Chapter II

Journey Vs Life

Paulo Coelho, the eminent alchemist of words, was born on 24th August 1947 in a sophisticated upper middle class family in the Botafago neighbourhood of Rio de Janeiro as the eldest son of Petro Queima Coelho de Souza, an engineer and Lygia Araripe Coelho, a home maker. Different from other boys of his age, Coelho at a very early age showed the tendency to understand the truths of life which made him being blamed for everything that happened around him and being treated as a rebellious boy. In an interview with Gamal Nkrumah, Coelho said, “I’ve always refused to obey orders. I was headstrong and I wanted to be different” (Nkrumah). His creative inclinations were so powerful that at a quite younger age, he travelled forty eight hours to Buenos Aires to meet his literary idol, Jorge Luis Borges. “He found him [Borges] after more than a few difficulties and stood mutely before him. He looked at him and thought, ‘Idols don’t speak’, and went back to Rio” (Arias viii).

Coelho always dreamt of an artistic career, something frowned upon in his upper middle class household. Realizing his growing inclination towards art and literature and lack of interest in academics, he was admitted by his parents to a strict Catholic Jesuit School of San Ignacio, where he learned to be disciplined. It is here at this Jesuit school that he developed a strong aversion to the obligatory nature of religious practices and “made a tryst with his true calling; that of a writer” (Mishra 1) after achieving his first literary prize for a poetry competition. His parents’ desire to make him an engineer ended up as he took three years to finish off the final year of his secondary school. His spirit of
rebellion reached its zenith after his reading of Henry Miller’s *Tropic of Cancer* and was admitted in a mental hospital thrice for his own good from where he managed to escape all the three times. But Coelho considers this experience as something that adds to the cauldron of his knowledge. He describes his experience of being amidst the insane:

> I think the big danger of madness is not madness itself, but the habit of madness. What I discovered during the time I spent in the asylum is that I could choose madness and spend my whole life without working, doing nothing, pretending to be mad. It was a very strong temptation…. It was like a maternal womb that gave you tranquillity. (Arias 36)

After his treatment in the mental hospital and the electroconvulsive therapy, Coelho became more indulged in his own world. He agreed to enrol himself as a law student in the Faculty of Law at the University of Rio de Janeiro, according to his parents’ desire. But after a short while he dropped his studies to work in the theatre, which also lasted only for a short period. He soon dropped into despair as he had lost his job of journalism which he had been handling besides theatre. Being abandoned by his friends for his so-called “insanity” and giving up his job, he was thrown into despair. Utterly dejected by all this, in a fit of frenzy, Coelho locked himself in his room and smashed down everything he had which reminded him of his past – his much loved collection of books and his records – an act which brought him amusement as his psychiatrist had endorsed him and said, “you’ve done the only thing you needed to do. Finish with the nightmare of the past. Now your life can start anew” (40). The future account of his life witnessed the complete truth of this statement.
Coelho never felt any rancour towards his parents for committing him in a mental asylum for three years, rather justified their deed saying “it wasn’t that they wanted to hurt me but they did not know what to do…. They did not do that to destroy me, they did that to save me” (Elizabeth Day). Coelho treated this experience in the asylum as an advantage to his writing career as every experience provides great knowledge essential for a writer. “I was an idealist at heart and deep down I thought that for someone who wanted to be a writer, it is only right to have to undergo all experiences, even the mental hospital…I saw it as a part of my personal legend, or my yearning for adventure (Arias 35-36). During the hippie movement of 1968 he got involved in all the progressive movements and became attracted to Marx, Engels and Che Guevara and took part in elections and demonstrations. As a hippie, he travelled all over Latin America, in quest of new spiritual experiences and idealizing Carlos Castanada. He resorted to drugs, hallucinogens, sects, and black magic.

Still writing remained a passion for him and he decided to dabble in journalism. Thus, he founded a magazine called 2001; even though it lasted only for two issues, it made a remarkable twist in the life of Coelho. It became instrumental in introducing him to the great music producer and singer Raul Seixas. Together they produced a number of songs, and this was the first time that the moment of glory kissed the writer. His most famous song, Geeta, which was based on the Bhagavad Gita sold about five million copies. This companionship enabled Coelho to earn enough money as well as fame. Along with this he worked for the Rio newspaper El Globo till 1974. In 1974 he published his first book on the theatre in education.
Later on, along with Seixas, Coelho joined an Alternative Society which was against capitalist ideology and supported individual rights. These days, Coelho began practising black magic, inspired by Aleister Crowley. These experiences are being described in his first book as the hardest and most difficult experiences of his life. When he managed to free himself from the chains of black magic that were dragging him to the edge of the abyss. Together with Raul Seixas, he published a series of comic strips entitled, “Kring-ha” which exhorted the need for more freedom. This ended up in his arrest a second time for political reasons. Soon after his release he was taken to a military torture centre in suspicion of being a guerrilla. Having undergone a week-long harassment, he barely escaped death by telling his torturers that he was insane and had thrice been to a mental hospital. In order to prove his status as a lunatic he even began to physically harm himself in front his kidnappers who stopped him from doing so and set him free.

