

# A JOURNEY FOR A PERSONAL LEGEND: AN ARCHETYPAL READING OF THE HERO'S JOURNEY IN PAULO COELHO'S THE ALCHEMIST

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper suggests an archetypal reading of Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist*. This novel is about the protagonist's psychological and physical journey towards his personal legend. In his journey, the protagonist faces many inner and outer obstacles and ordeals over which he overcomes. Beyond any ordinary reading, the novel is inspirational for depressed souls that face many challenges. Throughout this paper, the researcher tries to analyze the concept of the hero's journey in this novel. This research applies the archetypal literary approach. Within this context, the researcher surveys Carl Jung's and Joseph Campbell's theories of archetypes. Then, the theory of Christopher Vogler of mythical hero's journey is adopted to show how far an archetypal reading of this novel is applicable. Through Vogler's famous twelve stages of hero's journey, the researcher discovers how far Santiago's journey is crowned by achieving spiritual maturity or in Coelho's own words the Secret of the World. The hero's journey – as explained later in this paper- forms a universal experience for almost every interested reader regardless of any racial, religious or cultural background to reach a state of mystical relief.

**KEYWORDS:** Archetype, Cycle of Spiritual maturity, Secret of the world, *The Alchemist*, Mythic structure, Christopher Vogler, Jung, Joseph Campbell.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist* is not the first literary work that discusses a hero's journey for spiritual maturity. Generally, the main common feature of such a literary sub-genre is that the hero must face many challenges and go through many tasks in order to achieve the desired transformation. To Nancy Howard, all of "the journey stories" should contain "trials and enemies that the heroes, alone or in the company of others, are bound to undertake" (2). In Coelho's fictional world, the hero's journey is a long process through which the hero faces many losses and hazards, but in return this sincere journey provides the hero with all what he needs to know about transcending himself and his society as well. This vision is also similar to Joseph Campbell who notes, "the heroes must go out from the comfort zone to explore into labyrinth of the story in order to achieve the triumph"(263).

Modern hero's journey usually follows the same pattern that appears in old myths and tales where a hero faces many ordeals to be rewarded materially and spiritually. Northrop Frye in his famous book *Anatomy of Criticism* points out that "the pattern or the structure of most contemporary literary works including journey stories reverts to the structure of old myths or tales. Besides the structure of the hero's journey is believed by many scholars as something archetypal"(162). Archetype is a Greek word that generally means an original pattern or a model. In his *Glossary of Literary Terms*, Abrams defines archetypes as recurrent narrative designs, patterns of action, character-types, themes, and images which are identifiable in a wide variety of works of literature, as well as in myths, dreams, and even social rituals. Such recurrent items are held to be the result of elemental and universal forms or patterns in the human psyche, whose effective embodiment in a literary work evokes a profound response from the attentive reader, because he or she shares the archetypes expressed by the author (12).

Archetypal criticism is based on Carl Jung's idea of the archetype in which archetype refers to a part of universal "collective unconscious"("The Collected Works"124) that can be noticed worldwide regardless of place, time and culture. Collective unconscious means a part of the human psyche which does not exist due to personal experience and consequently it is not acquired by any personal effort. In his famous book *Collected Works of C.G. Jung: Archetypes and the Collected Unconscious* a clear explanation of the idea of archetype and collective unconscious is discussed. Jung points out that, "The concept of the archetype, which is an indispensable correlate of the idea of the collective unconscious, indicates the existence of definite forms in the psyche which seem to be present always and everywhere"(99). In other words, the collective unconscious is related to the deeper part that mainly includes memories and experiences inherited by ancestors.

Collective unconscious, objective psyche or race memory is all different terms used by Jung to refer to a universal feature of human race in general. It is a “repository of man’s experience, an image of the world” (“*Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*” 86). These archetypal patterns abide to the same laws in all cases. To Jung, humanity follows a single collective unconscious mind, far from having many single and different personal unconscious minds. Regardless of the unique approach of every single human mind in dealing with material and historical experiences, the collective unconscious mind is shaped ultimately by collective patterns. The whole idea of individual personality is deeply rooted in a more collective and impersonal pattern. The unconscious human mind, as Jung suggests, is grounded in a set of underlying myths.

