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## The Evolution of Inner Self from the Aesthetic to the Religious Stage in Tennyson's "Ulysses"

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper explores how the principal speaker Ulysses in Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem "Ulysses" combines the real spirit of wisdom and knowledge with action, following the ideals of Kierkegaard's philosophy of the stages. The perfect blending of action and knowledge brings perfection to Ulysses' life. He strives for his existence and inner evolution, which is a quest for real identity. His ideation is that the moment one stops to know something, one starts dying inwardly. Ulysses, a great man of learning, strives for self-transformation, exposing the spirits of existential philosophy, choices, and the different stages of inner growth and advancement. Following the footsteps of Kierkegaard's philosophy, he passes through the aesthetic stage, the ethical stage, and in his culmination of self-transformation, he attains the genuine spirit of the religious stage. Thus, it remains significant to view Ulysses, as a practitioner of Kierkegaard's philosophy in action, existence, and evolution, proving that when wisdom and knowledge come together, then there prevail glory, victory, and bliss. As a research article in qualitative paradigm, this aims to provide a deep insight into Ulysses' evolution of inner self, exploring it from the perspective of Kierkegaard's philosophy of existence, choice, and stages.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Aesthetic Stage, Ethical Stage, Evolved Individual, Religious Stage, Vitalism*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

This article explores the ideals of the existential quest of Kierkegaard's philosophy in Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem "Ulysses." In the poem, Ulysses, the chief speaker, is a celebrated war hero. He fights as a great warrior in the Trojan War, taking the side of Menelaus, the King of Sparta, against the Prince of Troy, Paris. After the fall of Troy, he returns to his kingdom, Ithaca. However, he is not satisfied to remain idle, simply living life in luxuries. He yearns to explore the real essence of knowledge, and in reality, he starts a journey of self-evolution. He speaks and develops such a dynamic spirit of vitalism for the existence that exactly expresses and reveals the ideations of Kierkegaard's philosophy that he discusses in his great works *Either/Or: A Fragment of Life* and *Stages on Life's way*. Ulysses goes beyond the aesthetic stage because his passion for knowledge instigates him to go even beyond the level of human thought. He wants to enjoy the taste of every drop of life, rising beyond the sunset. Symbolically, this is a fire and an intense drive for inner evolution. This evolution is the vibes of faith that is the final stage in the quest for individual existence in the philosophy propounded by Kierkegaard. When Ulysses leaps up to the religious stage, he evolves within. He chooses therefore he finds his existence. His journey from the aesthetic stage to the religious one really invites a revisiting to mark him as the real spokesperson of Kierkegaard's philosophy.

Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809-1892) was a renowned English poet from the Victorian period (1830-1900). He was the Poet Laureate of that time. He is often known for his reflective poems like *Idylls of the King*, *In Memoriam*, and *The Princess*. Yet his poems like "Ulysses," "The Lotus-Eaters" and "Break, Break, Break" have provided him with a distinct and remarkable status in the arena of English literature. His great poem "Ulysses" was composed in 1833 and published in 1842 after the sudden demise of his closest friend Arthur Hallam. Tennyson (2014) writes that the poem (Ulysses) reveals the compulsion of moving "forward and braving the struggle of life" (p. 138). He also clarifies that there is more in the poem than only his feeling of irrevocable loss of his dearest one because "still life must be fought out to the end" (p. 138). Tennyson's words signify the power of the poem. From this very point, it always invites the new revisiting as it disseminates the idea of finding the inner essence, existence and identity in life. The poem is like a veritable goldmine that needs a systematic approach of exploration. The poem stands as a perfect dramatic monologue that enriches its intensity and beauty. According to Thaker (1999), a dramatic monologue is a poem or any form of writing that contains dramatic features like tension and the revelation of character. It is spoken by a single person who reveals his thoughts, character, feelings that are heard or overheard (p. 153). Likewise, the narrator or the speaker addresses as "you" to an audience or a group of the audience just like Ulysses addresses his audience in line forty-nine of the poem, "You and I are old" (Tennyson 2014, p. 144). It makes

the involvement of listeners to create a dramatic situation in the poem.

