

**Tribhuvan University**

**Revisiting Personal History as a Healing Force in Paulo Coelho's *The Zahir***

**A Thesis**

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**By**

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**LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION**

Mr. Gopal Upreti has completed his thesis entitled "Revisiting Personal History as Healing Force in Paulo Coelho's *The Zahir*" under my supervision. He carried his research from January, 2010. I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for Viva Voce.

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## **Abstract**

*The Zahir* by Paulo Coelho presents the different kinds of conflicting human relationships and overshadowed selfhood. This thesis observes how such relations affect the human life and how such conflicting relation comes to the harmonious point following the main aspects of ethics. It also exposes the bitter and sweeter reality of human lives and clearly shows the importance of Ethical norms and values as the healing force in human lives. Paulo Coelho has presented his characters in such a way that almost all of them suffer different kinds of problems and difficulties. Either protagonist or Mikhail they have to face so many kinds of problems. As a consequence they have to revisit their personal history following the Ethical norms and values which ultimately work as healing forces in most of the characters of *The Zahir* .

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## Chapter -I

### Revisiting Personal History as Healing Force and Ethic as Analyzing Method

Paulo Coelho, one of the most famous writers of the world, was born in the Botafago, Brazil on 25<sup>th</sup> August 1947. Since early childhood he was of artistic nature. Different kinds of literature and literary persons were familiar to him since his school life which developed in full range in his later life and he became one of the widely read authors of the world. He used to think about becoming a writer which created a kind of love for art and literature.

Paulo Coelho always struggled for his own identity and freedom. He was non-conformist. For him, every experience that life gives, are acceptable. During guerrilla and hippy movement Coelho experiences wide range of drugs, hallucination and travelling. For self-dependence and freedom he worked in theater then tried Journalism then too. None of these professions existed longer in his life. At last he became a writer. It gives him wide spread popularity and he writes books like *Pilgrimage*, *The Zahir*, *Birda*, *Alchemist*, *The Warriors of Lights* and so on.

He has become widely read writer since the publication of his first book, *Pilgrimage*. Reason behind his widespread popularity is his style of writing and his attitude of sharing self-experience with the readers. Furthermore, his understanding of human life, different sectors of human society and this world are quite heart-touching to everyone who has read him.

Since first publication of his book, he is well known writer of the world. In most of his writings readers find a kind of familiarity with the experiences and understanding of human life and this world. Paulo Coelho has admitted himself that he has written about his own experiences and understanding which are common to all human. After long meditation and dissatisfaction with ongoing human world and train he starts

writing about such things which are not well known to him too. And when he finishes the writing it is like discovering an unknown island of his own heart. While an unseen force works on him he writes without doing anything else. As he says, "by the time I sit down at the table, the food is cold, I gobble it down and go back to computer. I am no longer in control where I placed my feet, the island is being revealed to me, I am being propelled along its path, findings things. I have never even thought or dreamed of it" (71).

Perhaps his very experiences about human life and world become common to everyone and he is the representative of those people. When his books come in readers hand they are taken to the same journey of experiences and understanding like that of writer.

Paulo Coelho's personal life since his childhood to adulthood has a lot to do with what he writes. He has experienced sweet and bitter sides of human life since his early childhood. He has fought with those all powers and unseen forces of human world in his life which has challenged his self-respect and freedom. He worked as lyricist then journalist and at last he has become the writer which was his ambition in his life. Though different kinds of forces have played vital role in his success, his life partners have great role in his success.

Paulo Coelho's understanding about life and human world has shifted from narrower to wider horizon since early childhood. His vision about life, love and human relationship are changing as his experience changes. For him human life, love and human relationship are such things which are very difficult to understand. What we can do is reform our vision about them.

His very understanding about such different sectors and sides of life has scattered in his writings. His career as a writer has become from *pilgrimage*. In this

book Coelho has compared his experience of black magic period with his journey from France to Spain. It seems that every sphere of his life be it simple or difficult, have given him a kind of sense of better understanding of human life which are main sources of his writings.

In many corners of life Paulo Coelho has got himself as a person full of misery and problems. Most of such problems and difficulties are created by human world. At such points he thinks perhaps he is alone and there is no one who has felt as such. So he writes and this very writing shows and makes clear to him that he is not alone. There are so many people in this world who have experienced like him. As he writes in *The Zahir*:

From then on, I am no longer the man lost in the storm. I find myself through my readers; I understand what I wrote when I see that others understand it too, but never before. On few rare occasions, like the one that is just about to happen. I manage to look those people in the eye and then I understand that my soul is not alone. (72)

### ***Zahir* and Paulo Coelho's Vision about life**

Paulo Coelho's writing is about the different kinds of human relationship, mysterious human nature and analysis of those factors for better understanding of human life and this world. When life goes on speedily we can't revise our passed life and history. Because of it a kind of refreshness and recreative power lacks in human life. In such condition human life needs a kind of healing force which can heal person from all these dissatisfactions and monotony of life. And for Coelho we get this force from nowhere outside but concentrating our own personal history. Such revision of passed life gives us a kind of new vision and we can see our faults and negative sides

that we have done in different parts of life. When we understand those all we can improve our selves.

Like most of the novels of Paulo Coelho, *Zahir* is also one of them which presents same vision of life and human world on the bases of different kinds of human relationship. Paulo Coelho wrote *The Zahir* in January and June 2004. It is a full record of author's understanding of different human relationship and hardships of human life since the disappearance of his wife.

Protagonist's search for his wife ultimately proves to be search of his own passed long life where he discovers different kinds of negative sides in his own character. Through simultaneous searching of his wife and personal history he discovers a kind of understanding about his own life and himself which ultimately works as healing force in him and he finds a new vision of life and human world. His conversation with police officer about freedom has long lasting effect on protagonist where police officer says protagonist that he is free to go as if officer knows what freedom is. Speaking of freedom, he says, "slightly disappointed with this writer's refusal to enter in to debate with a police officer you're free to go" (8) .

