



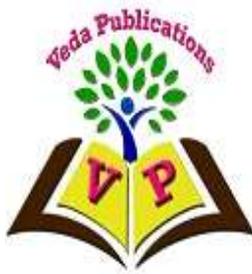
DESTINY AND FIGURATIVE INDICATION: AN OBSERVATION ON SANTIAGO IN PAULO COELHO'S *THE ALCHEMIST*

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ABSTRACT



The recent research paper desires to provide the center of attraction to the quest for destiny and the figurative reference in Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist*. Paulo Coelho acknowledged for utilizing plenty of symbolism in his description of spiritually inspired journeys captured by his character. Paulo Coelho's works serves as a way for the self-actualization and self-discovery to the readers. In the book, *The Alchemist*, Coelho displayed miscellaneous journey and quest for the achievement of destiny through the protagonist, Santiago. Symbolism is observed as an act of utilizing object to present an abstract idea. In the novel the author has used unique symbols to propose the lesson of life. Each and every word of the *Alchemist* made a great impact on Santiago. The novel, *The Alchemist* evokes many of the readers to follow their dreams and destiny. Paulo Coelho elaborate in his novel that every individual has the freedom to follow their dreams. The book, *The Alchemist*, teaches many elements like, Goal Setting, optimistic thinking, presence of mind, Practical manner and decision making. This book highly explores the meaning of human being's existence in the world.

Keywords: *Destiny, Dream, Inspiration, Treasure, Symbols, Optimistic Thinking, Alchemist.*



Paulo Coelho is a popular Brazilian novelist, acknowledged for utilizing plenty of symbolism in his description of spiritually inspired journeys captured by his character. Most importantly, he is renowned for his work, *The Alchemist* and *Eleven Minutes*. Readers can find the different interpretation and many approaches towards their life journey and inspired to lead their life in a unique way through his works. Paulo Coelho's works serves as a way for the self-actualization and self-discovery to the readers. In the book, *The Alchemist*, Coelho presented miscellaneous journey and the search for the achievement of destiny through the protagonist, Santiago. Originally the novel, *The Alchemist* was written in Portuguese and then it was translated into many languages. And this particular work numerously talks about wisdom and magic elements.

Symbolism is observed as an act of utilizing object to present an abstract idea. In Symbolism symbols can be used to indicate ideas, thoughts and characteristics. Actually symbols are used in all domain like Literature and Painting. *The Alchemist* is a story of a young Shepherd boy, Santiago. In the novel the author has used unique symbols to propose lesson of life. Here, Santiago is a symbol, one who symbolizes his life journey. Hjelle and Ziegler have given their opinion about style of book and that absolutely apt to the novel *The Alchemist*: "Concept, idiographic in nature that identifies the person's unique mode of adaptation to life, most notable including the person's self- created goals and means of achieving them [144].

Santiago spends most of his time only to take care of his sheep. His parents expected him to become a priest and ask him to lead a respectful and

a peaceful life. But he wants to learn and gain many things and decides to make a travel to many country. He thought that, "He had wanted to know the world, and this was much more important to him than knowing God and learning about man's sins [Coelho 8]. So he persuade his parents to let him allow to do adventures. One day he fall asleep in the church with flocks of sheep and he was disturbed by a dream. By that dream he comes to know about a treasure. So he planned to make a travel towards to the treasure.

Dream is another symbol which plays a major part in everyone's life, because many of them get success in their life only by following dreams. During his journey he supposed to meet an old woman. First he frightened on seeing that woman and suddenly she tells him that he has to follow his dream. On hearing the words of the old woman, Santiago was disturbed and utterly disappointed. She tells, "And dreams are the languages of God. When he speaks in our language, I can interpret what he has said. But if he speaks in the language of soul, it is only you who can understand" [Coelho 12].

After the utterance of the woman, Santiago decides that he never should trust in dreams. Throughout his journey he has to meet some strange person. By meeting those persons, he has learned a lot regarding the purpose of life and also the lesson of life.

