The present research work proposes to study the selected fiction of the renowned Brazilian novelist Paulo Coelho in order to highlight his obsession with various types of quests human beings undertake. The origin of the present research problem is rooted in the very life of human being. From the beginning of the human history, human life is viewed as an odyssey in search of one thing or the other. Though the modern man enjoys many privileges and facilities in comparison to the primitive one, his search in life has not come to an end. On the contrary the highly awakened mind of the modern man, in turn, has raised many expectations from life, thus setting him on a journey to fulfill those expectations. The awakening due to education has made him cross over new horizons in order to realize his dreams. The failures or frustrations in these attempts set him once again in search of some consolation, equilibrium, some peace of mind or spiritual tranquility. Sometimes man is compelled to set out on a journey in order to find out something that is lost or some material prosperity. Thus human life is an eternal journey in search of various mysteries. In her book *Journey to Love: Following One's Inner Voice*, Gloria Ponziano rightly remarks that from the day of birth mankind is on an eternal journey, sometimes knowingly, willingly or sometimes unintentionally or involuntarily.

I believe each of us embark upon a journey the day we’re born. We are here, not by accident, but by divine appointment. No matter what conditions or social status you were born into, it wasn’t chance that brought you into existence.
Usually we’re not even aware we’re on a journey until something significant happens that grabs our attention. And once it does, we need to be open to what’s being presented to us; otherwise we could miss the potentials and possibilities that can lead us into our life’s purpose, destiny, and true fulfillment.¹

A reflection of such journey of quest can be seen in almost all mythological and national literature. As a theme, it run through the world literature, from its beginnings -from Homer, through Virgil and Dante and down to Eliot. Due to its recurrence in literature, this theme has become an archetype. The ancient quest tale *Odyssey* by Homer has set in the trend of using quest as a basic plot structure. Following the trend almost all national literatures have used quest both as thematic base and plot structure.

The quest, as a narrative pattern underlying literature and mythology, reveals two prominent and evidently contradictory features of the human imagination. On the one hand is its apparent craving for the same essential tale; on the other is its flexibility, its power to create endless variations on a single theme. Through history, the story of the quest has given writers a vehicle for their novel insights and visions. Moreover this pattern of journey has potential to take innumerable forms.

As a requisite of the study the objectives of the same are stated here. The present research work attempts to study the selected novels of Paulo Coelho in order to highlight his fascination with the various types of quests human beings undertake in life. It endeavors to present Paulo Coelho’s perception of human life as presented in his works. Drawing on the experiences of different characters from Coelho’s novels, the
study attempts to shed light on the individual and universal dimensions of spiritual quest. It aims to show that, irrespective of the full knowledge of the objectives of life, how these objectives are revealed to us most mysteriously.

But first of all, the study demands at this stage a short introduction to the author on whose works the present research work is being carried out.

**A Short Biography of Paulo Coelho**

Paulo Coelho was born on August 24, 1947 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, the city where he lives now. His life is in many ways as varied and unusual as the protagonists of his internationally acclaimed novels. Like most of his characters, Coelho has pursued a dream of becoming a writer. But this dream met with frustration at the initial stage of his writing career. He worked at various professions, some of them materially rewarding but spiritually unfulfilling. "I always knew," he says, "that my Personal Legend, to use a term from alchemy, was to write."²

The struggle in Coelho’s life starts even before his entry into this world. As a fetus, he had swallowed the fatal mixture of meconium, which stopped his movement in the womb and showed no inclination of birth as a result of which he had to be delivered by forceps. As he was pulled into the world, the doctor had heard a slight crack of baby’s collarbone. On delivery, the baby made no sign of being alive, the sobbing parents asked for someone to give the last rites to the dead child. A nun, who was present there, heard a faint mewing sound. The child was in fact alive but was in deep coma. Thus Coelho faced his first challenge and survived it.

³
The life thereafter led and experienced by Paulo Coelho was extreme. His teenage years were defined by rebellion and defiance as he struggled for the independence to discover his destiny. He began to experiment with drugs and developed a dangerous interest in dark magic.

In 1970 he realized that law school was not for him. During the same period he traveled through much of South America, North Africa, Mexico, and Europe. Returning to Brazil after two years, he began a successful career as popular songwriter. In 1974, he was imprisoned for a short time by the military dictatorship then ruling in Brazil. At the beginning of 1972 Raul Seixas, a musician and singer invited Paulo to write songs for him. This was the beginning of their lifelong friendship’s the months pass by the two became not just partners but great friends. So as part of the Brazilian rock scene Coelho wrote lyrics for many performers from Brazilian music.

His fascination with the spiritual quest dates back to his hippy days when he travelled the world to learn about secret societies, oriental religions and mysticism. In 1986, he experiences one of the defining moments of his life; he walked the 500-plus mile Road of Santiago de Compostela in northwestern Spain. This ancient highway was used for centuries by pilgrims from France to get to the cathedral said to house the remains of St. James. At the end of this pilgrimage Coelho achieved self-awareness and a spiritual awakening that he later described in *The Pilgrimage*.

In Holland he met a person, whom he referred as J throughout the *Valkyries, The Pilgrimage* and “Warriors of Light”. This fellow changed his life. As an influence of his contact with “J”, Coelho was driven to Christianity. He said he became a member of a Catholic Group
called Regnus Agnus Mundi, an organization that believed in reading the omens of life and the language of the world.

Paulo Coelho has led an extreme life. During his youth, he was rebellious. He was a hippie. He wrote popular song lyrics for some of Brazil's famous pop music stars, including Elis Regina and Raul Seixas. Shortly after, he worked as a journalist.

In 1986 Paulo Coelho walked the Road to Santiago, a medieval pilgrim's route between France and Spain. He would later describe this experience in *The Pilgrimage*, published in 1987. The following year, his second book *The Alchemist* established him as a writer of some caliber. The book has achieved the status of a modern classic and is considered as a timeless story. It enchants and inspires and will continue to inspire a whole new reader from generations to come.

In September 1988, after devoting two weeks in spiritual exercises with his wife Christiana, he said, “It is a spirituality that is not to be preached about or intellectualized but experienced. It is through the experience that the mystery of God will be revealed to each person, in a singular, individual form, which means seeing in each and everything the figure of God, the presence of the Holy Trinity constructing and reconstructing the world”.

Paulo Coelho once said that following your dream is like learning a foreign language; you will make mistakes but you will get there in the end. In 1988, he published *The Alchemist*, a novel dealt with the quest of a dream, and it launched him as an internationally acclaimed author. Paulo Coelho is recognized for his powerful storytelling technique and the profound spiritual insights he blends effortlessly into his parables. Since its publication, more than 11 million copies of *The Alchemist* are
sold worldwide. It has been translated into some 41 languages. Along with *The Pilgrimage* and *The Alchemist*, Paulo Coelho has written more than fourteen novels about the different streams of our lives. To date a sum of 280 translations in 58 languages have been published of his works. For 15 years, Paulo Coelho's different titles have made the top places on the bestseller lists around the world. He is a winner of numerous literary prizes and, moreover, works as a prominent speaker for humanitarian causes.

"Paulo Coelho is not only one of the most widely read, but also one the most influential authors writing today," wrote the Bambi awards in Germany. "His books have had a life-enhancing impact on millions of people" wrote The Times in UK. According to Reuters (Oct 8, 2003) Paulo Coelho ranks among the world's three most successful writers.


The critics have especially praised his poetic, realistic and philosophical style, and the symbolic language that does not speak to our brains, but to our hearts. He is a member of the prestigious Brazilian Academy of Letters (2002).

**A Short Introduction to the Chapters**
Chapter II of this work is entitled as **Follow Your Heart, Live Your Dreams** and it proposes to study Paulo Coelho’s *The Pilgrimage* and *The Alchemist* to focus light on the writer’s fascination with the essential wisdom of listening to one’s own heart and above all, following one’s own path.

