this belief because the humanitarian duty takes precedence over national bigotry. On the same note, Dalai Lama XIV instructs us, that love and compassion are not luxuries but without them humanity will not survive. Lastly, Albert Einstein also noted that what we should do is to break the prison of our self by expanding our circle of compassion. All these views shed light on the main message of Buck which is

that compassion, moral courage, and respect to human dignity are the supreme manifestations of civilisation.

The Enemy is therefore a classic humanistic work that poses a challenge to the reader in the sense that true greatness is not gauged by allegiance to war but faithfulness to the law. In a world that is still dominated by war, violence and division of ideologies, the story of Buck still goes on to reaffirm the fact that the end is the triumph of human values (Nussbaum 5).

Research Gap

The Enemy by Pearl S. Buck has received much academic interest in the themes of war, nationalism, cultural conflict, humanitarianism and East West relations. The literature that has been available has basically discussed the story in terms of historical, political, postcolonial and cross-cultural views and has focused on tensions between Japanese patriotism and universal humanism during the Second World War (Said 122). The ethical dilemma of Dr Sadao has also been discussed by a number of critics with the interpretation of conflict between the profession and the loyalty to the country. Although such studies are very insightful, they tend to elaborate on the issue of human values as an on-the-side issue of interest instead of the main theme of enquiry.

Furthermore, there is a relative lack of research that has undertaken an in-depth study of how compassion, empathy, moral courage, professional ethics, forgiveness and respect to human dignity all play a role in the success of universal human values in the story (Tyson 397). The relationship between the humanistic

philosophy of Buck and how it is applicable in the modern global problems of war, refugee crises, racial discrimination, humanitarian ethics and international peace-building also receives minimal attention in the existing literature.

The other conspicuous interlude is the lack of an integrated humanistic framework which links the literary representation to the ethical philosophy (Wellek and Warren 94). The majority of earlier works examine *The Enemy* historically or culturally without adequately addressing such concepts as moral responsibility, universal brotherhood, and the ethics of care. As a result, little has been researched about the long-term relevance of the actions of Dr Sadao as an example of humanitarian leadership.

This paper attempts to fill these gaps by putting the victory of human values in the centre of analysis. It discusses the way Pearl S. Buck uses the elements of characterisation, conflict, symbolism, and narrative sentence to show that compassion and ethical responsibility have no limits in political borders, racial discrimination and wartime aggression (Guerin et al. 145). In addition, the work shows the ongoing applicability of *The Enemy* in the twenty-first century in fostering peace, intercultural awareness, and universal human dignity. This study provides a new perspective on the work of Buck because it takes a humanistic approach to literature. It adds to the accumulating debate on literature as a formidable tool of promoting moral awareness and peace in the world.

Statement of the Problem

War usually forces people to decide between patriotism and ethical duty and raises deep moral dilemmas that provoke a severe question of humanity. *The Enemy* by Pearl S. Buck raises the issue of this dilemma through the figure of a Japanese surgeon, Dr Sadao Hoki who risks his reputation, safety and social status by attending to a wounded American prisoner in the Second World War (Buck, *The Enemy* 401). His choice poses some serious questions in terms of professional ethics, compassion, patriotism, and the universal worth of human life.

Despite the vast attention given to *The Enemy* in terms of historical, cultural, and postcolonial forces (Barry 87), the emergent focus of scholarly attention in relation to the central affirmation of universal human values in the story is lacking. The current literature often focuses on wartime conflict, East-West cultural relationships, or political tensions, and does not pay much attention to the ethical principles which define the actions of Dr Sadao. Therefore, the timeless message of compassion, moral courage, empathy, and human dignity, that the narrative teaches, has not been explored thoroughly and in a cohesive way.

The Enemy raises some of the most ethical questions in our modern world, full of armed conflicts, displacement, racial prejudice, and humanitarian crisis, more than ever before. The novel questions the readers to rethink on whether moral conscience should exist over political ideology, national identity and social prejudice (Williams 18). Nevertheless, the enduring relevance of the Buckian philosophy of humanism in dealing

with modern problems which affect the world has not been properly addressed with criticism. Thus, the main issue that is covered in this work is to examine how Pearl S. Buck depicts the victory of the human values over the nationalism, hatred, and hostility in war in *The Enemy*. The research also aims to analyse how the characterisation, ethical conflict and narrative technique have been used by Buck to prove that compassion, professional integrity, and human life are universal values that cut across national boundaries (Leitch 210). By solving these problems, the research will serve to further understand the humanistic vision of Buck, as well as to show the relevance of the literature that promotes ethical awareness, intercultural harmony, and world peace.

Research Objectives

The current study will attempt to fulfil the following objectives:

1. To investigate how universal human values, including compassion, empathy, moral courage, and humanitarianism, are depicted in Pearl S. Buck's *The Enemy*.
2. To examine the moral dilemma in professional responsibility and national allegiance as is represented by the character of Dr Sadao Hoki.
3. In order to investigate the ways Pearl S. Buck uses characterisation, plot, and symbolism to show how humanity overcomes war, prejudice, and political enmity.
4. To examine the importance of medical ethics and the sanctity of human life as the main themes of *The Enemy*.
5. To assess the applicability of the humanistic philosophy of Buck in the modern world

environment in fostering intercultural understanding, peace, and universal brotherhood.