After being released from the military camp, Coelho took the firm decision to lead a new normal life, stopping the use of drugs and practicing black magic and started working for some recording companies. But in 1976, he moved to England with the instinct of becoming a writer to work for some Brazilian magazines as correspondent. There he decided to write an autobiography, but unfortunately lost the manuscript, the result of a year’s work, in a London pub, thus leaving it unpublished.

Coelho believes “everything happens to me three times” (Arias 47). Besides his three admissions in the mental hospital and his three imprisonments, he was also divorced thrice. In 1981, he married Christina Oiticia, a painter after three failed marriages. He is an ardent traveller and with Cristina, he set out to travel around the world for six months,
until in a concentration camp in Germany, he underwent a drastic change in his spiritual attitude bringing him back to his long-lost catholic beliefs. After this life-changing event, Coelho initiated his fifty-six day journey with his spiritual master in 1986, walking the seven hundred kilometre ancient route to Santiago de Compostella, a medieval pilgrim’s route between France and Spain. The experiences of this miraculous journey form the theme of his first literary text, *The Pilgrimage*, which was formerly entitled *The Diary of a Magus*. And thus started his literary career establishing him as one of the bestselling authors in the world, securing him a place in the Guinness Book of World Records, attained many awards, and many more awaiting him, and enough money for three reincarnations.

The readers can identify the characters of Coelho as one among them so that when the characters attain self-actualization, readers also get the impulse of going for a quest in search of their own inner self. In this sense, Coelho’s novels can rightly be called as inspirational for they have the power to raise a person from utter dejection to a state of high self-esteem and enlightenment. Being chosen from the lower strata of society, his characters exhibit a tendency to go in search of material possessions and physical pleasures like Santiago, in *The Alchemist*, Maria in *Eleven Minutes*, and Chantal Prym in *The Devil and Miss Prym* which lead them to an awareness of a more powerful state of being.

Christianity always has a place in Coelho’s novels, and he is at ease with different ideas of spirituality and destiny. He was a man with a vision and a mission. His first novel *The Pilgrimage* was based on his own pilgrimage on Road to Santiago. His next novel *The Alchemist* makes use of a variety of prophetic teachings and advocates
following one’s heart. In the novel *Veronika Decides to Die*, Coelho proves that insanity is the manifestation of a social ill, and he suggests that all mental illness is the result of a shock or environmental influence, rather than genetically determined. The novel describes Veronika’s self-realization during her seven days stay in a hospital after her attempt to commit suicide. Coelho’s novels delineate a sudden twist that happens when a challenging decision is taken in an individual’s life during a short period of seven days, at some unpredictable moments termed as “magic moments” by Coelho.

Most of Coelho's characters undergo boredom due to the mundane life and life’s slow pace. In the futile attempt to put down roots, people conveniently forget the dreams and desires of their soul. But it cannot give them lifelong happiness. Coelho, who tries to be unique in his real life, as in his novels, was successful in bringing out his rebellious ideas through his inspirational novels. Coelho is always against leading a pathetic, static life as most people in this world do. He always wanted to imprint the evidences that would remind the world of his existence.

Coelho’s novels are astonishingly inspirational, full of pithy maxims and aphorisms. “Listen to your heart” (*The Alchemist* 134), “wherever your heart, that is where you’ll find your treasure” (135), “be prepared for change” (8), “don’t give in to your fears” (148) etc are some of the instances. Through the characters of Coelho, the readers mirror themselves and live themselves through the life of his characters and attain Self-realization. Coelho’s novels communicate a form of his self-help spirituality that offers working examples of courage, adventure and eventual success of their protagonists. They are learned to read the omens and forge through perseverance in the face of adversity. Then as they learn to trust themselves and accept that life has so much
more in store for them, they gradually attain self-transformation. Moreover, being repeatedly told that the universe conspires to help everyone in realizing their dreams, the protagonists and the readers alike are assured of their eventual success. They also begin to realize the cosmic significance of their individual journey of self-discovery and inner transformation.