Part adventure story, part guide to self-discovery, the compelling tale, *The Pilgrimage* delivers the perfect combination of enhancement and insight. Because of the complete way in which it expresses the human side of Coelho’s philosophy and the depth of his search, the novel *The Pilgrimage* has a very important place in his fictional world. On a legendary road across Spain, travelled by pilgrims of Santiago, we find on a contemporary quest for ancient wisdom. This physical journey becomes a spiritual. This truly initiatory experience transformed him forever as he learned to understand the nature of truth through the simplicity of life.

On the other hand, *The Alchemist* unfolds the tale of a boy named Santiago, who has a dream and the commitment to pursue. After listening to “the sign”, the boy ventures on a journey in search of a hidden treasure. The treasure symbolically represents wisdom. *The Alchemist* is a stimulating novel, which reinforces that everything is possible as long as the person really wants it to happen. Coelho lays great stress on good omen through the novel. The moral of the story speaks of the “soul of the world” and that the Earth wants you to be happy. This story tells how each one of us has a single mission, goal or personal legend, though most of us do not realize it.

Chapter III, entitled **Quest for Heart’s True Path**, is a study of Coelho’s novel *Brida*, and *The Witch of Portobello*. *Brida*, a moving tale of love, passion, mystery and, spirituality, tells the story of
a young beautiful Irish girl, *Brida* and her quest for knowledge. During her journey she meets a wise man that teaches her how to conquer her fears and a woman who teaches her how to dance to the hidden music of the world. They see in her a gift, which they make her discover by her own. As *Brida* seeks her destiny, she struggles to find a balance between her relations and her desire to transform herself.

*The Witch of Portobello* is the story of Athena. She is a Mysterious young woman born in Romania, rose in Beirut and living in London. What is significant of this novel is the story telling technique; Athena’s story is narrated by more than a dozen of narrators. They recount her birth in Transylavania to a Gypsy mother, her short early marriage to a man she met at a London college, her son Viorel’s birth, her stint selling real estate in Dubai and many other things. Athena recognized and struggled with the power of her magical gifts at an early age. Encouraged by innate truths and passions inaccessible to most of her contemporaries, she wandered around Europe and the Middle East in search of acceptance, Enlightenment and a truer path.

Chapter IV, *Journey for Self-discovery* deals with the uncanny fusion of philosophy, romance, religious and the importance of following the heart’s true path in Coelho’s novels *The Zahir* and *By the River Piedra I sat Down and Wept.*

*The Zahir* presents the philosophical and spiritual chronicle of a man’s quest for self discovery. The novel centers on the narrator’s search for his missing wife. Her name is Esther, a journalist. The protagonist seeks out Mikhail, the man who was supposed to be Esther’s most recent lover and with whom she was last seen. Then one day Mikhail finds the narrator and takes him to his wife. Mikhail introduces the narrator to a global underground “tribe” of spiritual seekers. The
narrator’s search for his wife becomes the search for the truth of his own life. This quest takes him from South America to Spain, France, Croatia and eventually the bleakly beautiful landscape of Central Asia. More than that, it leads him into a new understanding of the nature of love and the power of destiny.

Similarly, the novel *By the River Piedra I Sat down and Wept* explores the theme of faith. Its protagonist Pilar, a young woman from the Spanish countryside, is sparked by the teachings of a new mysterious man she has known and loved since childhood. As a result, she leaves her graduate studies and embarks on a spiritual pilgrimage through the Pyrenees Mountains and reevaluates her life and her future. Pilar in the company of her former boyfriend learns over the course of seven days that the spiritual path is traveled by means of the daily experience of love.

The last chapter **Conclusion** sums up the whole study by arriving at certain configurations about the spiritual odyssey and the various quests of different characters by. This study of Paulo Coelho’s fictions has a potential to reveal his explorations of various meanings of dreams, love and life. The significant focus here will be on his spiritual quest and mysteries related to life. It will show how the quest of one’s own identity results in the successful recognition.

Before going further, the study demands an explication of its title to determine the limits and specify the scope of the research.

**Spiritual Odyssey and Mysteries of life**

**Spiritual Odyssey**
The present research work proposes to study the spiritual odyssey of an individual and as a requisite of it an elaborate analysis of the word ‘spiritual’ is attempted here. It attempts to define the term ‘spiritual’ bringing out its relevance to the present study. The root of the term ‘spiritual’ is ‘spirit’ which has best been described by Wikipedia as having “many differing meanings and connotations, most of them relating to a non-corporeal substance contrasted with material body. The spirit of a living thing usually refers to or explains its consciousness. The notions of a person's "spirit" and "soul" often also overlap, as both contrast with body and both are understood as surviving the bodily death in religion and occultism.” In his essay “What is ‘Spirit’?” R. M. Duraisammy discusses in detail the meaning of spirit. According to him,

The spirit within us is our real self! And yet when asked this question "what is ‘spirit’?", hardly anyone will answer: "it is me, myself, my true being"! However, just this right interpretation of "spirit" will provide the necessary answers to all questions in due course. To know that the spirit is one’s own real innermost self is the first stage of spiritual enlightenment.

From this word ‘spirit’ stem the concepts like spiritual, spirituality, and spiritualism which differ in meaning from each other. Spiritual means those matters which regard human kind’s ultimate nature and purpose. Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary defines spiritual as “relating to deep feelings and beliefs.” It involves things closely akin in interest, attitude, outlook and which are concerned with or affecting the soul. Usually it is contrasted with material things with the physical and temporary. In spiritual matters a sense of connection is central.
The word spiritual is not to be confused with spiritualism and the study has nothing to do with the latter. Further it has also to be emphasized that in the context of this study, spiritual doesn’t mean religious and the present research doesn’t propose to make any investigation of any religion or any religious practices. The word spiritual is used here as an umbrella term to cover all that is related to one’s own self, inner self.

Considering this, a spiritual odyssey may be interpreted now as the development of an individual’s inner life, a gradual passing of mind, self or spirit, from one state to another regarded as more advanced. It may be defined as a journey in search of the sources and realities of life, and one’s own happiness. It is believed that there exist many spiritual paths to these objectivities and one has to find one’s own individual path.

It isn’t true that everyone should follow one path. Listen to your own truth.6

A spiritual odyssey may or may not be an enterprise physically undertaken, as it can also be mentally conceived. Like a pilgrimage it may be an actual journey of enlightenment or like meditation it may be an enriching spiritual experience. Conceived through daily experience of life, it may be a journey on the path of knowledge and awakening. The phrase Spiritual Quest reflects the degree to which a human being is actively searching for meaning and purpose in life, in order to be more self-aware and enlightened person.

Mysteries of Life

Man’s interest in unraveling the mysteries is as old as his existence. He has struggled ever since his creation to find even his
creator. In *The Mystery of the Universe and the Meaning of Human Life* Witness Lee states that “the mystery of this universe is God.” Man had tried to see the creator in different forms; sometimes as the Sun, the moon, or the stars; sometimes as a mighty river or a lofty mountain or the earth itself. However the God continued to elude man. From the Neolithic age to the present times the search has been ceaseless. Indeed it has been a fascinating journey of discovery. Back and forth, then man travelled between faith and doubt.

In all the phases of the march toward knowledge, from the primitive to the evolved modern one, the another human goal has been the fundamental existential question “What exists?”, which – earlier in the East (India), and later in the West (Greece) – was turned into the internal quest with the question “Who am I?” These two questions have from time to time claimed either the particular or exclusive attention of humans, or have constituted parallel goals through the intuitive or reflective realization that their object, i.e. the “Being”, is found past the “What” and beyond the “Who” in the transcendent existential unity.

In life, overall, we are in search of one thing or the other, the nature and composition of which we are not sure of. We are not even sure of what form those things are going to be revealed to us. Though we are sure of our objective, it is a mystery that how, when and where are we going to achieve it and in what form. In this context what Dr. Rafiq Zakaria comments on the existence of God and the human being’s search for Him seems to be pertinent here.

