

The Alchemy of Hope and Optimism in Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist*

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Abstract— Paulo Coelho is a well-known author from Brazil. His writings demonstrate how optimistic and hopeful he felt about life. He believed that if you have a strong desire for anything in life, it is certain that your wish would come true. The purpose of this research is to explain the symbols employed in *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho and to describe the optimistic principles that these symbols represent. This study uses a descriptive qualitative methodology. *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho serves as the study's main source of data. The study's findings indicate that the author of *The Alchemist* uses symbols to convey hope and optimism via a narrative about his or her own journey. According to the research, the symbols help the readers comprehend Paulo Coelho's premise that everyone may discover contentment within themselves.

Index Terms— optimism, hope, quest, moral.

I. INTRODUCTION

Literature is an interpretation of a man's life told via the medium of language. This medium is used to create literature. The book "The Alchemist" illustrates how the main character has the attributes of optimism about life, such as hope, faith, power, courage, struggle, positive thinking, and respect. Additionally, these characteristics are portrayed through the symbol of character, events or idea and objects. We are able to create an interpretation of the author's life story by drawing a link between the author's characteristically upbeat outlook on life and the symbol that appears in the book.

The researcher draws on some of the references from the earlier study in order to illustrate the parallels, contrasts, and distinctions that may be found in the book *The Alchemist*. In analysis with the same issue of the previous study are reviewed as a reference to support this study: the first two, researchers Puspa (2007) novel entitled "*Santiago's Self-actualization in the Alchemist based on Maslow*" and Utomo (2008) novel entitled "*Motivation of a boy to pursue his dream as seen in Paulo Coelho's The Alchemist*." In both of these studies, the protagonist, Santiago, undergo the same linked philosophy as Abraham Maslow's humanistic psychology, one way to approach this task is to do an analysis of the characterization of the novel's characters.

The second study, conducted by these four scholars and titled "*Santiago's Struggle for Success in Paulo Coelho's The Alchemist Novel (1992)*", was published in Farizi (2013). In the article headed "*The significance of nature for Santiago in his endeavor to achieve the genuine happiness in The Alchemist*" that was published in 2010 by Indrajani, the author D. Nawang (2010), wrote an article titled "*Listening to Heart, Pursuing Dreams and World's Reality*," which an analysis of the symbols employed in Paulo Coelho's book *The Alchemist*. Hasanah, titled "*Decision Making in Paulo*

Coelho's *The Alchemist*," (2008) published their findings. This researcher is employing symbols in the book to investigate the similarity notion.

The writer focuses on the positive vision of life that is shown in the book by making use of past studies that were conducted by other researchers in order to assist the writer in assessing the facts presented in this article. This research is being done to analyze the uses of symbols in reflected with the optimistic view of life through the attitudes of the character, towards optimistic view of life.

II. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

The study examines the different literary allegories in *The Alchemist* that represent optimism and hope. According to Hofstede (11–13), optimism is the faith that results in success; without hope, the harmony between a person's soul and their spiritual confidence in God proclaiming their good deeds, nothing can be accomplished. Pickering asserts that faith has the potential to enhance energy, accomplish the most amazing feats, and get through any challenge (56).

Although Seligman claims that optimism is not the rediscovery of the "power of positive thinking," optimism involves expecting good things to happen, thinking positively, and making a strong effort to view every good and bad event that occurs in real life with optimism. This is done because of a strong expectation that never lets the mind or feelings stop. Based on the aforementioned assertion, the author draws the conclusion that an optimist is someone who has the qualities of having a high degree of hope, a firm sense of faith, developing power, confronting hardship, elevating positive thinking, and elevating respect. (Seligman 15)

According to biographical critics, a writer's (or a character's) work is a mirror of their own lives and circumstances. According to this method, in order to comprehend a work fully, one must be aware of the author as

well as the political, economic, and societal surroundings of the period. It analyses the relationship between the author's biography and the literary output. To really comprehend the work, including the symbolism and references in it, one must relate it to the creator. Additionally, it's vital to consider the political, social, economic, or cultural aspects of the period the work was created in order to give additional crucial details to the analysis of the work. Wellek asserts that literary works have certain inherent components, such as structure, style, topic, characters, story, symbolism, etc.