Coelho believes that the personal transformation holds the key to self-realization. The protagonists of Coelho dramatize the story of self-actualization. His novels are built on the theme of self-actualization or spiritual fulfilment through self-awareness, self-exploration, heart searching and action. Through life-like stories of his protagonists, Coelho attempts to convince that if ordinary people like Santiago, a shepherd or Prym, a bar maid, or Maria, a prostitute can attain self-actualization, why can not the readers. The readers are motivated and influenced by the inspirational thoughts scattered on every page of his novels that prompted them to undertake a journey of self-revelation in their subconscious. Mario Maestri, a well known Brazilian critic praises Coelho's writings regarding his inspirational thoughts:

In spite of belonging to different genres, Coelho's narratives and self-help books have the same fundamental effect: of anesthetizing the alienated consciousness through the consoling reaffirmation of conventions and prevailing prejudices. Fascinated by his discoveries, the Coelhist reader explores the familiar, breaks down doors already open, and gets mired in sentimental, tranquilizing, self-centered, conformist and spellbinding visions of the world that imprisons him. When he finishes a book, he wants another one that will be different but absolutely the same. (par. 4)
Driven by the urge to find out their Selves, the protagonists of Coelho undertake a spiritual journey which in fact parallels a physical journey in search of a material treasure. Most of Coelho's novels deal with the physical journey that the characters undertake with an aim of finding their destiny which finally leads them to their destination. But on a spiritual level all these journeys lead them to their own true inner self. The journey becomes vital in their life as reaching the destination provides them with a sense of innate happiness.

Through his novels, Coelho advocates for the system of feminine thought. He observes, “woman is sacred, she is feminine energy, she is what keeps us from building a wall between the sacred and the profane, she is the logic of mystery, of the incomprehensible, of miracles” (Arias 100). In *Paulo Coelho: Confessions of a Pilgrim*, he confesses that “All my life has been governed by feminine energy” (83). Moreover, in one of his interviews to Alan Riding, he admits, “I am a Catholic, not so committed to the church but to the idea of the virgin, the female face of God; I have spent every New Years’ Eve since 1992 in Lourdes. I spend the hour of my birth every year in the grotto. It’s a place with meaning for me” (par. 12). Coelho used the metaphor of a pregnant woman who awaits giving birth to a new baby to elucidate the pain he feels before giving birth to a new literary piece. In *Paulo Coelho: Confessions of a Pilgrim*, he remarks:

I fill up unthinkingly, in the classic process of pregnancy, after having made love with life, although I never know who the father is. For two years, in the interval between one book and the next, I do nothing, I don’t take notes, but I’m totally available to life. And, at some point, something
gets inside me and weighs me down. And soon I feel the need to write.

(Arias 151)

Coelho draws inspiration from his daily life, from the experiences he has acquired and from the people he met every day. He considered the experiences as the best way to learn and propagate his inner feelings. He considers the people around him as a mirror to himself. He treats writing as a means to touch his own self, a way to realize his own destiny, and thus helps him ease his process of self-discovery. He admits: “I’m a writer who’s politically committed to the times in which we live, and my great search has always been the spiritual one (150).

Coelho's novels therefore abound in self-reflexive temperament that is, Self in relation with itself. This is characterized by the open possibility for the individual to think about itself, to reflect on the varieties of life, through a mirror game, where the Self of the subject is set as an object of analysis. It also means that the subject’s self-identity, instead of having a fixed and normative approach based on absolute morals, acquires a changeable and flexible attitude, open to transformations in the individual Self (Mishra 186). Thus, each of his novels projects the spiritual seeker in him and expresses his quest to reach his self, an unquenchable thirst for self-actualization. And here is provided a brief account of his novels to emphasize how he has pictured his urge for self-discovery in his novels.

Coelho’s great passion for exploring the unseen wonders of the world through travelling is revealed when he says: “without doubt it was travelling that made me make the leap.” (Arias 195) Thus, with his undiminished yearning for the search of his personal
mission, he chose to travel the world along with his wife Cristina. Coelho observed the journey has a very strong symbolic significance in people’s lives. Coelho has made the seemingly unattainable concept of self-actualization in layman’s terms through his novels ensuring his readers to achieve it through perseverance and strong will. He admitted, “A new stretch of my life started there with my return to the Catholic church.” (Arias 144)

In 1986 he undertook an epoch making journey to the Santiago de Compostella and the following year 1987 proclaimed him as a writer for his first fiction, The Diary of a Magus, which later came to be entitled as The pilgrimage. Though he published his first book, Hell Archives in 1982, it had failed to raise him to the status of a writer. Then three years after this, in 1985 Coelho published The Practical Manual of Vampiricism, the quality of which Coelho was not satisfied and had taken it off the shelves. After these two failures, Coelho had set out for a life changing journey on the Road to Santiago, the medieval route to Santiago de Compostella between France and Spain in 1986, for which he had taken fifty six days.

In The Pilgrimage, he penned down his experiences during the journey which transformed Coelho as an ordinary man to an accomplished writer, the journey which determined the destiny of his life. It turned out to be a milestone in his life and career and was shifted to the status of the best seller novelist with the publication of his next novel The Alchemist in 1988 Coelho himself acknowledged the novel as a metaphor for his own life and it reflects his eleven years of study on alchemy. Through the spiritual quest of Santiago, a shepherd boy, Coelho unveils the complex processes of alchemical transformation that takes place in the human psyche. Throughout the novel, Coelho reiterates the importance of following one’s dreams, interpreting the omens and listening
to one’s own heart. It teaches the readers of the essential wisdom of listening to their hearts, learning to read the omens strewn along life’s path and above all following their dreams. In fact, Coelho enjoys his journey, physical as well as spiritual. He is enthralled to travel towards the unknown, to experience the mysteries. He believes that they all open up doors to his inner self. In *The Pilgrimage*, Coelho confesses: “Even if I were not able to find my sword, the pilgrimage along the Road to Santiago was going to help me to find myself” (14).

