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Spiritual Quest in Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist*

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Approval Letter

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Abstract

The Alchemist, a magic fable written by Brazilian writer Paulo Coelho follows spiritual quest. This study analyzes that spiritual quest of the protagonist on the basis of theory of spiritualism particularly advocated by Paul Brunton in his book *The Quest*. Santiago, the main character of the novel while following spiritual quest, faces many difficulties and adversities on the way of his inner journey. However, he ultimately attains super-conscious by the divine guidance and his own intuitive feeling; which reflect the ideas of Brunton.

This research has been divided into four chapters. The first part is the general introduction of the writer; second part describes the theory of spiritualism particularly of the inner quest. The issue of spiritual quest of the novel is proved in the third part by the help of textual analysis. Finally the fourth part includes conclusion.

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I. General Introduction of the Writer

Paulo Coelho is the writer of novel, *The Alchemist* on which my dissertation is based. Coelho was born in the Botafago neighborhood of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on 24th August 1947. His father was an engineer Pedro Guaima Coelho, and his mother Lygia Araripe Coelho who had faith in religion. His family was an upper middle class family which neglected Coelho's thought about his artistic career. Because of this clash between his and his family's creed about the career Coelho's schooling period was not so good. Since his childhood he loved to read the text of Jorge Luis Borges whom Coelho thought his literary guru. Borges was the person who simply putting ideas in Coelho's mind guided to become a writer. The concentration in Borges texts led him back in study for which he was admitted to the then strict Jesuit school, colegio desan Ignacio in Rio de Janeiro. Despite losing religious faith, he learned to be disciplined here. Yet Coelho's interest in art and literature was no less than his early life; when there were poem contests he always stood first.

Coelho made his identification that he was always a non-conformist, a seeker of new things and taste. During the guerrilla and hippy movement of 1968, which was known as the revolt against the then military regime of Brazil (1964-1985), he was the follower of Marx and Engels. He took part in election and demonstration. He was participated in all the progressive movements and was part of the 'peace and love generation'. It was during this period, Coelho confronted crisis in his way of thinking. His life has in many ways been as varied and unusual as the protagonists of his internationally acclaimed novels. Like them he followed a dream in quest for fulfillment. His dream to be a writer met with frustration throughout much of his early adult life, a time in which he worked at various professions, some of them materially rewarding but spiritually unfulfilling. "I always knew," he says, "my personal legend,

to use a term from alchemy, was to write.” In this difficult situation he attached himself with drugs, hallucinogens, sects and magic and traveling. However, his father played a vital role to bring him in the track and admitted him in Law University of Rio de Janeiro. But as a lover of art and literature how could Coelho adjust himself in Law University? In 1970, after deciding that law school was not for him he started to work in a theatre. He had earned some money there as an actor but was sent to a mental asylum in 1974 by the military dictatorship then ruling in Brazil. Escaping from mental asylum he traveled through much of South America, North America, Mexico, and Europe.

Writing was still his strong interest. Before dedicating his life completely to literature, he worked as theatre director, actor, lyricist and journalist. Returning to Brazil after two years, he tried journalism. He also started a magazine called *2001*. The magazine went only two editions. As part of Brazilian rock scene, Coelho wrote song lyrics for famous performances in Brazilian music, such as Elis Regina and Rita Lee. His most well known work was with Raul Seixas. Together they wrote such successes as “Eu nasci ha dez mil anos atras” (I was born ten thousand years ago), “Gita” and “Al Capone” amongst sixty other songs. Seixas taught Coelho the magic of communication: a complex message doesn’t need to be hard to understand- the message must be as simple as possible to grasp, even though to live it is the hardest of things.

As he confesses in an interview to Juan Arias, during that time he was introduced to the work of controversial English mystic Aleister Crowley, which influenced his collaboration with Raul Seixas. The influence extended not only to music, but also to plans for the creation of the “Alternative Society,” which was to be an anarchist community in the state of Minas Gerais based on Crowley’s premise:

“Do what thou wilt’ shall be the whole of the law.” The project was considered subversive by members of the Brazilian military, which imprisoned all perspective members of the group. Coelho is reported to have been tortured during this imprisonment.

After escaping from imprisonment he decided to live a normal life and worked as the lyricist of many music companies. But in 1976 his writing passion took him away from Brazil i.e. U.K., a place where he had worked as the correspondent of many Brazilian magazines. He also had written his biography including his childhood experiences in Jesuit school and the hard time he faced. However, this book remained unpublished.

After three failed marriages, he married a painter Cristina Oticia, with whom he is sharing the greatest success of his life as a world famous writer. Oticia led him towards Christianity. His fascination with the spiritual quest dates back to his hippie days, when he traveled the world learning about secret societies, oriental religion and mysticism. Coelho had said he became a member of catholic group called Regnus Agnus Mundi. However, the existence of the group was unverified since his own works were the only source while the Latin name was unverified. In 1986, he experienced one of the defining moments of his life; he walked the seven hundred kilometer Road of Santiago de Compostela in northwestern Spain. On this ancient highway, used for centuries by pilgrims from France to get to the cathedral said to house the remains of St. James, he achieved self-awareness and a spiritual awakening. By covering the experience of his journey from France to Spain, he published his first book ‘Diary of Magus’ which is later renamed as *The Pilgrimage*. Coelho himself offers the following comment on his spiritual philosophy: “people ask me: what is the secret behind such huge success? The only honest response is I don’t know. All I

know is that, like Santiago the shepherd, everyone needs to be aware of their personal legend the path that god chose for you here on earth.”

The journey of writing which started from *The Pilgrimage* continued and he wrote other luminous novels about the different streams of our lives including *The Alchemist*, *The Valkyries*, *By the River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept*, *Veronica Decides to Die*, *The Fifth Mountain*, *The Zahir*, *The Devil and Miss Prym*, *Eleven Minutes*, *Manual of the Warrior of Light*. These texts became avail to lead him to the zenith of glory and he is one of the top ten best writers of the world. He now lives in his Rio de Generio home located in the Copacabana beach in Brazil.

The Pilgrimage (1987) is the first of Paulo Coelho’s path breaking novel. He has tried to strike the chords of spiritualism in this finely written novel. He has cast himself as the central character and he has described his inspirational tale of spiritual journey to Santiago to Spain. He is trying to compare the experience of his black magic period, a period during which he revolted against the Brazilian military regime with the journey to a religious place. *The Valkyries* (1992) is an account of Coelho’s forty days in the desert to meet his angel. His *By the River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept* (1994) is a wonderful novel, with a poetic and transcendent narrative, that reflects all the mysteries life. Similarly, *The Fifth Mountain* (1996) teaches how faith and love can overcome suffering.

Coelho’s famous book *The Manual of the Warrior of Light* (1997) is an invitation to each of us to live our dream, to embrace the uncertainty of life, and to rise to meet our own unique destiny. In his inimitable style, he helps us to discover the warrior of the light within each of us. With inspiring short passages, we are invited to embark upon the way of the warrior. The one who appreciates the miracle of being

alive, the one who accepts failure, and the one whose quest leads him to become the person he wants to be.

The famous book *Veronika Decides to Die* (1998) in which a woman on the point of death discovers the emotions and experiences she has shied away from before. The *Devil and Miss Prym* (2000) illuminates the reality of good and evil within usual and our human capacity to choose between them. Similarly, his *Eleven Minutes* (2003) depicts that how a girl happens to become prostitute when she is convinced that she will never get true love in her life. *The Zahir* (2005) is about the writer's own notion about spirituality. It describes the pilgrimage of a successful author, who has to learn how to balance between spiritual refinement and blinding obsession, and how to remain bewildered by love without fully understanding it. It offers nothing more than a naïve listen to your heart philosophy whose goal is to realize and become friends with one's destiny.

Paulo Coelho's stunning novels explore the timeless struggle between good and evil and its relevance to our everyday dilemmas: to dare to follow our dream, to have the courage to be different, and to master the fear that prevents us from truly living. He is rather fascinated to deal with the various mental facets that create the gap between our ordinary existence and the enlightened state spiritual beings in the material world. He once said that following your dream is like learning a foreign language; you will make mistakes but you will get there in the end. In 1988 he published *The Alchemist*, a novel that explores this theme, and it launched him as an international bestselling author. Specifically Coelho is recognized for his powerful storytelling technique and the profound spiritual insights he blends seamlessly into his parables.