The article aims to reflect how the philosophy as the knowledge and its implementation in action brings a broader outlook to view this world. This paper holds its value when it reveals the blending of thought in action. When the philosophy of Kierkegaard goes side by side with the inner will and action of Ulysses, then it is certain that there would be glory, wealth, and victory. It shows that "human perfection was sort of marriage between high thought and just action" (Radhakrishnan 2010, p. 455). It crystallizes how this marriage nurtures the world with the ideas of vitalism and dynamism.

### **1.1 Literature Review**

Tennyson poetry is powerful. So, very often his poems invite and attract critical receptions. As the great poet Arnold (2016) says, "Tennyson's poetry is all distilled thoughts in distilled words" (as cited in Bloom 2016, p. 66). In this regard, this poem also invites a qualitative in-depth perception as it encompasses thoughts in words. Likewise, Thaker (1999) opines that Tennyson's poetry is hailed for its charming and awesome quality in its style, music, in graphic picturesque aspects, and the intensity of feelings and ideas it reflects (p.80). "Ulysses," at its best, bears all these qualities as described by Arnold and Thaker, and has been attracting critical responses since its publication. So, Gilfillan (2010) rightly opines that Ulysses possesses the optimum ideal of "Tennyson's heart that was just dawning

upon his mind" (as cited in Bloom 2010, p. 40). If a poem combines the ideas of both the heart and mind then its superiority deserves a good exploration. Pinion (1986) rightly notes that this great work never undervalues Tennyson's works; rather Ulysses' passion for the exciting life always drives those who intend for the adventures and new explorations in their life (pp. 96-97). In this way, this work and its main speaker always invite the novelty of interpretations with multidimensional perspectives.

The popularity of the legendary figure Ulysses has been increasing in course of time. For 3000 years, this figure has been inviting many literary figures and scholars to write and imagine about him. It was the great Greek Homer who recorded the adventures of this great hero in his celebrated epics *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. The Italian poet Dante also wrote about Ulisse in his great work *Inferno*. This great work tells the story of Ulisse who makes a quest for knowledge beyond the realm of human thought (Ricks 2014). In this regard, Tennyson's "Ulysses" proves to be the leitmotif of Homer and Dante. Shoiley (2013) exactly notes this point and writes that Homer, the great classical poet provided a super-heroic form to this legendary figure. The charismatic character of this legendary figure has been attracting many writers and critics of every age to reveal Ulysses as the best example of the spirit of immortality that lies in humans (p. 65). Therefore, Tennyson's "Ulysses" slightly differs from Homer's, Dante's "Ulysses". It also differs from Joyce's novel *Ulysses* written in twentieth century. Since Tennyson

belonged to the Victorian era, his hero, Ulysses, symbolizes the valorization of individuality. Ulysses' quest for the individual self, in this regard, invites further exploration with the theoretical dimension of Kierkegaard's existential philosophy and self-evolution.

Tennyson's Ulysses idealizes the spirit of romanticism as well. The spirits of feeling and yearning for betterment had an influential part in the poem "Ulysses." Thus, according to Langbaum (1957), the poem deals with the theme of the inner evolution of the soul. The evolution finds its way only with the real quest for knowledge and wisdom that ultimately leads to self-realization (p. 57). This view leads to the idea that Tennyson's hero Ulysses seeks inner transformation and evolution. If he represents so, then obviously, the poem needs a systematic analysis because according to Langbaum (1957) the poem attempts to expose the truth of endurance that is inherent in life itself which has been explained by establishing a new tradition. It has become a new form of myth in Tennyson's poetry (p. 12). In this aspect too, the poem attracts a new revisit from a new perspective. When Tennyson changes the dimensional aspects of Ulysses in his poem, he valorizes the personal quest and identity because Ulysses proves to be a new man every time he speaks in the poem. Therefore, Shoiley(2013) is right to note that "Tennyson's 'Ulysses' has a concrete and confident identity and seems to know what his present and past is about and how he wants to visualize his future for encompassing surer times" (p. 82). If the visualization of the future influences a

person fully considering the totality of past and present, then s\he seeks for transformation and a new quest. In this aspect, the poem "Ulysses" demands a systematic touch of Kierkegaard's philosophical ideals that leads one from the journey of essence to existence.