Next he met an old man named Metchizedek. He is the old king of Salem and he is a man of philosophical ideas. He talks about destiny, reality, life and about soul to Santiago. He says that if anyone whole heartedly desires for anything then that desire or destiny prepares his spirit to attain the success. And the old man demands the boy to bring



tenth of his flock, then only he will tell about the hidden treasure. The next day, he confesses to Santiago that he has to follow the omens to discover the hidden treasure. The old man explores about fate by following words, "God has prepared a path for everyone to follow. You just have to read the omens that he left for you" [Coelho 28].

The old man signifies as a symbol of inspiration to the people who are all searching for their personal destiny or desires. In this novel Santiago meet many persons in his journey and each person give a new twist to find out the hidden treasure. Santiago's quest for the treasure completely starts, when he met that old king, Melchizedek. The king gave two different stones. One is in black and another one is in white. Here, these two stones are taken it as symbols. And the names of the stones are Urimm and Thummim. The old king told him that, the black stone symbolizes 'Yes' and the white stone symbolizes, 'No'. The reason for giving this stones to him is that if Santiago is in dilemma to choose right path or in difficult to read the omens, then the two stones will help him to choose the right one in his journey. And the king reveals that the treasure is in Egypt Pyramids. So he started his journey towards Egypt.

Omen is the main symbol, which is going to determine his journey. When the king and Santiago were talking a, beautiful butterfly fluttering between two of them so according to the king it is sensed as a good omen, which he heard from his grandfather. Here, butterfly is also a symbol which signifies the independent thinking and freedom of moving wherever he / she wants to go. Like, the butterfly the shepherd, Santiago is also roving here and there to

attain his journey. Juan comments that, 'Journey has a very symbolic significance in people's life' [197]. In the world most of the persons like to travel around every parts of the world.

Money plays a powerful role in everyone's life. So here, money is a symbol and it shows how Santiago's thinking about money is changed. Next he visits Africa and experienced strange even in his every step. He does not know the language of Africa, and the atmosphere of that place everything is new to him. By selling his sheep, he has enough money in his hand and understand the word magic is something a magic one. Most importantly, Santiago sense alone because he is far away from his native land and his parents. And he tells to himself that, "Whoever has money is never really alone" [Coelho 38]. Sometime he thinks, that he took wrong decision, because his life unexpectedly changed and he feels that nothing around him.

On his way, he met a young man in the western dress who speaks Spanish to him. Santiago demands the young man's help to go to the Pyramids to find out his treasure. For that, Santiago promised the man to give money also. Soon the man asks Santiago has he enough money to reach the place. So in a friendly manner he showed the money which he is having to the young man. Finally the man ran away with that money. Now the money makes him alone. First he thinks that if he has money then everything will be around him but unexpectedly money pushed him alone.

Two stones signifies a lot in this novel. Because according to Santiago, the two stones showing that the old man was with him only. So he will get some confident and strength. Throughout his



journey he has experienced both positive and negative thoughts also. When he lost his money he felt sad and express his depression in the following words:

...I'm going to become bitter and distrustful of people because one person betrayed me. I'm going to hate those who have found their treasure because I never found mine. And I'm going to hold on to what little I have, because I'm too insignificant to conquer the world [Coelho 37].

Then he ask a question to himself that whether he is going to behave like a victim of a thief or like an adventurer to find the treasure. Then he pacifies himself, "I'm an adventure, looking for treasure" [Coelho 40].

Meanwhile, Santiago encounters a crystal merchant in Tangier. After meeting that person he get some optimistic view towards his treasure. Completely Santiago spend more than two months with the merchant, and soon he decides to leave the place to continue his journey. Often the words of the old king coming into his mind throughout the journey, "Never Stop Dreaming, Follow the Omens... when you want something all the universe conspires to help you achieve it" [Coelho 59]. Soon he joined in a Caravan. There he met an English man, whose aim is to learn the true language of the universe, specifically from the Alchemist. The English man has brought a lot of books along with him. Santiago could not concentrate on reading because he was surprised by the environment around him.