Those who admire Coelho praise his ability to bring his readers face-to-face with existential questions. For some he acts as a midwife in an initiation, helping them to meet the sublime within themselves. Others are intrigued by the way he shows fact and magic as intertwined. He seems to put the sacred into everybody's reach and he gives back magic to religion. Others again experience reading Coelho as a kind of spiritual caress or message. Young people perhaps especially, gain something from reading Coelho. His message can help them to find and trust their own will and way, to strengthen their individuality and to affirm their feeling of self-worth. Yet, what is simple, wise, profound and inspirational for his admirers, is simplistic nonsense to his critics.

The writings of Paulo Coelho give us a sense of conversation. We get the sense that a person whose experience is similar to us is sharing his experience with us, and instructing us the right way of life. The writings of Coelho can be understood more by the words of Eisinger. He writes, "This is the reason behind the fame of Coelho which he has achieved by using only those people as character which he himself has lived" (145).

The Alchemist revolves around the story of an Andalusian shepherd boy Santiago who has the passion for traveling. It tells the story of the boy who embarks on a journey in search of a treasure. Santiago displays an innocent idealism and allows himself to be guided by 'the signs' by coincidence as it were in his encounters with people and nature. His journey through adventurous lands is also an inner journey that finally leads to the discovery of the treasure in the most unexpected place.

The charming tale of Santiago, a shepherd boy, who dreams of seeing the world, is compelling in its own right, but gains resonance through the many lessons

Santiago learns during his adventures. He journeys from Spain to Morocco in search of worldly success, and eventually to Egypt, where a fateful encounter with an alchemist brings him at last to self-understanding and spiritual enlightenment. The story has the comic charm, dramatic tension and the psychological intensity of a fairy tale, but it's full of specific wisdom as well, about becoming self-empowered, overcoming depression, and believing in dreams. More parable than novel *The Alchemist* uses the story of a young shepherd Santiago's search for his personal legend as an allegory for everyman's struggle to break from the comfortable confines of conformity and pursue his life dreams. Along the way of course, this young man is beset by all manner of setbacks, testing his resolve and forcing him to become attuned to the soul of the world in order to survive. By paying attention to the details in the world around him, which serve as omens guiding him towards his goal, young Santiago becomes an alchemist in his own right, spinning unfavorable circumstances into riches.

This play with stereotypes, indeed, is one of the reasons Coelho's work has not always endeared itself to academic audiences, who often see it as pandering to popular taste. Coelho has a column in the online version of the Brazilian newspaper *O Globo*, and he regularly includes a horoscope column. In some ways his fiction expresses the rather simplistic ideology of the horoscope writ large; his novels are animated horoscopes.

Paulo Coelho is not only one of the most widely read, but also one of the most influential authors writing today. One possible explanation for Coelho's popularity is that he uses the shorthand of literary cliché expertly. His best seller *The Alchemist* is one of the most widely read books in the world. Translated into forty one different languages it has been sold more than forty-three million copies.

There is no doubt that Coelho is a sociological phenomenon. His books have changed what it means nowadays to be a Latin American author. Coelho's fiction indeed has broken out of the shell of a mere novel.

A wide ranging criticisms has been found about his magic fable since it has been studied, analyzed interpreted from different perspectives. He is widely acclaimed for his simple and direct language expanding on each opening statement with explanations and examples. There is strongly Christian slant in Coelho's technique but also a universal spiritual message which draws from eastern philosophies. Coelho's fiction uses the technique of magical realism, but endows them with a visionary quality, promoting the notion that each of us is destined for treasure, that each of us has a magical dream buried deep down within us and that it is up to us to search the reality around us until we finally discover where the magic is. He is widely acclaimed for his perpetual polish, splendid explanation of natural support and hostility shown by nature. His use of language is deceptively simple. His use of imagery, metaphoric expressions and the use of aphorism are extremely vivid and effective. But it has been found that Coelho's work is often full of grammatical errors when submitted to his Brazilian publishers.

For Antje Jackelen the use of elements of fable in *The Alchemist* raises Coelho's book far above the level of many would-be-wise guides for a successful life. She depicts the existential facet of the novel. In her essay *Why is Soren so popular?* she writes, "*The Alchemist* falls short of reaching the depth of a master of irony like Soren Kierkegaard. But the difference lies in the ability and willingness to deal with the tragic" (103).

Stephen M. Hart opines that *The Alchemist* celebrates cultural hybridity. Coelho's eyes are those of the hybrid in which there is no single overriding monofocal

vision of reality. In his essay “Cultural Hybridity, Magical Realism, and the Language of Magic in Paulo Coelho’s *The Alchemist*” he remarks, “The protagonist is portrayed as standing of the crossroads between various ancient cultures: he simultaneously is intersected by Christian, Hebraic and Arabian cultures. The forces of different cultures melt into each other” (311).

Spencer Johnson who is co-author of *The one minute manager* finds *The Alchemist* as a tale of universal wisdom which is applicable even now. He writes about this novel as “An entrepreneurial tale of universal wisdom which can apply to the business of our own lives” in his essay going through Santiago’s character (n. p).

Ram Prasad Bashayal finds heroic motif in *The Alchemist*. In his M. A. dissertation ‘Heroic Motif in Paulo Coelho’s *The Alchemist*’ he remarks; “The main character of the novel undergoes all the three major phases of heroic adventure that are departure, initiation, and return and almost all the subjections of three major stages as described by Campbell” (47).

Radhes Panta finds this novel very optimistic. For him, this gives enthusiasm to the reader. Commenting on this fable he says, “The novel dazzles with wisdom and philosophy” in his essay “the Most Loved Book” (41).

Gaul Hudson finds, *The Alchemist* in his essay *Reading Coelho* the Latin American mind has been presented in a trustworthy way. He writes, “The expression of Latin American class mind which is expressed by simple truths and places in a highly unique situation” (n. p).

For Charlottee Zolotow, author of *If You Listen the Alchemist* appears to be a didactic piece of literature. According to her, this book is helpful to the readers to find their own destinies in life He further says, “The mystic quality in the odd adventures of the boy, Santiago, may bring not only him but others who read this fine book

closure to recognizing and reaching their own destinies” in *Comparing Santiago with Coelho’s other heroes* (27).

Though wide ranging criticisms can be found about the novel *The Alchemist*, we can find many fields about this text which remain unexplored. Spiritual quest in *The Alchemist* is one of them which I will be exploring in the next chapter. For this exploration I will be applying the theoretical modality of philosophy of spirituality. The third chapter of this dissertation will be the detailed analysis of Santiago’s quest for spiritual enlightenment. And the last chapter which is about the conclusion brings the end of the thesis.

II. Spiritualism: A theoretical modality

In this chapter, I will discuss about the theoretical modality of spiritualism as advocated in different religious texts. *The Quest* by Paul Brunton will be discussed here in particular and other relative references in general.

Spiritualism is commonly understood as the practice of a religion in the prevailing environment of competitiveness, hatred, self promotion, material prosperity and usurpation of authorities. Spirituality, in a narrow sense, concerns itself with the matter of the spirit, a concept closely tied to religious belief and faith, a transcendent reality, and one or more deities. Spiritual matters are thus those matters regarding humankind's ultimate nature and purpose, not only as material biological organisms, which is confined to worldly things, but as beings with a unique relationship to that which is perceived to be beyond both time and the material world. But in a broad sense, the intuitionism, cosmicism, actualism in Italy, pantheism, dualism and monism, theism and atheism, are all the philosophical concepts contributed by the great thinkers during the last three millenniums and are considered as spiritualism. Subjects dealing with matters are not spiritualism, and that the concept is incapable to say about the nature of the Supreme Being, or the cosmic and universal forces.

The entire philosophy of spiritualism as considered by many distinguished modern thinkers is a thought which accepts the existence of the reality beyond material world. The truth as such accepted is beyond sensual perception of human being. In principle the acceptance of infinity, morality, the God, immortality, soul, concepts are common to all spiritual thinkers. So, spiritualism is the idea of immaterial identities which includes cosmic forces and universal mind. The practice of spiritualism is beyond sensual as well as material reach. George Lawton in his essay *Spiritualism a Contemporary American Religion* opines, "Spiritualism is not

only a belief in spirits but in spirit as well. It arose to combat Materialism and is to be looked upon as part of the post Kantian idealistic movement in philosophy” (53).