No one knows where, when, and where and how God came into existence. Or what He looks like, how He lives and functions. The human mind has struggled hard to find answers; but it has got entangled in riddles. Experts in
anthropology, mythology, philosophy, sociology and metaphysics have broken their heads over this, but no one has come out with concrete proof. Their findings are still a heap of confusion. The more man has tried to search for Him, the more he has got lost; neither rational arguments nor scientific inventions have made him any wiser. He has succeeded in landing on the moon and the Mars, but god has remained as inaccessible as before. Reason could not discover His origin; science has failed to fathom His functioning. Man has confronted with a sphinx which remains inscrutable. Plotinus (c. 205-270) said that even if God were to reply to the question: “wherefore dost Thou bring forth creatures?” His reply would be, “Ask not, understand in silence even as I am silent.”

Irrespective of these uncertainties man has never ceased to explore what he desires or aspires in his life. Here lies the real interest of life and the whole mystery of the quest. The glimpse of agony from the realization upon our minds in contradiction with our souls is often uncomfortable for our inner peace. Imagining ourselves with nonexistent answers we seek in the darkest moment of our life, and still we do not want to leave anything behind, struggling and not knowing where exactly we are heading. Confusion is a mist; the cause of this powerful motivation makes it seem like we are divided and deprived, incapable not just of the quotidian, but of something very mysterious behind all this majesty.

Apart from the search for that mysterious force which has created him and her, human being has been in search of many other things that kept him bound to the force of life. All these forces have been viewed by him as mysteries which he always tried to explore. Ranging from a
Promised Land to a valuable treasure, from faith in God to love in other
human being, from spiritual awakening to physical love, from power to
recognition, and many more have been dreamed, desired and explored
for. Such and various other objects are viewed as mysteries until they
are revealed or discovered. These have been viewed in the context of
this study as the mysteries of life.

**Definition of Quest**

From the mundane matters of daily life to the world of mythology,
history, literature and modern media, the word Quest has been used to
signify a search. It has commonly been used to cover many such acts as
the trails of a hound, a common man’s pursuit of happiness,
investigations of a detective, an artist’s search for a voice or recognition,
a pilgrim’s spiritual journey and many more. In the earlier context the
word was even used to denote a person or a group of person who search
or make an inquiry. These examples are sufficient enough to make us
aware of a large variety of ideas which the word “quest” embraces.
Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary defines it as “a long search
for something that is difficult to find, or an attempt to achieve
something difficult.” The same meaning is implied to mythology,
history, literature and modern media.

In the context of mediaeval romances the term quest implies the
notion of a search, by a solitary knight, over a defined period of time
and in a geographically determined landscape to some objective, which
is generally stated at the outset. The hero’s success and achievement is
often followed by his safe return home, a re-union which frequently
confers some benefit on his society. This familiar pattern represents
fairly well the structure of such ancient stories as the epic of *Glimesh*
and Homer’s *Odyssey*. The quest – a journey to accomplish a particular
task or to find or regain some object- is an essential element of myth, religion and narrative literature.

There are two types of quest or journey that can be identified in human life;

1. Physical
2. Spiritual

Any quest or journey involves in either or both of these two. A physical quest is that one which involves a journey from one place to the other whereas a spiritual is the one which occupies mental space and involves in the search of abstract things like peace, development of mind, wisdom, truth, self, happiness among others.

In the context of literature in general, the word quest refers those narratives which has a journey with a serious search for something. The search may not only embrace persons, places and things, but also ideas. And if we admit of the important search as a vital component of the quest, then the theme of pilgrimage must be considered, as it is a theme which informs the structure of the *Canterbury Tales* and of *Piers Plowman*. Inevitably, then, the quest can consist also of a search for spiritual truth and earthly perfection, as in the Grail quests, a trial and preparation for the hereafter in which the reward is the promise of eternal salvation.

The attempts to define the term ‘quest’ requires a detailed analysis of the process undertaken by a quester, which is covered separately in the following pages.

**The Objectives of Quest**

Every version of the quest in myth, fairy tale and fantasy revolves around a particular “boon,” often a fabulous treasure: The Golden
Fleece, the Holy Grail, the Water of Life, the Plant of Immortality, the Lost Ark of the Covenant, and countless others. In the ‘Magical Realism’ type of fiction, the treasures are sometimes less magnificent, and often intangible.

In a narrative, quest provides a reason for the action and motives of the characters. It serves as a plot devise and frequently as a metaphor. In literature, the object of quests requires great exertion on the part of the hero/protagonist, and the overcoming of many obstacles, typically including much travel/journey. The quester normally aims to obtain something or someone and with this object to return home. The object can be something new, which fulfills a lack in the quester’s life or something that was stolen away or someone with authority to dispatch the quester. Sometimes the quester sets out with no more definite aim than to seek the fortune.

The occasion of the action in Homer’s *Iliad* is the rescue of Helen from the Trojans; Homer’s Odysseus struggles to return to his home and reestablish himself as head of his family and country; Moses and Virgil’s Aeneas search for new homelands; Christ seeks to redeem mankind; Gautama Buddha leaves his house to seek out the truth of life and spiritual knowledge; Malory’s Sir Gareth sets out to liberate the lady Lyones from Red Knight; Ariosto’s Orlando searches for Angelica.

The objective of a Quest in relevance to the modern times has aptly been pointed out by Shand d aramon in his book *The Sacred Quest*.

Although the days of shining armor and lances may be over, the chance to take on the Quest is not. There is another Holy Grail that each of us must pursue and doing so requires the same amount of commitment, courage, and
strength as was required of those knights of old. This Holy Grail is something we all possess but which requires a Sacred Quest to uncover and behold, for within the Grail is the elixir of happiness. Finding this drop of joy can help us lead happy and fulfilled lives. This is the objectives of the Sacred Quest and of the spiritual life – true happiness.  

**What is the real Treasure?**

The objectives of a quest may be a tangible or intangible object. Sometimes, the goal of a quest is a literal treasure: precious object, hoards of jewels or hidden fortune. In other stories, the object the hero seeks, though still a tangible one is comparatively paltry or even worthless. The treasure sought may even be a person, as in the fairy tales. The hero’s expedition is to find or rescue a princess. But the treasure is not always a material object. Often it is something intangible: the acquisition of knowledge, spiritual enlightenment, power or inner peace. In fact, even when the treasure is concrete, it may represent some intangible quality.

In spite of all the different forms they take, however, the different treasures that lie at the end of different quests always share certain characteristics. First, they are difficult to obtain; reaching them requires immense effort on the part of the heroes. And the value of the treasure, most particularly to the hero, is in direct proportion to the difficulty of his or her journey to attain it. Indeed, the main characters commonly face difficulty in their attempts to reach their goals. But even when a particular goal has little or no apparent worth, its importance to the quester is immense. The heroes are willing to risk humiliation, defeat and possible death in order to achieve whatever end they are striving for is a sign of its ultimate value. In short, whether the treasure is worth a
trifle or a worthy fortune, its real value derives from its significance to or what it represents to the hero.

But what exactly does the treasure represent? In story after story, the heroes are willing to undergo extreme adversity and peril for one fundamental reason: they believe that the things they are looking for will change their lives. For some, the treasure means improvement in their material and economic circumstances. For some the treasure represents a change in their position in society, while others attempt to alter society itself. And some characters try to transform, not the outer world, but their own personality and nature; they attempt to break free of the fears, weaknesses, and delusions that have trapped them in deeply unhappy lives.

In every instance the treasure stands for the promise of a fresh start. That promise is not always fulfilled. In many stories, the heroes never find the treasure. It is also possible for the treasure to result in changes that are very different from the ones the hero expects. Still, to the true hero, the quest for the treasure remains an irresistible challenge. The hero understands that the difficulties involved in attaining the desired object reflect the difficulties involved in making any significant changes in the world or in one’s self. Most people would rather cling to the familiar than face the new, even when the familiar has grown painfully unfulfilling. The desire and the ability to make those changes, distinguish the hero from the rest of humankind.

