

Critical analysis



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The Choice Is Yours One can relate to atleast one of the characters in Veronika Decides to Die. There is one Veronika- she has everything she would want in life. And yet, something is lacking. Her failure to find it, leads to a suicide attempt. There is one Zedka- a lady who leads herself into depression for that one battle in life that she had lost. There is one Dr. Igor- the strict doctor at the asylum of Villetete. He is an intelligent man with interesting ways of treating his patients (Though this aspect of Dr. Igor is not obvious until the end). And finally, there is one Eduard, whose interest in painting and lack of interest in a high-income career, leads his rich parents to believe that his mental state is unstable. He is put in an asylum. The place- Villetete, an asylum in the city of Ljubljana. And the author- an expert storyteller, Paulo Coelho.

Though, the plot of the story may sound gloomy but the story keeps the reader engaged as it unwinds. Because, you can relate to atleast one of the characters, you are eager to find out what happens next. You want to know the path taken up by the characters. Perhaps, you could follow the same. And the path that you should follow in life is revealed by Paulo Coelho in the most amazing way. You will find it difficult, if not difficult, impossible to disagree with him.

The battle of every character is painted by Paulo Coelho with great detail. On one fine day (11 November 1997), Veronika simply decides to die. She swallows sleeping pills and peacefully waits for her death. She could have used some other method of committing suicide but the book explains why she uses sleeping pills- “ Obviously she could have thrown herself off one of the few tall buildings in Ljubljana, but what about the further suffering caused to her parents by a fall from such a height?” Veronika fails to realize

that her death will, anyway, bring misery to her parents. Veronika is saved and admitted to an asylum.

In the asylum, she is told by Dr. Igor that her suicide attempt has succeeded but she will live for another five days before she dies. Veronika had planned to die quickly. But waiting for your death is different. And so, begins the five day ordeal for Veronika. Many of us commit suicide and die a cowardly death. This happens in a matter of a few minutes. How quickly the scenario changes when you have to wait for your death! You know that every minute is taking you towards death. And so you want to make the most of it. That is what happens to Veronika.

At the asylum, Veronika meets other ‘ mad’ people. She meets Zedka, whose troubles, I have explained above. Her suffering is visible through the following paragraph from the book- “ Did I fight hard enough? Should I have accepted my role as mistress, rather than wanting things to go as I expected them to? Did I fight for my first love with the same energy with which I fought for my people?”

Veronika, Eduard, Zedka- all have one thing in common. They have lost the zeal to live. But in Veronika’s case, in her last five days, she realizes how much she wants to live! She falls in love with Eduard and runs away from the asylum with him. She has only one more day to live and she wants to spend it with the guy she is in love with. Hence, both, Veronika and Eduard are surprised when she lives the next day. When she wakes up the next day, Veronika asks Eduard “ What’s going on?” “ Nothing”, says Eduard, “ Or rather, a miracle happened: another day of life.” And here, the reader realizes that every day is a miracle.

Dr. Igor’s intentions are revealed in the end when he is relishing the success

of his experiment. He had always known that Veronika would not die. In the end, he finds the medication for Veronika's and other patient's troubles: "an awareness of death" that leads to "an awareness of life".

Thus, Paulo Coelho, in his book *Veronika Decides to Die*, offers the reader, a simple solution to the reader's problems: "Every second of existence is a choice that we all make between living and dying."

Reference-

Coelho P. *Veronika Decides to Die*. 15th Impression. Harper Collins, 1999