

## Examining The Inner Journey of Paulo Coelho in *the Alchemist*

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**Abstract:** In the complex domain of literature, writers skilfully use their individual life lessons, growths, and journeys, to shape the very core of their writings. The individuals portrayed in the creative settings help the authors to show how they have grown by showing their problems, choices, and changes. There are many themes and patterns in a story. These serve as a mirror that shows what the author is thinking and feeling, including their beliefs, problems, and philosophical thoughts. Writers use metaphor and symbols to write about their own experiences. This gives readers a lot of different levels of meaning that help them to understand their own struggles and successes. When an author writes a story, their own feelings and experiences affect the setting and mood of the story. So, there is a deep link between the author's personal struggles and the problems of the writers' characters who faces and solve themselves. This allows readers to relate to the general human experience. By weaving together different stories or using parts of their own lives, writers create a complicated story that makes readers want to work on their own personal growth and exploration. When authors write, they use their own experiences to make stories that other people can relate to. This encourages a deep and honest look at what it means to be human. In this connection, how Brazilian writer Paulo Coelho's personal life can be traced or encountered in his novel *The Alchemist* is the main focus of this paper.

**Keywords:** Paulo Coelho's life journey, autobiographical elements, themes, transformation, *The Alchemist*.

This research article looks at how the famous author Paulo Coelho's life and his famous novel *The Alchemist*, is a reflection of his own personal growth, are connected. By making links between Coelho's life and the way *The Alchemist* is told, shows how self-discovery is attained by an individual. There is a lot of information in the story about Coelho's personal journey, including his struggles, successes, and spiritual growth. This paper also looks into things like family opposition, the idea of a person's final fate, the hidden meaning in the main character's name, and the author's thoughts on how art is made. This article also tries to present how Coelho's life and writing style are connected, providing a complete understanding of how the character changes in *The Alchemist*.

Paulo Coelho, a Brazilian author, is known for his enthusiastic work *The Alchemist*. In this novel, he encourages individuals to pursue their own narrative without fear or delay. Coelho also served as a spiritual mentor to his followers. Despite his ability to inspire individuals from other nations and his current status as an enlightening author, he has also experienced numerous challenging periods in his life. He mostly focuses on human concerns as the key theme in the majority of his writings. In contrast to Shakespeare's epic heroes who faced struggles in their lives, the ordinary heroes in his fiction endure the greatest suffering.

In the novel *The Alchemist* there is a noticeable parallel in the characterization of the author, Paulo Coelho, and the protagonist, Santiago. Both individuals encountered difficulties and sought to establish their sense of self. They both achieved a profound change in their spiritual beliefs following their journeys to a specific location. While *The Alchemist* is not explicitly an autobiographical piece by Coelho, readers can discern resemblances. Coelho's life prior to *The Alchemist* is characterised by instability and lack of clarity. He had a solitary existence. Upon sharing his aspiration of being a writer with his parents, they derided and discouraged him. During his

time at the Jesuit school, he cultivated his aspiration and then transformed it into his objective. However, his parents were attempting to thwart his aspiration of becoming a writer.

Similar to Coelho, Santiago's parents similarly dismissed his aspiration when he shared his ambition of exploring the globe, seeking spiritual enlightenment, and gaining insight into the flaws of humanity. Santiago's inclination was towards shepherding, but his parents harboured the desire for him to pursue a career as a priest. Coelho's parents aspired for him to pursue a career in engineering. Both Coelho's and Santiago's families are devoutly spiritual. To this context, Coelho states as, "Everything that happens once can never happen again. But everything that happens twice will surely happen a third time." (Coelho 148)

During his teenage years, Coelho was influenced by Henry Miller's novel, *The Tropic of Cancer*. Coelho began to adopt the themes and characteristics of the novel's protagonist, and he also developed a desire to reject societal and moral norms, leading to rebellion against his parents. His parents were exasperated and enrolled him in a psychiatric facility when he was 19 years old. They observed the irrationality in Coelho's demeanour. During his hospital stay, he experienced anguish in the form of electrical shocks to his genitals and was given high doses of medication for a period of 20 days. He eluded the hospital, although his parents readmitted him following a span of 60 days. Once more, he absconded and endured a solitary existence devoid of sustenance and financial means. They accomplished it for the third consecutive occasion as well. Subsequently, he immersed himself in the realm of theatre, assuming roles as an actor, journalist, writer, and director, much to the continued dismay of his parents.

Santiago experienced a similar occurrence. Due to Coelho's three admissions to the psychiatric facility, Santiago had the misfortune of losing his money on three separate occasions. He was a victim of theft by an unknown individual in the streets of Tangier, after having sold his sheep to his friend and Melchizedek. Another occurrence of this event took place as Santiago and the Alchemist were journeying to the Sahara Desert, passing via the oasis. A group of tribesmen emerged and confiscated all the hard-earned money he had accumulated over the course of more than a year working diligently at the crystal merchant's shop. On his final attempt, he was once again robbed of his money by bandits when he arrived at the Pyramid and began excavating the sand dunes in search of his treasure. Similar to Paulo Coelho, Santiago too has three very distressing incidents.