Such treasures which can be stated as objectives of quests in human life as represented in literature can be summed up as follows:

1. Happiness
2. Treasure or Wealth
3. Knowledge
4. Truth
5. Spiritual Contentment
6. Peace
7. Objective of life
8. An object like Grail
9. A person
10. A promised land
11. God
12. Wisdom
13. Achievement
14. Spiritual Salvation
15. Universal Human Experience
16. Voice
17. Self
18. Any skill

**Quest Stories: Structure and Stages**

Most of the theorists of quest literature have attempted to describe the structure and stages of quest stories. Some theorists consider a quest as a formulation of seventeen stages, some involve in twelve stages, and some cover it in eight stages whereas some encompass it merely in four stages. Almost all quest themes follow a particular pattern and this structure of the journey of a questing hero is best described by an American mythologist, Joseph Campbell. His seminal work *The Hero*
*with a Thousand Faces* describes the theory of journey of the archetypal hero found in the world mythologies. In the book Campbell explores the theory that the major myths from around the world share a fundamental structure. Joseph Campbell suggests that all quests in fact represent one quest which he called the ‘monomyth’

The standard path of the mythological adventure of the hero is a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: separation-initiation-return: which might be named the nuclear unit of the monomyth.  

Campbell describes a number of stages or steps along this journey. The hero starts in the ordinary world, and receives a call to enter an unusual world of strange powers and events (a *call to adventure*). If the hero accepts the call to enter this strange world, the hero must face tasks and trials (a *road of trials*), and may have to face these trials alone, or may have assistance. At its most intense, the hero must survive a severe challenge, often with help earned along the journey. If the hero survives, the hero may achieve a great gift (the *goal* or “boon”), which often results in the discovery of important self-knowledge. The hero must then decide whether to return with this boon (the *return to the ordinary world*), often facing challenges on the return journey. If the hero is successful in returning, the boon or gift may be used to improve the world (the *application of the boon*). Campbell has described seventeen stages of the monomyth which he categorizes in three groups viz. Departure, Initiation and Return. These seventeen stages are as follows:

**Departure**

1. The Call to Adventure
2. Refusal of the Call
3. Supernatural Aid
4. The Crossing of the First Threshold
5. Belly of the Whale

**Initiation**

6. The Road of Trials
7. The Meeting with the Goddess
8. Temptation
9. Atonement with the Father
10. Apotheosis
11. The Ultimate Boon

**Return**

12. Refusal of the Return
13. The Magic Flight
14. Rescue from Without
15. The Crossings of the Return Threshold
16. Master of two Worlds
17. Freedom to Live

But, as stated earlier, some of the theorists have described a quest as a twelve stage journey as follows;

1. The Ordinary World
2. The Call to Adventure
3. Refusal of the Call
4. Meeting the Mentor
The hero starts in an ordinary world. When he receives a call, initially he refuses it. Only a meeting with a wise man in the form of a guide encourages him to set out on the journey. Throughout the journey he faces many tests and temptations, which he has to overcome. The loneliness during the journey allows him to undertake a parallel but inward journey to find his own self. After successfully overcoming all the ordeals and gaining the desired reward, he needs to return with enlightenment or the Elixir. The structure of such a journey can best be illustrated in the model below.
Not each of the above stage may be the part of every quest, but almost all the quest stories, irrespective of their mythical, medieval or modern
context and time, share some of the principal stages of the journey which need specific elaboration.

The Call

Anyone—any animated thing—can undertake a quest. But those who do it must have certain qualities: the qualities such as insight, courage, and endurance. These are the essential qualities of questers. Not all have what it takes, or enough of what it takes, to bring the quest to an end. But anyone who accepts the Call must have these qualities. These heroes need insight to see the limitations of their lives, especially when the rest of their world regards those lives as enviable. They need courage and patience to fight against the fate others succumb to, against social convention and the expectations of family and friends, or even against the stable but unsatisfying conditions of their lives. Their own fears and habits may urge them to stay home, to stay safe, and to be happy with what they have and what they are. In order to undertake a quest, it is essential that they consciously or unconsciously perceive the danger of remaining where they are. These heroes need insight. To leave the security and familiarity of the known world for the unknown as the quest demands may seem more dangerous than staying back. But it is not. The quest motif in myth and literature symbolizes the absolute necessity of radical, defiant, creative change in the individual’s life—in the life of any culture. Animated things must alter and grow, physically, emotionally, psychically and spiritually. To stop or hold this growth leads to stagnation. The hero learns to accept the truth that all is in flux, that all must change, that life is an unending cycle of deaths and rebirths. He or she must discard the things that were meaningful yesterday for those that assume new significance as the future unfolds. The hero’s willingness to undertake the quest is the sign that he
understands and accepts these exacting conditions of human life. The hero must know that to be static is to be dead.

Thus in a quest story a call and an appropriate and timely response to it are of primary significance. A “herald” appears and issues this call. The herald is often someone or something external, though there are some instances when the call arises from within the quester in the form of a powerful impulse or sudden craving. More often, the call comes from a source outside the hero. At other times, the call comes from a non-human creature. Myths and fairy tales are full of such heralds. Often, the herald is an extraordinary event or an intriguing object that makes a sudden, dramatic appearance, disrupting the day-to-day life of the hero. Whether that call comes from outside the hero or within, it always signifies that the present situation has become stagnant, sterile and unrewarding. It also indicates that the hero is ripe for a change, that he is ready, if not necessarily willing or able, to leave his old familiar life behind and move on to something new.

There are times in our lives when our whole existence depends on our ability to grow, to answer the inner challenge that urges us to change our lives. At such times, the complacency out of fear or habit or conventional morality and resultant staying back, condemns us to a kind of living death.

The Road of Trials

From *The Odyssey* to the legends of *King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table* to such modern-day fairy tales as the fantasy books of J. R. R. Tolkien, the central action of all quest stories is the peril-filled journey the heroes must undertake to reach their goals.
Often the journey can be difficult and painful, but with an open heart, each day can expose us to situations that will serve as building blocks towards destiny. There are lessons to be learned and often life’s greatest lesson to be learned and often life’s greatest lessons are learned through adversity, not through ease.  

The preliminary parts of the quest present the hero in a fix. It is a situation that requires courage, firm decision and determination. The hardships heroes must face do not fully begin until they have left their familiar surrounding and crossed into a mysterious and unknown world. In order to reach the goal they seek, they must travel a hard and dangerous path and survive a series of ordeals of the new world of uncertainty. This part of the quest is called “the road of trials.”

What makes this stage of the quest a descent into nightmare or a voyage into hell is not only the strange, unknown land itself but also the kind of experience the protagonist encounters there. In this “kingdom of the dark,” the protagonists undergo to a variety of ordeals that test their capacity for heroic behavior. In almost all the quest stories, this part of the narrative is usually the most entertaining. It portrays the heroes in a series of exciting situations: climbing the slopes of impossibly steep mountains; fighting their way through deadly jungles or enchanted forests; fighting with dragons, giants, and other supernatural foes; crossing a bottomless chasm on a bridge as narrow as the edge of a knife; and a limitless variety of similar obstacles and hazards. In “realistic” works of fiction, the ordeals are usually more mundane though no less demanding, since the protagonists themselves are ordinary individuals rather than heroes of mythic stature or superhuman ability.
The Journey has a purpose: it is a process of discovery in which the heroes learn essential truths about themselves, their society, and that of human existence. The severity of the journey, the trials and even tortures that the heroes must undergo, are the signs that these truths are very difficult to face, not simply because they are often painful, but also because accepting them requires that the individuals rid themselves of their familiar assumptions, values and self-images. In short, they must “die” to their earlier ways of life before they can be “born” into a new one. In this sense most of quest narratives are stories of initiation.

Whatever knowledge the heroes gain through their experiences on the journey is always important, if not always pleasant or easy to accept. They may be forced, for instance to face a hard fact about their place in a particular culture or in the world at large. At other times, the protagonists gain insight into vital areas of their own natures. The dragons and demons that must be faced and overcome are either embodiments of protagonist’s personal weaknesses, limitations and fears.

