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PAULO COELHO'S *THE ALCHEMIST*: AN INSPIRING JOURNEY OF LIFE

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Abstract:

Paulo Coelho, a Brazilian author, fascinated the world with his novels. The Alchemist is one of the most read and widely translated novels. It was published in 1988 and became international bestseller. It narrates the fascinating story of the journey of an Andalusian young boy, who follows his dream and travels to the Egyptian pyramids to find the treasure. After knowing the meaning of his dream Santiago, the young shepherd, begins his journey with his sheep. He travels through many countries, finds many people. Finally, after reaching the pyramids, he realizes that the treasure was under the sycamore tree where he dreamt of it. The novel inspires us and teaches us many life lessons. Through this article, the researcher has tried to make the readers realize the value of our dreams and life.

Keywords: *Alchemist, Journey, Dream, Treasure, etc.*

Paulo Coelho is a famous Brazilian author. He fascinated the world with his wonderful novels. *The Alchemist* is one the most read and widely translated among his novels. It was published in 1988 and became international bestseller. It is an exciting story of the journey of a young boy, who follows his dream and travels to the Egyptian pyramids to find the treasure. After knowing the meaning of his dream Santiago, the young shepherd, begins his journey with his sheep. He travels through many countries, finds many people. Finally, after reaching the pyramids, he realizes that the treasure was under the sycamore tree where he dreamt of it. The novel inspires us and teaches us many life lessons.

Santiago, the protagonist of the novel, is a shepherd. He takes his sheep to an abandoned church. Every time he sleeps under a sycamore tree and has a dream in which a child asks him to go to Egypt and get the treasure at the foot of pyramids. He wants to know the meaning of his dream and goes to a gypsy woman who also advises him the same thing, to go to Egypt. He decides to sell his sheep and starts his journey to Tangier to fulfill his dream. After reaching Tangier and robbed by a thief, he works in a crystal shop. He encourages the merchant and gives his ideas that make him rich very soon. After leaving the crystal shop, Santiago joins a caravan that was going to Egypt by crossing the Sahara Desert. Santiago meets an Englishman who was trying hard to become an alchemist and was studying for that. During the journey, Santiago has much discussion with the Englishman and learns many things from him. He learns about a stone called the Emerald Tablet on which the secret of alchemy is written. The Master Work, that is an ultimate creation of the alchemy, is made from the Philosophers Stone. This stone can turn lead into gold. Another master work is a liquid called the Elixir of Life that can cure all ills. Santiago also learns that the

Englishman is traveling to a place called Al-Fayoum, the Saharan oasis, where a powerful, 200-year-old alchemist resides. The Englishman wanted to know many secrets from the alchemist.

Santiago joins the caravan. The caravan had to stay in Al-Fayoum. They wanted to avoid the violent tribal wars taking place in the desert. During the stay, Santiago falls in love with a girl Fatima, who lives at the oasis. Santiago experiences some strange omens that indicate him about an attack on the historically neutral oasis. He informs the tribals about this omen and Al-Fayoum successfully defends itself against the attack. This news of Santiago's vision reaches the alchemist and he invites Santiago on a trip into the desert. During the trip, the alchemist teaches Santiago about the importance of listening to his heart and pursuing his Personal Legend. The alchemist advises Santiago to leave Fatima and the caravan and finish his journey to the pyramids.

The alchemist and Santiago continue their journey through the desert. During the journey, the alchemist shares much of his knowledge and wisdom about the Soul of the World. But unfortunately, when they reach very near to the pyramids, a tribe of Arab soldiers captures them. The alchemist gives all of Santiago's money to the tribe to save their lives and tells the soldiers that Santiago is a powerful alchemist. He says that Santiago will turn into wind within three days. But Santiago has no idea how to turn into the wind and over the next three days he a lot and on the third day, he speaks to the wind and the sun and persuades them to help him in creating a dangerous sandstorm. Then he prays to the Hand That Wrote All. He disappears at the height of the storm and reappears on the other side of the camp. The tribesmen are frightened by the storm and let Santiago and the alchemist goes free.