He himself is in vast mist of confusion that whether his life is going on as he wishes or he has already mistaken the way of his life. It is because author has everything in his life hat he needs, but with the disappearance of his wife he comes under confusion that whether he has got true freedom or not. I'm free. I'm out of prison, my wife has disappeared in mysterious circumstances, I have no fixed timetable for work, I had no problem meeting new people, I'm rich, famous and if Esther has really left me, I'll soon found someone to replace her. I'm free independent. But what is freedom? (8)

Since the publication of the novel *The Zahir* It has got different kinds of responses from different points of views. Like other novels of Paulo Coelho *The Zahir* also concentrates on overall human relationship and human world. Male female relation, love, the mysterious nature of love, freedom and self-respect are main themes of novel which are response in different ways. Discussing about the philosophical and spiritual sides of the novel, Margret flangan opines, "submitted a novel of obsession, this table is the philosophical and spiritual chronicles of one man's self discovery. Stunned by his wife's inexplicable disappearance from their Paris home and immediately suspected of foul play by the authorities and the press" (21).

Another critic, Barbara Musica opines:

*The Zahir* is autobiographical novel. For her novel has a lot to do with writer's personal life. We can find so many incidents and evident from novel which are from author's real life experience and incidents.

Although the narrator remains unnamed there is clearly an autobiographical element in the book. The protagonist is a famous author who lives in Europe. He writer in language not widely read outside his country, which ahs relatively small reading public. (65)

In the same way searching for freedom and happiness are the crux of the novel though finding happiness and freedom aren't so easy and even difficult to understand the meaning of both terms. As Paulo Coelho says himself:

One of the great traps for human being is the search for happiness. Even though she is successful in every aspect of her life, Esther, the writer's wife, is not a happy person. But instead of doing what most people do, i.e. ignoring her feelings and keeping her busy so as to avoid having to

think about the meaning of life. She decides to go in search of this thing called happiness. (21)

*The Zahir* is novel which examines human life in its deeper level and finds out the truth that whenever a person goes on looking forward and only forward in the life he gets lots of confusion in the self- understanding. It is because he/she gets no chance to revisit the personal history. When a person really examines and revisits her/his personal history it is possible to find out new vision about oneself which works as healing force to all those confusions and problems. As author discusses himself revising his own personal history:

I fought against the hostile world of Journalism - my next job - where my first boss kept me hanging around for three whole hours and only designed to take my notice of me when I started tearing up the book he was reading - I fought for the socialist ideal, went to prison, came out and went on fighting, feeling like a working class hero. (9)

Author revises his own history at such a condition where he gets more tensed and confused about himself and this revision works as a kind of power in him. This revision makes him able to understand him and his world in new sense.

According to love ethic disbelieve in one's self or identity gives birth to an illusion-over hope in life and creates a kind of doubt over ones reality. Protagonist of *The Zahir* and other characters too, are directly affected by this very self illusion and one's reality. When characters revise their personal history they see that they have done so many mistakes in their life. While revising their personal life history they find that sometimes they have loved other too much and sometimes they loved themselves too much. And this very imbalance of their relationship with others has created lots of problems.

Gender issue of the novel is also important. It seems that author has given more freedom to the female side. Though protagonist and his wife, including other characters of novel, have gone through so many hardships, female side is shown somehow higher than male. Gender conflict has become the central issue of the novel. Dr. Wisam Mansour says, "Like Barth's *Shahrayar*, Coelho's man undergoes a radical change that meditates century's of prescribed conventional masculinity and ends not only condemning female fertility but also legitimizing it by his reunion with his wife in spite of the fact that she is pregnant by some other man" (94).

Paulo Coelho's novel *The Zahir* has the subject matter of self realization and spiritual awakening too. The characters fight for freedom and self respect as well as self realization through all life. These all struggles and hardships are for spiritual awakening of human life as Ala Galleys writes, "*The Zahir*, like Coelho's other work, concerns spiritual awakening and life altering transformation as if follows the disappearance of protagonist's wife and a man who may be her lover" (1).

Even though most of the sides of the novel have been discussed different levels, revision of own personal history and the power that one gets by revising it, is another burning issue of the novel. And I have discussed and analyzed this issue in detail in this thesis. While discussing the issue of revision of personal history and its power to create new vision about human world and human life, different kinds of events and characters will be discussed. Moreover, in this thesis I have discussed the events and characters of novel, *The Zahir*, where ethics has functioned in many ways. Human world and human life can get a lot from the ethical norms and values. Following the ethical norms and value, one can get wider range of vision through revising personal history. This revisiting of personal history in the light of ethical norms and values have the power of healing different kinds of wounds and scars of human life.

Ethics is a kind of theory about human conduct of good attitude and bad attitude. It describes and shows the right way of human life. Main aim of Ethics is to establish a right way of living in this world. As Melvil Dewey defines Ethics as, "theory of right way of life, and basis of Judgments concerning right and wrong good and bad, better or worse in human conduct and social institution" (170).

Ethics examines different factors of human life. It shows the right way in human life. A person is center of ethics. Ethics analyzes the moral sides of human life. During long life period a person may face and suffer so many kinds of hardships and problems. Human can sometimes be fed up with this hostile world. At such a different situation ethics shows the right way of living showing good and bad sides of human life. That's why ethics is a kind of science as Jadunath Sinha opines:

A Science is a criticism of common sense. So ethics as the science of morality criticizes vague and sometimes inaccurate popular notion of right and wrong. It exposes the defects and the inconsistencies of the social customs and usages, social, political and religious institutions and gives as a real insight into the nature of the moral ideal. (15)

Protagonist and other characters of *The Zahir* have faced similar kinds of different problems which are directly connected to the social institutions. In so many corners of life they have faced different kinds of social and psychological problems. And moreover, they get insight and fresh vision about their hardship when they analyze their passed personal history on the bases of morality and different aspects of ethics like good and bad. Sometimes people find themselves as self controlled and sometimes they find themselves out of self control. People become confused about what is good, duty and morality as Sinha writes, "so, there are relative good and absolute good. Ethics is

concerned with highest or absolute good. Thus the fundamental notions of ethics are right, duty and good nature of which it investigates" (10).