This paper only focuses on the novel, as he states, "*If it persistently recurs, both as presentation and representation, it becomes a symbol.*" (Wellek 189). He also states additional important things, that is:

"The most widespread and flourishing method of studying literature concern themselves with its setting, its environment, its external causes. These extrinsic methods are not limited to a study of the past but are equally applicable to present-day literature" (Wellek 73).

III. OPTIMISM AND HOPE IN THE ALCHEMIST

Paulo Coelho emphasizes in *The Alchemist* that in order to succeed at higher heights, one must confront obstacles with courage and confidence in oneself.

The Alchemist tells the tale of Santiago, a shepherd lad who journeys across rural Andalusia with his flock in search of the finest pastures for his sheep. When Santiago decides to seek an interpretation of a recent dream and is instructed to visit the pyramids in Egypt and search for a buried treasure, the conflict first appears in the novel's storyline. The story follows Santiago as he journeys from Spain to the famous pyramids in Egypt across the Egyptian desert in search of the realization of his dream.

With a straightforward narrative and a logical storyline, Coelho's book has a structure that is almost mythical (Fajriani). Any information that is not directly related to the story's core storyline is notably missing from the narrative, which is tightly written and devoid of extensive characterization, explanations, or historical facts. The novel's focus is entirely on universal truths, which Coelho tries to communicate via the narrative. The success of *The Alchemist* is largely due to its symbolic components, universality of the protagonist's experiences, and message it conveys to the reader.

The Alchemist highlights a notion or want that most people fervently hope to realize: that everything in the cosmos works in harmony to realize one's dreams. Through his book, Coelho expresses the idea that this emotion is untrue and that, eventually, people lose the capacity to direct their own lives and turn into the puppets of fate. He believes that one may influence destiny by following one's intuition and paying attention to omens and indications. The novel's most endearing quality is the persistent undertone of hope that permeates the story.

In the story, it is noteworthy that Santiago's random contacts with individuals help him get closer to his goal and inspire him to keep searching despite his occasional complacency. His first encounter with the Gypsy fortune-teller is swiftly followed by a visit with Melchizedek, the ancient king of Salem, who is aware of Santiago's history and destiny and encourages the young man to follow his vision. The searcher is temporarily discouraged after a bad encounter with a thief in Tangier, but his recollections of the king's words help him make the correct decision. Santiago spends over a year working for a crystal trader who would rather fantasize about making a trip than actually go to Mecca. Santiago decides to pursue his goal after being shaken by the crystal merchant's dread of failure.

Later, Santiago meets an Englishman who hopes to visit the mysterious alchemist, an Arab with extraordinary abilities who lives near the Al-Fayoum oasis. In order to go to Egypt, Santiago joins the Englishman's caravan. It is on this voyage that the shepherd lad learns about the spirit of the universe, the language of the heart, and the complexities of alchemy. The shepherd boy Santiago is tempted to abandon his search for the hidden wealth by his developing love for Fatima, an Arabian girl he meets while travelling across the desert. However, Fatima plays the part of a soul mate and persuades Santiago to continue his challenging journey. Santiago's encounter with the alchemist in the desert at the book's conclusion aids the young seeker in discovering his inner powers and moves him closer to fulfilling his destiny.

The story is replete with omens, signs, dreams, and visions, which serve as refrains in this song of the desert. Santiago can only live up to the alchemist's expectations and fearlessly confront all the hardships that are in store for him by paying attention to these delicate discoveries of his subconscious mind. Coelho makes the implication in *The Alchemist* via Santiago's story that one can only expect to attain success, satisfaction, and happiness by discovering and adhering to one's "personal narrative."

The Alchemist was written by Paulo Coelho as an allegorical fiction, or a tale designed to represent a deeper moral meaning. Coelho created the narrative to examine the difficult but rewarding processes of change, which is a vital component of life. Coelho spent years following his ambition (Sattar 10).

The story chronicles the adventures of Santiago, a young shepherd who decides to visit Egypt after experiencing repeated dreams about discovering wealth under an abandoned chapel among the pyramids. Santiago becomes an acquaintance with an alchemist who travels with him on his quest to help him discover who he is. As Santiago learns about his identity and interconnectedness, as well as other bigger concepts that are presented as symbols—people, objects, actions, or words that represent a deeper meaning than the literal definition of the thing itself—his travels to Egypt become a greater reflection of his journey towards transformation. Symbols are a literary tactic often employed

to give the text more significance than what is found in it.