The year 1990 brought Coelho’s *Brida*, the story of a woman whom he happened to meet on his pilgrimage. Coelho believes that Brida is the woman he was searching for and identifies as the projection of his own feminine side. In 1991, he published *O Dom Supremo* (The Gift) and in 1992 he published his second autobiographical work after *The Pilgrimage*, *The Valkyries*. Regarding his autobiographical novels, Coelho comments: “I’m completely myself in *The Valkyries* and *The Pilgrimage*” (173). *The Valkyries* depicts Coelho’s forty days adventure in the Mojave Desert with his wife. The novel inspires the readers to reconcile with their past and to go in search of their future. It symbolically pictures the battle between self doubt and fear.

Coelho’s urge to project his feminine elements takes the form of another novel entitled *By the River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept*. It depicts love as a striving force in one’s search for the Self. It also helps the lovers to find the divinity in each other’s selves. Through the novel Coelho unveils the mysteries of love and life. Besides this, Coelho also brought out his another enchanting work in 1994, *Maktub*, the collection of his best columns published in the Brazilian newspaper, *Fol ha de Sao Paulo*. In the year 1995 he came out with his *Phrases*, a compilation of texts.
The next novel that brought him popularity is *The Fifth Mountain*, published in 1996. This novel is based on the Biblical text, a moving story of a 23 year old prophet, Elijah. The year 1997 witnessed the arrival of his two great books entitled, *Love Letters from a Prophet* and *The Manual of the Warrior of Light*, a collection of philosophical thought. Coelho’s novels urge the readers “to live their dreams, to accept the miracle of being alive and by accepting the uncertainties and failures of life become the person they want to be” (Mishra 8).

Coelho in 1998 brought forth his next novel that paved him the way to become the second bestselling author in the world, *Veronika Decides to Die*. After the short break of two years, at the turn of the century Coelho brought forth his next fabulous work *The Devil and Miss Prym*, that dramatizes the inevitable struggle between light and darkness. It seeks the answer for the question whether human beings are in essence, good or evil. It describes the possibility of the human mind to incline towards the evil and commit crime if tempted by greed. Meanwhile, it pictures the two equally important and powerful sides of the human psyche. And through the novel, Coelho remarks that it is one’s choice made in critical junctures that make an individual essentially good or evil.

Coelho always reminds his readers the importance of listening to the voice of the child that resides within them. The child tells the individual of his/her dreams and what the heart truly desires and craves for. He observes, “I think my books are read much more by the child we all carry inside us” (Arias 166). *Father, Sons and Grandsons* and *The Genie and the Roses* were brought out in 2001 and 2004 respectively, for children.
In 2003, Coelho published another daring and sensuous novel, *Eleven Minutes*, with a harsh, difficult and shocking subject of sex. Through the novel, Coelho presents Maria, a prostitute’s quest through the morass of prostitution to understand the nature of true love that attains her self-realization through sacred sex. The novel can rightly be praised as a courageous attempt as it deals with the life of a prostitute. Maria’s disillusionment and her yearning for love lead her to Rio de Janeiro and then to Geneva. She is caught in a cycle of predicaments that paradoxically pave the way towards self-discovery. Towards the end of her spiritual journey, Maria enjoys the blissful love, the love which not only involves the body but also the soul.

Coelho’s own spiritual quest reflects itself through all his novels, beginning with *The Pilgrimage*. His yearning for the total consciousness of his self mirrors in *The Zahir*, which came out in 2005. It can be considered a companion work to *The Pilgrimage* as it shares a common theme. While *The Zahir* relates the writer-protagonist’s adventurous journey in search of his missing wife, *The Pilgrimage* describes his quest in search of his hidden sword in the ancient route of Road to Santiago. As he had Petrus as a guide during his journey in *The Pilgrimage*, the writer-protagonist in *The Zahir* has Mikhail, the Mongolian nomad to guide him in the Steppes. Following *The Zahir* comes *Like the Flowing River* in 2006 to Coelho’s credit. An intimate collection of his dispersed meditation and short stories of living and dying, of destiny and choice, of love lost and found, the book bears a testimony to Coelho’s profound and versatile genius.

In 2007, Coelho came out with *The Witch of Portobello*, in which he re-engages with the theme of self-exploration through the life of an ultra spiritual girl, Sherine Khalil also named as Athena. The story runs around her dilemma, her quest to fill up the spaces
within her and to answer her questions of self, of will and of truth. Her searches take her through a journey of many phases and opens new doors of perceptions, until she discovers within herself a powerful energy. This accords her an unusual status, recognized by some as a saint and by others as a sinner, eventually leading to her death.