In a larger sense, the “road of trials” always leads to an illumination of character. Though some protagonists may remain blind to the reality of their natures even at the end of their stories, their responses to the perils and pitfalls of the quest tell the reader a great deal about them. For this reason, the journey is the ultimate revelation or test of a character’s heroic potential–a test some of the protagonists in these stories fail.

Transformation

In some quest stories, of course, the world the hero passes into seems worse, at first, than the one she or he has left. This is particularly true of those initiation stories in which the protagonist makes the
transition from youthful innocence to mature experience. It is common for people, both in and out of fiction, to resist this particular type of transformation. They hold the past with a piercing nostalgia and hold onto it as long as they can.

Once the hero secures the treasure, he must return with that. The fictional characters who successfully finish the journey are never the same people they were when they first started out; the treasure they have sought and found is precisely the transformation of lives. For this reason, the last phase of the adventure is not simply a comeback but a type of resurrection: the heroes die in order to be reborn. The changes that take place within them are profound, affecting their values, perceptions, the very way they experience life. Because of this changed perception, everything around them seems transfigured and the world itself wears a new face.

Not every hero is able to make a transition. Formidable inner and outer forces work to hold the hero back. Some protagonists find they do not have the courage to accept the change they thought they wanted. Maybe the characters do not have a powerful inner desire to attain their treasure and its inherent change. Or the “new life” that awaits is not always what was expected. And often the protagonists find themselves in situations so stifling they are unable to break away. So while some characters reconcile themselves to the changes that occur during their journey through life, others eagerly quest after transformation or welcome it gratefully if it comes to them by chance.

The hunger for rebirth, in fact, is basic to human beings and it is exhibited in different ways. In religion, the yearning for rebirth is expressed in such beliefs as reincarnation, the transmigration of souls and the resurrection of the body after death, as well as in the conversion
experience, the conviction that one has been “born again” through the grace of God. Other people long for the kind of rebirth that will affect their material rather than spiritual condition; examples are immigrants who come to America looking for a new and glorious life. Still others seek to ease feelings of depletion or stagnation; for example, the city-dweller who hopes to be regenerated by a vacation in the wilderness or the frustrated individual who believes that a change in career, marital status, or geography will make his or her life more fulfilling. Finally, some people struggle toward what is perhaps the most difficult rebirth of all: psychological rebirth, the transformation of their own personalities. Depressed by the feeling that they have not lived up to their potential or trapped in deeply fixed patterns of destructive and disappointing behavior, these people undertake the long and painful process of inner exploration. Their quest is for the self-knowledge that can liberate them from neurosis and put them in touch with their untapped inner resources that can revitalize them.

Irrespective of all their differences, stories of the quest attest to the same fundamental feature of the human spirit: a hunger for renewal and faith in the possibility of realization of this hope. Many characters never accomplish their quests; some are defeated before they begin. Every quest is in proportion. The stronger the desire for the treasure, the more courageous the hero must be. The more valuable the treasure, the more difficult the journey would be. And when the treasure is attained leading to the transformation of the hero, the more complete his rebirth. A successful quest demonstrates the human potential for significant transformation, the ability of persons to change their world and themselves for the better.
Campbell’s chief contribution was his designation of the stages of quest, from departure to return, and his useful remarks on the world-redeeming properties of the hero. The idea of redemption, of the hero conferring benefit upon his society, is a feature of many quests.

Helpers and Guides

Because the journey is difficult, the individual undertaking a quest frequently find themselves at a loss. Faced with insurmountable obstacles, insoluble mystery, or an enemy with powers that surpass their own, even the mightiest heroes need help to reach their goals.

Sometimes, this help comes from very unlikely sources. Fairy-tale and folklore characters are often rescued from terrible predicaments by seemingly insignificant creatures that turn out to have exceptional, sometimes indeed magical, powers. Beasts, birds, or even insects can offer the heroes guidance, counsel, and unexpected assistance. Two main types of recurrent characters that help and guide heroes are The Wise Old Man and the Good Mother.

The Wise Old Man

The mythological figure known as the Wise Old Man tends to offer a different type of assistance. Generally portrayed as a magician, wizard, seer, guide, or sage, he is the possessor of special knowledge, which he passes on to those rare individuals who have shown themselves to be worthy of it. Frequently, the Wise Old Man functions as a master or mentor of quest heroes, taking them under his wing as children, equipping and training them in the skills they will need to succeed in their enterprises, and initiating them into the uses and responsibilities of power. When his pupils are ready to begin the quest, the Wise Old Man may sometimes accompany them on the journey, to
warn them of any dangers that lie ahead and guide them on the path that will lead them to their goals. At other times, he appears only when the hero has arrived at a dead end and is in desperate need of assistance. His counsel delivers heroes from narrowness and immobility and set on the road that leads ultimately to the release of all their latent powers and capabilities. The help extended by the Wise Old Man develops the protagonists into the heroes they have always had the potential to become.

**The Good Mother**

At times, the role of Good Mother is played by the mother of the protagonists, sometimes even by his wife or by his relative. In ancient mythologies, the Good Mother appears in the form of the earth goddess supplying humanity with all of nature’s bounties. What she indicates in the whole journey of a hero is protection, succor, compassion, sustenance, and in some cases, spiritual nourishment. The Good Mother typically gives the hero maternal care and material support in the form of food, clothing, or a magical amulet to protect the quester from danger.

By introducing the young protagonists into a newer world that they have ever known previously and, what is more important, by giving them access to the untapped, and unidentified powers that reside within them, these older and wiser characters show how to lead a complete and fruitful life. They teach them how to be a human being.

**Evolution of Quest Pattern**

In *Anatomy of Criticism* Northrop Frye argues that the quest gives literary form to romance. He distinguishes three main stages in the successful quest: the journey, struggle and exaltation of the hero. Frye
maintains that any quest involving conflict assumes two main characters, and as far as political or chivalric conflict is concerned he is correct. But there are quests which do not enjoy a straightforward distinction between good and evil and, while there may be a journey and a recognition scene, there is not necessarily a conflict in the sense of the chief figure representing the good (protagonist) and another the evil (antagonist). Examples of mediaeval quest in which conflict plays a less “deterministic” role may be found in Sir Orfeo, Floria and Blancheflur and in Chaucer’s Wife of Bath’s Tale. In Piers Plowman the struggle is not one about which we can have any great certainty. Though Christ jousts with death and the Devil, illustrating one kind of conflict, the Dreamer on the other hand is consistently at odds with his personal intellectual and spiritual shortcomings. This suggests conflict of a different nature from the kind that Frye isolates as a quest element.

In his study on the quest themes in the English works of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth centuries, Peter Stewart Taitt suggests that in the Medieval age the theme of the quest evolved in three directions; quest as an embodiment of social and political values, quest as a symbol of private and moral considerations and quest as an expression of the pilgrimage of human soul

In the earlier works…the quest, while still remaining the metaphor for knightly proving, becomes the embodiment also of social and political values. In the exploits of Horn and Havelok are found vestiges of the courtly ideal. But there is also a preponderance of more popular notions. The quest is no longer entirely devoid of reality, no longer concerned only with demonstrating what an ideal figure the hero is, what an excellent representative of his class,
though these ideas are still present. Rather, it is concerned with some versions of historical and political reality, with the succession of kings and the security of Christian worship, yet, as a device, the quest remains largely as an external and public figuration of experience, having no relation to psychological changes in its heroes and participants, concerned more with the effect of action than with its cause.\textsuperscript{11}

In the second group of stories, notably Chaucer’s *Wife of Bath’s Tale* and *Sir Thopas*, Gower’s *Tale of Florent*, and many others, the quest embodies private and moral considerations. In Chaucer’s hands the theme serves to express a psychological dilemma by giving life to the Wife of Bath’s wish fulfillment. In these examples, the outcome of the quest is given a wider morality which does not owe allegiance to any particular social class. In Gower’s *Tale of Florent* the theme serves as the basis for a lesson in obedience, but the didactic nature of the work is never pursued at the expense of the adventure.

The third direction of evolution of the quest in the fourth century can be explained through *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. The work reveals something of Gawain’s inner nature and the adventure as an expression of the pilgrimage of the human soul.

