



Journey To The Quest: The Path Of Self Actualization In Paulo Coelho's "The Alchemist"

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Abstract

Paulo Coelho's hypnotizing novel *The Alchemist* is regarded as his monumental work, and he shared his personal experiences that remark the universal appeal. This novel is based on the theme of heart-searching, the living of one's dream, meaningfulness and spiritual attainment through self-awareness. The aim of this research study was to Coelho's protagonist explore the existential search for the ultimate meaning and purpose of the existence. The story of the novel is about a young Andalusian shepherd boy, Santiago, who search for the fulfillment of his destiny and he learns a few valuable life lessons on the way. The protagonist is in search of his identity the quest comes to an end in a self- realization which reveals that he is part of the universal soul. Coelho has point out the art of living: how to make life interesting by following one's dream. He claims that one has to find one's personal legend or the very purpose of being. Coelho appeals that rightly the ultimate secret of success in life is love, for it is at the root of personal transformation and collective evolution. The present paper seeks to explore the self-actualized hero of the protagonist Santiago's journey completely changes his life.

Keywords: Quest, Self-actualization, Existence, Personal legend, Transformation, Motivation, Santiago, Dream realization, Destination, Journey toward self, Vision of life.

Objectives

1. The general objective of the proposed research article is to highlight how simple shepherd boy achieves his dreams which most people find difficult to achieve in their life.

2. The paper also presents the transformation which takes place in the protagonist on his way to his quest.

"His journey led him to his destiny" - 'The Alchemist.'

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Introduction:

Self-actualization theory classifies the real creative self of an individual. Paulo Coelho creates the readers to realize the purpose of a man's life. He quoted, "The ship is safest when it is in port, but that is not what ships were built for." (The Pilgrimage p.22) He requests his readers not to sit securely and comfortably. He asks his readers to quest, travel, fight and find the treasure within oneself. Self-actualization is a term that has been used in numerous psychology theories, often in marginally different ways. Initially the term was coined by the organismic theorist Kurt Goldstein for the motive to realize one's full potential. Expressing one's ingenuity, quest for inner spirituality, pursuit of knowledge, understanding what they need in order to gain a sense of fulfillment and the wish to give to positively transform society are examples of self-actualization. The Alchemist novel's central protagonist, Santiago takes his journey across the continents to fulfill his inner dream.

Paulo Coelho, a Brazilian lyricist and novelist is presently one of the most prominent Latin American authors. He is the recipient of various international awards as well as the Crystal Award by the World Economic Forum. He has been charming readers around the world with his fascinating fictional expertise for nearly three decades. Coelho, a writer of the modern society owns the reading pursuits of the young minds. He is an evolutionist writer of the brain based society who mostly deals with the man's heart and soul of the universe. Coelho, he guides his every readers to live the meaningful life. He is entirely different from the writers of the present era and he evidently shows the protagonist's inner development through his own style of philosophical descriptions. He is a person who has written various books and all of his writing is full of optimistic views. His main characters are always faces many obstacles in their lives but they never give up and never lose hope. At the end of their journey they flourished in their aims. In this novel, The Alchemist he conveyed a very inspiring message of journey to the quest and self-actualization through the character of Santiago.

His fascinating novel The Alchemist is regarded as his magnum opus. It expresses the story of a shepherd boy Santiago who follows his effort for finding hidden treasures that he visualizes in his dream. In his adventurous efforts to make his dream true, and he met many kind of people and places, faces different sorts of threats, explores the meaning of love and particularly, realizes the true meaning of life on top of getting hold of the treasures he had been questing for. Coelho's optimistic view we can see through the character of Santiago. He has depicted his immense vision about human beings and he also presented a strong theme of confidence to his readers. In this novel The Alchemist, The old man stated to the boy:

"And, when you want something, the entire universe
conspires in helping you to achieve it." (The Alchemist p.42)

Coelho conveys the message through to the character of an old man that nothing is impossible for you. If you want to achieve something on your life you can get it certainly because nature will help you out and support you. This novel expresses the journey of Santiago to find his treasure and experiences of self-actualization and his precious experiences with the Sheep, King, Englishman, Crystal Merchant, Camel driver, Alchemist and Fatima teach him how to recognize his personal legend. "On the way toward realizing his own personal legend, he had learned all he needed to know, and he had experienced everything he might have dreamed of. (p.160)

Each and every work of Paulo Coelho conveys the theme of a journey or a quest for a way of life that enhances the meaning of existence. A man's life is considered prosperous when he struggles and fights in life against his ego and his highest achievement is in the wisdom attained in this process. Coelho's signature novel, *The Alchemist* one of his eminent characters *The Alchemist* tells Santiago one essential thing that he should know:

“Before a dream is realized the soul of the World tests everything that was learnt along the way. It does this not because it is evil, but so that we can, in addition to realizing our dreams, master the lessons we've learned as we've moved towards that dream. That's the point at which most people give up. It's the point at which as we say in the language of the desert, one 'dies' of thirst just when the palm trees have appeared on the horizon”. (p.39)

Santiago is a young and energetic adventurous shepherd boy. His regular habits reading books and communicate with his flock. His parent's wish wants him to become a priest and thus a source of pride for the family. He had studied Latin, Spanish and theology. From his childhood he wanted to know the world, and this was much more crucial to him than knowing God and learning about man's sins. So he summoned up the courage to tell his father that he didn't want to become a priest; that he wanted to travel. He is against tradition and leaves the comforts of home and wants to know the secret of life which is more prominent to him than knowing the Supreme Self. Coelho commences the importance of the journey both spiritual and physical. He himself is fond of exploring the world and its wonders and exposes, “without doubt it was traveling that made me make the leap” (p.195).

