

Influence of travel in an Individual: A Study on Santiago in Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist*

OPEN ACCESS

Volume: 9

Special Issue: 1

Month: December

Year: 2020

P-ISSN: 2320-2645

E-ISSN: 2582-3531

Impact Factor: 4.110

Citation:

Janani, SR, and KS Mangayarkkarasi.

"Influence of Travel in an Individual: A Study on Santiago in Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist*." *Shanlax International Journal of English*, vol. 9, no. S1, 2020, pp. 52–54.

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.34293/english.v9iS1-Dec2020.3694>

SR. Janani, B.A., M.Ed., M.Phil, Ph.D

*Research Scholar, Department of English (Aided)
Kongunadu Arts and Science College, Coimbatore*

Dr. KS. Mangayarkkarasi, M.A., M.Ed., Ph.D., UGC NET

*Supervisor, Assistant Professor of English
Department of English (Aided)*

Kongunadu Arts and Science College, Coimbatore

Abstract

This paper focuses on the influence of travel in the protagonist's life. The protagonist of this novel travels to different places in order to achieve his goals. Travel plays a vital role in the lives of humans. A Person learns about the world when they travel. Santiago the protagonist of the novel lives in Andalusia and he dreams of travelling the world in search of a treasure. His love for travel and his sacrifices helps him to achieve his goal and also makes him a better person. Santiago's journey teaches him about the meaning of the life through different people he meets.

Keywords: Travel, goals, dreams, sacrifice.

Paulo Coelho was born in Brazil and has become one of the most widely read and loved authors in the world. Especially renowned for *The Alchemist* and *Eleven Minutes*, he has sold more than 140 million books worldwide and has been translated into seventy two languages. He is also the recipient of numerous prestigious international awards, amongst them the Crystal Award by the World Economic Forum and France's Legion d' Honneur, Paulo Coelho was inducted into the Brazillian Academy of Letters in 2002. He is known for employing rich symbolism in his depictions of the often spiritually motivated journeys taken by his characters. His book *The Alchemist* is a mystical account of an Andalusian shepherd boy's journey across North Africa in search of treasure.

The protagonist of the novel lives in Andalusia and one day he decides to take shelter in the abandoned church where the roof of the building had fallen long ago, and an enormous sycamore had grown on the spot. When the protagonist tries to get some sleep has the recurring dream in which a child asks him to seek treasure at the foot of the Egyptian pyramids. The dream provokes the love for travel and makes Santiago realize that he should leave his place to know about the treasure. The protagonist takes his sheep to a merchant to

sell wool. He also meets a girl with raven hair and he describes about the life in other towns. The protagonist learns about the news in various towns by travelling to different places which would have been impossible for the girl who lives in the same place. He learns as well educates others about the happenings of the world. Travel changes the mind of every individual and it teaches a person to survive in various situations.

The protagonist's parents had wanted him to become a priest and his parents worked hard in order to get food and water. Santiago had studied Latin, Spanish and theology. The interest to travel is an inborn quality of the protagonist which is evident through these lines. "But ever since he had been a child, he had wanted to know the world, and this was much important to him than knowing God and learning about man's sins" (AL 8).

Thus the protagonist's interest to travel the world paved the way to find his treasure. He also bravely speaks about his desire to travel the world to his father. Santiago's father advises him that only the rich people can afford to travel and the other people who travel are shepherds. Santiago without a second thought agrees to become a shepherd which denotes his passion for travel. Santiago's father offers him three Spanish gold coins to buy sheep. He decides to sell the sheep when he gets tired of the Andalusian fields. He decides to go to Tarifa to meet the raven haired girl. Meanwhile he remembers about the interpretation of his dreams told by the old woman. The protagonist is threatened at first because he had heard many stories about the gypsies. She promises him that she will interpret his dreams if he promises to give one tenth of the treasure.

Santiago decides to take the risk though he knows about the tricks played by the gypsies she asks him to travel to Egypt to find his treasure. Santiago later meets an old man and he asks about the book that he is reading. Later the old man says that though the book is an important one it preaches the greatest lie. "It's this: that at a certain point in our lives, we lose control of what's happening to us, and our lives become controlled by fate" (AL 56).