The quest theme in the fourteenth century evolved from a public elaboration of a martial enterprise to a private search for salvation. The thematic goal of each type of quest is distinctly different. In *Piers Plowman*, the object is seeking a model for human behavior. The evolution of the quest in the fourteenth century is cyclical in the sense that we are once again returned from the dream world to the world of human affairs.
In his *Observations on the Fairy Queen*, Thomas Warton writes that ‘quest is a term properly belonging to romances, importing the expedition in which the knight is engaged, and which he is obliged to perform.’ Though, as Warton implies, the quest – a journey to accomplish a particular task or to find or regain some object- is essential to romance. It is also an essential element of much narrative literature. The occasion of the action in Homer’s *Iliad* is the rescue of Helen from the Trojans; Homer’s Odysseus struggles to return to his home and reestablish himself as head of his family and country; Moses and Virgil’s Aeneas search for new homelands; Christ seeks to redeem mankind; Malory’s Sir Gareth sets out to free the Lady Lyones from Red Knight; Ariosto’s Orlando searches for Angelica. The quest provides a reason for the action and motives for the actors, as it does in *The Fairy Queen*, where the narrative device of the quest is a central organizing principle.

A cyclical quest is found in many myths as a ‘magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: separation-initiation-return.’ In the monomyth, the hero answers a call to adventure, a formal challenge, or threat, and soon arrives at the threshold, the place of the first peril often guarded by a dragon or requiring a dangerous sea voyage. After passing over the threshold, he finds himself in an unfamiliar landscape or underworld, where assisted by helpers, he undergoes further tests. At the nadir of the cycle, he faces his greatest peril, a supreme ordeal, but after his victory- or escape- he must return again to his own world with the ‘elixir’ or boon (often a magical talisman or special knowledge) he has obtained. After the proper
application of the elixir overthrows the initial threats and restores the original order, the quest has come full circle.

Though this pattern may fit most mythological and many literary quests, some stories develop and elaborate one stage of the cycle, and reduce the other. The epic, for example, beginning in medias res, may omit the call to adventure and threshold-crossing at the start of the narrative but supply these stage later. It may present more than one hero as in the *Iliad*, and more than one adventure, as in the *Odyssey*. The hero of the myth quest is usually a god or demigod; the epic hero often the founder of a nation usually undertakes his quest for his people with divine assistance. In romance, where the quest becomes progressively more digressive and episodic, the hero is a knight-errant who may undertake a personal quest, perhaps to find or free a lover, and the supernatural forces at play are most often magical, beings wizards rather than gods. Unlike the myth quest, there is a tendency in romance for the conclusion to be deferred and a new adventure to succeed the last.

The romance quest may have three main stages in its completed form; the *agon* or perilous journey and preliminary adventures, the *pathos* or crucial struggle in which the hero dies or nearly dies, and the *anagnorisis* or exaltation of the hero. This threefold structure shows ‘the passage from struggle through a point or ritual death to a recognition scene’\(^{14}\) and, like the myth quest, exhibits ‘a cyclical movement of descent into a night world and a return to the idyllic world, or to some symbol of it like a marriage.’\(^{15}\)

Moreover, quest as a means of spiritual exploration of the self has been taken up by many writers from ancient to modern literature.
Mythological and Historical Instances of Quest

The Grail Quest: An Archetype

Though quests of all kinds abound in myth and literature, it is the Grail that comes most immediately to mind when the word ‘quest’ is mentioned. From the beginning of the medieval literature to the fiction and scholarly analysis of the twentieth century, the quest for the Holy Grail is pervasive and studies of the theme are almost without number. The most famous of the medieval romances dealing with the Grail quest are the chivalric romances of the Arthurian knights. In *Le Morte d’Arthur*, Sir Thomas Malory included many of such wanderings of Arthurian knights. This story cycle narrates multiple quests, in multiple variants, telling stories both of the heroes who succeeded, like Percival or Sir Galahad, and also the heroes who failed, like Sir Lancelot. These Arthurian romances center mostly on the quest of the Holy Grail. But “one of the earliest recorded instances of the legend itself was in Chrétien de Troyes’s *Perceval ou Le conte du Graal* (1190), which depicted the Grail as a chalice or vessel that was present during the Last Supper and later used to collect Jesus Christ’s blood after his crucifixion.” 16

An elaborate analysis of the Holy Grail and its quest is made by Jessie Weston. The anthropologist, Weston attempts an interpretation of Grail legend in terms of religious rituals. For Weston the origin of these quests was to be seen in ancient nature cults whose rituals revolved around the restoration of the land. That is, they descended from fertility and vegetation rites linked to natural, seasonal cycles. She further points
out that the romantic literature of the twelfth and thirteenth century dealt with quest for a “mysterious Talisman, varying in provenance, form, and effect, though they know always by the same name.” 17 She further observes that the Grail was the cup used by Christ at the Last Supper with his disciples before his crucifixion. According to the Legend, Joseph of Arimathea, a disciple of Christ, caught the blood from the wound made in Christ’s side at the crucifixion in this cup and brought it to Glastonbury in the West of England. The Grail was subsequently lost, and the search for it became an archetype symbol of the quest for the spiritual truth, especially in medieval romance about King Arthur and his knights.

Weston analyses the main features of the legends concerning the quest for the Grail. The search for the grail is undertaken by a knight whose quest takes him to a land which has been laid barren. The ruler of the land suffered from impotency, either by illness or by maiming. His infirmity brings about a curse on the land in the form of suspension of the reproductive process of nature, and there is a prolonged drought. The knight meets with a strange and terrifying adventure in a mysterious chapel where he is supposed to put certain questions about the Grail and another holy relic, the Lance which is pierced Christ’s side. The effect of the hero’s quest is to restore the rivers to their channels and render the land once more fertile. In some versions of the legend the king is also restored to health and vigour. But what is symbolically associated with the Grail quest, according to Weston, is the spiritual enlightenment. The vessel is a holy talisman, representing an individual’s journey towards spiritual growth and enlightenment.
And as the Grail itself varies, so do also the result arising from a successful fulfillment of the Quest. At first the object is the cure of the Guardian of the Talisman, an enigmatic personage, generally known as the Fisher or Maimed, King, who is helpless from the effects either of a wound, of extreme old age, or of illness caused by the failure of the Quester, and with the cure of the ruler the restoration of fertility to his land, which lies waste while the Quest is unfulfilled. In the final form of the result of the Quest is rather the attainment of spiritual enlightenment by the Quester,…

The modern tradition often goes farther and questions whether the Grail quest does in fact have intrinsic value. In the nineteenth century, Tennyson presented the Grail quest as destructive, and Mark Twain found it comically absurd. Twentieth-century authors, in particular, have utilized the Grail legend in both realistic and fantasy fiction, notably in stories that revolve around time travel or the struggle between good and evil. For example, in Arthur Machen’s *The Great Return* (1915), the Grail serves as an inspiration to better oneself, while in T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* (1922); the legend provides thematic unity to a poem that laments the futility of contemporary life. Critic Raymond H. Thompson has noted that the Grail theme is frequently utilized in works that highlight the condition of the human heart or an individual’s attempts to reach beyond the material world. As such, works like *The Waste Land* use the typically barren landscapes of the Grail quest as a contrasting backdrop to their characters’ search for spiritual fulfillment in modern society. In the poem, the quest to revive the Holy Grail is a quest for salvation amid the broken images of chaos in a post-war
wasteland of devaluation. But this journey reaches a rather ambivalent end with an infinite deferral of salvation as the message of the thunder remains incomprehensible.

**Buddha’s Quest and Enlightenment**

The life of the Buddha is an account of a man’s quest for and realization of the truth. Siddhartha Gautama was born King Suddhodana and Queen Maya in 583 BC, in Kapilavastu. His father was leader of a large clan called the Shakya. Unfortunately his mother died shortly after his birth. During his childhood a holy man prophesied about Siddhartha that he would be either a great military conqueror or a great spiritual teacher. King Suddhodana preferred the first outcome and prepared his son accordingly. He raised the boy in great luxury and safeguarded him from knowledge of religion and human suffering. The Prince reached the age of 29 with little experience of the world outside the walls of his luxurious palaces.