As such, the spiritual is contrasted with material, the temporal and the worldly. A perceived sense of connection forms a central defining characteristic of spirituality-connection to a metaphysical reality greater than oneself, which may include an emotional experience of religious awe and reverence, or such states as Satori or Nirvana. Equally important, spirituality relates to matters of sanity and of psychological health. Spirituality is the personal, subjective dimension of religion, particularly that which pertains to liberation or salvation.

Spiritualism has also been understood as organized religion which believes that Spirits of the deceased survive bodily death and communicate with the living usually via a media by means of messages. It is sometimes understood as the communication between dead and alive. Kantibhushan Chakrabarti in his book *Spiritual Life* writes, “The concept of spiritualism is understood as a dead interacting with the living being, an intangible and immaterial spirit dealing with the living persons, dealing with the spirit something immortal and separable from the body at death, occult communication with the departed soul” (11).

Lawton also has similar type of view. Spiritualism like all religious systems is based on the inveterate reluctance of human beings to admit that death is the extinction of their own or their loved one’s personality. For him, since the death of the person is not the extinction of his soul, he can interact with the living one. He further writes:

The chief business of spiritualism is the transmission of messages from the dead. These people say that spiritualism is a science which may be utilized by anyone regardless of his particular religious creed or lack of

it. Fortune telling has no more to do with spiritualism than it has to do with merchandizing, to communicate with loved ones in spirit and to receive the teachings that come from spirit is the purpose of spiritualism. (48)

Spiritualism lies as an essence of eastern culture; which says to achieve spirituality sacrificing material possession is a must. Westerners run after material quest and prosperity. They generally do not understand the core spirit of spiritualism which the easterners find in the sacrifice of material possessions and the practice of altruism.

Oriental concept of spiritualism is the observance of the wisdom about the ultimate truth. It is termed as Adhyatmikata. The practice of control, compassion and charity is the key to the gate of spiritual life and the key is possessed through the gradual realization, which is the practice of “Adhyatmikata”. In understanding the Sanatana principle of spiritualism it is pertinent to comprehend the basic truth of the creation and formation of therein, the cosmic energy and its prevalence within the universe. Whosoever succeeds in such achievement of realizing the networks of the creation, the threads of the same and the threads of the threads, he realizes the supreme lord.

The spiritualism here begins with the aspirations and the inquisitiveness to acquire knowledge; the knowledge about caitanya and jada, that is mind and body, consciousness and matters, discriminations and interactions amongst them. Origin of the soul and its passage and the destination or the finality, para- vidya the science of ultimate reality, the knowledge of the creator, and Aparavidya, the mundane knowledge, the knowledge of the created. It is however instant and continuous with the formation of life in the human organs since the organs acquiring sensory

capabilities commence functioning with anything in contact with. Chakrabarti further writes:

Spiritualism also deals with the traits of desire, vasana, sense-gratification, passion, repression and restraints, false ego accepting the body as the self, real ego accepting the soul as the self, ageing process, ailments, materialistic living and balance living. At higher and advanced level it deals with the attainment of knowledge about absolute truth, the Brahman, the paramatma, the super soul. In this process Para-viday supersedes Apar-viday which is about temporary and ever changing elements relevant to illusion, false existence and unstable matter. (17)

As the spiritualism begins with the aspirations and inquisitiveness to acquire knowledge, it deals with the ways and means to acquire the knowledge, the organic and inorganic elements functional in the process, discrimination of Sat and Asat, the knowledge leading to ignorance and the knowledge leading to Enlightenment.

The understanding of these discriminated truth and illusion is the comprehension of spiritualism. And this understanding begins from the deep contemplation of the phenomena of the world. In his book *Japanese spirituality* Daisetz Suzuki writes, “The working of spirituality begins from deep contemplation of the phenomena of the world, progressing finally to a desire to grasp the eternally constant something that is beyond the world of cause and effect” (75).

Spirituality may involve perceiving or wishing to perceive life as more important, more complex or more integrated with one’s world view; as contrasted with the merely sensual. It deals with the actions and deeds and the outcomes thereof, the practices and methods of conducting the living process to acquire wisdom, to get

freedom from the cycle of life, the birth and the death and materialistic existence. Many spiritual traditions accordingly, share a common spiritual theme; the path or tradition of perceiving and internalizing one's true nature and relationship to the rest of existence and of becoming free of the lesser egoic self in favor of being more fully one's true self.

So, to follow the dictums of conscience in contemplations, actions, acquisition of knowledge, sustaining and conducting temporary existence of life and for achieving the ultimate goal is spiritualism.

Spiritual Quest

One's journey towards spirituality is his journey of self or soul. When people feel their life is imperfect then the quest to achieve the goal begins. The goal here is the fulfillment of the real purpose of life as apart from the lower purposes of earning a livelihood rearing a family or so forth. The ultimate goal is to live from the over self not from the ego. When the time comes to achieve such goal people leave their family, friends, possessions etc. Some people are guided by their dreams that they should discover their "self"; they do not think about the mundane pleasure since it is insufficient to fulfill their quest. Buddha had also sacrificed sophisticated life in search for ultimate reality. Such people feel that something is missing from their life; a need that none of their possessions or relations can satisfy. So, this is not the outer or physical journey to achieve the goal of life rather it is inner journey that is the journey of self or soul to enlightenment.

So, the spiritual quest is simply an attempt of few pioneer men to become aware of their spiritual shelves. It is dedicated to find out who am I? The very idea of quest involves a passage, a definite movement from one place to another. Here of course, the passage is really from one state to another. For Paul Brunton spiritual

quest is a clarion call to man to seek his true self. In his famous book *The Quest*, Paul Brunton writes:

Spiritual quest is the deliberate and conscious dedication to the search for the ultimate truth, freedom or awareness. It is a call to those who want inner nourishment from real sources, not from fanciful or speculative ones. It calls them away from things, appearances, shows, and externals to their inward being, toward reality. And, such quest not only begins from heart but also ends there too. (4)

It is a brave struggle for freedom, a noble refusal to be the ego's puppet of the animal-self's victim, a fine resolve to win strength from weakness. In fact it is a movement in character from animality to purity, from egoism to impersonality.

What we can find here is, the person who is searching for spiritual life does not give any importance to his egoic self. One's quest for spirituality is his excessive desire to dissolve his or her ego. And there is no doubt that dissolving ego is the outcome of being free from inward bondages and attaining super-conscious. Paul Brunton further writes:

Spiritual quest is a continual effort of self-release from inward oppressions and self-deliverance from emotional obstructions. This is an adventure as well as a journey: a work to be done and a study to be made, a blessing which gives hope and a burden of discipline which can not be shirked. Here is a goal for men and women which can bring them the fulfillment of their best purposes, the happiness of being set free from their inward bondages and the calmness of knowing their own soul. (7)

So, the quest means disciplined emotions and disciplined living, sustained aspiration and nurtured intuition. It is a method, a teaching, and an ideal combined for those who seek a genuine inner life of the spirit.

Since the journey is about to discover the 'self', Hindu thinkers traditionally identify three yogas as paths to realization: Karma-yoga, the path of ethical living and cultic ceremonies; Jana-yoga, the way of understanding and study, frequently involving active contemplation and Bhakti- yoga, the route of loving devotion and service. Despite personal preferences, it is usually maintained that no one of these ways is "better" than the others, and most practicing Hindus combine aspects of all three.

Nevertheless, the Hindu says the most visible side of spiritual practices can be seen in the bhakti movements, loving devotion to a particular deity, chanting the names of God, being caught up in ecstatic states of consciousness. But Buddhism openly disregards this. According to Buddhism, in his teaching, disregarding Bhakti movements and loving devotion to particular deity, the Buddha outlined eightfold path to achieve the goal of life. He did not believe that the spiritual practices begin with meditative techniques. He purposed eightfold path as: right understanding, right thoughts, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration which can be avail to achieve the ultimate goal of life that is spiritual perfection or Nirvana in Buddhism.

Anyway, the journey to enlightenment is one for all; the means to reach the goal may vary with the pilgrims. The ways to the one are as many as the lives of men. And both agree that spiritual practices are ways of living that seek restoration of wholeness. It is to be understood as ways of uniting little self with the great life giving self in wholeness.

However, whatever the ways may be the desire of spiritual fulfillment is really the search for fuller and more lasting share in the divine peace; the true heaven which awaits us in the end whether in the freedom of so called death or in the confines of physical flesh. So, the desire to uplift our conscience beyond the world of cause and effect is the spiritual quest. It is an endeavor to lift to a higher plane and expand to a larger measure, the whole of his identity. It brings in the most important of himself—being essence consciousness.