As Dr. Sinha says ethics is a kind of detail analysis of different aspects of human life such as duty, good manners and bad manners. We need a kind of inner vision to analyze such concern of life which we get when we analyze our whole life. While analyzing such different aspects of human life ethics can be the analyzing tool for human beings for ethics provides different kinds of vision about human life, morality and good and bad sides of human life. Most of the characters of *The Zahir* have gone through same process of hardships, confusions and conflicting human relationships which can be well analyzed by applying ethics and it's different aspect such as, morality, self realization and power of self realization.

Ethics main concern is to establish the human world where humanity develops in the highest form following ethical norms and values. In different aspect of human world ethics can show the humanistic way of life which can provide a new kind of vision and energy about human life and human world. Ethics gives importance to the self realization or perfectionism. This is the state where highest good relies. This self realization doesn't come accidentally for it human should practice different kinds of exercises like self controlled behavior and morality base Daily human life. One should not be in the control of animal instinct and impulses rather they should be in control of person as Dr. Sinha writes, "self realization According to the perfectionism, perfection or self realization is the highest good perfection is the perfection of character or rational control of feelings impulses and desires in accordance with virtue or moral excellence" (180).

Paulo coelho's novel,*The Zahir*, discusses the self realization, through hardships of human life and revising this passed life of a person which gives new and

creative insight to everyone. Human life is not full of only happiness, enjoyment and pleasures rather it is surrounded by different kinds of problems, difficulties and conflicting human relationship which can confuse human from the right way of human life. Most of the people, like protagonist and Esther, have to face such bitter reality of human life. Moreover the most challenging sides of human life are to maintain the balance during such hard times of life and to live in such a way where one can control those impulses and feelings which can damage human life. From such practices whole drama of human life should be revised because such revision gives power to live in new way as Radoslav A. Tsanoff discusses, "the true moral evaluation of a man's act must be one which judges it in terms of all that is distinctively and role of that act in the whole drama of human life" (122).

## Chapter -II

### Conflicting Human Relationship and Overshadowed Selfhood in *The Zahir*

Human beings are the creations of the God in this earth that neither live without friends nor live happily with the friends. Human relationship is such thing in human life which makes human life easier in many ways. But that is not the ultimate truth because different kinds of conflicts and problems come and go in such relationship. Sometimes a person thinks that she has got all the possible happiness and pleasure in life and sometimes this very happiness and pleasure comes under the doubt. When life goes on gently people are busy with their life, relationship with their relatives and this human world. But as soon as people have reached some point of such relationship they doubt about their achievement and at such points people revise their own passed personal history. When people revisit themselves they find the sweeter and bitter sides of the life. Human life is not full of happiness and pleasure only rather it's full of conflicting human nature, submissive human relationship and such experiences which give human being a kind of grief as well as power to live. As the author revises his own passed childhood he writes about it as:

Ever since I was a child I fought to make freedom my most precious commodity. I fought with my parents, who wanted me to be an engineer, not a writer. I fought with the other boys at school, who immediately homed in on me as the butt of their cruel jokes, and only after much blood had flowed from my nose and from theirs, only after many afternoon's when I had to hide my scars from my mother. (8)

From very childhood the protagonist has experienced a lot of bitter sides of human life. Not only with the friends found at school and village but with his own family too, the protagonist has a kind of tensed and conflicting relationship. But only

conflicts, hardships and tensed mood are not part of human life. Moreover, human needs love. Love is crucial and central point of human life. When human life starts to be meaningless and unworthy and when people start to think that their lives have gone for nothing else but only for struggle with one another for nothing, love works as a healing force on them. Anywhere they feel the presence of love. At such different situation of the life people revise their own personal history where they found power of love and its importance in their lives. Ethics is a way of understanding personal life.

Human life is full of struggles and most of the time these struggles seem to have some deeper meaning in life. Moreover, human nature is also mysterious. Sometimes people think they are the most fortunate persons in the world and sometimes they think they are the most unfortunate persons in the world. What human soul and nature want is quite difficult to fix and say. Everything has different meaning according to the situation and person defines it in their own way. It happens in protagonist's life, too. When his wife disappears police come in touch with him. In highly tensed mood they have some interviews about ongoing situations and at last police declares protagonist "free" to go. At this point protagonist analyses the meaning of freedom. As he says:

The inspector says I'm free. I'm free now and I was free in prison too, because freedom continues to be the thing I prize most in the world of course, this has led me to drink wines I did not like, to do things I should not have done and which I will not do again. It has left scars on my body and on my soul. It has meant hurting certain people, Although I have since asked their forgiveness, when I realized that I could do absolutely anything except force another person to follow me in my madness, in my lust for life. (10)

There comes a situation in human life where it seems that people have no identify at all. Even though there is good condition of protagonist and his wife, Esther, their lives feel a kind of lacking. In the beginning days they had not such loveless and mechanized daily routine. They have not discussion about their past life and ongoing life where something is lacking. Esther wants to create a new understanding about this human world, whereas protagonist has quite opposite vision about it. They enter hot discussion about Esthers being war correspondent. For Esther to be war correspondent is to find new identity of human life and human world whereas it is meaningless for her husband. As they discuss:

So, why do you want to go and cover this war?

Because I think that in time of war, men live life at the limit, after all, they could die the next day. Anyone living like that most act differently.

So, you want to find an answer to Han's Question?

