



*Journal of Advances and
Scholarly Researches in
Allied Education*

*Vol. VII, Issue No. XIV,
April-2014, ISSN 2230-7540*

**A STUDY OF PAULO COELHO'S "THE
ALCHEMIST"**

AN
INTERNATIONALLY
INDEXED PEER
REVIEWED &
REFEREED JOURNAL

A Study of Paulo Coelho's "The Alchemist"

Shaista Yasmeen*

P.G. in English Literature, Govt. Teacher, Graduation from Jammu University

Abstract – Paulo Coelho is a Brazilian writer. He is well known for using rich symbolism in many of his works. Brazilian author not only writes about self fulfilment and personal happiness, he also embodies his success stories. Coelho's territorial independence made him the most famous Brazilian author abroad. His books have been translated into 81 languages and published in 170 countries. In the Novel, The Alchemist, even alchemy, the central symbol of the book, entails coaxing metal to achieve into own personal legend to turn into gold. As a result, the idea that all individuals should live in the singular pursuit of their individual dreams emerges as the primary theme of The Alchemist. The Alchemist, which has sold at least 65 millions of copies and holds a position in Guinness World Record for being one of the most widely translated books in the contemporary world. His mesmerizing novel "The Alchemist", is regarded as one of the magnum opuses that deal with the self-recognition of the protagonist of the novel.

Key Words: Alchemist, Symbolism, Guinness world record, Mesmerizing, Magnum opuses.

-----X-----

OBJECTIVES:

- 1) The general objectives of the proposed research paper is to emphasize how simple Shepherd boy accomplishes his dreams, which most people find difficult to achieve in their life.
- 2) The study also presents the transformation which takes place in the protagonist on his way to quest.

METHODOLOGY:

The research work is divided into two: Primary and Secondary sources. The primary source of the research paper is from The Alchemist Novel and the secondary source comprises of Library resources and Internet resources.

INTRODUCTION:

Paulo Coelho, one of the most read writers in the modern era. He achieved fame with second novel, "The Alchemist". Which has sold 65 million copies worldwide. Also, he holds the Guinness World Record for having the most translated books in different languages. Before returning to his passion for writing, he drifted among different professions. In 1986, at the age of 38, he visited Spain to Santiago de Compostela. This led to a spiritual awakening he experienced on wards his journey to the Shrine, which inspired him to write his first autobiographical book, "The Pilgrimage". However, he didn't get much recognition from it. After that he devoted his full time to writing.

In 1987, Coelho wrote his second book, The Alchemist, originally written in Portuguese and later translated into different languages, made him an illustrious figure in Literature. The Novel articulates the idea of spiritual inclination, one's intended destiny and the journey to pursuit truth. Coelho has made use of magical realism to explain one's "personal quest" to attain happiness. An allegorical novel, the story revolves around the journey of an Andalusian Shepherd boy name Santiago, who dreams of a long-buried treasure in the pyramids of Egypt. The style of writing is simple and lucid, which contain strong images, interesting characters and hidden meaning with twisted plot.

Santiago, the novel's protagonist by nature, is a curious, keen observer and determined to learn new things. He used to spend what he wanted to him, and they knew the schedule of the boy. Whereas Santiago wanted to travel across the world to learn new things. He used to spend his time taking care of the sheep. The sheep were used to him, and they knew the schedule of the boy. Whereas Santiago wanted to travel across the world to learn new things on the contrary, his parents wanted him to become a priest and live a prestigious life. However, Santiago was against this thought and with much persuasion, he convinced his parents for his adventure. One day he arrives at an abandoned church with his flocks of sheep where he fell asleep and has a disturbing dream. To pursue his dream, he sets to sail in the Egyptian desert from his homeland. Santiago's curiosity leads him to the gypsy woman's house, whose archetypal role helps him in acquiring answers to all his doubts. However, as per his nature, Santiago remains agnostic to her advice. He had

sheer disappointed after listening to the words of the older woman. Dreams are the language of god when he speaks in our language, I can interpret what he has said however if he speaks in the language of the soul, it is only you who can understand. Further, he meets Melchizedek, the old king of Salem, who challenges the boy to discover the truth of life.

"To find the treasure, you will have to follow the omens".

Here, the old king appears as a symbol of motivation to people who are in search of personal legends. Each character points Santiago in the direction of his quest, which adds a new twist to the plot. As Santiago moves forward to Moroccan port city of Tangier, along the way, he becomes the target of a thug. As he entrusts the person who later cheats him leads to the development in the character of Santiago. Contemplating what to do, he thinks of returning to his homeland and to give up the idea of discovering the truth of life. Later, the words of the wise older man struck Santiago's mind. "Learn to recognize omens and follow them".