The spiritual quest is a holy journey. So, he who is engaged on it is truly a pilgrim. Who stands on the threshold of this path is about to commence the last and greatest journey of all, one which he will continue to the end of his days. Once begun there is no turning back or deserting it, except temporarily. And as on many journeys, difficulties, fatigues, obstacles, delays and allurements may be encountered on the way. Brunton writes:

There will certainly be dangers, pitfalls, oppositions and enmities too. Despite such hurdles, his intuition and reason, his experience and earnestness will constitute themselves as his guide upon it. When he happens to face such dangers on the way there is the possibility of deviation in our purpose as well. There is also the danger to the receiving soul of mistaking its momentary emotion for real religious earning. These momentary emotions are thus mistaken that continuous, real want of the soul will not come, and he will not find the transmitter.

(10)

The difficulties on the way towards spiritual perfection appear in the form of doubt as well. When the aspirant becomes too doubtful, in such situation he may need a teacher as a guide. He must join a particular group or attach himself to one teacher. The inner

work must then proceed by the guidance of his own intuitive feeling together with the pointers given by outer circumstances as they appear. However, our first duty ought to be looked into our own souls and find whether we really want the truth. Purity in every way is absolutely necessary.

When the aspirant is devoted in his quest he can fulfill it either way, be it the grace of God or his self-effort. These two schools of thought one of which says that spiritual attainment depends on self-effort and the other that it depends wholly upon the grace of God do not really clash if their claims are correctly and impartially understood. When a man begins his spiritual quest it is solely by his own strivings that he makes his initial progress. The time comes, however, when this progress seems to stop and when he seems to stagnate. He has come to the end of a stage which was really a preparatory one. The stagnation indicates that the path of self-effort is no longer sufficient and that he must now enter upon the path of reliance upon Grace.

This is because in the earlier stage, the ego was the agent for all, his spiritual activities, whilst it provided the motives which impelled him into these activities. But the ego can never be really sincere in desiring its own destruction, nor can it ever draw from its own resources the power to rise above itself. So, it must reach this point where it ceases self-effort and surrenders itself to the higher power which may be variously named God or the higher self, and relies on that power for further progress. But because the aspirant is living in a human form, the higher power can reach him best through finding a living outlet which is also in a human form. So, it bestows its grace upon him partly as a reward and partly as a consequence of his own preparatory efforts by leading him to such an outlet, which is none other than a master or guide in the flesh. No man is wholly saved by his own effort alone nor can any master save

him if he fails to make effort. Thus the claims of both schools are correct if introduced at the proper stage.

The Yoga Vasistha also states that there are two kinds of paths leading to liberation. If one should, without the least fail, follow the path laid down by a teacher, delusion will wear away from him little by little and emancipation will result, either in the very birth of his initiation by his guru or in some succeeding birth. The other path is where the mind is, being slightly fortified with a stainless spontaneous knowledge, ceaselessly meditates upon it, and there alights true gnana in it, like fruit falling from above unexpectedly.

However, fulfilling the spiritual quest in either way is not a romantic or dramatic adventure, but a stern self- discipline. It is continual effort of self- release from inward operations and self- deliverance from emotional obstructions. It is a homeward journey.

Is Monastic Discipline Needed?

The term spiritual is very loosely used nowadays. It includes in its domain but is not limited to certain state of mystical consciousness, certain religious mental experiences, high moral attitudes and non worldly emotional reactions. Thus one man may be called highly spiritual although he may not have had any mystical experience, that is, when he is highly moral. So, monastic discipline is not essential part for a person while searching spiritual awakening. Paul Brunton also focuses on this fact and says that living a moral life is more important than embodying oneself within monastic discipline. According to him, a person without following monastic discipline too can achieve spiritual perfection in his life. He writes:

It is less important whether or not we live under monastic rules than whether we live faithfully in the purpose which prompted those rules

to be formulated. Whether a man stays within the household and secular society or whether he enters the monastic or ascetic one, his enlightenment is neither guaranteed by the second choice nor blocked by the first one. The god within him is the secret watcher, be he layman or hermit he can defile or purify himself in either estate, grasp the truth or miss the point whether active in the world or enclosed in a religious order, ashram or temple. (129)

So, the purification of mind may be accomplished at home or it may be accomplished in an ashram-monastery. The point is that holiness is not necessarily limited to hermits and monks; it may also belong to householders. It is immeasurably more important to have inner detachment than to wear a monk's robe. Detachment from the world is an absolute necessity for the man who seeks authentic inner peace, and not its imagined counterfeit. But renouncement of the world is not necessary to any except those who have an inborn natural vocation for the monkish life.

Spiritual Enlightenment

Besides consciousness in the animal world (perception and action), and self – consciousness in the human (intelligence and will), we have spiritual consciousness or super consciousness, a level of experience at which new aspect of reality reveal themselves. At the spiritual level the individual becomes aware of the substance of spirit, not as an object of intellectual cognition but as an awareness in which the subject becomes its own object, in which the timeless and space less is aware of itself as the basis and reality of all experience.

When a person attains super consciousness, the soul of the person is unified with the super soul and becomes one with the eternal spirit. S. Radhakrishna says such men discovering their 'self' attain super-conscious and become eternal. In his famous

book *An Idealist View of Life*, he writes, “The awakened man draws back from his mind, life and body and all else that is not his true being and knows himself to be one with the eternal spirit which is the soul of all phenomena” (302).

Spiritual enlightenment or awakening is the primary goal of almost all spiritual practices, traditions and religions and for any spiritual seeker. It is the truth seekers’ goal in life. When the goal is achieved or when a person realizes his ‘self’, the enlightened life of the person begins. When one can live in the state of pure bliss and carry on in the midst of his daily round activities he has become a jivan-mukti (a liberated person). This state is the “eternal present”, in which personal consciousness is transcended permanently. For such a person there is neither ego nor world nor other persons. In his book *Spiritual Discipline in Hinduism Buddhism and the West*, Harry M. Buck opines such man is free from the present, past, and future. He writes:

A liberated person is devoid of ideas of “I” or “mine”; he looks on the body as a mere shadow, an outer sheath encasing the soul. He does not dwell on the past takes no thought for the future and looks with indifference on the present. He has the power to know present, past, and future at the same time. He is the super human attaining super-conscious in his life. (18)

Such a person surveys everything in the world with an eye of equality. He is no longer touched by the infinite variety of phenomenon; he no longer reacts to pleasure and pain. When the wall between his little ego and the infinite being collapses, he is said by some Orientals to have entered Nirvana, the void, and by others to have joined his soul to God.

This is the spiritual climax of one’s life, the dramatic moment when consciousness comes to recognize and understand itself. He will know that this is the

day of his spiritual rebirth that struggle is to be replaced henceforth by serenity, that self-reproach is to yield to self-assurance, and that life in appearance is transformed into life in reality. At last he has emerged from confusion and floundering and bewilderment. He is able to experience the blessed satisfaction, the joyous serenity of an integrated attitude wholly based on the highest truth.

The divine presence has now become to him an immediate and intimate one. Such man can perform some miracles which seem to be uncanny in general life. The person knows present, past and future at the same time. He is the master of two worlds like the Jesus. Paul Brunton in his next book *Enlightened mind, Divine mind* opines:

It is natural as well as inevitable that one who has entered into the larger life of the over self should show forth some of its higher powers. Such an individual's thoughts are informed by a subtler force, invested with a diviner element, pointed by a sharper concentration, and sustained by a superior will then are those of the average person. He has a better capacity to enjoy life and a truer expression of happiness than those who delight only in ephemeral pleasures and sense satisfaction. (73)

This is the condition in which a person becomes one with the ultimate entity and attains super consciousness. Now the person becomes god-like. As the God has no desires, the person also has no further desire after fulfilling his quest. It is the state of eternality, the ultimate truth or reality. The Hindu thinkers affirm the reality of life eternal or release from rebirth. S. Radhakrishna opines this state of awakening as:

It is the supreme status of being in which the individual knows himself to be superior of time, to birth and death. It is not a life merely future

or endless but a new mode of being, a transfigured life, here and now. It transcends individualism to rise superior to the phenomena of time and thus escape from rebirth. Now the person need not face the cycle of birth, death and rebirth. (304)

Thus, Nirvana is considered as the highest form of spiritual practice which leads person beyond the state of death and rebirth. Therefore it is parallel of immortality. Sir Aurobindo in his famous book *Essays on the Gita* shares same type of view about the characteristics of liberation and says it is timeless, space less and beyond cause and effect. He writes:

Nirvana means the extinction of the ego in the higher spiritual inner self, that which is forever timeless, space less, not bound by the chain of cause and effect and that changes of the world mutation, self blissful, self illuminated and forever at peace. He becomes the Brahman; he is unified in consciousness with the immutable divinity of the eternal self which is immanent in his natural being. (225)

So, Nirvana, the spiritual consciousness is the condition of being merged of soul and super soul, the state of attaining super consciousness, the destruction of extinction of limited separative consciousness and it is the whole original and eternal and final truth.

