



The Self And The Legend – PAULO COELHO’S THE ALCHEMIST

K. Uma Maheswari

MA English Literature

Sathyabama Institute of Science and Technology

Dr. R. Suchithra

Assistant Professor

Department of English

ABSTRACT:

This article examines **Paulo Coelho’s** novel **THE ALCHEMIST**, concentrating on the powerful idea of following one’s ambitions. The narrative focuses on self-discovery, personal legend, and inner faith through Santiago’s transformation from shepherd to treasure seeker. Coelho’s writing, which combines fantasy, adventure, and spiritual understanding, encourages readers to trust their hearts and accept the path to ultimate purpose and satisfaction, despite hurdles and uncertainty. Coelho’s basic yet symbolic writing style makes the work both universally relatable and emotionally meaningful. Beyond tangible riches is found in courage, progress, and the balance between dreams and emotionally meaningful. This study also considers how the narrative relates to human wants for meaning, purpose, and the timeless search for identity in chaotic environment.

Key words: Paulo Coelho, The Alchemist, Personal legend, Dreams, Inner faith, Adventure, Human desires, Identity.

INTRODUCTION:

Paulo Coelho De Souza was born on 24th august 1947 in Rio De Janeiro was a Brazilian writer and lyricist. Before turning to novel writing, he worked as a journalist and lyricist. Paulo’s outstanding novel is **THE ALCHEMIST** which sold over 56million copies and it holds the Guinness world record for being the most translated book by a living author. Paulo the renowned Britain author, has received numerous major international prizes and accolades during his career, acknowledging his literary accomplishments and influence. He Paulo had a turbulent childhood, including being taken to a psychiatric hospital by his parents for rebellious behavior and an ambition to be a writer. On his parent’s desire, Coelho enrolled in law school

and gave up his aspiration of becoming a writer. One year later, he skipped out and became a hippy, travelling around South America, North America, Mexico, and Europe before starting to use drugs in the 1960s.

Introduction to work:

THE ALCHEMIST **Paulo Coelho**, a Brazilian author, wrote the internationally acclaimed novel THE ALCHEMIST. The novel which was first published in Portuguese in 1988, has since been translated into numerous languages and has earned international renown. It is a philosophical and symbolic novel on the significance of the following one's dreams and own destiny, which Coelho refers to as the personal legend. The novel is frequently regarded as a combination of fantasy, adventure, and spiritual allegory. The plot revolves around Santiago, a young Andalusian shepherd kid who dreams of discovering a hidden treasure near the Egyptian pyramids. Leaving behind his modest life, Santiago embarks on a long journey across deserts and other nations, encountering a variety of characters including the king of Salem, an Englishman, a crystal merchant, and finally the enigmatic alchemist. Each person he encounters teaches him valuable lessons about faith, fear, destiny, love and listening to his heart.

Introduction to literature:

Brazilian literature refers to the written works created in Brazil, mostly in Portuguese, since the country's colonization by Portugal in the 16th century. It reflects the history, culture, society, and challenges of Brazilians. Brazilian literature has gone through several eras, beginning with colonial literature that concentrated on religion and native people's life and progressing to modern and contemporary writings that explore identity, politics, and social justice. The 19th century saw the rise of the romantic era, with writers such as Jose de Alencar celebrating Brazilian environment, indigenous culture, and national identity. Later, the realism and naturalism movements delve into societal themes, as evidenced in the works of Machado de Assis, usually regarded as Brazil's best author. Despite rising popularity, Brazilian literature confronts obstacles in reaching a larger worldwide audience, as some readers may only be familiar with a few well-known authors.

Summary:

Santiago, a young shepherd boy from Spain, has a recurring dream of finding treasure near Egypt's pyramids. He goes to a gypsy woman, who advises him to follow his goal. Later, he encounters Melchizedek, a mysterious old man who claims to be the king of Salem. The old man introduces Santiago to the concept of a personal legend, which refers to our ultimate purpose or aspiration in life.

Melchizedek offers Santiago two mystical stones, Urim and Thummim, to aid in decision-making. Santiago then chooses to sell his sheep and fly to Africa to pursue his ambition of discovering treasure. However, things are not easy. When he gets to Tangier (an African city), he is duped and his entire savings are stolen. Santiago is lost and frustrated, yet he refuses to give up. He gets a job working for a kind crystal vendor. By working hard, he learns about life, patience, and dreams.

Santiago saves enough money to continue his trek towards Egypt. He joins a caravan crossing the desert and meets an Englishman preparing to become an alchemist. The Englishman teaches him about alchemy, the magical science of transforming metal into gold, as well as the soul of the world, a profound bond that exists between all living beings. They arrive to an oasis, where Santiago meets and falls in love with a beautiful girl named Fatima. Even though he adores her, she urges him to continue his quest to become a personal legend.

Santiago had a vision of an attack while at the oasis. He warns the leaders, and his vision comes true. People begin to respect him. Then he meets a strong deeper meaning of life and how to listen to his heart. With the alchemist's help, Santiago is confident than ever in his ambition.

How is the Theme connected with the background of the novel: shorten

Theme: The Pursuit of one's personal legend

Paulo Coelho wrote THE ALCHEMIST during his own long personal journey to understand his life's purpose. He pursued a variety of vocations, including songwriter, actor, and director, but remained spiritually unfulfilled. Following a journey to Santiago de Compostela (Spain), he had a mystical experience that inspired him to create this novel. The novel's primary theme is shaped by the protagonist's real-life journey of searching for meaning, striving, and eventually finding purpose.

The story's main character, Santiago, journeys in search of a treasure. However, as the voyage progresses, he realizes that the true treasure is not riches, but rather the wisdom, spiritual growth, and self-discovery he obtains. His "personal legend" is a concept that depicts one's genuine purpose in life. So, the novel's background Coelho's own spiritual awakening and search for purpose is inextricably linked to the theme. The concept is not purely fictional; it mirrors the author's personal truth.

Conclusion:

The Alchemist is a timeless story that encourages readers to pursue their passions and listen to their hearts. Through Santiago's quest, **Paulo Coelho** demonstrates that true fulfilment is found in self-discovery, faith, and the fortitude to pursue one's personal legend.

REFERENCES:

THE ALCHEMIST- 1988

<https://www.britannica.com/art/Brazilian-literature>

<https://study.com/learn/lesson/paulo-coelho.html>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Alchemist_\(novel\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Alchemist_(novel))