The novel’s narrative that moves in the form of a series of accounts of different individuals and their personal interactions with the queer girl makes the work a unique one.

One of his latest novels, *The Winner Stands Alone* is set against the backdrop of the Cannes Film Festival. The novel is a critique on the makings of modern society dominated by the pop culture. It is a specific portrayal of the celebrity-obsessed culture in which both the celebrities and the audience are the victims of the system.

As obvious, with more than twenty books, three hundred and sixty-five brief essays and a whole lot of published and unpublished writings to his credit, Coelho is going from strength to strength as a writer. Translated into sixty-six languages, more than hundred million copies of his books have been sold in about one hundred and sixty countries. His narrative simplicity captures not only the mind but also the heart and this has won him countless readers all over the world. With his books topping the best sellers list, he has become more of a wizard that makes books disappear from stores. Besides being lovingly bestowed with titles like “an alchemist of words,” “a mass culture phenomenon,” or “a Brazilian phenomenon,” “a New-Age guru,” “a self help author,” Coelho has been officially honoured with titles and awarded immensely.
In 1996, when *The Alchemist* topped the best seller list in Italy, Coelho was conferred with two prestigious Italian awards, the “Super Grizane Cavour Book award” and “Flaiano International Award.” Prior to these in 1995, he bagged two French awards, namely “Grand Prix Litteraire Elle” and “Knight of Arts and Letters.” The following year, in 1996, Coelho was made a “Chevalier des Arts et des Letters” and “Philippe Douste-Blazy” upon which the French Minister of Culture acknowledged him as, “you have become the alchemist for millions. Your books do good because they stimulate our capacity to dream, our desire to search.” (*PauloCoelho.com*)

The same year Coelho was appointed a special advisor to the UNESCO programme “Spiritual Convergence and Intercultural Dialogues.” In 1998, he won the Brazilian “Comendador de Ordem do Rio Branco.” After winning the Spanish, “Golden Medal of Galicia” in 1999, the same year he bagged the coveted “Crystal Award” given by the World Economic Forum, which remarked, “Paulo’s most important contribution has been to touch and unite so many different cultures through the power of language, which clearly marks him out for this award.” (*PauloCoelho.com*)

In 1999 alone, the French government conferred on him the highest honour by making Coelho a “Chevalier de l’Ordre National de la Legion d’ Honour.” In 2000, he was appointed to the Board of the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship. The following year, Coelho bagged the oldest and the most prestigious German “Bambi 2001 Award.” In 2002, he was admitted as the newest member of the prestigious Academia Brasileira de Letras that safeguards the Brazilian language and culture. This award became quite remarkable in the light of the fact that Coelho's works are almost never set in Brazil, but he sees the world through the eyes of a sensitive Brazilian. And in the same
year Coelho was honoured with “Club of Budapest Planetary Arts Award 2002” and “Best Fiction Corine International Award 2002” for *The Alchemist*.

The year 2004 brought him as many as five awards, namely, “Golden Bestseller Prize,” the Serbian “Ex Libris Award” for *Eleven Minutes*, “Nielsen Gold Book Award” for *The Alchemist*, “Order of St. Sophia,” and “Order of Honour of Ukraine.” In 2005, Coelho got “The Budapest Prize,” “Goldene Feder Award,” and “Direct Group International Author Award.” Four other awards followed him in the year 2006, as he won the American “Wilbur Award”, the Brazilian “Cruz do Merito do Empreendedor Juscelino Kubitschek,” the Croatian “Kiklop Literary Award” for *The Zahir*, and the Spanish “I Premio Alava en el Corazon.” Besides, there are many other awards that he is being bestowed upon from time to time, in recognition to his outstanding contribution. Here, it becomes interesting to note that having bagged several awards, Coelho, today, humbly remains oblivious of the reason that catapulted his books to the international arena.

Coelho invariably employs the motif of journey in all his novels. In his novel *The Alchemist* he apparently portrays the protagonist’s, a shepherd boy named Santiago’s, journey from home in Spain to the markets of Tangier in Africa and from there to the Egyptian Pyramids. Though the boy set out his journey in search of a treasure buried in the Egyptian Pyramids of which he was recurrently shown in a dream, Coelho metaphorically presents Santiago’s spiritual journey to realize his own self, his own destiny or his “Personal legend,” in Coelho’s term.
Personal legend is a prominent aspect that catalyses the process of self-actualization. The realization of their personal legend enables Coelho’s characters to follow their dreams and pursue their paths of self-discovery. Coelho reiterates throughout his novels that every individual in the world has a personal legend and through achieving it, the individual reaches the soul of the world. Coelho considers the personal legend as one’s reason for living on this earth. Coelho observes: “I believe in the concept of ‘anima mundi’ (soul of the world), where each person, through total dedication to what he does, comes into contact with the inspiration of the universe” (Weinoldt).