It is a new dimension altogether, dealing with things eternal. This piece of Nirvana is reached when all the mental consciousness is perfectly controlled and liberated from desire and remains still in the self; when motionless like the light of a lamp in a windless place, it ceases from its restless action, shut in form its outward motion, and by the silence and stillness of the mind, the self is seen within, not disfigured as in the mind, but in the self seen, not as it is mistranslated falsely or

partially by the mind and represented to us through the ego, but self perceived by the self. Then the soul is satisfied and knows its own true exceeding bliss, not that untr tranquil happiness which is the portion of the mind and the senses, but an inner and serene felicity in which it is safe from the mind's perturbations and can no longer fall away from the spiritual truth of its being.

It is the putting away of the contact with pain, the divorce of the mind's marriage with grief. The firm winning of this inalienable spiritual bliss is the divine union; it is the greatest of all gains and the treasure beside which all other lose their value.

III. Spiritual Quest in Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist*

The main crust of Paulo Coelho's novel *The Alchemist* is the hero's spiritual quest and his faith in recurrent dream to fulfill it. Santiago, the main character of the novel, denounces the life his family wanted to impose upon him simply leading his life towards spiritual perfection. Finally, the protagonist becomes one with the ultimate entity thereby attaining super conscious which benefits the whole mankind with the divine message. Applying the philosophy of spirituality the researcher is going to prove this condition in the novel.

Santiago is born in lower middle class farmer's family. His family, however, provides him education so that he could be a priest which is supposed to be a prestigious profession in his family. His parents wanted him to become a priest, and thereby a source of pride for a simple farm family (Coelho 8). But he is not happy with his father's decision to make him a priest rather he has the passion for traveling different parts of the world so that he could know much better about the world. His father tries to convince him the meaninglessness of traveling. He gives the example showing those people's life who come to visit their land and return getting nothing. Santiago nevertheless, is persistent in his passion and counter's his father's logic about traveling and argues "I want to know the world, and this is much more important to me than knowing god and learning about man's sins" (Coelho 8). These two thoughts passion for knowledge about the world and the revolt against the imposed life are crucially noticed in oriental concept of spiritualism. We can find in those texts related to Buddhism one of the dominant branches of spiritualism, Buddha had also revolted against the life his father wanted him to live. He did not want to live the life of the prince which would be much pleasant. He does not care about the prestige of royal family which could be badly affected by his decision. Rather,

ignoring all the worldly pleasure he leaves home to find out the causes of unhappiness in human beings in this mundane world. He also sacrifices the love to his family. All these things happen because of the passion for knowledge about the reality of the world. And there is reciprocal relationship between the quest for knowledge about the ultimate reality of the world and spiritualism. Denouncing his father's will our hero Santiago, too, becomes a shepherd, a mean profession for his family, to know the world in detail. He is happier to be a shepherd than becoming a priest for the knowledge about the world.

Traveling much of the parts of Andalusia as a shepherd Santiago happens to face the same dream once again; a dream, in which a child comes, plays with his sheep and leads him towards Egyptian pyramid where he is assured to get the treasure of life. Treasure is the personal legend or a being's reason to live. Everything in the world has a personal legend and by reaching one's personal legend they add to the soul of the world, the purity of the world. So, Santiago's dream can be taken as an inspiration to find his destiny in life. And very few people have the chance to know about such destiny of life which is taken as the legend of their life. This destiny of life is known to them as in the forms of dream or things like that. Santiago is one of such few.

Dream becomes a simple guide to those people to live their life beyond cause and effect. As we know the dream is the sacred language of god to people Santiago takes it seriously. Despite his little interest in his dream in its first sight, however, his true inclination towards spirituality starts while he decides the dream to be interpreted after its twice occurrence. He goes to Tarifa for the interpretation of the dream. There he meets a gypsy woman. The lady demands one tenth of his treasure when he will get it. She says "I am not going to charge you anything now, but I want one tenth of

the treasure if you find it” (Coelho 13). This makes Santiago laugh out of happiness and asks to interpret the dream. But he gets disappointed when the woman suggests simply asking him to go to the pyramid and find it. She says “and this is my interpretation: you must go to the pyramids in Egypt. I have never heard of them, but if it was a child who showed them to you they exit; there you will find a treasure that will make you a rich man” (Coelho 14). Hearing this, the boy is surprised and irritated. He is not seeking out the old woman for this. He did not need to waste his time just for this. Santiago is not the type of a person who wants to become a rich man in his life. After the twice occurrence of same dream he is inspired to find out the treasure of his life that is the ultimate reality; a being’s reason to live. And to know all about this one should live the life of spiritual perfection which is possible only after attaining super conscious. So, he seems to be persistent to follow his dream and to get the treasure of life. If he wanted to be a rich person he would not disagree with his father and he would be a priest which was a prestigious profession in his society as well.

The behavior of gypsy woman makes Santiago almost leave his dream unnoticed. He even decides that he will never again believe in dreams. He becomes confused. But his quest to find out the treasure is further motivated when he meets an old man named Melchizedek the king of Salem. Santiago is confused with the man first. The man appears as a grace of god. So he knows everything about Santiago. Pointing out the book which Santiago is reading the king says, it describes people’s inability to choose their own destinies and it ends up saying that everyone believes the world’s greatest lie; that at a certain point in our lives we lose control of what’s happening to us and our lives become control by fate. Santiago gets startled thinking that whether the old man is pointing him by saying so. He suddenly reveals to the man

that he has refused to live the life of imposition thinking that it will be avail to clarify him he is not the person of the type. However, Santiago's confusion about that man increases when he accidentally asks him to give one tenth of his sheep so that he could reveal the way to find out the hidden treasure of the boy.

In the journey of purifying the 'self' we may find teachers on the way. These teachers help make our journey easy and comfortable. Paul Brunton says, "The spiritual journey must proceed by the guidance of his own intuitive feeling together with the pointers given by outer circumstances as they appear in any form" (The Quest 136). Brunton further says that these teachers are thought to be a divine guidance. They lead the person's life towards achieving the ultimate goal of life. The goal is the fulfillment of real purpose of life as apart from the lower purposes of earning a livelihood rearing a family or so forth. Brunton further clarifies that the goal is for us to live from the over self not from the ego. And here too the king appears as the teacher of Santiago in the form of divine grace. Clarifying his existence in the form of teacher Melchizedek says:

Not always in this, but I always appear in one form or another.

Sometimes I appear in the form of a solution, or a good idea. At other times at a crucial moment, I make it easier for things to happen. There are other things I do, too, but most of the time people don't realize I have done them. (Coelho 22)

In this way, the king is trying to persuade Santiago to complete his journey thereby discovering his 'self'. He also laments that most of the time people ignore his advice in such crucial moment of life. He further clarifies that whatever the form as a teacher it may be he appears as solution or good idea.

As in the form of grace of god, but before the boy could say anything, the old man leaned over, picked up a stick and began to write in the sand of plaza. There in the sand of plaza the boy read the names of his father, and his mother and the name of seminary he had attended. This man guides Santiago as if he has known everything that he wished and says, “You are trying to realize your destiny and you are at the point where you are about to give it all up. And when you want something the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it” (Coelho 21). So, here too, Melchizedek as the guide of Santiago motivates him to find out the treasure of life consequently becoming the enlightened one. He strengthens his point saying that the universe also helps in this process.