### **1.1.1 Statement of Problem and Research Questions**

Ulysses, from the very beginning, yearns for the meaningful vibes of life. The main drive of life for him is to seek and find something new. It demands evolvment which needs movement, not idleness. He pleads if one stops learning and moving, one starts dying. He, at first, valorizes the war, dignity and idealizes the aesthetic stage postulated by Kierkegaard. Then he passes the ethical stage and leaps for the religious stage, which is the culmination point for his journey from essence to existence. In this sense, he epitomizes the ideals of Kierkegaard's philosophy. Thus, to explore and analyze these issues, this paper answers the following research questions: What are the ideals of individualism and existence in the philosophy of Kierkegaard? How does Ulysses express and reflect the radiance of the ideals of Kierkegaard's philosophy not only in his words, but also in his actions? Why does Ulysses leap from aesthetic stage to religious stage?

## **2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The article is explorative and interpretative. It interprets and explores the poem from the standpoint of Kierkegaard's philosophy of stages. Thus, this paper considers the words, symbols,

and themes of the poem "Ulysses" as the source of primary concepts. Since it applies the qualitative approach and interpretivism, it makes a content analysis by keeping the view that "knowledge is based on human interpretations" (Pant 2018, p. 23). That's why, according to Creswell (2011), the qualitative approach leads knowledge inductively from particular aspects to the general conclusion and themes (p. 4). Likewise, it analyses, describes, and explores how these concepts expressed in the poem "Ulysses" reflect and expose the ideals of choices, individual existence and evolution of Ulysses through the different stages to establish him as the real spokesperson of Kierkegaard's philosophy. Related criticisms of the poem, contextual ideas and reviews as well as the other online materials become the secondary sources to prove the proposition and establish the argument.

## **2.1 Theoretical Method: Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Existence and Stages**

Soren Kierkegaard is a great Danish philosopher. He is generally considered as the propagator of existential philosophy. His philosophy, at first hand, grasps in human as an individual. It means the quest for individuality becomes the main goal in his philosophy. The concept of individuality in Kierkegaard was the spirit of that time because the prevailing contemporary philosophical trend nearly sidelined the human responsibility just as an individual. The philosophy that he propagates closely criticizes the affairs of society. In this regard, his philosophy relates to the truth that is significant in a person's life. It is so vital to "seek the

truth for me" (Gaarder 1998, p. 379). If it is important "to seek the truth for me," then obviously the truth is subjective. The subjectivity of truth regards human's existence as the focal point, and it can be accumulated by humans because of the freedom of multiple choices. In this way, personal experiences determine existence because one has gained it from the level of multiple choices. Kierkegaard (1987) in his great book *Either /Or: A Fragment of Life (Part II)* says, "the choice itself is crucial for the content of personality: through the choice the personality submerges itself in that which is being chosen, and when it does not choose, it withers away in atrophy" (The Balance between the Aesthetic and Ethical in the Development of Personality, para 11). Unlike other philosophers, the philosophy of Kierkegaard would certainly say, "I choose therefore I am" (Raju 1997, p. 78). Since the choice differs from person to person, the level of existence becomes particular. Because of the unique sense of particular existence and its limitations, human "feels always the presence of an "other," which is God" (Raju 1997, p. 78). In this aspect, Kierkegaard's philosophy gives the space for religious beliefs too. That is the demarcation between human to human. In a sense, this boundary creates the identity of individuality. However, Kierkegaard (1987) believes that choice does not become volatilized, rather it finds out that still there is something to do again (The Balance between the Aesthetic and Ethical, para 13). It presupposes how important the choice is for us.