**The Four Passing Sights**

One day, curiosity compelled Prince Siddhartha ask the charioteer to take him on a series of rides through the countryside. During the journey he was shocked by the sight of an aged man, then a sick man, and then a corpse. The harsh realities of old age, disease, and death seized and shocked the Prince. Finally, he saw a wandering ascetic. The charioteer clarified that the ascetic was one who had renounced the world and sought release from fear of death and suffering.

**The Renunciation**

When the Prince returned to palace life, he could not enjoy its luxury. Even the news that his wife Yasodhara had given birth to a son did not please him. One night he wandered the palace alone. The
luxuries he had once enjoyed now seemed grotesque. Musicians and
dancing girls had fallen asleep and were sprawled about, snoring and
sputtering. Prince Siddhartha reflected on diseases, the old age, and
death that would overtake them all and turn their bodies to dust. He
realized then that he could no longer be comfortable living the life of a
prince. That very night he left the palace and changed his prince’s
clothes for a beggar’s robe. That was the beginning of his quest for
enlightenment.

**The Journey to Enlightenment**

Siddhartha began by seeking out renowned teachers, who taught
him about the many religious philosophies of his day as well as the
process of reaching inward through meditation. But even after he had
learned all they had to teach, his doubts and queries remained. So he and
five disciples left to find enlightenment by themselves.

The six companions attempted to find liberty from suffering
through physical discipline—enduring pain, holding their breath, fasting
nearly to starvation. Yet Siddhartha was still unsatisfied. It occurred to
him that in renouncing pleasure he had grasped pleasure’s opposite—pain
and self-mortification. Now Siddhartha thought of a mid way between
those two extremes. He remembered an experience from his childhood,
when his mind had settled into a state of deep peace. *The path of
liberation was through discipline of mind.* He realized that instead of
starvation, he needed nourishment to build up his strength for the effort.
This was considered as his reaching his goal. Siddhartha sat beneath a
sacred fig tree known and settled into meditation. Here ended his quest
when he was enlightened of the ultimate knowledge and reality of life.

**Epic and quest**
Ramayan

The great Indian Epic, Ramayan depicts Prince Rama’s quest to rescue his beloved wife Sita from the clutches of Ravan with the help of an army of monkeys. Though the main concern of the story is about the ideal personality of Rama, the journey in search of Sita also has a greater significance. Rama was the eldest son of King of Ayodhya, Dashrath. Due to Dashrath’s third wife, Kaikayi’s plan to make her son, Bharat the Yuvraj of Ayodhya, Rama, along with Sita and Lakshman are intrigued to spend fourteen years in Forest.

During their stay in the forest, Sita was kidnapped by the King of Lanka, Ravan. And the remaining part of the epic is spent in her search by both Rama and Lakshman. In this search of Sita, they were helped by an army of monkeys, led by Hanuman and Sugriv, monkey King of Kiskindha.

The story opens in the north of India and Sita is kidnapped in the central part of India. Lanka, where Sita was kept captive by Ravan is located at the south end of India. Thus the story physically takes its readers from Himalayan region to beyond the south end of India.

The main purpose of this journey, as analysed by its interpreters, is to destroy the evil elements present in the days of Rama, who was an incarnation of Vishnu. Ravan, who kidnapped Sita was a king of devils. By his worships, he had gained such powers with which he could bring even the regimes of God under his control. It was a divine plan to bring Rama and Sita to Dandkaranya, so that Ravan would kidnap her giving a legitimate cause to Rama to kill him. Thus the search of Sita in Ramayana takes universal dimension and involves in many agencies other than human being, such as animals, birds and even divine elements.
Odyssey

Homer uses the idea of spiritual growth as one of his underlying themes in the *Odyssey*. He relates this through many characters and their adventures or actions. Spiritual growth is brought about by rough times, temptations, long travels, and even good times. Homer does a good job of hitting on all of these factors.

Odysseus’ adventures and growth are much more prevalent in the *Odyssey* than those of any other characters. He begins on Calypso’s island, where he has everything, except happiness. His spirit is low as he longs for his homeland. Homer introduces Odysseus at a low point to emphasize the growth in his spirit from beginning to end. If Homer had shown Odysseus in a good spirit first, then the growth would not have seemed as prevalent. Odysseus seems to see the light when he finds out that he will be sailing home. He is tested first when Poseidon nearly kills him off the coast of Scheria, the first island he reaches. The *Odyssey* says, “and trapped within that backwash of the brine, Odysseus would have died before his time had not gray-eyed Athena counseled him.” Athena allows Odysseus to experience the storm, but not die. She knows that it will make him stronger for it. There is an old saying, which goes along with this situation, “what doesn’t kill us makes us stronger.”

Odysseus is also tempted when he and his crew pass the Sirens. He is the only one to hear their song and must be tied to a post in order to keep himself restrained. Odysseus’ spirit is still weak as he is engrossed with the Sirens ability to foretell the future. He says, “So did they chant with their entrancing voice. My heart longed so to listen, and I asked my men to set me free.” The restraints allow him to struggle with the challenge and become stronger without being entangled with
the evil. The suitors entice Odysseus when he returns home disguised as the beggar. But now, he has the strength and will power to reject those spoken words.

Homer expresses his ideas about pride and spirit when Odysseus encounters the Cyclopes. After out-smarting the Polyphemus, Odysseus shouts out his own name in search for “kleos.” These were his words to Polyphemus, “if any mortal man should ask about the shameful blinding of your eye, then tell him that the man who gouged you was Odysseus, ravager of cities.” Instead of being humbled by the experience, Odysseus tries to brag about what he has done. In reality, it was the gods who blessed him with the ability to escape his situation. Odysseus pays for this action as Poseidon makes his journey back more difficult than it should have been. We see later in the Odyssey how Odysseus grows from this experience when he returns home. He is angered by the suitors and has the composure to keep his name secret until the right time. His spirit is more humble now with the idea of pride than it was on his journey home. Homer shows many different types of spiritual growth throughout the Odyssey. But, he has one main idea: the spirit with the most growth and strength is the one that is tested.

A Brief Survey of Literature of Quest

Journey of quest has been used as theme in literature across space and time. In Greek and Latin literature it has used by many writers. It has also been used in early British Literature in poetry. Medieval Literature

As an influence of grail legend, the medieval English literature may be seen revolving mostly around the quest pattern. The prominent
of the works which share this pattern, focus on human being’s journey towards spiritual enlightenment and were least concerned with any physical or tangible treasure; remarkable of these include *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *The Canterbury Tales*, *Morte D Arthur* and *The Pilgrims Progress*.

Written by an anonymous poet, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is a late 14th century Middle English romance. It is one of the Arthurian stories in which Sir Gawain, a knight of King Arthur’s Round Table, accepts a challenge from a mysterious Green Knight to strike him with his axe with the readiness to receive the blow after a year and a day. Gawain beheads the Knight. Then a year after begins the journey of Sir Gawain in search of Green Knight. The story is that of the testes of chivalry and loyalty. The reference here is of significance because the story followed the quest pattern and gave a significant contribution to the revival to this pattern in the Medieval English literature.

*The Canterbury Tales* is a collection of stories written in Middle English by Geoffrey Chaucer at the end of the 14th century. At the Tabard Inn, a tavern in Southwark, near London, the narrator joins a company of twenty-nine pilgrims. The pilgrims are traveling to the shrine of the martyr Saint Thomas Becket in Canterbury. The narrator joins them. The narrator gives a descriptive account of twenty-seven of these pilgrims, including a Knight, Squire, Yeoman, Prioress, Monk, Friar, Merchant, Clerk, Man of Law, Franklin, Haberdasher, Carpenter, Weaver, Dyer, Tapestry-Weaver, Cook, Shipman, Physician, Wife, Parson, Plowman, Miller, Manciple, Reeve, Summoner, Pardoner, and Host. The Host of the inn is Harry Bailey who suggests that the group ride together and entertain one another with stories. In order to make the pilgrimage more relaxed and enjoyable, it is decided that each
pilgrim will tell two stories on the way to Canterbury and two on the way back. Whomever the host judges to be the best storyteller will receive a meal at his tavern. The pilgrims draw lots and determine that the Knight will tell the first tale.