The alchemist travels with Santiago for so many days. When they reach Coptic monastery, several hours from the pyramids, the alchemist shows his ability of turning lead into gold by using the Philosopher's Stone. After reaching the destination, Santiago starts digging for the treasure at the foot of the pyramids. Suddenly, two men arrive there and beat him but let him live after he tells them about his dream vision. But before they leave, one of the men explains the futility of dreams. The man gives the example of his own dream that talks about a treasure buried in an abandoned church under a sycamore tree in Spain. After listening the man's dream, Santiago realizes that the church is the same one in which he had his original dream. He finally understands where his treasure is. Santiago leaves the pyramids and returns to Spain and finds a chest of jewels and gold buried under the tree. After discovering the treasure, he plans to return to Al-Fayoum, where he will reunite with Fatima.

The Alchemist has didactic approach that teaches some powerful lessons. These lessons are applicable to the life of every human being. Firstly, it teaches the lesson that fears is the biggest obstacle in our way than the obstacle itself. "Tell your heart that the fear of suffering is worse than the suffering itself and that no heart has ever suffered when it goes in search of its dreams, because every second of the search is a second's encounter with God and with eternity."¹ He says that if we want to achieve something big, we need to enter into an unknown region that may be scary. But we should take risk as it comes with a great reward. We should not have the fear of failure because it is the only thing that makes a dream impossible to achieve.

We learn that we should be true and honest to whatever we do. Truth cannot be denied or defeated. It stands firm in any situation. If you are not true, you would not get anything in return. "If what one finds is made of pure matter, it will never spoil. And one can always come back. If what you had found was only a moment of light, like the explosion of a star, you would find nothing on your return" (Coelho). One should find something new and good each day. Life becomes stagnant, mundane, and monotonous if we don't look at it differently. But these changes depend on what we choose to see each new day. The novel makes us realize that the things that seem simplest in our life, are the most extraordinary things.

The book also gives us an insight to live in present. It states that there is no use of dwelling in the past and letting it define you. At the same time, we should not get lost and be anxious about the future. We should always live in the present because your life will be based on how you engage with the present moment. Growth, change, and evolution are the realities of the natural world. Hence, we should always try to be a better version of ourselves that benefits everything around us: our lifestyle, our family, our friends and our community.

The character of the protagonist Santiago teaches us to take decisions. We should follow our dreams and take actions to fulfill them. Action will flow out of having confidence in your decision.

We should not sit on the fence and wait for the dreams to complete; it will get us nowhere. We should be unrealistic while following our dreams. The great achievements and innovations always begin with a mindset that ignores the impossible. The most positive thing we get from the novel is if you fall seven times; get up for the eighth time because the eighth time may provide you a breakthrough. Many great people created the history after facing hundreds of rejections because they never gave up.

The novel gives us an insight that how should we live our own life and focus on our journey. Sometimes we are influenced by others, but we should not live someone else's life as it makes our life miserable. Taking advice and learning from others is not wrong, but we should be confident that it is beneficial for our desires and passions. The novel teaches us the importance of taking action. People all study, read, and listen many things, but get the full experience when people take action. The novel says, "There is only one way to learn. It's through action" (Coelho).

The Alchemist is full of life lessons. The most important essence of this book is the inspiration to follow your dreams. One's journey to achieve the aim is far more important than its destination. The novel also shows the contrast between the lives of people who realize their dreams and work hard to fulfill them and those who don't achieve their goals. Ultimately, the novel gives us the biggest lesson that when you want something, the whole universe conspires in helping you achieve it. The present paper is based on the analysis of one of the most inspiring novels of this era. The descriptive method has also been used wherever necessary. There was no need of any fieldwork for this research paper. The text of *The Alchemist*, journals, newspapers and material from websites have been used as a primary and secondary data for this research work. The MLA Handbook (7th Edition) has been followed for references.

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