'Journey' appears to be a remarkable sign in *The Alchemist* signifying that wisdom is found in the journey and not in destination. Santiago's symbolic journey evidently refers to Tennyson's legendary hero Ulysses who, desires to travel around in order to discover new places, to encounter fresh adventures and to venture into the vast realm of the unknown with a view to satisfy his restless spirit as much as to search for a stable meaning in life. The book frequently repeats that: “When you want something, all the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it” (p.21)

The boy living a normal life, his quest is provoked while sleeping near a Sycamore tree in the abandoned church. He gets a frequent dream, in which a child tells him to pursue a treasure at the foot of the Egyptian pyramids. Santiago decides to commence the journey and in the journey he encounters some antagonistic situations. He reminisces that an old gypsy woman who interprets dream lives near the village of Tarifa. He meets her and describes his dream to her. The gypsy woman requests him to go to Egypt and find the treasure and she states that she will not be charging him for her delivery, but she wants ten percent of the treasure when he finds. He couldn't believe the words of the gypsy woman. The dreams signify not only an outlet into one's inner desires, but also a form of communication with the Soul of the World. His dream of a treasure in Egypt, for instance, expresses to him his Personal Legend.

In his journey, Santiago meets an old man named as Melchizedek and reveals that he is the King of Salem. He motivates him to follow his dreams. He creates Santiago realize that when he achieves self-realization, his individual soul is recognized with the Supreme Self and the world is realized as an illusion. Melchizedek states that “All things are one” (P.23). That means every individual souls are part of the soul of the world. The Egyptian pyramid is additional historical symbol used in the novel to state that human beings can create wonders in this world.

Coelho is of the opinion that the aptitude to read the omens can help one in one's journey for the dream. After listening to the voice of the omens, Santiago finds a crystal shop and requests the merchant of the shop to avert him clean glasses in the shop in exchange for food, but the crystal merchant does not

accept immediately. Santiago cleans the glasses. At the time two customers enter and buy crystal, so the merchant offers a job for Santiago. With the help of crystal merchant Santiago becomes a crystal merchant himself and attains a grand success. The incident of crystal shop Coelho wants to indicate that the individual has power to change, shape, and improve their life. As well as he believes that character is destiny and our unconscious is as powerful as our conscious in molding our personality. He also exposes that all things and beings in the universe are connected.

Santiago's journey over the desert towards pyramids which leads him to find the hidden treasure. He decides to continue pursuing his Personal Legend. He joins a caravan and meets an Englishman who studies books to become an alchemist. The English man appears unfriendly at first, then Santiago tells his story they become close. In the journey Santiago acquires a lot from the Englishman. He also learns that the secret of alchemy is written on a stone called the Emerald Tablet. The crucial creation of alchemy is the Master Work, which contains of a solid called the Philosopher's Stone which can turn lead to gold, and a liquid called the Elixir of Life that can cure all ills. Santiago comes to know that Englishman is traveling with the caravan to the Sahara oasis of Al-Fayoum, where 200-year-old powerful alchemist living. The Englishman plans to ask the alchemist the secret of his trade.

Santiago wants to travel to Egypt but he stays in the oasis in order to avoid violent tribal war in the desert. Santiago meets a charming and beautiful girl called Fatima in the desert, and he starts to love her. The novelist has beautifully decorated the powerful impact of love and believes that love is the magic that compels one to be successful. He highlights: "When we love, we always strive to become better than we are. When we strive to become better than we are, everything around us becomes better too (p.100). Coelho has portrayed the significance of the feeling of love. During a walk in the desert, Santiago witnesses an omen that foretells an attack on the oasis. He warns the tribal chief about omen and the attack, and as a result, the people of Al- Fayoum successfully defend them self against the attack. The alchemist gets the word of Santiago's vision and requests Santiago on a trip into the desert, at the same time he teaches Santiago about the importance of listening to one's own heart and following his Personal Legend.

Santiago and Alchemist continue the journey over the desert. The alchemist shares his wisdom about the Soul of the World. They want to travel many days to reach pyramids. Meanwhile soldiers of Arab arrest them during the travel. The alchemist hands over Santiago's money, but they do not trust them. Alchemist expresses the soldiers that Santiago is a powerful alchemist who will turn into wind within three days. Santiago feels scared because he has no idea how to turn into the wind, and over the next three days he anticipates on the desert. On the third day, the chief and his officers visit Santiago to see if he can prove his statement. What Santiago has learned so far as the Language of the World comes to his help to rescue him from the current situation.