Yes I do. (44)

When human life goes on like that of protagonist and his wife Esther it creates a kind of monotony and meaningless life. Every human being has to suffer such situation and condition in human life. Human should identify himself and his surroundings which helps them to create a harmonious situation in such difficulties and problematic life. In such a condition we come under the influence of our passion, feelings and we surrender before them such situation creates a kind of life which lacks morality and good sides of human life, so, to control such scattered life and to develop a kind of moral attitude we should give proper time to love each other and to share our understandings about human life and this world. If we do act in such a way it can give a new vision of life as well as inspire to live in better way. As Sayyid Lari discusses, "there is no specific place for love in our table of values, because it's major role inspires

the whole drama of our life. So these two love and upright spirit, characterize the moral attitude in two general perspectives rather than in any specific field of experience" (131).

Like the protagonist himself, his wife Esther also fights her whole life for what we call freedom. The Protagonist, since his childhood, fights for it. Human passion for power, prestige and position always comes in between moral attitude of human life and life full of conflicts and hostility. Esther also flight for her own freedom. Though her husband has not discussion with her about being her war correspondent, she, forcefully, leaves her husband and joins the field she liked. Such situation like in protagonist and his wife's life come in every human's life which may not have good attitude always. Though people declare that they are fighting and struggling for freedom and virtue, in such condition people act emotionally rather than calmly and such behaviors and action rather give human fortune and the world which is full of trouble and immoral aspects Sayyid Lari writes, "liberation from all restraints for the sake of fulfillment of instinctive urges is not real freedom, for in such a state man unconsciously negates his own being" (39).

Like Sayyid Lari has discussed, it is the part of ethics and morality whether any act of human being, in the name of freedom and liberation, are really good or bad. Ethics says that all the time human being can't be in good condition. All the time people don't act for harmonious society where only good, morality and virtue lie. There comes so many occasions and circumstances where knowingly, unknowingly people struggle and fight against themselves and at such condition men unconsciously negates his own being. The protagonist's aim since his early childhood is to be the successful writer but though his wife insists him to write, but he escapes from it. Hot discussion takes place and protagonist unconsciously negates his own being neglecting his wife's

suggestion to be the writer. As discussion goes on they have hot conversation over this subject matter as:

You enjoy my company, but hate being by my self you are always looking for adventure in order to forget more important things. You always want to feel the adrenaline flowing in your veins and you forget that the only thing that should be flowing through hem is blood.

I am not running away from important things. Give me an example of something important.

Writing a book

I can do that any time.

Go on then, do it. Then, if you like, we can go our separate ways. (20)

Human beings get trap in different kinds of social, individual and psychological/problems. It is because human beings always tries to get what they want but they never feel that they have got what they have wanted. To be free from such different kinds of problems human should follow moral attitude which can control their instinctive passions and feelings. As Dr. Jadunath Sinha explains the functions of ethics:

It has indirectly to treat of several problems which are psychological, philosophical, sociology and political in nature. The psychological problem with which ethics is concerned is those of the nature of voluntary actions, classification of the spring of action and the relation between desire and pleasure. (11)

As Dr. Sinha has discussed protagonist and his wife have faced so many individual and psychological problems. These all problems and conflicts between these two characters have root in very human nature which seek for the thing it wants. It can't

be the good and moral at all the time. But when person acts without understanding each other's feelings and experiences, it creates a kind of conflict in day to day life. Esther and her husband get trapped in such a problem which is related to pleasure of and happiness in human life. Esther wants to be war correspondent whereas her husband is against it. As they go on:

So, what's all this about wanting to write about a war in some  
godforsaken part of the world?

Like I said, I need to.

Haven't you got everything you need?

I have everything a woman could want.

What's wrong with your life then?

Precisely that I have everything but I'm not happy. (37)

Esther's such saying clearly indicates the human passion and thirst to create one's own identify when there are all the things that a human may need there may still be some lacking in human life. it may be identify of personal self and may be passion for knowing and understanding the outside world than that of private one.

In spite of all the fulfillments of the human need both protagonist and his wife can't be happy. and further more such desire for knowledge and experience of outside world plays central and vital role to create and establish human identify and one own personality. Introducing this very human nature about outside world and need of one's own personality William Lillie, writer of "*An introduction to Ethics*" says that:

A man's intention refers to the outside world, the world of anticipated results as they are foreseen by the agent, the motive refers to the state of the agent's own mind, the spirit in which the action is done rather than

the consequence of the action, Although a fully conscious motive has an aim which indicates the spirit of the action. (30)

Thus human relationship has its base in the nature of human which has such character that no human relationship remains conflictless and with full satisfaction. For the better understanding of our relationship and to develop the moral and good attitude towards human life and society we should try ourselves best for the peaceful and harmonious relation with reach other.

### **Chapter -III**

#### **Mikhail and Esther's Relation way: to Revision of Self.**

The protagonist and his wife have different kinds of hot discussion about their daily lives and their perspective about human world. Even though they have all the things that any human beings need in the world, they do not have quite understanding and warm relationship. Protagonist and his wife Esther have struggled a lot to get such a successful life. Certainly, both of them have passed so many days and night of hard and conflicting daily life. In the beginning days of their marriage too, they had some problems and issue which used to create a kind of misunderstanding between them but they had managed such situation. They both used to inspire each other for better understanding of human world and human life.

But after all these struggles and such a wonderful achievement in life protagonist and his wife come at a point where both of them can't make clear themselves to each other. Even though all the requirements of human life are easily attainable for them, both of them feel a kind of lacking in their lives. Though they are enjoying a kind of great success in the life a kind of curiosity about knowledge and adventurous experience forces them to follow another track that could bring a kind of misunderstanding in their life.

This very lacking and a kind of dissatisfaction ultimately cause Esther's disappearance from the life of protagonist. It is obvious that both of them had different sorts of conflicts and discussion about their vision about their life but they had reached some meeting point. And now when Esther accidentally disappears from protagonist's life he feels a kind of strangeness in himself. He just remembers their discussions and tries to find some concrete reason about her disappearance but is unable to find. They both have discussed a lot above human life and truth but nature of truth is not like that

as G.L. Duprat says, "truth is not imposed by brute force it is proposed by some, accepted by others and becomes common though by the free adhesion of minds" (11).