The old man speaks about the people who gave up their dream and blames fate for their own actions. Santiago states that he did not give up his desire and he became a shepherd in order to fulfill his goals. Later the old man reveals his true identity and it is hard for Santiago to believe that he is the king of Salem. He also asks his sheep in order to help him find the treasure. The old man makes Santiago to realize his dream by giving an example. He says a story about the miner who almost sacrificed everything to find emerald and he gave up when he was about to find the emerald. Thus Santiago decides to sell his sheep to the old man to find the treasure. He gives him one black stone and one white stones which is used to know the right path to find the treasure. Santiago sells his sheep and his travel starts from the exotic markets of North Africa.

The protagonist of the novel faces many obstacles before achieving his goal. In Tangier he meets a stranger in bar and he believes that he will help him to travel to Egypt. He also gives the money to him but instead of taking him to Egypt the stranger betrayed him. This situation teaches Santiago a lesson. Thus the protagonist learns through travelling different places. Santiago reminds himself that he is an adventurer looking for treasure and decides to learn the language of world without words. He decides to work in the crystal shop and he earns money. The owner was also impressed by the creative ideas of Santiago which made the business flourish. Santiago gets ready to work hard to go to Egypt. "I'll work all night, until dawn, and I'll clean every piece of crystal in your shop. In return, I need money to get to Egypt tomorrow" (AL 44).

The protagonist of the novel faces many obstacles and he loses all his money but he never gives up his passion to travel. The crystal merchant states that he too dreamed of going to Mecca but he never goes. He thinks that once he accomplish his goal there will not be any desires left to motivate. The crystal merchant also says that it is difficult to travel to Egypt. He also states that anyone could build a pyramid in their backyard. The protagonist loses his faith when he listens to

crystal merchant but he never gives up. The protagonist decides to leave the market place with all the money he had earned in the crystal shop.

Santiago thinks that he could buy more sheep and become rich in Spain. The protagonist has mixed feelings about the treasure. He thinks that he could go back to Spain at the same time he says that he can try to find the treasure.

He suddenly felt tremendously happy. He could always go back to being a shepherd. He could always become a crystal salesman again. Maybe the world had other hidden treasures, but he had a dream, and he had met with a king. That doesn't happen to just anyone!" (AL 62)

Thus it's evident that Santiago is ready to take risk and to travel. He knows that it is very risky to cross the Sahara desert but he gets the help of the Englishman. He also realizes that this opportunity will never give again to him. Thus his journey to find the treasure begins.

Santiago decides to go to the supplier's warehouse to find out the distance to reach Egypt. Santiago meets the Englishman who tries establishing a relationship with an alchemist. The Englishman had sacrificed all his wealth to learn about alchemy. Meanwhile the warehouse boss offers them a trip in his caravan which was going to Al-Fayoum. There were almost two hundred people and four hundred animals which were ready to travel. During the travel they overcome much hindrance when the animals come across a boulder they go around it. In some places the ground was covered with the salt of dried-up lakes. The animals could not carry the goods hence the travelers carried their things. If a guide dies or falls ill he is replaced by the other person. These are the difficulties that the protagonist faces during his travel. Santiago is not afraid of the obstacles and he learns the language of the world through his travel.

After a travel filled with adventure they reach the oasis which is filled with date trees and three hundred wells. The protagonist follows the omens and he predicts about the war that was about to happen in the oasis. Thus the chief rewards him with gold coins. Santiago also becomes distracted in his goal when he meets the love of his life Fatima. Fatima as a desert woman never discourages Santiago. Thus when the protagonist meets the Alchemist he realizes his goal and the passion to travel to Egypt becomes more important to him.

The Alchemist helps Santiago to travel to Egypt. The protagonist finally reaches the pyramids and digs to find the treasure and he comes to know that the treasure was under the sycamore tree. He returns back to Spain and finds his treasure. Thus the protagonist learns about different languages, people and about different situations. His lessons on travel also become a treasure which he will use for the rest of his life. Travel plays a vital role in an individual's life which is also conveyed in *Aleph* by Paulo Coelho. "Life is the train, not the station" (AP 107). Through this the writer speaks the importance of journey in life and how it changes an individual.

Works Cited

1. Coelho, Paulo. *The Alchemist*, Harper Collins Publishers. New York. 1998.
2. Coelho, Paulo. *Aleph*, Harper Collins Publishers. New York. 2011.