Whatever else *The Canterbury Tales* may be, it is clearly the account of a pilgrimage. This kind of journey is the major device used by Chaucer to structure his narrative. Along with acting as framing device, the pilgrimage brings to *The Canterbury Tales* everything associated in the late Middle Ages with the religious concept of the pilgrimage and the literary expression of this idea.

*The Pilgrim’s Progress from This World to That Which Is to Come* is an allegory written by John Bunyan and published in February, 1678. It is regarded as one of the most significant works of religious English Literature. Christian, an everyman character, is the protagonist of the allegory, which centres itself in his journey from his hometown, the “City of Destruction” (“this world”), to the “Celestial City” (“that which is to come”: Heaven) atop Mount Zion.

By portraying Christian and his companions learning from their mistakes on their journey, *The Pilgrim’s Progress* demonstrates that knowledge is gained through travel. Yet in Bunyan’s book, voyage in itself does not make a traveler a pilgrim. The pilgrim must progress spiritually as he or she advances geographically. The key factor is knowledge, which must be increased with the passage of journey. In the book, the writer shows Christian committing many mistakes but he never makes the same mistake twice or meets the same foe twice, because he learns from his experiences. Once he experiences the Slough of Despond, he never needs to be despondent again. Other pilgrims who lack understanding may advance fairly far, like Heedless and Too-bold,
who almost get to the Celestial City; however, they do not understand what they undergo, and so they only babble nonsense and talk in their sleep. They are travelers but are not pilgrims because they cannot show a spiritually growth in them.

Modern Literature

Quest strategy continues to fascinate the modern writers too. There is much modern literature in which the theme revolves around a certain quest. The popular and familiar modern literary quests are J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* and J. K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter*. *The Lord of the Rings* is the Frodo Baggins’s quest to destroy the ‘One Ring’. Against the background of epic and supernatural warfare, Tolkien tells a meaningful tale of friendship and inner struggle with temptation. *Harry Potter* is also a sort of quest, with Harry looking for the horcruxes so he can overcome Voldemort.

Eliot’s Quest for Self-realization

One of the modern writers who pursued literary art as a means of personal quest of spiritual fulfillment is T. S. Eliot. His poetic and dramatic creations are part of his individual quest. Throughout his literary career Eliot searched for an appropriate form and mode of articulation which express the personal quest for meaning of life. Right from his early childhood Eliot seems to have a growing awareness of the contrary forces of materialism and spiritualism which came to influence modern men: as men drifted towards material comforts, they moved away from spiritual contentment. A spiritual barrenness overtook the urban civilization of America and Europe. The two World Wars appear to be vain displays of the destructive power that man has incurred with a growing knowledge of technology. They seemed to be expressions of a corresponding spiritual barrenness of the modern urban
societies. Eliot’s highly perceptive sensibility enabled him to realize that a way had to be found in order to restore spiritual fertility, so that man’s existence is fulfilled. The archetypal figure of the Incarnation illuminated the path of Eliot’s quest.

Eliot’s awareness of the unprecedented problems of modern urban people created by the completely new conditions of life, in which they found themselves, propelled him towards a quest for a way of expressing the thoughts and emotions which grew out of such a milieu. This quest was primarily twofold: for self-realization and, for form and articulation.

In the quest for self-realization, Eliot strove to find a way out of the spiritual barrenness experienced by modern urban people. He felt that the way shown by the Incarnation in Christ’s Sufferings and Salvation through the working of the Divine Will was the way that could be followed for release from the claustrophobic urban existence. Eliot’s understanding of the Incarnation was complemented by his understanding of the Buddha and Lord Krishna’s teachings as enunciated in Buddhist text and the Bhagavad-Gita. His deep knowledge of Hindu and Buddhist Philosophy enabled Eliot to recognize the essential similarity between Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism regarding the search for the Ultimate Reality.

The centrality of the doctrine of the Incarnation in Eliot’s personal life stimulated his desire to use the legendary quest for the Holy Grail as the under pattern of his own quest in his creative writing. The quest of the holy grail serves as the objective correlative to Eliot’s own search for meaning of life and forms the under pattern of all his works right from ‘The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock’ to The Elder Statesman.
As a part of his personal quest, Eliot has incorporated in his poetry and plays the Oriental concept of detachment in spiritual quest and its attendant notion of sacrifice and suffering as enshrined in the Vedantic and Buddhist philosophy.

According to the Upanishadas, which are commentaries on the Vedas, the Parmatma (eternal spirit) comes to meet the Jivatma (spirit of man) in love, which leads to a harmony that is expressed in serenity which comes from selflessness and detachment from earthly shackles. This detachment has been emphasized by the Buddha in his Fire Sermon in which he says that the fires of all desires must be extinguished in order to attain salvation in the form of Nirvana. The Buddha’s sermon is somewhat similar to Christ’s Sermon on the Mount.

Eliot felt that in following the ideal example set by Christ, man may regain spiritual fertility. Initially, in his creative writings he emphasized Christ’s Suffering and Sacrifice to atone for the sins of men, in order to bring about Salvation—which implied the endurance of austere penance.

In *The Waste Land* the quest is undertaken by a protagonist or protagonists for a contemporary waste land. The quest parallels the quest of the Holy Grail, and so the protagonist in the poem has to pass through difficult, stony terrains, fearful valleys, crowded street and pubs, and over mountainous jungles. The journey begins somewhere in Europe and ends in the Himalaya region on the banks of the Ganges. This journey is not to be understood in geographically literal sense; it is journey in time, back to the past and forth to the present. It is also a journey into several different cultures of the world to explore for their meaning. Every scene is the scene which the protagonist sees and
reflects in course of his journey. The journey image in *The Waste Land* suggests a quest in search of the solution for the decay.

**Heart of Darkness: A Quest Within**

Joseph Conrad’s novel, *Heart of Darkness*, offers readers a unique opportunity to journey in search of a man’s soul. Conrad is telling a story of man’s participation in the “age of discovery” which included the expansion of European colonial power into areas such as Africa. Like a knight of the Round Table, Marlow, the protagonist of *Heart of Darkness* sets off in search of strange person by name Kurtz. As the journey proceeds he gradually picks up more and more hints about Kurtz. Like a knight he is frequently tested by some signs he must confront. The signs are things you see or experience or are told which have meaning beyond the literal. The reader is led to believe at the outset of the novel that the object of the journey is to find a man called Kurtz. But as the journey into the center of the “dark continent” progresses, the reader becomes aware that we are also accompanying the story’s narrator, Marlow, on a personal quest of his own. The novel is considered as “a quest within, as a journey to mythic underworld”

This wave of fascination for the quest pattern continues with many contemporary writers – Paulo Coelho being one of them. His fictional works demonstrate his interest with the various journeys human beings undertake in their life. In one of the conversations, Coelho explains the significance of journey in his life and its use in many of his novels. He says,

I belong to the travelling generation, the hippy generation, that lived on the road, connecting with other cultures. And the journey has a very strong significance in people’s lives.
First, when you travel you’re no longer yourself, you have to be open. The other two things are that you leave your own environment, so you’re not surrounded by familiarity; you’re independent, you’re lost’ you need the help of others, this is also part of the human condition, letting yourself be led.24

As most of his works are related with a person’s wanderings in search of the things of individual interest they are viewed as a depiction of spiritual odysseys. In the following chapters a study of his selected fiction is undertaken and an attempt is made to point out how his literary enterprise is an odyssey of quest for various mysteries of life.25
Chapter I

References:

12. Peter Stewart Taitt, *The Quest theme in Representative English Works of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth...*


16. Ibid. p. 54


19. Ibid. P. 2-3


21. Ibid. P 243

22. Ibid. P 185