It may be so that Esther had gone in search of that very truth about human life and this world which she couldn't get in the time when she was with her husband. And this disappearing has a lot to do with both of them police investigations shows that she has an affair with a person named Mikhali.

The police were told that they had met before, although no one knew how often, Esther has always said that the man who concealed his true identity behind the name Mikhali was some one very important, although she had never explained whether he was important for her career as a journalist or for her as a woman. (3)

Though protagonist has very less idea about the person called Mikhail he meditates upon the possible consequences of her disappearance and none of them give him final answer and the protagonist seems as if he is out of his own control. At such a critical point of his life he can't think properly, what is good and what is bad when one loses self control and morality, good attitudes and feelings about human society and relationship come under doubt. All the virtues and good attitudes disappear and it seems that all the aspects of harmonious society, good attitude and self realization are ridiculous. As Abraham Edel opines, "it is simply the hope that the great issue of the modern world can be faced with the confidence that there are solutions available to reason and experience modern man does not ask for a complete morality" (18).

As these lines suggest, protagonist meditates upon possible happenings and he revises his own passed life where he finds that such incidents has happened to him so many times. He has faced same sorts of experiences in his passed history, too. His passed experiences say him that it will take some times to recover. He will be tensed for

some certain period of time and one day he will be ready to well come another life full of love. As he goes on:

Until one morning, I'll wake up and find I'm thinking about something else, and then I'll know the worst is over. Might heart might be bruised, but it will recover, and become capable of seeing the beauty of life once more. It has happened before, It will happen again, I'm sure when someone leaves, it's because someone else is about to arrive I'll find love again. (16)

It so happens in human life that person, being controlled by emotion, passion and certain circumstances of situation, comes to such understanding about human life that gives him grief, pains and sadness. But person can't realize that his/her very understanding may not be true as well. Human beings are under the control of such uncountable circumstances and situations in human life where human life seems as if it is a drama, performed in stage. It so happens to the protagonist too. At first he decides to forget Esther and find another love but he is quite unknown that circumstances will not let him to do so rather he will be very much closer with ester in his upcoming life. The protagonist's all assumption about Mikhail and Esther proves to be false when he comes in touch with Mikhail and knows that Esther and Mikhail have some kinds of relation different than the protagonist had thought at first. Human nature is like such that in such tensed and difficult situation person can easily divert from main stream of human life, morality and good attitude like that of William Lillie opines:

In such circumstances a person may even say that he had an impulse to do a right action and that he was wrong to have acted differently. In such a case he may be referring to an intuition of the rightness of the action, rather than to impulse, this intuition resembling an impulse in it's

arousing a tendency to action and in it's being isolated from the main stream of ideas. (25)

It so happens in the protagonist's case, too. He was looking towards new possibility of love in his life in those days of Esther's disappearance. But as soon as he comes in touch with Mikhail and knows about their relation he suddenly fills up himself with Esther's feeling. He even knows that only Mikhail can show the path to Esther. The Protagonist and his beloved Marrie's relation comes to an end with this incident. This attitude towards his wife, Esther, becomes *zahir* which fills every corner of his life during her disappearance. During this period he goes through series of revisions of his own personal history and his own view about human world and human life. Marrie comes in touch with protagonist during the period of Esther's disappearance and when she is found again Marie becomes clear that Esther has become '*Zahir*' for the protagonist. So, Marrie just revises her life and understands herself through one paragraph of protagonist's book called "*A Time to Rend and a Time to Sew*". As she recites, "when I had nothing more to lose, I was given everything when I ceased to be who I am, I found myself when I experienced humiliation and yet kept on walking, I understood that I was Free to choose my destiny" (82).

This very vision about oneself gives a kind of new power to Marrie which can heal her hurt of life and she gets new energy to leave protagonist and to start her new life. On the other hand protagonist becomes full of true understanding of his passed marriage life with Esther and without being influenced by passion and emotions he decides to realize himself in deeper level as well as to leave Esther in her own situation and world which she had chosen once. At this point of understanding protagonist says:

The following morning, I swore to myself that I would not try to find out where Esther was living. For two years i had unconsciously preferred to

believe that she had been forced to live, that she had been kidnapped or was being black mailed by some terrorist group. Now that I know she was alive and well, why try to see her again my ex-wife had the right to look for happiness, and I should respect her decision. (85)

In this way protagonist becomes self-sacrificial but he was not such in the beginning day of the disappearance of Esther and at this point of new turning of his own life, because of the meeting with Mikhail and his own revision about his passed life, the protagonist gets new vision about life and happiness. At those days of his wife's disappearance he used to be in tensed mood thinking about possible upcoming of their relation but these days his vision of life changes a lot. This new vision gives him deep sense of love and happiness. He loves Esther more than he used to love her in his passed days but the attitude is new. For the ethicist the meaning of love, satisfaction and happiness is different from that of common people. These terms have greater meaning than common people usually think. As Radoslav A Tsanoff opines, "happiness is a term of broader and deeper meaning. It describes the experience or condition of life which we cherish. it connects with satisfaction in the pursuit of whatever is considered good, of the values with which we are identified" (62).

As suggested by these lines human beings have their identity and meaning of life only when they are living their lives understanding the deeper level of happiness, identity and self understanding. When the protagonist comes in touch with Mikhail he is forced to revise some of the moments that he had spent with his wife Esther before her disappearance. Once, while talking about human life and love they had similar kind of discussion about deeper meaning of human life and love. The protagonist revises this conversation and finds that in common daily life, when people have no time to think about the real and deeper meaning of human life, they don't understand their meanings.