A distinction, in this context, between the prospect of God's existence and individual

relationship with him needs a better explanation. For Kierkegaard, only the ideas that are accumulated with reason are not sufficient at all times because the truth and ideas may become immaterial and even do not become suitable when it comes in the context of an individual's existence. Kierkegaard (1987) in his book *Either/Or: A Fragment of Life (Part I)* says, "I have the courage to doubt everything; I have, I believe, the courage to fight against everything" (Tested Advice for Authors, para 16). This is the reason for how much important the personal existence is. In this way, faith is the ultimate answer and the surest way to realize the existence of God and explain religion. Gaarder (1996) cites Kierkegaard's word to clarify this idea:

"If I am capable of grasping God objectively, I do not believe, but precisely because I cannot do this I must believe. If I wish to preserve myself in faith I must constantly be intent upon holding fast the objective uncertainty, so as to out upon the deep, over seventy thousand fathoms of water, still preserving my faith." (p.381)

The one aspect of the development of intellectual history centers on to proving the existence of God rationally. However, the justification that we get from logical arguments is just the loss of faith. It also brings a derogative sense in the attachment of religion because faith, according to Evans (1990), is always considered as a religion of transcendence, not of immanent. Faith has its base on revelation which the rationality can never

demonstrate (p. 469). So, faith is the building of human passion over the governing ideals of life. Faith is the ultimate way for Kierkegaard (1987) as he opines in *Either/Or: A Fragment of Life(Part I)* that he views emptiness everywhere but nothing can divert him if he manages to perceive everything with faithful fullness. This is the surest way to win the ordeal of life.

### **2.1.1 The Aesthetic Stage**

The crux of Kierkegaard's philosophy remains in its exploration of different stages namely, the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious stage. By passing through each of them, an individual builds up the personality or individuality. Since human is free to choose his existence, an individual can remain on a single stage or move to another higher one. It depends on a person's choice. The first stage, known as the aesthetic, is just like living for the movement, here and now. The idea of immediacy governs this stage. According to Kierkegaard (2004), this stage is limited in substantial longings of here and now. In this stage, the utmost satisfaction of personal desire becomes the main goal. The hedonistic values dominate the entire activities of life. "Good is whatever is beautiful, satisfying, or pleasant. This person lives wholly in the world of the senses, and is a slave to his desires and moods" (Gaarder 1996, p. 383). What is not loaded with pleasure becomes boring for a person who remains in this stage. Kierkegaard (1991) opines that this stage is based on something past. However, the moment a person realizes the transitoriness of the physical passion, s/he

can leap to another stage known as entire stage. Still, the choice comes from within and it is solely own.

### **2.1.2 The Ethical and Religious Stages**

The ethical stage is loaded with morals and values. Kierkegaard (2004) views this stage as separate essence from mere coincidence and accidental. It is a commitment to the ideals of life. Moral choice and seriousness become one's responsibility. In this stage, "What matters is that you choose to have an opinion at all on what is right or wrong" (Gaarder 1996, p. 384). A sense of universal brotherhood and a sense to live for the other guide a person who lands on this stage. A person longs for more. Most of the people remain in this stage, while some guided by the creative ideals can leap up to the religious stage. This stage, according to Kierkegaard (2004) is the unity of the previous two stages. Here, a person realizes that s\he has been dreaming, and awakes from it. Gaarder (1996) cites Kierkegaard:

"But others make a new leap to the religious stage. They take the 'jump into the abyss' of Faith's 'seventy thousand fathom.' They choose faith in preference to aesthetic pleasure and reason's call of duty. And although it can be 'terrible jump into the open arms of the living God,' . . . it is in the only path to redemption." (p. 384)

In this stage, one chooses faith instead of pleasure, giving priority to duties and morality as well. This is the stage where one can transcend bodily sensual

pleasures and find the path to redemption. Kierkegaard (1991) categorizes that ethical existence is polemical and religious stage exists in an imaginary configuration. In this sense, real transformation dawns in this stage.

## **3 RESULTS & DISCUSSION**

The forthcoming sections interpret how the poem by Tennyson exactly crystallizes the ideals of Kierkegaard's philosophy. Ulysses really proves to be an evolutionary individual to walk on a journey of personal choice that leads to inner transformation and self-realization. He rises from the stage of aesthetic to the crux of realization that is the religious stage.