Then Santiago goes to "the hand that wrote all". In this context Paulo writes:

"The boy turned to the hand that wrote all. As he did so, he sensed that the universe had fallen silent, and he decided not to speak. A current of love rushed from his heart, and the boy began to pray... the boy understood that the desert, the wind, and the sun were also trying to understand the signs written by the hand, and were seeking to follow their paths, and to understand what had been written on a single emerald. He saw that omens were scattered throughout the earth and in space, and that there was no reason or significance attached to their appearance; he could see that not the deserts, nor the winds, nor the sun, nor people knew why they had been created. The boy reached through to the Soul of the World, and saw that it was a part of the Soul of God. And he

saw that the soul of God was his own soul. And that he, a boy, could perform miracles” (p.159-160).

The wind understands but doesn't know what to do. Santiago efforts to convince the wind that love can empower it to do anything. This makes the wind feels that Santiago degrades it by telling what it already knows how to do. Annoyed, it blows harder, and tells Santiago to talk to the Hand That Wrote All. Santiago willingly accepts what it says with the request to create a sandstorm so he can look into the sky without the sun blinding him. The wind agrees to do so and picks up into a powerful windstorm. The tribesman asks their chief if they can stop Santiago's stunt. The chief, however, needs to see Santiago complete his task.

Santiago communicates with the wind and the sun and wheedles them to help him create an enormous sandstorm. Now Santiago recognizes that the soul of God is his own soul the supreme Self, and that he can perform wonders. He prays to the Hand That Wrote All, and at the height of the storm he disappears. He recurs on the other side of the camp, and to the tribesmen, “The secret of happiness is to see all the marvels of the world, and never to forget the drops of oil on the spoon.” (p.30) Coelho seems to say that if the aspirant hunts for the Divine genuinely within his own body, instead of seeking him outside himself, he will realize the self soon and then view the body as the indwelling place of God. Here Santiago realizes the oneness of God and Man. “The boy reached through to the Soul of the World, and saw that it was a part of the Soul of God”(p.160).Santiago requests the alchemist to teach him alchemy, the art of transfiguration. The alchemist says him that it includes of simple truth that everything in the world had a soul and they would change when they became perfect. He further states him to listen to his heart. The conversation between the boy and his tutor highlights this thing:

“Why do we have to listen to our hearts?” the boy asked, when they had made camp that day. “Because, wherever your heart is, that is where you'll find your treasure.” “But my heart is agitated,” the boy said. “It has its dreams, it gets emotional, and it's become passionate over a woman of the desert. It asks things of me, and it keeps me sleepless at many nights, when I'm thinking about her. ”“Well, that's good. Your heart is alive. Keep listening to what it has to say” (p. 84)

The alchemist also tells Santiago's secret to quiet his heart when he complains that he finds it difficult, “My heart is afraid that it will have to suffer,” and Santiago tells to the alchemist one night as they looked up at the moonless sky, “Tell your heart that the fear of suffering is worse than the suffering itself. And that no heart has ever suffered when it goes in search of its dreams, because every second of the search is a second's encounter with God and with eternity”(p.85)

Before taking leave from Santiago, the alchemist initiates him with yet another secret:

“What you still need to know is this: before a dream is realized, the Soul of the World tests everything that was learned along the way. It does this not because it is evil, but so that we can, in addition to realizing our dreams, master the lessons we've learned as we've moved toward that dream. That's the point at which most people give up. It's the point at which, as we say in the language of the desert, one dies of thirst just when the palm trees have appeared on the horizon”(p.87)

At the end of the novel, Santiago attains the place of his dreams and feels stunned. In order to show the contrast between the one who chases the dreams and wins it and the one who leaves it thinking it impossible. Coelho has purposely depicted the character of the leader of the refugees from the tribal war as a person who has missed an opportunity to attain his treasure. The courage of Santiago opens all the door of his inner self. In his dream he obviously sees the exact location of the treasure. But his 'self-love'

makes him reluctant to take up any attempt to achieve it because his heart does not want him to suffer in his search of the treasure. That's why he tells to Santiago that, "I'm not so stupid as to cross an entire desert just because of a recurrent dream" (p.172). But, Santiago has the strong and deep desire to follow his dream. He is eager to accept the pain involved in achieving the treasure and obtains the treasure at the end. He knows that one should listen to one's heart, "Remember that wherever your heart is, there you will find your treasure" (P.111).

Santiago finally discovers the hidden treasure and achieves selfhood. His involvement in the soul of the World or the collective unconscious makes him understand the nature of life and the value of love. Similarly, Santiago too feels that once he has decided to set on his journey there is no turning back. Purposely, Coelho has put Santiago at the center or as a subject and he teaches how to live life and how one can change one's life by altering his attitudes. The Alchemist brings home the biblical message that God made man in his own image and hence whatever is possible to God is possible for the children of God. Transformation is the key of life. Things transform and finally have to become one with the Supreme Self.

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