Santiago here comes out in a positive light instead of, making a decision in haste. He ponders over every incident. This empowers him which forms one of the themes of the novel. Santiago changes his mind set and decides to continue his search for his quest. He reminds himself that the work does not complete until its objectives is not achieved. Soon, Santiago commences into a new adventure full of challenges.

In Tangier, he encounters a crystal merchant from whom he regains a new outlook and discovers optimistic view which leads him to his legends. He indicates Santiago that his destiny is written in stars by using the Arabic word, "Maktub", which means, "God has written one's destiny, and whatever we experience, it occurs because it is meant to be". So, he drops the idea of returning to his homeland and has to continue with his journey to the pyramids of Egypt. After seeking blessings from the merchant, he sets on his way of reading and learning books. But he realizes that he has got familiar with the language of the world which is the soul of the world. He can now interact now just by observing his surroundings. Meanwhile he joins the caravan, where he meets an Englishman who wants to learn the universal language from the ancient alchemist. Santiago begins to read the books the Englishman has brought, but he couldn't concentrate on it as he was fascinated by observing the desert and the companion around him. The Englishman's character thwarts to Santiago's character, where the one is interested in reading while the other in observation. Later, both of them develop a companionship despite their differences. The Englishman states that everything that a human being learns comes from book not from life experience. While conversing with Santiago about his involvement in the crystal shop, the Englishman makes a statement.

"When you want something with all your heart, that's when you are closest to the sole of the worked. It's always a positive force".

Santiago tries to read the book which Englishman having. For him, the books resembled strange as it contains details about properties of mercury and salt, discussing kings and dragons. Out of the collection, the one book that Santiago took interest consists of the life stories of famous alchemists who devoted their life in purifying metals. The boy learns that the world has a soul and whoever understands that soul can also understand the language of things. Along his way to Oasis Santiago and the Englishman encounters a pretty young woman, at first glance, Santiago falls for her.

"At that moment, it seemed to him that time stood still and soul of the world surged within him, when he looked into her dark eyes and saw that her lips were poised between a laugh and silence, he learned the most important part of the language that all the world spoke. The language that everyone on earth was capable of understanding in their heart. It was love".

Santiago considers Fatima as good omen and professes their love for each other. They understand their relationship is already destined. Meanwhile he observes hawk in the sky and warns the oasis chieftain of the upcoming danger. During the battle, the boy is introduced to the alchemist. He asks the alchemist to instruct and help him in his journey. The alchemist offers to guide him in quest, which will take him across the Sahara desert and the pyramids. However, Santiago fears of losing Fatima. Here, Fatima stands for strength and generosity. She aspires him to accomplish his legend. After hearing the words of his beloved, Santiago grabs the strength and continues his journey with the alchemist in the desert. The alchemist urges Santiago to engross himself in the desert and listen to his heart. He instructs he boy he should keep himself away from the worldly attractions and should concentrate on pursuing his quest. He differentiates personal legend with the one who lacks it. He states if one wants to become a true alchemist, then he must follow his heart and listen to the soul of the world. The words of the alchemist had a lot of impact on the boy. He decides to follow his heart and performs a miracle. He transforms himself into the wind, which proves him that he is suitable to become an alchemist. Santiago rides through the desert, listening and following his heart. He starts digging the place where his tears fall. While digging that place, same thieves attack him thinking he is hiding treasure. The thieves beat him badly and ask for treasure. Santiago screams and tells them about his recurring dream. Like the crystal merchant, the thieves ignore his dreams. Whereas the leader of the thieves responds that he too had a parallel dream where he saw an abandoned church that sheltered shepherd and sheep. He tells Santiago that he didn't went in search of the treasure as it was just a dream and he advice the same to Santiago. After his departure he learns the actual place where the treasure is hidden. In

search of the treasure, he returns to his homeland. Santiago now learns that his quest was valuable itself even though it ends where it begins.

CONCLUSION:

Through Santiago's journey, the author intricate that everyone has the right to chase his dreams Coelho is of the view that dreams don't have price. The novel highlights the inner quality that everyone should realize.

The book proved to be life changing and highly awakening to those who want to achieve their quest.

REFERENCES:

- 1) Coelho, Paulo, "The alchemist", Harper Collins Publishers.
- 2) Dash, Rajendra Kumar "Paulo Coelho's The alchemist, the Memories of life Management skills" IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Suences, vol. 3, no. 3, 2012 pp. 1-4.
- 3) Soni, Sonia (2014). "Life Realized through riddles: A study of Paulo Coelho's The Alchemist", MIT international Journal of English language and Literature, Vol. 1, no. 2, 2014, pp. 85-91.
- 4) "The Alchemist/Study Guide". Course hero, www.coushero.com/Lit/TheAlchemist/Summaries.

Corresponding Author

Shaista Yasmeen*

P.G. in English Literature, Govt. Teacher, Graduation from Jammu University

shaistachauhan8@gmail.com