### **3.1 Ulysses' Evolution in Kierkegaard's Philosophy: Blending of Action and Knowledge**

The myth of Ulysses is popular throughout the ages. The meaning of the myth gets its connotation according to the context of different ages and the interpretations. After returning from the war of Troy to Ithaca, his kingdom, he becomes so curious to explore the world. In spite of his union with the family members, he does not cling himself to the narrow boundary by fulfilling the desires of senses. Fundamentally, his yearns from the aesthetic stage to the ethical stage reveals his intense ideals to move beyond the level of physical craving desires. Kierkegaard (1987) believes idleness is the root cause of evil (Rotation of Evil, para 11). Following this spirit, Ulysses says:

It little profits that an idle king,  
By this still hearth, among these  
barren crags,  
Match'd with an aged wife, I mete  
and dole  
Unequal laws into a savage race,  
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and  
know not me. (Tennyson 2014, p.  
41)

It is better to die than to remain idle. The sudden realization that comes from within a sense of inner realization incites a person to leap beyond the level of here and now. Kierkegaard (2002) says that the truth does not introduce itself to the person from outside, rather truth was inherent and always within a human (as cited in Gardiner 2002, web). This philosophy of existence to seek the "truth for me" is clearly exposed in the above quoted beautiful lines. He wants to sacrifice the kingdom, his queen, and entire earthly glories to attain genuine knowledge. The real good and ideals remain as the driving force in his life. This is the "heroic theme of "Ulysses," one of the most controlled and perfectly wrought dramatic monologues, which presents the voice of aged Ulysses planning a final voyage" (Daiches 1992, p. 998). The final voyage is for the sake of his faith. His choice for a life of values and ideals makes him a hero who perfectly follows the parameters of Kierkegaard's philosophy. The hedonism cannot control him.

From the very beginning, Ulysses desires to seek knowledge that is beyond the periphery of the human mind. That is his inner choice, the "truth for me," which is the fundamental aspect of Kierkegaard's

philosophy. The pleasure becomes very boring for him. The worldly pros and cons become a matter of decay for him. What an attitude he expresses in the poem! Every word reflects the intense desire for exploration beyond the level of craving desires. He says:

I cannot rest from travel: I will drink  
Life to the lees: all them I have  
enjoyed  
Greatly, have suffered greatly, both  
with those  
That love me, and alone; on shore,  
and when  
Thro' scudding drifts the rainy  
Hyades  
Vext the dim sea. (Tennyson 2014, p.  
141)

These powerful poetic lines reflect the intense passion to search the individuality that suits and fits the spirit of great warriors like Ulysses. This is the fundamental of Kierkegaard's philosophy. While living in the aesthetic stage, a person may feel angst and a sense of alienation. So, one has to go on moving because a human is born to move, not to confine within the limits of craving physical desires. This reflection of inner voice makes Ulysses a person who becomes the real existential person, following the different stages of self-evolution postulated by Kierkegaard (1987) because for him life is to be drunk in drops counting slowly. Tennyson's projection for the quest of identity is so powerful that Ulysses is realizing his self and his inner essence. Only then, the real transformation and evolution are possible. He is winning himself as Buddha (2015) says in the *The Dhammapada*, "One who

conquers himself is greater than another who conquers a thousand times a thousand men on the battlefield. Be victorious over yourself and not over others" (Easwaran trans 2015, p.135). In this path of realization, Ulysses walks with the real spirit of the man of action and knowledge. Only this blending is sure to lead him beyond the level of the aesthetic stage.

Ulysses cannot rest; rather he will drink the drops of life slowly counting each of them. It reflects the inner voice of existence that he wants to create. This dynamism of life leads him to a journey from essence to existence. In this regard, "there is more about only self in Ulysses, which was written under the sense of loss and that all had gone by, but that still life must be fought out to the end" (Ricks 2014, p. 138). He wants to "exist" really as long as he lives. He wants to struggle and create truth for himself. Only the struggle can lead him to the beyond. He enjoyed the life of war. That was his aesthetic stage. To fulfill his earthly glory, he fought and won the war of troy, and found a level of existence. He says:

I am become a name;  
For always roaming with a hungry heart  
Much have I seen and known; cities  
of men and manner, climates,  
council, governments. (Tennyson  
2014, pp. 141-42)

He has established himself as a landmark in the search of personal identity. He has "become a name." His name and fame has been proved, but is that the inner essence he is searching for? Certainly not! The

stage of becoming a name is obviously a stage to move and seek further for the inner-realization. He becomes a personal person to the public one. He becomes a man for society, and he has to set an example for the society. This quest for identity by Ulysses is so great that it follows the great voice of Lord Krishna (1994) in *The Bhagavadgita* who says to his disciple Arjuna, "In the actions of the best men others find their rules of action. The path that a great man follows becomes a guide to the world" (Mascaro trans 1994, p.58). Ulysses finds the identity that was inherent in him as proclaimed by Kierkegaard. He lives by a faith that he can get only in the religious stage that Kierkegaard proposes. This is only possible when one knows the real spirit of action and knowledge. Such a person in totality can only transcend the worldly attachments as Buddha (2015) says, "Look on the world as a bubble look on it as a mirage. Then the king of death cannot even see you. Come look at this world" (Easwaran trans 2015, p.161). Ulysses has realized this world and the inner reality. He has looked at the world because he has a passion to drink every drop of life.

Ulysses lives for his standard, establishes his existence, and possesses a life of vitalism. As a hero guided by Kierkegaard's philosophy that "I choose therefore I am" (Raju 1997, p.78), he does not want to waste his single moment of life without doing anything new. He wants to grasp the ultimate goal of what the human mind can think, and wants to blaze forth than to be extinguished like the smoke. His crux towards the existence

and quest for real essence are exposed in these powerful lines loaded with vitalism:

How full it is to pause, to make and end,  
To rust unburnish'd not to shine in use!  
As tho' to breathe were life. Life piled on life.  
Were all too little, and of one to me  
Little remains: but every how is saved  
From that eternal silence,  
something more,  
A bringer of new things; and vile it were. (Tennyson 2014, pp. 142-43)

This is perhaps the greatest reality of life. Stopping means dying. The moment you cease learning or moving, you start dying. It becomes the hurdle for existence. Every moment is a process to leap ahead. That is only the optimum level of living a perfect level of life. Don't these above lines express Kierkegaard's voice? Of course, they do. Kierkegaard (1987) views that either one has to remain on the aesthetic stage or move from it. After achieving the level of success when the evolved individuals stop the basic drives of life, his/her declination is certain to befall. This is the reality which the great principle Lao Tzu (1986) expresses as the ultimate path of life (The Tao). He says:

Holding to fullness  
Is not as good as stopping in time.  
Sharpness that probes  
Can not protect for long. (p. 9)

To gain the fullness, one must not remain static. The inner transformation needs a broader outlook of life. An inner

revelation can only give a greater perspective. This is the perfect way to gain existence in life.

Only the evolved individual like Ulysses who has achieved a broader outlook can never let oneself down. After attaining a stage of realization, he leaps for a higher stage. He grows and flourishes inwardly. He never lingers to the gross attachment. The fundamentals of Kierkegaard (1987) philosophy that to be perfect is to be the highest remain as the driving force for Ulysses. He better knows that every moment is a bonus from the eternal silence to add something new in the life of a person. Every moment is a bringer of new ideas. Every moment is a new birth. So, he prefers to lead a life that runs on his faith. It is the faith in the self that gives rise to self-knowledge. And "it is through self-knowledge, not through belief in somebody else's symbols, that a man comes to the eternal reality, in which his being is grounded" (Huxley 1992, p. 12). All these discussed factors are essentials of the self-evolution in self-transformation, which germinates out of Kierkegaard's philosophy.