Coelho’s alchemical concept of “Anima Mundi” serves as a central figure in his novels, helping his characters across the universe. Santiago, the shepherd boy in The Alchemist, acts as a model for all the succeeding novels of Coelho. So ranging from Pilar and her friend in By the River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept to prophet Elijah in The Fifth Mountain to Veronika in Veronika Decides to Die to Chantal Prym in The Devil and Miss Prym to Maria in Eleven Minutes and finally to the writer-protagonist and his wife Esther in The Zahir, each character with a personal legend to follow, is a Santiago by himself or herself. In this regard Coelho makes a remarkable observation. He says:

The key to my work, if we simplify it in the extreme, is what I call the personal story, like in The Alchemist. And although it seems mysterious to us, it’s the reason for our existence. Sometimes it might not be clear and we strain against fate. That’s when we feel weak and cowardly. But in the end our personal story is still there within us and we know why we’re here. (Arias 193)
Thus, the Ulysses-like journey of exploration and self-discovery for a symbolic search for treasure becomes Santiago’s mission on earth, which is nothing but to find God, implying happiness, fulfilment and the ultimate purpose of creation. A similar journey of self-discovery and realization of childhood love lends Pilar and her friend a force that urges them to conquer their dreams, so to say their “personal legends” and find God in each other’s self. Santiago remains undaunted in living up his personal legend through an adventurous journey of self-exploration. He confessed: “he had to choose between thinking of himself as the poor victim of a thief and as an adventurer in quest of his treasure” (*The Alchemist* 44).

So “the theme of ‘personal legend’ resulting in self-exploration, self-actualization and acquisition of meaning, purpose and direction by the pursuers makes Coelho’s writings enthusiastically spiritual which becomes yet another theme of his novels” (Mishra 168). Coelho believes in the existence of a mysterious force that assist one in achieving the personal legend. The King of Salem tells Santiago,

> It’s a force that appears to be negative but actually shows you how to realize your destiny. It prepares your spirit and your will, because there is one great truth on this planet: whoever you are, or whatever it is that you do, when you really want something, it’s because that desire originated in the soul of the universe. It’s your mission on earth.” (*The Alchemist* 22-23)

Journey in search of one’s personal legend means search for one’s own total consciousness. It is the journey of self-exploration and self-discovery. Coelho, through the words of the alchemist conveys, “There is only one way to learn and it’s through
action. Everything you need to know you have learned through your journey” (120).
Indeed it is the journey that Santiago takes to explore the material riches and simultaneous discovery of himself anew. As he physically moves away from his home to distant places he was being newer to his heart realizing the dark corners of his soul.

During his journey he earns money working in a crystal shop in Tangiers and wins fifty gold pieces in the oasis of Al- Fayoum by his prognostications. At the same time his spiritual journey enables him to experience love, through a desert girl Fatima. As he moves, there is an evolution that takes place in him liberating his old narrow perceptions and gaining wider awareness of life, thereby acquiring a grander experience of the Self, and establishes a greater harmony with the Universe. Thus, Santiago undergoes an amazing metamorphosis from an ordinary shepherd Self to the nobler Self of an alchemist. He admits, “I learned the alchemist’s secrets in my travels. I have inside me the winds, the deserts, the oceans, the stars, and everything created in the universe. We were all made by the same hand, and we have the same soul” (154).

Santiago’s enlightenment reaches its full zenith when he reaches the Egyptian Pyramids. There occurs a visionary encounter towards the end of the story as the boy meets a gang of refugees in the pyramid. They beat him down for money and leave him there to die and as they leave, one of them remarks:

Two years ago right here on 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 dream, there was a sycamore growing out of the ruins of sacristy, and I was told that if I dug
at the roots of the sycamore, I would find a hidden treasure. But I’m not so
stupid to cross an entire desert just because of a recurrent dream. (171-72)

For Santiago it is a moment of revelation that foretells him about the actual
location of the treasure buried in his native land. It has powerful implications about
looking into the roots and foundations of one’s life. It is about voyaging outward to find
the way back home. It also means trusting one’s dreams even they seem to have slipped
beyond one’s reach. Thus, for Santiago to reach his treasure, he has to remember not to
forget his sheep that symbolize his identity, his roots. It is here, after all, where his heart
lies. He has to learn to accept change, to value simplicity and to trust his experience of
daily life over bookish knowledge. It is also required of him to live in the present, to read
God’s will in signs and omens, to listen to his heart and to penetrate the Soul of the
World. Santiago can learn all this only by travelling and returning all wise and
enlightened. Finally, he needs to have firm faith in his goal in order to follow it through
to its realization. As Santiago undergoes this spiritual transformation that parallels the art
of alchemy, converting lead into gold, he finds his treasure that is his pristine, sublime
self.