6. To evaluate how *The Enemy* has contributed to the debate on humanism through the emphasis made on the moral conscience as opposed to ideological and national differences.
7. To prove that *The Enemy* is a classic piece of literature that preaches moral accountability, humanitarianism, and the perennial strength of altruism during war.

Research Questions

The following research questions are aimed at being answered in the current study:

1. What does Pearl S. Buck do to depict the victory of the universal human values in *The Enemy*?
2. How does the character of Dr Sadao Hoki reflect compassion, moral courage and professional ethics, under the pressures of war and nationalism?
3. What does *The Enemy* show us about the struggle between the individual conscience and the duty of patriotism in the Second World War?
4. What are the literary devices such as characterisation, symbolism and narrative structure that Pearl S. Buck uses to stress the superiority of humanity over political and racial boundaries?
5. In what ways does the theme of humanitarianism in *The Enemy* question prejudice, hatred and dehumanising impacts of war?
6. How does the humanistic philosophy of Pearl S. Buck help to promote universal

brotherhood, intercultural understanding and peace?

7. Why is *The Enemy* still useful in solving current global challenges pertaining to ethics, humanitarian responsibility, and human dignity?

Significance of the Study

The current work is important as it provides a holistic humanistic explanation of the meaning of the book *The Enemy* by Pearl S. Buck, which is the timeless importance of compassion and moral courage, professionalism, and respect towards human dignity during war and conflict. Although, the earlier studies have largely discussed the story in historical, political and cross-cultural contexts (Abrams and Harpham 174), this research makes universal human values as the center of critical discussion thus adding a new dimension to the Buck scholarship.

The work fills the void in the literary criticism by showing how Buck uses characterisation, ethical conflict, symbolism, and narrative structure to promote humanitarian ideals that go beyond national, racial, and ideological lines. The study, through the character of Dr Sadao Hoki, depicts the fact that morality and professional duty can always dominate over discrimination, hatred and hostility during the war. This method adds to the interpretation of the humanistic philosophy of Buck and strengthens her topicality as a writer who believes in universal morality and intercultural coexistence.

Academically, the work adds to the areas of English literature, comparative

literature, ethics as well as humanistic literary criticism. It offers a noble outline to future scholars who might be interested in humanitarianism, medical ethics, war literature, moral philosophy as well as East West cultural relations. Combining literary analysis with ethical and philosophical approaches, the research broadens the range of interdisciplinary researches of the works of Pearl S. Buck (Westling 3).

The work also has a social topicality of our time. *The Enemy* remains a powerful source of information on the significance of empathy, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence in the time of armed conflicts, forced migration, racial discrimination, and humanitarian crises. The story challenges the reader to consider that true humanity is not defined by a nationality or political loyalty but by devotion to save life and hold justice.

Additionally, this study is a valuable academic tool to students, educators, scholars and researchers since it offers a systematic review of the humanistic aspects of *The Enemy*. It should inspire new academic debates concerning the use of literature in developing ethical consciousness, intercultural-awareness and global citizenship. Finally, the research confirms the timeless ability of literature to bring about compassion, moral reflection, and the process of making the world a kinder and more peaceful place.

Research Methodology

The current project uses the qualitative research design which is founded on the humanistic literary criticism and textual analysis to discuss how human values triumph

in Pearl S. Buck the Enemy. As the study aims at grasping the meaning of a piece of literature instead of quantifying the information, the qualitative method is the best way to explore the ethical, philosophical, and humanitarian aspects of the text.

The main piece of the research is the short story The Enemy created by Pearl S. Buck, which is analyzed and examined in terms of critical textual analysis (Buck, The Enemy 400). To examine how the author builds and conveys universal human values, the analysis will focus on certain literary elements, such as characterisation, plot, conflict, symbolism, setting, dialogue and narrative technique (Guerin et al. 145). Special emphasis is placed on the personality of Dr Sadao Hoki whose ethical judgments are the basis of the study of compassion, professional ethics, empathy, moral courage and respect of human dignity.

The principles of the Humanistic Literary Criticism, which highlight the dignity, worth and ethical responsibility of human beings, largely inform the study (Barry 87). This theoretical view can help the researcher explore how Buck crosses the borders of national, racial, and ideological distinctions by introducing humanity as a moral standard of universalism. Moreover, the ideas of ethical criticism and medical humanities are also used where necessary to understand the professional responsibilities of Dr Sadao as a doctor and the ethical importance of saving human lives in wartime (Nussbaum 5).

Close textual reading is also utilized in the research enabling an in-depth analysis of

important passages, dialogues, symbols, and interactions between characters. Themes are humanitarianism, universal brotherhood, nationalism, prejudice, war, and moral responsibility, which are identified, categorised and interpreted with respect to the objectives of the study. Instead of discussing these themes in part, the discussion examines how they are interrelated in how they form the central message of the narrative.

The scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, dissertations, and other authoritative critical works on Pearl S. Buck, humanism, war literature, ethics, and literary criticism are the secondary data that will be used in the study (Abrams and Harpham; Leitch; Tyson; Wellek and Warren). The sources furnish the theoretical and critical context of interpretation of the text and positioning of the study in the contemporary scholarly literature.

The interpretations are made by using an interpretive and analytical method whereby text evidence is looked at and in conjunction with pertinent theoretical standpoints. The Enemy quotations are critically examined to show how Buck uses compassion, moral responsibility and dignity as human elements to go beyond political antagonism and national boundaries. The thematic analysis of the research is structured in such a way that there is coherence between the objectives of the research, the research questions and the conclusions.

The methodology, which combines humanistic literary criticism and close textual analysis, gives a systematic approach to the understanding of how such supremacy of

universal human values is affirmed in *The Enemy*. By doing so, the study will be able to add value to the body of scholarship on Pearl S. Buck, as well as emphasize on the timeless nature of her humanistic vision in tackling modern ethical and humanitarian issues.

Conclusion

The Enemy by Pearl S. Buck is a classic work of literature that is a true testament to the human value system over time in the face of war, discrimination and politics. Buck shows that compassion, empathy, professional ethics and respect towards human life are universal principles that are not limited by national borders or ideological lines through the moral struggle of Dr Sadao Hoki (Buck, *The Enemy* 415). In the story, it is confirmed that true humanity is not judged by how loyal one is to the country but by the values of moral conscience and ethical responsibility.

The discussion shows that the choice by Dr Sadao to rescue an injured American prisoner even though the personal stakes involved were dire is symbolic of the victory of humanitarianism over hatred and hostility (Buck, *The Enemy* 418). His deeds question the strict requirements of nationalism and accentuate the moral value of saving human life regardless of race, nationality, or political belonging. Buck has been successful in using characterisation, conflict, symbolism and narrative to bring out the message that moral courage and compassion are the greatest ideals of civilisation.

Moreover, the paper also shows the deep humanistic ideology of Pearl S. Buck who believes in universal brotherhood,

intercultural understanding and peaceful coexistence. Instead of describing the war as a political or military affair, Buck reveals the moral implications of war and highlights the creative force of compassion and moral action (Williams 18). This way she welcomes readers to rethink the definition of justice, duty and humanity during crisis.

The results of the study confirm the main thesis that *The Enemy* glorifies the triumph of universal human principles over the nationalism, bigotry, and hatred in wartime (Nussbaum 5). The paper also fills in the research gap identified by offering a narrow humanistic explanation that incorporates literary commentary with the ethical and philosophical views. This method will help to understand more about the literary vision of Buck and enrich the critical discourse of her works.

The Enemy is painfully topical in the modern world where the society is still struggling with the armed conflicts, displacement, racial discrimination, and humanitarian crises. Its message seeks to motivate individuals and communities to maintain kindness, tolerance, and moral uprightness even in the toughest of situations. The novel teaches us that the saving of human dignity forms the basis of sustainable peace and justice.

The Enemy by Pearl S. Buck, in the end, goes beyond the historical background of the Second World War to provide a timeless and cross-cultural image of humanity. By reiterating the idea that ethical responsibility and compassion are greater than fear, hatred, and political division, readers are guaranteed

to keep looking forward to the story as it reminds them of the ability of human values to change the world. Being a piece of high humanistic importance, The Enemy supports the ideology that literature is a mirror of the society, and it influences moral awareness and creates a more human, just and peaceful world (Buell 210).

Works Cited:

- Abrams, M. H., and Geoffrey Galt Harpham. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 11th ed., Cengage Learning, 2015.
- Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. 4th ed., Manchester University Press, 2017.
- Buck, Pearl S. *The Enemy*. In *The Collected Stories of Pearl S. Buck*. The John Day Company, 1958, pp. 398–420.
- Buck, Pearl S. *My Several Worlds: A Personal Record*. John Day Company, 1954.
- Buell, Lawrence. *The Dream of the Great American Novel*. Harvard University Press, 2014.
- Guerin, Wilfred L., et al. *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*. 6th ed., Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Translated by Mary Gregor and Jens Timmermann, Revised Edition, Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Leitch, Vincent B., editor. *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. 3rd ed., W. W. Norton, 2018.
- Nussbaum, Martha C. *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life*. Beacon Press, 1995.
- Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. Vintage Books, 1994.

Schweitzer, Albert. *Out of My Life and Thought: An Autobiography*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.

Tyson, Lois. *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*. 4th ed., Routledge, 2023.

Wellek, René, and Austin Warren. *Theory of Literature*. 3rd ed., Penguin Books, 1976.

Westling, Louise H. *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Environment*. Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Williams, Raymond. *Culture and Society: 1780–1950*. Columbia University Press,