Melchizedek has been sent by the god to guide Santiago properly to make his dream realize. Being a teacher, Melchizedek further supports him in fulfilling his quest. He suggests that Santiago should follow the omens. God has prepared a path for everyone to follow. And Santiago also has to read the omens that the god left for him. By saying so he provided him two stones, black and white to read the omens if any difficulty would appear. These stones are the guidance for the boy to follow his dream properly. Directing the way for discovering the truth Melchizedek finally instructs the boy, “Don’t forget that everything you deal with in only one thing and nothing else. Don’t forget the language of omens. And above all don’t forget to follow your destiny through to its conclusion” (Coelho 29).

This is how Melchizedek as the teacher sent by the god guides Santiago towards achieving the enlightened life. Because getting the treasure of life is discovering the ‘self’ or finding the ultimate truth. Such people’s life is filled with spiritual perfection. And to attain spiritual enlightenment if they feel the need of teacher in difficult situation there exists a teacher by the grace of god. Our hero

Santiago is also directed towards fulfilling his quest by the king of Salem who, after giving much of suggestions provides him two miraculous stones to read the omens.

After getting much of directions from Melchizedek Santiago decides to go to the Egyptian pyramids reaching where he would be enlightened one. He is ready to sell his sheep too. He sacrifices his love to his sheep as he has done to his family. He gathers courage as well as self confidence. He thinks that he has left his father, mother, and his home town just for the passion to know the world and he is confident that the things will go in the similar way if he leaves his sheep as well. He says, "I left my father, my mother and the town castle behind. They have gotten used to my being away, and so have I. The sheep will get used to my not being there, too" (Coelho 26). Here, he assures himself that the sheep will be inhabited to live in his absence as well. Now the thing is clear that Santiago is not only passionate for traveling but also impatient to get his dream come true. He has clearly shown his quest to get the treasure further increased. And we obviously know that getting the treasure of life is not only earning a simple livelihood rather it is the awakening of 'self' as well. So he has the quest for spiritual enlightenment.

The boy's spiritual quest is intensified when he meets Melchizedek the next day and gives him six sheep as the cost for his guidance. Santiago becomes much hopeful when all the other sheep are immediately purchased by his friend. Melchizedek interprets it as the principle of favorability or the beginner's luck. It is because he says, "There is a force that wants you to realize your destiny; it whets your appetite with a taste of success" (Coelho 27). These surprising incidents took place one after another further motivate Santiago to believe in his dream. Now sacrificing the love for his family as well as his sheep he ventured to go towards Egyptian

pyramids to find out the ultimate reality of life. And sacrificing love is one of the crucial steps considered in Buddhism towards finding out the treasure of life.

The journey of Santiago towards Egyptian pyramids is not only the journey happening in outside world but it is a journey within his mind as well. Spiritualism says the journeys are interrupted within the pilgrimage when he is too doubtful about accomplishing his task that is achieving the real purpose of life. Paul Brunton opines, “The person may face dangers and pitfalls here which can deviate the purpose of the pilgrims” (The Quest 5). In this parable too the hero faces such dangers while on the way towards discovering his ‘self’. When Santiago moves towards Egyptian pyramid he reaches to a place in Africa called Tangiers which is two hours distance from Andalusia Spain. In this new place, he faces difficulty because of the lack of common language. Neither the African people nor our hero could understand the language of each other. As a consequence he is cheated by a local person.

While on the way at a teashop in Tangiers, he thinks about the way to find his treasure. He had enough money in his pouch left by the selling of sheep. When Santiago is drinking bitter tea in a hotel he hears a voice in Spanish asking him his identity. He gets surprised by the person and looks at the new comer’s face. He is from this city and is of same age as our hero. Santiago talks to the young man about the way to reach the Egyptian pyramid sharing his secret to the new man ignorantly. The owner of the tea shop, though he wants to help Santiago, is unable because of the lack of common language. At the time of paying bill the shopkeeper tries to separate Santiago from the new comer grabbing and talking to him in an angry stream of words. But he fails to save Santiago from stealing when the new comer who really is a thief tells Santiago that the shopkeeper wants to steal his money. He makes the things clearer by saying Tangier is not like the rest of Africa; this is a port and thieves are

common in port. Entrusted by the new comer he gives him the pouch. Unfortunately, he ran away stealing money when Santiago is looking in an attractive sword in the market. Nothing left except his dream, two stones, and his jacket. He falls in difficulty. This is the obstacle in the journey of the quester as Paul Brunton has said in his book. This makes Santiago almost frustrated. He laments that he was happier with his sheep than meeting such fate. Coelho writes:

When I had my sheep, I was happy, and I made those around me happy. People saw me coming and welcomed me. But now I am sad and alone. I am going to become bitter and distrustful of people because one person betrayed me. I am going to hate those who have found their treasure because I never found mine. And I am going to hold on to what little I have, because I am too insignificant to conquer the world. (Coelho 37)

Now, he has the feeling of humiliation. He thinks himself as not being enough to know the world in detail.

Such obstacles had previously been seen as in the form of doubt in Santiago. He doubted that he was sure to acquire his dream in reality. Brunton has said that doubt also can hamper in the journey of pilgrims when he is searching for spiritual perfection in his life. He says, it may cause the deviation in the purpose of pilgrims. Santiago also doubts whether his dream will change into reality. This has happened when he meets Melchizedek for the interpretation of his dream.

After being unsatisfied with the gypsy woman in Tarifa he goes to an old man (Melchizedek) for the well interpretation of dream. When the old man talks to Santiago as if he has known everything about him, he is wondered from the old man. He gets the dream well interpreted from this man and decides to go to the Egyptian

pyramid to get the treasure. But he does not sacrifice his profession as a shepherd and his sheep earlier. Even after the well interpretation of his recurring dream by the old man he doubts whether his dream will convert into reality. He hesitates to go to the pyramid quickly. He roams around the window from where the tickets were sold for Africa, the way to the Egyptian pyramid. There one of the men who is selling tickets asks him if he could help him. But Santiago replies “may be tomorrow” (Coelho 24) moving away from there. This makes us think that probably he will move tomorrow towards achieving the treasure. However, he is confused within himself and thinks going back to his own sheep. He loves his sheep. He loves his profession. He is fascinated with his profession.

While standing at the ticket window, the boy had remembered his flock, and decided he should go back to being a shepherd. In two years he had learned everything about shepherding, he knew how to shear sheep, how to care for pregnant ewes, and how to protect the sheep from wolves. He knew all the fields and pastures of Andalusia. And he knew what the fair price was for everyone of his animals. (Coelho 25)

Now, he decided to return to his friends stable by the longest route. He seems to be deviated from his purpose for some moment. As he walked past the city’s castle he interrupted his return, and climbed the stone ramp that led to the top of the wall from where he could see Africa in distance. Someone had once told him that it was from there that the moors had come to occupy all of Spain.

Here, sitting at the top of the wall and looking around the Africa, he thinks that neither the woman nor the old man understood his reality. He desires that the old man and the woman be impressed by the fact that he was a shepherd. But they were

solitary individuals for him and who no longer believed in things, and did not understand the shepherds become attached to their sheep.

Santiago's confusion about choosing right decision reaches in climax at that moment when the wind began to pick up at the place where he had sit. He knew it as a levanter because on it he thought the moor had come from the Levant at the eastern end of Mediterranean. Confusion increases as the levanter does.

The levanter increased in intensity. Here, I am between my flock and my treasure, the boy thought. He had to choose between something he had become accustomed to and something he wants to have. There was also the merchant's daughter, but she was not as important as his flock, because she did not depend on him. (Coelho 26)

However, he is not deviated even at the moment of severe confusion about choosing his true vocation. His decision to venture towards getting treasure overshadows his thought about going back to his sheep. He is persistent in his quest because he thinks that he left home, his father, his mother, the town castle behind and he is confident that he can leave his sheep as well. "The sheep will get used to my not being there, too, the boy thought" (Coelho 26).

Santiago's quest for freedom thereby getting the ultimate goal of life increases as the levanter further becomes strong. He thinks that the wind has brought the moors; it has also brought the smell of the desert and of veiled women. It had brought with it the sweat and the dreams of men who had once left to search for the unknown and adventure for the pyramid. The boy wishes to get freedom in life, "The boy felt jealous of the freedom of the wind, and saw that he could have the same freedom. There was nothing to hold him back except himself. The sheep, the merchant's

daughter, and the fields of Andalusia were only steps along the way to his destiny (Coelho 27).