It is in the Egyptian Pyramids that Santiago finds both his physical and spiritual
journeys becoming fruitful as he is revealed that his treasure lies in the same spot where
he had the recurrent dream of his treasure reminding him that the treasure lies where his
heart is. Then there occurs a synchronization of both the outward and the inward
journeys. This in turn reminds him of the necessity of recreating himself to attain his true,
sublime self. His journey back to the ruined church in Spain symbolizes his being close to
his heart. Thus, getting the treasure buried beneath the sycamore tree concludes his physical journey.

One of his later novels, *The Zahir*, portrays the significance and importance of journey in the life of a well known writer who is also the protagonist of the novel. Engulfed by the obsession of his missing wife, Esther, the writer-protagonist is being led to a state of complete madness. Unable to find a way to escape from the thought of his absconding wife, which becomes his Zahir, he decides to undertake an adventurous journey from Paris to Kazakhstan.

The physical journey of a husband in search of his missing wife parallels the spiritual journey of the protagonist from a state of madness to holiness. The experiences he gains through his journey of two years, nine months, eleven days, and eleven hours uplifts him to an enlightened state of a seer, who can forgive others’ sin and can bless them. The writer-protagonist who madly treads on his wife’s footsteps undergoes a tremendous self-revelation and frees him from his personal history. According to Coelho only the people who are immersed in their personal history would be sad. Through the old man, Esther meets on her way to the Steppes, Coelho reminds his readers the reason for people’s unhappiness,

They are the prisoners of their personal history. Everyone believes that the main aim in life is to follow a plan. They never ask if that plan is theirs or if it was created by another person. They accumulate experiences, memories, things, other people’s ideas, and it is more than they can
possibly cope with. And that is why they forget their dreams. (*The Zahir* 305)

He undergoes a tremendous self-revelation that he can now accept anything unpleasant, even his wife’s pregnancy by someone else and bless her with the heart of a seer. His journey is, thus, a complete transcendence from an obsessed and shattered husband madly in pursuit of his wife to a holy saint who is ready to forgive the sins of others.

Esther, the writer-protagonist’s wife, a war correspondent who often heads from one continent to another for her profession, becomes dissatisfied with her mundane existence. She sets out in search of the real happiness and the true meaning of life. Esther’s decision of fleeing away from her husband leads to both the husband’s and the wife’s journeys of self-discovery that eventually culminates in their return to each other with a new understanding of love. She chooses to live in the frontiers of Kazakhstan and is influenced by the life of nomads who follow the local Tengri tradition of the Steppes.

The nomads always keep on moving and live only in the present. As they travel always, they do not bother about the past and future and hence are always happy. In her journey she accepts the life of nomads and follows the tradition of Tengri. She learns weaving carpets as a way of respecting and accepting the Tengri culture. Along with her physical journey she also embarks on a spiritual quest. Her journey transforms her and leads to the enlightenment of her Self. During her journey, she makes a remarkable shift from the field of destruction found in the war zone to the field of creation found in the Steppes. She, thus, assumes the role of a creator and in doing so displays her spiritual uplift. It is a progression of Esther’s Self from a petty, unhappy war correspondent
capturing gory battle scenes to that of a traditional nomad. It is also her transformation from a mundane existence into a cosmic one.

Coelho’s inspirational love story *By the River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept* also flavoured with the leitmotif of journey. The fantastic journey in the life of a young university student, Pilar and her childhood sweetheart, now a spiritual teacher and a miracle worker, is astonishingly brought out through the novel. Their seven days journey through the French Pyrenees parallels the gradual transformation of their souls from the preconceived inhibitions, traditional norms, and concepts.

Pilar begins her journey, both physically and spiritually, as she accepts the invitation of her friend for a conference he conducts in Madrid. She denies her love for him to be expressed as she believes that love is a trap and one does not get what he/she dreams of. But her inner journey with her friend frees her of all such notions and creates a new outlook in her about love and life. It is her journey that enables her to calm down her conflicting Self takes a final decision of accepting the love, her friend has promised. The journey made Pilar capable of returning to her “true Self” neglecting her “other Self” which always warns to deny love. Towards the end of their journey both Pilar and her friend realizes that love is not a hindrance but a panacea for everything in the world.

Journey forms a major motif in the quasi autobiographical novel of Coelho, *The Pilgrimage*. It accounts the experiences of Coelho’s fifty-six day journey, which had a profound impact on his life. It relates his seven hundred kilometres journey on foot to Santiago de Compostella in Spain from the French city of St. Jean-Pied-de-Port on the ancient route of Road to Santiago. *The Pilgrimage* enlivens the enchanting journey of the
author through the strange route, undergoing a tremendous transformation in his life. It fascinatingly adds information about his physical journey as well as his spiritual journey. He starts his journey as a common man in pursuit of a material goal that is, his hidden sword, but ends up as a wise man having acquired the experiences, knowledge, and the spiritual transformation of a life-time.