Once Esther and her husband goes on discussing about human life, self identity and love. At this point Esther takes side of that kind of love and human relation which one may feel at war zone. Comparing human life and their attitude about life and love Esther says, "If some one is capable of loving his partner without restrictions, unconditionally, then he is manifesting the love of God. If the love of God becomes manifest, he will loves his neighbor, he will love himself. If he loves himself, then everything returns to its proper place" (106).

Even though human beings struggle and fight their lives for the identity and self realization, these things have no meaning when they are alone. Every one needs this society to love and to be loved. Society and other human relationship is the base of human life. Every person struggles with conflicting human relationship to establish his/her own personal self. But human being can not understand this truth that he is not meaningful creation in this world without human society and relationship. When a person doesn't revise own passed history and analyzes it from different points of view, s/he can't get new vision about own life which can heal and cure all those wounds and scars of life. To develop the good manner and harmonious attitude, it is necessary to revise the mistakes of the life. These are human tendencies if a person can learn from his/her own life history it is positive and develops good attitude about the life. Pointing this side of human life Radoslav A. Tsanoff opines, "man cannot attain the full possibilities of the abundant life by himself. He realizes his own larger meaning and values by identifying himself justly and generously with the need and the fulfillment of others. He lives his own fuller life in theirs as they in his" (127).

Protagonist understands the value of life, meaning of human relationship and feels peace and harmony after he gets a terrible accident. Before this accident he hadn't understood the life in such away. During the time when he was in hospital, he comes

closer to life's meaning which he had never understood. Having new vision about life and allowing this new vision to work as healing force, the protagonist accepts the reality of human life which gives him a kind of relief and he revises his personal history and comes to better understanding of human life and this world. As he says:

That night I went to sleep smiling "*The Zahir*" was disappearing and Esther was returning, and if I were to die then, despite all that had happened in my life, despite all my failures, despite the disappearance of the woman I loved, the injustice I had suffered or inflicted on others, I had remained alive until the last moment, and could, with all certainly affirm:

My day was good, let night fall. (174)

## **CHAPTER-IV**

### **Protagonist's Search for His Wife-Way to Revision of Self**

Human beings are such kind of being which have its own system of living and functioning. Human life is a kind of journey where a person has to cross different kinds of turnings knowingly and unknowingly. Every turnings of human life give a kind of vision and inner insight to human being. Those uncountable turnings and crossings of human life have their own importance and deeper meaning too. Everybody has to cross such crossings and turning in their life time. But when they are in the process of crossing and turning they really don't understand their meaning. There comes a certain point in human life when one revises his /her own personal history where she/he has crossed different kinds of turnings. Moreover a person comes to realize the inner and deeper meaning of those events and incidents which had no such importance in the past.

This research discusses some of the events and characters, like the protagonist, Esther and Mikhail, as the universal human tendencies, where they have to cross different kinds of happenings, incidents and accidents in the life. Every human being is to have similar kind of journey. And when, in certain point of human life, they revise their life journey, they get a kind of inner vision which enables them to accept their life as a process of understanding and this understanding gives a kind of power and energy to live peacefully. Protagonist, Esther and Mikhail have crossed different corners and sides of human life together which ultimately prove to be the process of their own self understanding. Every action of human beings either proves to be the process of self fulfillment or the process of retrogression. Neither such human decision can be said as bad decision nor as good one. When situations and the conditions are realized as a process of understanding then every happenings come to be the process of understanding. And moreover, for the better understanding of human life and for the

harmonious relationship with each other, it is necessary to revise those every happening of human life. As Radoslave A. Tsanoff opines:

At the cross roads of decision, our choice may point towards Fruition, harmony and self fulfillment or to backwash and regression. The slope in which we are moving is an upward but also a downward slope , our every act and word and thought are either uplifting or degrading us, and through us uplifting and degrading other.(128)

Esther's disappearance teaches a great lesson to the protagonist. The protagonist just remembers that when he was with Esther they had spent most of time discussing about the things which had no real importance in their lives. It is obvious that protagonist discovers so many hidden mistakes and faults in his life when he revises his own personal history and it gives some kinds of power to heal his some scars. But after publishing the book, *A Time to Rend and a time to sew*, he feels a kind of relief. But this is not to mean that he has cleared all the dissatisfactions from his heart. It is really hard to do so. Marie appears in protagonist's life and has some conversations with him about energy of forgiveness. Marie says such forgiveness comes from love and love transforms life in positive way. Protagonist can't stand such saying and refuses to accept Marie's opinion because he thinks such things are hard to practice. He thinks so because he has passed the life differently. He has still so many bitter experiences and feelings about this human world and life. Pointing to his passed struggles and such bitter sides Marie goes on, "you had to hide tears from his parents. You still bear the marks of the skinny little boy who couldn't get a girlfriend and who was never any good at sport. You still haven't managed to heal the scars left by some of the injustices committed against you in your life" (67).

As Marie remembers protagonist's passed life, every human being has to face similar kind of experiences and feelings. What matters more for the human life is self-respect and self understanding. As Ethics says that it is very hard to live without being oneself. Self-identity and self respect is needed most for the better living of human beings. If one feels being hated and misbehaved from the society s/ he feels a kind of bitterness which can make person ill mentally and physically. Protagonist has become similar kind of person in the past which has still some place in his heart. But one must do justice towards himself by creating a kind of self identifies and self respect as Radoslav A.Tsanoff opines, "other things in nature may come and go, we may use them as our convenience and expediency may dictate. The moment our moral will is involve however, unyielding self –respect demands our primary concern for it's integrity and inner worth" (107).

It happened in every sphere of protagonist's life that everywhere he finds that he is misbehaved and because of it he has lost his self – respect and it has given a kind of wounds to him Things are not same always. Human life is always changing. According to this changing human being keeps on changing every time. Human understanding, feelings and experiences are under the control of different kinds of environmental circumstances. This happens to the protagonist, too. He realizes that when Esther was with him and they were spending their martial life, the love and passion that he feels for her now was not so strong at that time. When she disappears from his life he starts to feel a strong love for her. When Mikhail comes in contact with him, he always wants to find that where Esther is. During the period of his wife's disappearance the protagonist has through different kinds if inner changes. He has discovers many parts in his life which have given him a kind of strong feelings about himself and their marital lives too. It has helped to understand him too. Love and respect that he has for Esther have

increased so highly that he even imagines Esther's returning and if it happened, he swears not to ask even a single question but he would forget all these sufferings during her disappearance and would start another life where Esther would be with him forever.