So, Santiago has strong desire to get enlightenment despite some doubts on achieving it. After being robbed by his so called friend in Tangiers he was almost deviated from his purpose. He could go back to Andalusian fields. But he does not get back. Though he had not a cent in his pocket, he had faith and seemed to be confident to follow his dream thereby fetching it into reality. He had decided, the night before, that he would be as much an adventurer as the ones he had admired in books. He realizes that he has to choose between thinking of himself as the poor victim of a thief and as an adventurer in his quest of his treasure. But Santiago is persistent in his quest. He has to get it anyway. He is not the type of person who leaves his quest unnoticed. "I am an adventurer looking for treasure" (Coelho 40).

Now, Santiago has to go through much of struggle to get the treasure. Being a bankrupt he goes to a crystal merchant's shop to work so as to collect money for his remaining journey. He starts cleaning the glasses there. The merchant also becomes happy with the boy as his business was increasing after he had started to work there. Santiago is devoted in his work of cleaning the glasses which could be avail to go him to Egypt. "I will clean every piece of crystal in your shop. In return I need money to get to Egypt tomorrow" (Coelho 44). He needs money to go to Egypt. He is not working here as his aim of life but it could be a ladder in fulfilling his quest to achieve the treasure. "It was not exactly the kind of job that would make him happy" (Coelho 49). While working in crystal merchant's shop he earns some money there. However, he seems to be happy with working and earning money. As Brunton has said such person may deviate his purpose leaving the ultimate goal, Santiago too, once again is affected by his desire to purchase sheep and to pass the life as shepherd. He calculates

between the money he has earned and the price for the sheep. He seems to be money minded for some moment. He thinks Egypt as distant dream. "Because Egypt was now just as distant dream for him as was Mecca for the merchant" (Coelho 53). He was almost deviated from his purpose here. The boy desires to go back to his sheep. But Bruntot has said that such deviations in the mind of a person are removed by the proper guidance of the grace of god. Here, too, after Melchizedek, the crystal merchant appears as the teacher of Santiago. He declares Santiago's inner quest as if he has known everything about his desire. He says, "You know that I am not going to go to Mecca. Just as you know that you are not going to buy your sheep" (Coelho 58).

The boy takes the crystal merchant seriously. He thinks that the crystal merchant is not an ordinary man. This makes him to rethink about his purpose of life. He also remembers the old man and his behavior towards him. It brings him much enthusiasm to venture towards the Egyptian pyramid. He does not miss the chance to get the treasure of life. He holds Urim and Thummim in his hand which also inspired him to move forward.

After working eleven months and nine days in crystal merchant's shop Santiago moves towards Egyptian pyramid with a new sense of hope. With new courage, new wisdom and a better purified mind he is ready to face any obstacles that appear in his journey of discovering the 'self'. He gathers self confidence to get his dream come true.

The news that the caravan is moving toward the oasis makes Santiago very happy. He joins the caravan and moves forward in his quest. He is hopeful that after crossing the dessert he will get treasure. While joining caravan he also meets an English man who is searching an Alchemist who lives in the oasis of Al-Fayoum. He was going to meet him so as to know the universal language which everybody used to

understand but now is forgotten. At that time the caravan leader too appears and instructs to the people in caravan that desert is not easy to pass and that a disobey of the leader's command can lead to death. Santiago thinks that since he had learnt something from his sheep, from the gypsy woman, from the king, from the crystal he could also learn something from the desert. He becomes friendly with the camel driver as well. The camel driver in one conversation teaches the lesson of life to the boy. He says, "We are afraid of losing what we have, whether it is our own life or our possessions and property. But this fear evaporates when we understand that our life stories and the history of the world were written by the same hand. There are rumors of tribal wars" (Coelho 80).

The tribal war is major obstacle for the caravan to cross the desert; sometime resulting in the death of many people. The camel driver informs Santiago about the tribal wars which he said had already started. The threat of death and the tribal wars become major obstacles in the journey of Santiago. These obstacles are considered common in such journey as advocated by Brunton. As the person needs proper guidance in such situation the camel driver helps in holding patience. Santiago's inner journey within his mind becomes much stronger when camel driver teaches him suggesting living in present. He further says, "To die tomorrow is no worse than dying on any other day" (Coelho 103). So, camel driver also becomes a teacher in Santiago's journey of discovering the 'self'.

When the caravan reaches the oasis Al- Fayoum the chieftain welcomes it. The tribal war in the oasis has interrupted his journey now. Because of this Santiago and the Englishman both are engaged in searching the Alchemist. The boy approaches a woman who had come to the well to fill a goatskin with water. He asks her there where the Alchemist would live. She replies him she is not conversant with the man

the boy asked, and suggests that it would be better not try to converse with women who are dressed in black because it is a taboo to speak with a married woman by a unknown person in their culture.

After they feel that the people in the oasis do not know the term Alchemist they start asking about the man who cures people from illness. As they are instructed not to speak with the married woman Santiago respects the tradition despite the English man's insistence to speak with them too. At this point there appears a lady who was not in black dress. Santiago approaches her to ask about the Alchemist. When he reaches near her he knows that he was standing in front of her twin soul. Though the outer journey of Santiago is interrupted here he is getting improved in his inner journey. After the appearance of his twin soul Fatima he knows that the only language which the whole world can understand is the language of love. Love is the sacred language of the world. He becomes dumbfounded and motionless. Despite that, they develop intimacy. The girl not only reveals her name as Fatima but also tells its meaning. The boy asks her about the particular man they were searching there. Fatima informs, "That's the man who knows all the secrets of the world" and further clarifies that he lives in the south. Then the English man leaves for south to search the Alchemist. Next day at a well Santiago meets the English man who reveals his meeting with the Alchemist; a man who had instructed him to practice alchemy by himself by converting lead into gold. The Alchemist had told the English man to follow his destiny alone and by himself.

After the English man leaves the place, Fatima appears whom Santiago tells his entire story of his life and also about his interest to marry her. He reveals that the war was a curse for him in his purpose. The caravan leader says, "We don't know when the war ends. So, we can't continue our journey" (Coelho 92). From this too, we

know his inner desire to get his treasure anyway. So, here too, god has sent Fatima as the guide in the journey of Santiago's spiritual quest. She pleads him to complete his journey. He should not stop at the middle path of his quest. Fatima further convinces him saying that it was those omens that brought him to her. "That's why I want you to continue toward your goal. If you have to wait until the war is over, then wait. But if you have to go before then, go on in pursuit of your dream" (Coelho 93). Santiago thinks it seriously. He also remembers the English man who had said fear of failure keeps man away from their destiny. He gathers courage along with their inspiration.

Though it seemed external journey of Santiago, he is equally undertaking the journey inside his mind towards attaining super conscious. Now he is in the situation where he can understand the language of the world. When Santiago is wondering about the meeting with Fatima, he sees two hawks flying in the sky. He sees one hawk attacking the other. At that time he gets the image of armed people in his mind and the image disappears. Understanding the meaning of that omen he suddenly interprets it as the armed people might attack the oasis soon. He could interpret it because he understands the language of the world. "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). Then he moves to the chieftain of the oasis to talk about his perception. But the chieftain challenges him if the forecast changes into reality he provides gold coin to Santiago for every ten killed person if not he would be killed. Santiago accepts the challenge because accepting challenge was common to him. He is alarmed by what had happened. He has succeeded in reaching through to the soul of the world, and now the price for having done so might be his life. It was a frightening bet. At the same time the Alchemist as a stranger comes to meet the boy because he knows that there is a person who can understand the language of the world. He

checked the boy's ability; and after being convinced he calls the boy to meet him tomorrow. The prophecy turns true. The boy gets fifty gold coins. Then he moves towards the south where the Alchemist had called him.

The next day Santiago goes to the south to meet the Alchemist. When he meets the Alchemist there in the south he asks the boy whether his destiny is to meet him. But the boy answers because of the wars between tribes, which is taken as a hurdle in Santiago's inner journey, he is unable to cross the desert. But the Alchemist appears as a teacher and says, "When a person really desires something, all the universe conspires to help that person to realize his destiny" (Coelho 109). The boy remembers that the words are repeated from the old king. Santiago shows his reluctance to go to the pyramid because he had everything he wanted in the oasis. But the Alchemist replies that nothing he has from the pyramid and he has to achieve his dream into reality. Finally, convinced by the Alchemist the boy leaves the oasis and headed towards his final destination. This last guidance by the Alchemist in Santiago's journey of enlightenment becomes avail to achieve the ultimate goal.