Thus, both in his life and in his novels, journey has such a significant place that he himself admits that he has become the man he is, only after undertaking such an adventurous spiritual journey. After this enchanting journey he penned down his experiences on the sacred route and entitled *The Pilgrimage*, his debut literary work that uplifted him to the status of a writer. Journey has taught him precious noteworthy lessons of life such as “wherever your treasure is, there will be your heart” (*The Pilgrimage* 43) and one can become “God’s manifestation by becoming wiser and by living a simpler life in other words, through love” (48).

Though physical journey does not form a prominent motif of Coelho’s *The Devil and Miss Prym*, the spiritual journey that the characters exhibit has a noteworthy impact on the story. The story of the novel focuses on a massive inner journey, instead of the individual journeys portrayed in the other novels of Coelho, of the natives, the 281 inhabitants of Viscos, a seemingly peaceful village induced by the temptation put forward by the stranger in the form of eleven gold bars to break any of the Ten Commandments. Tempted by the fabulous offer of the golden bars as a way to escape from the mundane, stagnant life of Viscos, the villagers including Chantal Prym, the protagonist, undertake an inward journey from their righteous Selves and decided to befriend with evil. Thus, in this journey vice wins over virtue and having been ruled over by greed, the villagers
decided to break one of the Ten Commandments, that is, to break “Thou shalt not kill.” In
their heinous task they select Berta, an old widow of the village as their scapegoat. Thus,
the villagers voluntarily choose evil and continue their journey upholding immortality.
But towards the end of their journey, they were redeemed by Chantal Prym. The
stranger’s journey to a distant village symbolizes his journey from his virtuous Self by
the accidental calamity that sends off his dear ones from this world.

Journey features as one of the powerful leitmotif in the life of the protagonist in
*The Zahir*. He walks on the road to Santiago, travels to a city called Victoria in Spain and
finally journeys from Paris to Kazakhstan in search of his missing wife. He firmly
upholds the conquistadors of America that “It is not the life that matters, but the journey”
(*The Zahir* 58). This belief finds a very potent manifestation in his life as all his journeys
lead to self-discovery, to love, and eventually to his absconding wife. It is this spiritual
significance of the concept of journey that urges the spiritual writers like Coelho to
employ it as a motif in almost all his novels. Moreover, it also has an autobiographical
element as Coelho remarks, “I belong to the travelling generation, the hippy generation,
that lived on the road connecting with other cultures” (Arias 197). He accredits journey
for all his achievements and says, “without doubt it was travelling that made me make the
leap” (195). Coelho is an avid traveller and loves to call himself a pilgrim writer. He says
that he is in continuous movement and so wants his characters to find themselves on a
journey always.

In fact, Coelho enjoys his journey, physical as well as spiritual. He is enthralled to
travel towards the unknown, to experience the mysteries. He believes that they all open
up doors to his inner self. In *The Pilgrimage*, Coelho confesses: “Even if I were not able
to find my sword, the pilgrimage along the Road to Santiago was going to help me to find myself” (14). A physical journey for Coelho, significantly, becomes an awareness integrating his lower Self with his higher Self and helps him find himself anew. Symbolizing change, growth, movement, discovery, transformation, and an ever-expanding vision of what is possible, it stretches his soul and enables him to see clearly and deeply. It accords him the perception of a seer who begins to view journey or pilgrimage as a metaphor for life.

Through his novels Coelho stresses that a journey is needed for the soul to realize all its potentials and act according to its will. He confesses: “using the metaphor of the journey, I see life as a caravan. I don’t know whence it came or where it’s going to end up” (Arias 210). Coelho believes that everyone is on a journey and must undertake it without expecting any results and on the way must acquire as much knowledge as one can. One of his novels, *The Zahir* begins with a short poem entitled “Ithaca” which philosophically points out the journey everyone has to undertake in their life. Coelho insists his readers to live the life to the fullest, listening to their hearts, acquiring knowledge gained from the experience during the journey rather than concentrating on the destination one has to reach.

Always keep Ithaca in your mind.

To arrive there is your ultimate goal.

But do not hurry the voyage at all.

It is better to let it last for many years;
And to anchor at the island when you are old,

Rich with all you have gained on the way,

Not expecting that Ithaca will offer you riches.

Ithaca has given you the beautiful voyage.

Without her you would never have set out on the road.

She has nothing more to give you.

And if you find her poor, Ithaca has not deceived you.

Wise as you have become, with so much experience,

you must already have understood what Ithacas mean. (*The Zahir* 1)

Thus, through all his novels, Coelho says that the fruit of the journey is the journey itself; the experiences and knowledge one gains throughout is the real treasure one can achieve through his/her life journey. In this journey, touching one’s own heart or soul is the real greatness, the ultimate joy of life. Thus, Coelho has employed journey as a process of growth and transformation leading the individual to his/her spiritual growth and enlightenment. Through this thesis entitled “Journey of Self-Discovery in the Select Novels of Paulo Coelho,” the researcher attempts to explore various evolutionary processes and psychical phenomena taking place during this journey and the various factors that stimulate these processes.