As Protagonist says:

During the thousand and one nights, I had lain awake, waiting for the sound of the key in the door, for Esther to come in and lie down beside me, without saying a word, I had promised myself that if this every happened, I would ask her no question, I would just kiss her and say sleep well, my love and we would wake the next day, hand in hand as if this whole nightmare had never happened. (112)

It happens to protagonist as ethics says that self realization is not impossible until and unless one sacrifices oneself. This self realization never came to protagonist during their marital life when they were together when people are ego centered and selfish they never think about other. Human being has to live in the human society where other people also live. One has to think and care about those people too. But sometimes it so happens that a person, being self centered, neglects those parts of responsibilities which ultimately let people to the state of confusion and one is lost in the vast mist of confusion. The Protagonist also revises his self centered and narrow individual thinking. To get rid of such vast mist of confusion, as ethics says, one should sacrifice his narrow individual and private self. This very self sacrifice is the way of self realization. As Dr. Jadunath Sinha says, "self realization is possible only through self sacrifice. Lose your narrow, individual, private self in order to find your wider, universal, social life" (181).

It also happens in protagonist's life too. When he thinks about his wife Esther after her disappearance he gets clear vision about their relationship. As more he

concentrates about Esther and his relationship with her, he becomes quite wider and becomes able to analyze his passed relation with Esther as well as the coming circumstances in his life. By concentrating about Esther and their passed relation protagonist sacrifices his personal-self which gives him a kind of new vision about their relation and lives. At such a point of his life protagonist imagines that perhaps Esther is also experiencing and feeling same thing. He thinks that Esther may have same experience of revising their marital lives and the misunderstanding that had taken place in their lives. As he goes on:

I was just going through a difficult patch, experiencing the kind of misunderstanding that can occur in any love relationship. Esther was somewhere, waiting patiently for me to discover what had gone wrong in our marriage and for me then to go her and ask her forgiveness so that we could resume our life together. (119)

Love is an essential part of human life, but it needs balance and systematized correction during the period of relation with one another. The nature of love is mysterious whenever it is with one he can't understand the deeper meaning of it and when it is far from one he is to revise this relation which gives deeper and real understanding of love. It so happens in Esther's and her husband's lives, too. They can't understand each other well when they were together. Love had, as if, no meaning to both of them. During their marital lives, what was lacking from their relation was self sacrifice for on another's life. The real essence of love couldn't be manifest at that time. But, now, when they are disappeared from each other, the real sense and meaning of love begins to appear to them which also gives them the power of self realization. This is the nature and character of love as Dr. Zadunath Sinha writes, "love is the essential trait of the ideal self. Love is manifested in living the life of others-giving

oneself up to others, self sacrifice is the essence of love, universal love and social service lead to self –realization" (181).

During the period of Esther's disappearance protagonist goes under various kinds of changes. Once, protagonist gets a terrible accident while walking on the middle of the road. Because of this terrible accident he has to stay in hospital for some time. During this period he under goes series of revision of his passed life. He has enough time and intention to revise their marital lives and their relation during that period. Here he comes to the fact that in every relation with so many girlfriends in his life, he couldn't choose the right person. The reason for this, according to the protagonist, was that he was the controller of those all relations. Everything has its own system of functioning and moreover love is, by nature, free and if some one tries to control it then it can not be controlled.

While revising such love relation with so many girlfriends, the protagonist comes to realize that it was Esther who ultimately changed his manner of thinking and vision about life. But the very person, who has done so many contributions in the progress of the protagonist's life, has disappeared from his life now. It was all because of the protagonist's monotonous relationship with her. In every field there comes the point from where one can't go further. The protagonist finds himself in the similar condition. At that time, when Esther was with him he had started to think that their relation had come to the point from where it could go neither further nor return back. But at this point of his life, protagonist remembers those days and he wisher for same time to come in his life which is impossible. At that time, those days were as if meaning less but now the protagonist realizes that they had their own meanings as he goes on:

It is always important to know when something has reached its end.

Closing circles, shutting doors, finishing chapters, it doesn't matter what

we call it; What matter is to leave in the past those moments in life that are over. Slowly I began to realize that I could not go back and force things to be as they once were; those two years which up until then had seemed as endless inferno, were now beginning to show me their true meaning. (171)

At hospital, the protagonist remembers passed moments with Esther which had no importance at that time. But now he starts to understand the meaning of shared moments of their marital lives. By understanding those moments, shared with Esther and by revising his own passed life in deeper level, the protagonist realizes his personal self in newer way. This very self realization about himself creates a kind of his own personal identity. This self realization adds his love for Esther. He goes on remembering those silent moments that he had spend with Esther in this way:

At no point had the love felt for Esther diminished; but every day spent in hospital had brought back some intriguing memory: not of conversation we had had, but of moments we had spent together in silence. I remembered her eyes, which whenever she set off on some new adventure, were like those of enthusiastic young girl or like of a wife proud of her husband's success or of the journalist fascinated by every subject. She wrote about and, later, like those of the wife who no longer seemed to have a place in my life. (177)

Such revision of passed life gives a kind of understanding and new vision to the protagonist. By concentrating over those shared silence, the protagonist tries to find out the moment when things had gone wrong. Such understanding about oneself is the power of human being to live. Because of such self understanding human life is possible in this earth. Self realization is the vehicle of human life as Jadunath Sinha

opines, "self realization means that the isolated desires, instead of being allowed to seek their own gratification, are so systematized and harmonized with one another that they become a vehicle of the life of the rational self" (184-185).