During the conversation between Santiago and the English man, Santiago said that, "We make a

lot of detours, but we're always heading for the same destination" [Coelho 74]. Santiago tells everything about his life, how he come across and also about the Crystal shop. The English man totally fascinated by the story of Santiago. Most of the time the English man talks about Alchemist only and he says, "In alchemy, it's called the soul of the world when you want something with all your heart, that's when you are closest to the soul of the world. It's always a positive force" [Coelho 75]. It is understood that the English man is also a symbol. He is a man of philosophical ideas, knowledge and positive thinking.

According to the English man, every human being can learn everything from books not from the experience which were given by life. Santiago comes to understand that soul of the world permit everyone to comprehend anything on the earth and to understand the language of things. From this novel one thing is clear is that, "everyone has his or her own way of learning things" [Coelho 80]. Next he met a beautiful young lady, named, Fatima at Oasis. Soon they started to love each other. Santiago realizes that Fatima is also a good omen and they proposes their love. So love is another symbol. Santiago tells that their relationship is also already intended. But Santiago is in the situation to leave Fatima to seek his treasure. Fatima's love for Santiago reveals through her words:

You have told me about your dreams, about the old king and your treasure. And you've told me about omens... so now, I fear nothing, because it was those omens that brought you to me. And I am a part of your dream, a part of your destiny, as you call it [Coelho 93].



Fatima is a symbol of kindness, unselfishness and courage. Here, his love encourages him to achieve the treasure. Finally Santiago meet the Alchemist and he seek his help to find out the treasure. The he started his journey with the Alchemist. Meanwhile Santiago watches the Hawks flying in the sky. According to Santiago, the Hawk symbolizes something and he tries to read it. The Hawks are always tries to tell the meaning of love. So Santiago think about his love Fatima and he says that, "I am learning the Language of the world, and everything in the world is beginning to make sense to me...even the flight of the hawks" [Coelho 95]. On this journey Alchemist advises Santiago should focus on his hunt for the treasure only, not for the worldly attraction. The Alchemist confesses, that if one wants to become an Alchemist then he should listen to the soul of the world. The following words were come out from the mouth of Alchemist, "Listen to your heart. It knows all things, because it came from the soul of the world, and it will one day return there" [Coelho 122].

In this world many of them are unaware of their dreams. Because they may think that they are inferior creature and not in the position to deserve their dreams. They think in a pessimistic way, then only they cannot achieve their dreams. Each and every words of the Alchemist made a great influence on Santiago. After his words, Santiago started to follow his heart only. Soon he and his heart become friends. His heart speaks to him and that give him confidence and courage. Finally Santiago reaches the place and he begin to dig the particular place for many days but he could not find anything. In between he was round up by thieves. They severely

attack Santiago for gold. Like the crystal merchant, the thieves also avoid his dream.

At the end Santiago understand, where the treasure is latent. He thought, "It's true; life really is generous to those who pursue their destiny" [Coelho 160]. The real truth is, if something will get an end and that end will give beginning for many things. So Santiago accepts that his hunt for destiny is a priceless one. The realization from this novel is, what are all the experiences gained by the persons throughout the life journey is identified as a real quest for treasure. This journey influences Santiago a lot to pursue his own dreams and heart. Finally he begin to see the world from his own point of view and in his own eyes.

The novel, The Alchemist, evokes many of the readers to follow their dreams and destiny. The symbols like stone, Omens, Love and the bird everything symbolizes some positive note to the boy to pursue his dreams in an optimistic way. Paulo Coelho elaborate in his novel that every individual has the freedom to follow their dreams.

The upcoming words should follow by human being, "Life is the moment we're living right now" [Coelho 81]. If everyone understand the simple concept, then the life will be an easy one. The book, The Alchemist, teaches many elements like, Goal Setting, optimistic thinking, presence of mind, Practical manner and decision making. So Santiago realizes the treasure is hidden within himself only. From this book everyone should learn that without dream life is worthless. Because dreams only inspires many great legends and give them enormous strength to achieve their destiny. This book highly explores the meaning of human being's existence in the world.

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