Myths are no longer adopted in explaining the meaning of existence, however, they do still exert powerful attraction on human beings in general. Carl Jung devoted many years studying folktales, myths, and the psychological explanation for many behavior forms. He believed that people are motivated by a great psychological energy that lead them to psychological growth, self-realization and maturity. To Jung, the conscious mind is mainly concerned with understanding different objects that exist outside the mind and anticipated by the lenses.

This leads again to the idea of the collective unconscious and its relation to the archetypes. Archetypes, as noted before, are general patterns and images that are not received by sense perception and far away from being learnt by personal experience. To Jung, “these *a priori* categories have by nature a collective character; and they are images of parents, wife, and children in general, and are not individual predestinations. We must therefore think of these images as lacking in solid content, hence as unconscious. They only acquire solidity, influence and eventual consciousness in the encounter with empirical facts, which touch the unconscious aptitude and quicken it to life. They are, in a sense, the deposits of all our ancestral experiences, but they are not the experience themselves”. (*The Collected Works*300)

Jung highlights the similarity among the different hero myths in a sense that they are all originated from common psychological structure that exists in the collective mind. To him, a hero must integrate his consciousness with the unconscious elements of the psyche in order to reach self-realization and self-actualization. By the unconscious elements, it is meant to refer to the different archetypes that originated in the collective unconscious. Consequently, archetypes of the collective unconscious help the hero in his long journey for maturity. The hero needs first to identify with these archetypes before beginning his own journey.

Joseph Campbell adopted Jung’s idea of archetypes and then developed it to reveal the structure of myth. In order to achieve this, Campbell studied the different cultural patterns from ancient tribal clans to modern nations. Campbell ended to the idea that social behavior of the different members of any culture is directed by its mythology in the form of archetypes. He also found out that many hero journeys and myths follow the same story-pattern which he named “Hero’s Journey”, or the “monomyth”. Campbell’s monomyth is simply a hero’s journey from the already known world into a new strange world full of supernatural elements. Throughout his journey, the hero faces many extraordinary and fantastic challenges over which he finally and hopefully overcomes. From this challenging and adventurous life, the hero returns to his society as a mature person willing to lead and help his community.

In his book *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Campbell identifies a series of certain archetypal steps that are considered a detailed description of modern hero’s journey. To him, the hero undergoes the same fundamental journey regardless of any religious, ethical or geographical backgrounds. Campbell highlights the idea that a “hero’s journey” or “monomyth” takes place in the myths of the different cultures. He notes that, “the standard path of the mythological adventure of the hero is magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: *separation-initiation- return*: which might be named the nuclear unit of the monomyth”(30). These three stages summarize the whole idea of the hero’s self-discovery in order to fully understand the hidden potentialities of the surrounding universe.

In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Campbell introduces the different stages of the hero’s journey. Despite its infinite varieties, the hero’s journey is mainly a story in which the hero leaves his comfortable pattern of life to face a challenging unfamiliar and sometimes dangerous supernatural world. The hero’s journey can be an adventure to an actual place: a desert, cave or forest, or unfamiliar city that becomes the place for the conflict with antagonists and merciless fearful forces. In his physical journey, the hero goes also through an inward journey that includes his heart, soul and mind. To Campbell, a good hero’s journey is the one in which the hero ends up being strong, hopeful and wise after being weak, desperate and immature. In order to achieve all of that, the hero should cover a seventeen-stage map. This series of seventeen stages is the following by order: **First Departure**: The Call to Adventure, Refusal of the Call, Supernatural Aid, Crossing the Threshold, Belly of the Whale, **Second Initiation**: The Road of Trials, The Meeting with Goddess, The Woman as a Temptress, Atonement with the Father/Abyss, Apotheosis, the Ultimate Boon, **Third Return**: Refusal of the Return, The Magic Flight, Rescue from Without, The Crossing of the Return Threshold, Master of Two Worlds and Freedom to Live. These seventeen stages show the hero’s myth and his transformation throughout his journey. The whole journey is summarized by Campbell as a hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of

supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won. The hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow men. (28)