### **3.2 Ulysses' Leaps for Faith**

Ulysses realizes that idleness does not suit an evolved man like him. Then he is even ready to sacrifice himself for his ideals and faith. His faith is that one should do some noble conducts for humankind so that the future generations get nurtured by these ideals. This is the basic premise of the ethical stage. He chooses the right for wrong following the real spirit of Kierkegaard (1987) when he says choosing has gravity because there is

danger conjoined in it. He possesses the ideals of universal brotherhood and fraternity. The whole world becomes a family, a home for him. After handing his entire kingdom to his son Telemachus, he yearns for his ideals of faith. He jumps into the "abyss of faith" (Gaarder 1996, p. 384). He realizes the "Death closes all; but something ere the end, some work of noble note, may yet be done" (Tennyson 2014, p. 144). He still has aspiration, a vitalism, and a fire of dynamism that lurk inside him. It is because he transcends the aesthetic stage of passion and the concept of here and now. He leaps up to a higher stage of ethics, and even wants to go beyond that, and land on to the stage of faith because he yearns "To follow knowledge like a sinking star, beyond the utmost bound of human thought" (Tennyson 2014, p. 143). The knowledge here signifies the knowledge of self-evolution. His faith towards the knowledge of good is not the knowledge of immanence, but it is the realization of transcendent. The purpose of going beyond the realm of human thought is certainly to realize the transcendence. As an evolved person guided by the principle of Kierkegaard's philosophy, he puts the motive to attain the genuine purpose of life. For this attainment, according to Krishnamurti (1992), we must enter through the door of ourselves. The journey starts from the self. Knowingly or unknowingly, we must face the things in their essence (p. 281). He wants to find the real "Me" because Kierkegaard's philosophy proclaims for the context of an individual's existence. Thus, the quest for individual identity is a must. Besides, Kierkegaard's philosophy also presupposes that the ideas accumulated by

only reasons are not sufficient all the time because they may not prove suitable in the context of a person's existence. A person's existence is relative. It depends on personal choice, and the choice is always determined by a person's nature. In this regard, Ulysses is right to say that he wants to go beyond the thought where he can cross every boundary and the level of delimitations.

With the unquenchable thirst to cross beyond, Ulysses paves through the strong will to find the reality of the world. He asks his friend to start a new journey. The journey is not for only the enjoyment of physical pleasures; rather it is a journey to find the evolution that sprouts from within. He seeks a new knowledge for humanity. His faith for his purpose, in this regard, is profound and measureless as he says:

Come, my friends

'Tis no too late to seek a new world.

Push off, and sitting well in order smite.

The surrounding furrows; for my purpose holds

To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths

Of all the western stars, until I die. (Tennyson 2014, pp. 144-45)

How wonderfully he expresses his purpose! His walk is not just physical; rather it is for inner evolution. Sailing beyond the sunset signifies an utmost leave of inner growth. He appeals to the people to keep zeal and principle that it is never late to make a new move in life because seeking for something new and

good is a never-ending process. And when a person "understands the significance of ending, because in ending there is renewal, while in continuity there is death, there is decay" (Krishnamurti 1992, p. 265). Certainly, Ulysses, as a decorated war hero, is guided by this spiritual height. He knows that every end is a step for regeneration. This concept only germinates by jumping into the abyss of faith that Kierkegaard propagates in his philosophy.

After crossing the aesthetic and ethical stages, Ulysses leaps for the contemplation that is the religious stage. The contemplative stage germinates when one is one-pointed in faith. Then, it brings the equilibrium of mind to attain wisdom. Shri Krishna (1972), in the great Hindu scripture *The Bhagavadgita*, opines that without harmony in mind there is no wisdom and contemplation and meditation, and without these there can be no peace. Without peace there is no happiness and without happiness there is no bliss and eternity (Prabhavananda & Isherwood 1972, p. 43). Ulysses' leaps to religious stage are certain to bring harmony, contemplation, and meditation. It is because of faith. Christ proclaims that great faith and its requests are always granted (Mathew, 15:28). From every point, Ulysses is sure to attain liberation from this bovine attitude of hoarding. He has perceived the truth as the great Greek poet Hesiod says, "That man is best who sees the truth himself, Good too is he who listens to wise counsel" (as cited in Srinivasan 2016, p.137). Ulysses, in this sense, becomes a man of faith who realizes the truth, the bliss of eternity. He has become a man in transcendence.