When the Alchemist desires to meet Santiago for the first time he appears as an enemy. He is testing the courage of Santiago whether he is capable to achieve his treasure. But Santiago is always ready for death for the betterment of the people in the oasis, because his death would alarm the people of oasis about the possible attack. This makes us clear that Santiago is not loving his body or his life. He could sacrifice his life for the welfare of other people. After meeting his twin soul Fatima he has known the immortality of soul and he had no value for the fragile body. He has also known the language of the world which is wordless. These evidences prove that Santiago is developing his spiritual journey. He is undergoing many changes. He is discarding the love of his body which can be taken as a remarkable instance that he is

heading towards getting super conscious. All these things make the Alchemist realize Santiago as the true seeker of spirituality. The alchemist is further convinced when Santiago becomes able to find the life in the desert when he is asked. Now the Alchemist decides to help Santiago in his remaining journey. "I am going to help you across the desert" (Coelho 124).

The Alchemist and Santiago start their journey. The journey is very long and they come across many tribal men and see many of them in the horizon. The Alchemist teaches the boy that one needs to listen to his heart. But the boy says that his heart is a traitor. The Alchemist believes that the heart is 'as the sign of life'. Then Santiago requests his heart not to stop speaking. The heart follows the request and every time Santiago wanders away from his dream his heart alarms him. Here, we must know the fact that Santiago's heart has been united with the soul of the world. While on the way Santiago is instructed once again by the Alchemist.

Before a dream is realized, the soul of the world tests everything that was learned along the way. It does this not because it is evil, but so that we can, in addition to realizing our dreams, master the lesson we have learned as we have moved toward that dream. That's the point at which most people give up. It's the point at which as we say in the language of the desert one dies of thirst just when the palm trees have appeared in the horizon. (Coelho 126)

Santiago is now on the verge of attaining super conscious. Along with their journey they meet a lot of tribal warriors who blame them as spies and take them to the tribal chieftain. The chieftain interrogates them. The Alchemist answers all the questions and further claims that the boy is an Alchemist and he can convert himself into wind if he likes. They want to see a man being transformed into wind. But the Alchemist

says he needs three days. Though Santiago is afraid, the Alchemist leaves him helpless thinking that he has learned the language of the world and he is sure that Santiago could do so. After three days the time comes and Santiago talks to the desert wind, sun in heaven, and 'the hand who wrote all' and reaches the soul of the world. In other words, he is connected to the soul of the god or he is in Apotheosis. He now becomes with the ultimate entity. After this, Santiago turns himself into the wind. "The boy reached through to the soul of the world and saw that it was a part of the soul of the god. And he saw that the soul of god was his own soul. And that he, a boy, could perform miracles" (Coelho 145).

The lesson is pointed and obvious that when we understand our heart we are sure to accomplish our purpose. So, heart is the place where the treasure of life lies. We should learn to respect our heart. The treasure of life lies in spiritual awakening. In the case of Santiago too, his heart tells him what his strongest qualities are. The qualities he bore are, "His courage in having given up his sheep and in trying to live out his destiny and his enthusiasm during the time he had worked at the crystal shop" (Coelho 128). So we need to learn that the fear of failure keeps us away from realizing our destiny.

Now the Alchemist leaves Santiago alone to find out his treasure. He simply needs to hear his heart which would tell him where the treasure lies. When he reaches near pyramid he weeps thanking god for making him realize his destiny. As Santiago weeps, a drop of tear falls. He starts digging there thinking that it is the symbol of god. Suddenly three people appear in the pyramid and ask him the reason for digging. But Santiago does not tell anything. When they start beating him severely, he tells his dream to the people. Then the leader of the people discouraging Santiago tells:

Two years ago, right here in this spot, I had a recurrent dream, too. I dreamed that I should travel to the fields of Spain and look for a ruined church where shepherds and their sheep slept. In my dreams there was a sycamore growing out of the ruins of the sacristy, and I was told that, if I dug at the roots of the sycamore, I would find a hidden treasure.

But I am not so stupid to cross an entire desert just because of the recurring dream. (Coelho 155)

But as he is persistent in his dream he does not leave his task unnoticed. He gets nothing there. Though much of the difficulties he faces, Santiago however, ultimately reaching Egyptian pyramid discovers that the treasure of life lies in spiritual awakening. His treasure of life turns out to be his discovery of the 'self'; which is the perfect form of spiritualism. The discoveries he makes, the wisdom he acquires are the real treasures. Now he has acquired the capacity to live the life of comfort and the life of knowledge at the same time. A soul which is one with the universal soul will not be suffering the cycle of birth, death and rebirth. The novel can appeal to everyone because everyone can identify with Santiago and because like Santiago, we all dream and want to hear someone tell us that our dream will come true.

IV. CONCLUSION

Santiago's spiritual quest starts from the very beginning of the novel when he desires to know the world in detail. He has the passion for knowledge. So, he starts his life as a shepherd discarding his father's will to make him priest, a prestigious profession in his family. Santiago is haunted by a recurring dream; in which a child comes, plays with his sheep and leads him towards Egyptian pyramid where he is assured that he will get treasure. He wanders to interpret what the recurrent dream meant for him. He meets a gypsy woman in Tarifa who discourages him asking one tenth of his treasure. Then he meets an old man who inspires him to go Egyptian pyramid giving two stones Urim and Thummim to read the omens. After this, Santiago decides to go to get the treasure. The treasure is the ultimate goal of life that is higher than simply earning a livelihood. The person who gets the treasure of life can live beyond cause and effect. So, to complete his quest he sacrifices his father, mother, his home town, his profession and his sheep as well.

After being satisfied from the interpretation of the dream from the old man he ventures towards getting the ultimate reality. This journey of Santiago is not only the outer journey but also it is directed towards discovering his 'self'. As on many spiritual journeys difficulties, fatigues and obstacles appear. These obstacles are physical as well as psychic. They might even cause the deviation in the purpose of the pilgrim. But the divine guidance helps to achieve their destiny. Santiago too, faces such obstacles on the way. In Tangiers he is cheated by his so called friend. He loses everything there except his dream. This makes him frustrated from his quest. Nevertheless, he works in crystal merchant's shop in Africa to collect the money for completing the remaining journey. But he doubts in achieving the treasure. He thinks to go back to Andalusia where he could be a shepherd again. However, the crystal

merchant guides him in his quest. Santiago remembers the old man once again and collects zeal to continue his journey. He joins a caravan in desert and heads towards achieving his goal. But the tribal war in the desert causes to stop the caravan. The war becomes curse for Santiago. There he meets his twin soul Fatima as the divine grace who also inspired him to complete his journey. Though the journey of Santiago seems to be stopped here he is undergoing his inner journey. He has learnt many things from the old king, the crystal merchant and Fatima too. Now he could understand the language of the world which is wordless. When he is wandering to meet Fatima he saw two hawks flying in the sky and attacking one another. He gets the image of armed people there attacking one another. But Santiago prevents the possible war in oasis by reading the omens he had.

The Alchemist appears as the last teacher of Santiago in the desert. As in the case of old king, crystal merchant, and Fatima he learns many things from the Alchemist. Now he could convert himself into wind. He is reaching in Apotheosis because he is not afraid of the menace of death given by the tribal people. He has learned the language of the world, which is basically the language of the soul of the world. As the soul of the world is related to the soul of god, Santiago is able to perform miracles after he has reached into the soul of the world. Upon reaching Egyptian pyramid he starts to dig in one place. But he is severely beaten by there people there. He continues to dig but got nothing. However he knows that the treasure of life lies in spiritual awakening. He becomes one with the ultimate entity. He could now live in any form. The message is obvious and pointed that we should respect our heart.

Hence, Santiago, the protagonist of Coelho's *The Alchemist*, though faces much difficulties and adversities in finding the treasure of his life; he seems to be

confident in his quest thereby finally achieving the ultimate goal. The trials on the journey which make him almost deviate from his purpose become no more than the minor obstacles in his journey of spiritual quest. The teachers appeared in different phases of his journey too make him easy to find out the real treasure of his life thereby attaining super-conscious. The novel will appeal to everyone because everyone can identify with Santiago, and because like Santiago, we all dream and want to hear someone tell us that our dreams will come true. The novel can be an inspiration for anyone seeking their path in life. It teaches us when a person is confident to achieve his inner quest he can succeed achieving the goal respecting his heart.

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