As the protagonist realizes his past mistakes that he has done while he was with Esther, he thinks that he never tried to understand her in the way she liked to be understood without understanding her in deeper level he always behaved with her in a way that he preferred. He thinks that he has absorbed her life and her energy which made him happy and confident. And, on the other hand, he gave her nothing worthy which could give her energy to live. So, the protagonist realizes himself and thinks that if he again meets her he wouldn't show the nature that he had shown in the past. He wishes to see Esther with new eyes full of new and fresh understanding. As he goes, "If I was to see her again, my face needed to be as clean as hers. Before, I could find her, I must find myself" (197).

The protagonist finds out where his wife is waiting for him with the help of his friend Mikhail. Mikhail and the protagonist also have a long relation during the period of Esther's disappearance. When protagonist understands himself in deeper level by revisiting his personal history, he gets a kind of new vision about his own life and surroundings and his marital relationship with Esther.

While traveling to the steppes of Kazakhstan protagonist and Mikhail have long conversation on the way about human world, human life and their own relationship with different kinds of persons. Both of them share their experience about human life and human world with each other. At this point protagonist shows his thankfulness to Mikhail for he has changed protagonist's whole life. But Mikhail doubts him and thinks protagonist is only interested in finding Esther. But reality is that protagonist had gone through different kinds of changes after he came in touch with Mikhail. So he really

accepts that Mikhail has changed his life in many ways. The protagonist even accepts that he is still interested in finding his wife but he again accepts the reality that his relation with Mikhail has a lot to do with the changes that have come in his life. For the protagonist, it is Mikhail who forced him to revise his whole life and this revision really works him to find out his faults and mistakes which give protagonist a new kind of vision about human life and human world as they go on:

You were only interested in finding your wife.

I still am, but didn't just make me travel through the whole of my past life. I saw where I went wrong, I saw where I stopped , I saw the moments when I lost Ester, the moment that the Mexican Indians call the accommodator" the giving up point. (325)

After understanding of personal self through revision of passed personal history protagonist achieves a new kind of power which helps to heal his scars of body and soul which have troubled him since his early childhood. Esther was protagonist's guide throughout his life. And because of self-centered attitude he lost her in the mid-way of life. But this loss of his best thing in his life gives him the way of revision of self which ultimately works as a healing force in him. It is because such best thing are our source of inspiration and aim of living which is also the first step in true insight and self understanding as Radoslav A. Tsanoff suggests, "Our first step in true insight and in right living is to recognize the best and choose it for our aim and guiding principle" (123).

While traveling with Mikhail through the steppes of Kazakhstan protagonist comes to realize that our best thing always helps in better understanding of ourselves. The Protagonist revises his passed life where his love, Esther, had done so many important contributions for

him. While following the steppes of Kazakhstan he happens to revisit the uncountable steppes of his life and he finds Esther's presence everywhere. These all revisions about his passed life prove Esther's disappearance as the source and power of his own life. Because of this disappearance, the protagonist revises his past history where he finds so many mistakes and with the understanding of his misdeeds he gets new vision and understanding of his life and his surroundings. And this understanding works as healing force in him.

## Conclusion

Human beings have to learn from their mistakes and they have to understand them in the new manner. When people are busy and their lives have no time for revision of past lives they become quite habituated with such life. Such habituated life gives people a kind of monotony which ultimately creates meaninglessness in them. Such state creates a kind of misunderstanding and confusion. In such a difficult situation people revisit their own personal history knowingly & unknowingly. Such revision of personal self has great power to heal those problems of misunderstanding and confusion about oneself and the human society. Similarly, ethical norms and values have a lot to do with the better understanding of human lives and human world. Following the ethical norms and values one can improve himself / herself. Most of the characters of *The Zahir*, have followed those norms and values which have helped them to make their vision wider.

Paulo Coelho presents characters and events in his novel *The Zahir*, in such a way that clearly indicates that human being can't follow same position at all the times. There come so many conditions and situations where a person feels different kinds of feeling. One can not feel only satisfaction in human life. But human life is the combination of so many problems, too. Life does not go on straight line but it has so many carvings where one can get confusion and misunderstanding. When such hard and difficult situations come in human life, one should struggle for better understanding of himself/herself. Revision of personal history is an essential part of human life. Without revising one's own personal life human being can't get new and fresh vision about them and about human society as well. Furthermore, such revision has a kind of power which can give a new understandings and vision about human life and human world.

Paulo Coelho's understanding and vision about human world, human being and different kinds of systems exist in different kinds of human relationships in *The Zahir*. Characters like the protagonist, Esther and Mikhail are the representative of all the human beings in this world. They are representative of human beings in the sense that the situation and crossing they have passed and felt are the types which every human being have to face. There comes a kind of situation in human life where one gets confusion about himself/ herself and their own surroundings. One common thing that most of the characters of *The Zahir* do is the revision of their own personal history. While doing so they get such crossings and situations in their lives that they get a kind of vision about their own misdoings and faults. It is obvious that when a person analyzes himself/ herself they can find out their good sides and bad sides. Such understanding about oneself gives power to the person not to follow their faulty lines that's how one can understand and improve himself quite well. Revisions of personal history in the light of different kinds of ethical norms and values have ultimately created a kind of new energy in most of the characters of the novel. Moreover, applying those norms and values, most of the characters have healed their problems. They have realized their own mistakes and these realizations have made their vision wider which ultimately help them to create better understanding.

In the process of living protagonist Esther and Mikhail come to the point where they get their own types of confusion and misunderstanding about themselves. They revise their own personal history which gives them a kind of newer vision which works as the healing force.

Thus, Paulo Coelho 's novel *The Zahir* presents the assumption that human beings are bound to live their lives in such away that they have to face both sweeter and

bitter sides of human life. This research, as a whole tries to clarify the hypothesis that revision of personal history works as a healing force in every human being.

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