Campbell's hero is in fact the symbol of the destiny of everyman and that makes the images in myth a reflection of human wisdom, experience, dreams and aspiration. The mythical hero and his journey are both extraordinary. Throughout his journey, the hero might be honored or even despised but later the hero becomes the master of extraordinary powers and wisdom. The hero's journey goes through the following stages:

## II. DEPARTURE (SEPARATION)

### a. Call to Adventure:

At the beginning the hero deals with some unknown forces termed as the "announcer of the adventure" or the "herald". At that stage the hero is incapable of neither explaining these forces nor ignoring them. However, the appearance of the herald indicates that the hero is ready to start his own journey. The call to adventure signifies that destiny has "summoned the hero and transformed his spiritual center of gravity from within the pale of his society to a zone unknown" (53). The hero might accept this call by his own will or might be seduced away by an evil agent. Usually this call is unanswered or even refused by the hero. Once this happens, the hero's life turns to a circle of bored meaningless details.

**a. Supernatural Aid:** In case the hero chooses to join the journey, he meets a wise figure who provides him with certain supernatural powers. This supernatural aid can be a teacher, an old man, a wizard ... etc. This stage confirms the hero's doubts about being chosen to do this journey by a larger system beyond the hero's mind.

**b. The Crossing of the First Threshold:** In this stage the hero moves forward from the limits of the known world to enter the "zone of magnified power" (71). At this point the hero must be able to overcome the power of the threshold in any of its different forms (e.g. dragons, ogres, lions ...etc.) in order to go forward to the next stage of his journey.

**c. The Belly of the Whale:** If the hero fails to win over the power of the threshold, he is swallowed into the belly of the whale. It is an image of the idea of rebirth. In this stage, the hero thinks of who he is and what he does. After that stage, the hero changes in a way that he becomes detached of his ego.

### 1. Initiation

**a. The Road of Trials:** After crossing the threshold, the hero enters an ambiguous world full of challenges, tests and ordeals. Sometimes, he is helped by the supernatural powers of the first phase. This stage is considered the beginning of a long journey of a learning process to the hero.

**b. Meeting with the Goddess:** In this stage the hero meets a perfect goddess-like lady. It is considered a sign of the Heaven bliss to the hero's journey. The hero's meeting with this perfect goddess and their mystical marriage indicates his possible capability to win the boon of love and to master the challenges of the coming life. The goddess is both the good mother who can nurture and sooth, and also the bad lady who can seduce and lure. Nevertheless, this marriage means also that the hero has replaced his father. This marriage is also responsible for the hero's deep feeling of guilt and sin that leads the him directly to the next stage.

**c. Atonement with the Father:** By atonement Campbell means the separation away from the image of the father's ego. Actually this is a very difficult stage that the hero must face since this ego is contradictory in itself as it includes the good and the bad, the pleasure and the pain, the deprivation and the boon. At this stage, the hero must have faith in father's grace and mercy when they do meet. The goddess or the mother figure saves and protects the hero in the crisis of meeting his father. Only then the hero searches for the parental images in both the father and the mother. "He beholds the face of father, understands and the two are atoned" (135). After that the father takes the responsibility of training the hero to the duties of the world of adults. Also at that stage, the hero is purged of all human fears and hopes to become a representative of the whole cosmic force. Now he is growing mature and he reaches a state of inner peace where he fully understands the mysteries of the universe.

**d. Apotheosis:** It is an act of transcending the hero to the status of god. The hero at this stage achieves the divine state since he is now free of any feeling of fear, ignorance or terror; moreover, he realized all his potentials. This godly mythical hero combines the two polarities, the male and the female within his own self since he is fully aware of the oneness of the father and the mother. The hero is also full of peace and love for human beings since he succeeds in overcoming his ego in a previous stage. The newly born hero is now fearless, compassionate, wise, desire less.