The faith of Ulysses becomes so powerful that death does not become a hurdle for him. With this powerful fire in his heart, he moves on for his faith. He knows that they may die on their way, or they may touch the happy isles. However, he chooses the faith in preference to the aesthetic pleasure, as Kierkegaard has stated. That is only the path of redemption. The following splendour words reflect Ulysses' strong willpower and determination:

We are not now that strength  
which in old days  
Moved earth and heaven; that  
which we are, we are;  
One equal temper of heroic  
hearts,  
Made weak by time and fate, but  
strong in will  
To strive, to seek, to find, and not  
to yield. (Tennyson 2014, p. 145)

Physical causality does not become valuable when a man is inwardly grown. A man in the strong will can move heaven and earth and bring them together. Kierkegaard (1987) exactly believes that old age gives the way to the dreams of youth. How powerful ideas these are! The heroic heart loaded with strong will always leads us to strive, to seek, to search for the perfect reality of life. It proves when a person crosses the aesthetic stage and ethical stages; the stage of faith certainly realizes that one is not born to surrender. Better to die physically than to give up. These perfect ideals of Ulysses speak the voice of Kierkegaard. And it would be equally justifiable to prove Ulysses' vitalism and his depth of faith when we read these

words from the Buddha (2015) in *The Dhammapada* that forever inspire humanity to struggle for faith and attain the radiance of inner evolution:

Better to live in virtue and wisdom for one day than to live a hundred years with an evil and undisciplined mind. Better to live in goodness and wisdom for one day than to lead an ignorant and undisciplined life for a hundred years.

Better to live in strength and wisdom for one day than to lead a weak and idle life for hundred years. Better to live in freedom and wisdom for one day than to lead a conditioned life of boring for a hundred years.

One day's glimpse of the deathless state is better than a hundred years of life without it. (Easwaran trans 2015, p. 136)

These mesmerizing words from Buddha are the perfect summation that reflects how powerful the stage of faith is. Life without the driving force and inner vibes is not the real life at all. It is better to peril than to live a flameless life. Ulysses' faith inspires us to realize that it is not the essence as though to breathe is life. Life is for something newer to seek, to attain, and never to stop, give up, and surrender.

#### **4 CONCLUSION**

Ulysses, a great hero, abides by the philosophy propagated by Kierkegaard. His philosophy of moral choice suitably fits with the ideals of Ulysses. Likewise, Ulysses' determination to take the

responsibility of his choice makes him a hero who seeks an individual identity. He realizes that identity grows up relatively. Therefore, he wants to leap up onto the stage of ethics and faith. He deliberately realizes that the aesthetic stage does not suit a man of vitalism and strong determination like him. The life of entangling with the confinement of craving desires leads us to nowhere. Surcharged from within, he yearns for ethical life with a broader perspective. He holds such a great aspiration that he wants to drink every drop of his life, drinking it perfectly. Every action in every moment lays a new foundation in his heart for identity. This realization makes him a man loaded with dynamism. He realizes the power of inner evolution. Therefore, bodily gross and passions do not hurdle him. No matter he is old now, but for him, that age inspires him to find a new path of knowledge. As a hero guided by Kierkegaard's philosophy, he lives a life of faith—the faith in utmost vitality, will, and wisdom. That's why he can have the ambition to sail beyond the sunset and the limitations of thought. He is a man with the true spirit of inner evolution who even sees better dignity in death than to live an idle and unfurnished life. Life in movement gives the real existence. His journey from essence to existence makes him a new man of existential values. Gradually, he leaps up to the stage of faith, crossing the aesthetic and ethical stage. For him, it is better to blaze forth for a moment to light the world than to be smoke throughout the ages. Meaningful life full of valour is much worthier than a life without any vibes and drives. He chooses and so he exists, and strives for something unique. A halt to move ahead

is a stage of dying for him. Thus, he wants to live every meaningful moment of his life. These ideals that Kierkegaard postulates very much expose themselves in the principles of the great hero, Ulysses. In him, the action and wisdom meet which is certain to bring harmony and bliss with an inner evolution. Thus, he becomes a real spokesperson of Kierkegaard's philosophy.

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