The alchemist's and his own life depend on his ability to transform into the wind: "The youngster replied, "If I can't convert myself into the wind, we're going to perish (Coelho, 203). Coelho uses conversation to plainly and explicitly depict his worry rather than implying it. The boy's stern tone, which includes expressions like "we're going to die." The protagonist and the alchemist are plainly at odds with one another, as well as with himself. He also has a burning desire to live for Fatima, his true love. The youngster brought them to the cliff where he had been the day before, but in a struggle for survival he musters the bravery and accepts this task for her sake. He instructed everyone to take a seat. (Coelho, 204). He confronts the powers of nature and shows them the strength of his love. The all-knowing hand ultimately transforms him into the wind, shocking the desert leader. According to an Arab tradition, the youngster almost destroyed a military camp by turning himself into the wind in defiance of the desert's most powerful chief. (Coelho, 218)

Santiago's quest of self-discovery and change is followed in *The Alchemist*. After having good fortune dreams, he decides to investigate the matter on his own. He encounters new individuals along the way, including a girl he falls in love with, an alchemist who teaches him about spirituality, and a crystal dealer who teaches him about deceit, who he would not have encountered otherwise. Although he first feels uneasy, he decides to look for his higher purpose. As a dreamer, Santiago embodies the human drive to pursue dreams and the desires that are innate in everyone. As he learns more, he also serves as a metaphor for everyone's capacity for growth.

Santiago often has fantasies in which he discovers wealth in a collapsed structure. After discussing this with a fortune-teller, Santiago is given a prophesy that he would discover wealth among Egypt's pyramids. Santiago gives up his work as a shepherd and sells his beloved flock of sheep in order to pay for his journey to Egypt.

Santiago considers his profession as a shepherd while travelling, even though he thinks it will be to his advantage. Even though he liked his sheep, he has a little bit of anger against them since, in contrast to him, they relied exclusively on him for basic requirements (such as food and water). These considerations show that the sheep represents contentment and humility. His sheep are pleased to spend their lives grazing and are not looking for a better life than the one they already have. The sheep lack the possibility for progress since they have a restricted grasp of potential options, despite the fact that they are not required to seek out anything better.

Santiago looks for his "Personal Legend," or his life's purpose, as he embarks on his adventure. It is revealed that in order to fulfil their aspirations, everyone must discover their "Personal Legend." A global tongue, known as the language of the globe, is used to relate the "Personal Legend" and is spoken by the Soul of the World. As the world attempts to

lead them, everyone can understand this language. It is up to the individual, nevertheless, to pay attention. The Alchemist stands for the deeper spiritual interconnectedness of people. In contrast to those who listen to it, people who disregard the World and their "Personal Legend" suffer, as shown by Santiago's hunt for the book (Kremenik 130).

A discipline of natural philosophy that was used in the Middle Ages is Alchemy. Alchemy was a popular activity or practical knowledge before to the development of chemistry that aimed to unravel the secrets of nature, particularly those relating to transformation. Alchemists often changed one material into another, such as converting impure (base) metals into gold. Because pure life cannot be altered by outside causes, alchemy has come to symbolise the purity of life. The wise men Santiago encounters throughout the book provide examples of this approach. He encounters an Englishman who discusses the research and an alchemist who demonstrates the process while on his quest. Santiago realises that the technique requires years of serious research and trial before it can be used in real life. Alchemy represents Santiago's growth as he discovers the value of patience in obtaining satisfaction.

Santiago must cross the desert, a metaphor for the obstacles that prevent individuals from realising their aspirations, in order to reach the pyramid or the destination of the voyage. The harsh weather and constant conflict in the desert make it difficult for anyone to go visit the pyramid. Santiago is nonetheless reminded by the Alchemist that these requirements are an essential component of "Personal Legends" since they impart important lessons.

Despite the difficult circumstances, Santiago discovers a well and falls in love with Fatima. As Santiago searches for indications of optimism in the hostile environment, the well and Fatima are both symbols of hope.

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