Following a series of distressing encounters, he ultimately made the choice to live a conventional existence. He embarked on a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela in order to uncover the ultimate truth of life, marking the beginning of his profound personal journey. The aspiration of becoming a writer materialised only after his trek, since the experience propelled him along the path of his aspirations. The route to Santiago is a lengthy and mystical path that imparts fundamental truths about life, such as the need of having a clear objective, avoiding unnecessary complexity, and cultivating keen observation. In 1987, upon his return from Santiago, the author penned *Pilgrimage*, a narrative that chronicles his own journey in pursuit of spiritual enlightenment.

Ultimately, he achieved his long-awaited aspiration of becoming a writer. He acquired knowledge and expressed the belief that there is no wrongdoing in experiencing joy, and individuals should strive to achieve their aspirations. Here, what makes the author so great is that he can give his readers confidence and drive to go after their own goals. Again, he made the decision to author a second book, titled *The Alchemist*, which serves as a symbolic representation and metaphorical reflection of his own life. Paulo Coelho's use of the universal dimension in *The Alchemist* has established him as a prominent writer within the global literary community.

Similar to Santiago's role as a shepherd with intellectual knowledge, he desired to discover his true identity. He began to feel inadequate due to his occupation as a shepherd when he developed feelings for a girl who happened to be the daughter of a merchant. In addition, he desired to explore the entire globe and acquire knowledge about every intricate detail and aspect of the world. Upon hearing the Gipsy woman's explanation of his dream and her request for him to pursue the Pyramid in order to discover his treasure, the individual initially

hesitated. However, after recognising the significance of adhering to one's personal legends through the wise counsel of Melchizedek, he gradually gained confidence. He journeyed through unfamiliar territories, encountered peculiar individuals, encountered numerous obstacles, and was guided by favourable signs whenever he was diverted.

Eventually, after several years, he arrived at the Pyramid, the location where his valuable possession was concealed. However, he was unable to locate his treasure within the sand hills of the Pyramid and was informed by one of the thieves that he too had experienced a comparable dream to Santiago's. He expressed his desire to find a treasure located in the Spanish countryside beneath a dilapidated church where a shepherd and his flock rested. The revelation left him astounded, prompting him to burst into uncontrollable laughter as he finally discovered the whereabouts of his treasure. He swiftly sprinted towards his homeland and, after excavating for a mere thirty minutes, he successfully unearthed his precious treasure. He believed that life bestows great abundance upon those who actively pursue their predetermined fate. To this context, Santiago states as,

When I have been truly searching for my treasure, everyday has been luminous, because I've known that every hour was a part of the dream ... When I have been truly searching for my treasure, I've discovered things along the way that I never would have seen had I not had the courage to try things that seemed impossible for a shepherd to achieve. (Coelho 125)

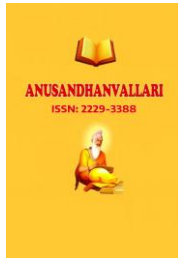
Paulo Coelho intentionally and purposefully chose the name Santiago for his protagonist. The term "Santiago" in Spanish refers to St. James, who is Apostle James, one of the original twelve disciples of Jesus. According to Roman Catholic belief, Santiago is regarded as the patron saint of Spain and his remains are located in the Spanish town of Santiago de Compostela. This location is regarded as the third most elevated site, following Jerusalem and Rome, where millions of devotee's pilgrimages to the tomb of St. James. Santiago bears a resemblance to the pilgrims who embark on a quest for spiritual communion. Juneja characterises *The Alchemist* as an oversimplified rendition of new age philosophy and mysticism, according to some critics. The majority of the characters serve primarily as vessels for conveying the author's wisdom, rather than delving into their own personal struggles beyond a superficial level. The arduous endeavour of discovering one's true identity and purpose is effortlessly resolved through the implementation of magical realism and romanticism, a phenomenon that is not commonly encountered in reality.

The conflict Santiago experiences with his parents' expectations parallels the struggles faced by Coelho himself, as both individuals encountered opposition when attempting to articulate their aspirations. While Santiago had a strong desire to travel and discover spiritual truths, Coelho had a deep longing to become a writer, a dream that his parents tried to discourage. The presence of familial disapproval in both stories serves as a backdrop for the transformation of one's own identity. Thus, by comparing Santiago, the main character of *The Alchemist* one can identify a common storyline involving familial resistance and the pursuit of an unconventional journey. However, overall, the characters serve as vessels for the author's insights, establishing a harmonious connection between personal experiences and literary expression, while also representing universal struggles.

To conclude, by comparing these two studies, we can see how Paulo Coelho's life and writing show how people change who they are. Family pushback, the search for personal tales, symbolic name practices, and the purposeful simplicity of the stories all come together to form a deep synthesis. It's clear that pursuing your own personal fate is a path to self-actualization, as shown in Coelho's trip through Santiago's quest.

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