**e. The Ultimate Boon:** After successfully achieving the previous stages, the hero is entitled to win the ultimate Boon. The Ultimate Boon is more like the secret of immortality, the Elixir of life. This stage examines how far the hero is growing wise. If he is not wise enough he would probably ask for a weapon to overcome his enemies, or he would ask for physical immortality. However, if he is wise enough he would certainly ask for spiritual growth through which he can help mankind in general.

### III. RETURN

**a. Refusal of the Return:** After completing his quest, the hero is supposed to return to humanity with the boon. However, the hero might refuse this responsibility and prefers to stay forever in the blessed land. His return to the land of the mortals means that humanity benefits from his journey and that what mostly happens. But if he prefers not to return, the humanity will be deprived of the benefits of the boon.

**b. The Magic Flight:** The supernatural power helps to support the hero if his triumph accords with them and thus he will be blessed. If the hero's trophy is against their will, his return will be complex and hindered by them.

**c. Rescue from Without:** If the hero is reluctant to leave the blessed land, the supernatural powers will rescue and help him to go back. The crossing of the threshold back to reality means losing his ego and facing the misunderstanding and the doubts of his people before he can offer them the Elixir.

**d. The Crossing of the Return Threshold:** In this stage, the hero returns from the divine world to the real human world. He needs to adapt with the real world again which is a bit difficult after living at the spiritual world. He also needs to fight the temptation of quitting the world to live in solitude. By crossing the threshold back, the hero learns that the two kingdoms are actually one.

**e. Master of the Two Worlds:** The hero is now capable of understanding the mysteries of the two worlds because of learning that both of these worlds are actually one. Only then the hero can pass back and forth the threshold as a blessing of a true vision of cosmos as well as his personal fate.

**f. Freedom to Live:** This is considered the last stage of the journey of Campbell's hero. To Campbell, the whole journey aims to put an end to the life of ignorance by increasing individual's consciousness with the universal will.

The previous stages reflect Campbell's idea of the hero's journey. This idea is universal in a sense that it can occur at every time and within every culture. At the same time, it also varies due to the different human races; nevertheless, the basics are still the same. In this sense, Campbell's ideas agree with Jung's ideas of the archetypes. They believe in the existence of both the hero's journey and the characters' types in the myths of almost all cultures such as the wise old man, the young man and the influential woman. All of these types indicate the validity of Jung's theory of archetypes. This universal dimension of the hero's journey stories adds an appeal that can be felt by millions of readers since these stories stem from a universal source in their collective unconscious. Consequently, hero's journey stories always deal with universal concerns and topics. This idea-imbedded in mythology, explained by Jung, identified by Campbell and developed by Vogler- can be adopted in understanding common human problems than just attracting a mass audience.

Christopher Vogler modified Campbell's own idea of the hero's journey in his work *The Writer's Journey*(2007) in which he tried to relate to the contemporary story telling. Vogler notes that the hero's journey is a group of living principles. In other words, a guiding manual for life with a set of structures in the way of "being human" (xiii). To Vogler, the hero's journey is not only an outward one to a certain place where he fights the evil shadows, but it is also an inward journey of the hero's mind and spirit. At the end of his journey, the hero gets stronger, wiser and enlightened. Vogler's idea of the hero's journey model is similar to that of Campbell, but it only contains twelve stages as follows:

#### 1. Ordinary World

In this early stage of his journey, the hero is introduced to the readers in his ordinary world that usually creates a contrast to the Special world that the hero is going to explore. The details of the hero's life in the ordinary world helps in creating a connection between the hero and the audience. The problems the hero faces in the ordinary world and the challenges he goes through give clear clues about the required transformation that the hero will achieve at the end of his journey. The hero, in this stage, is incomplete in both his life and his personality. In this sense, the hero's journey is a search for completeness and a step towards the desired perfection. The hero's problems and weakness add a touch of reality to his character. Moreover, the hero is usually suffering from isolation and rejection due to boredom, disappointment, or betrayal. In this sense, the hero's journey is not about dealing with gods and unknown forces as much as it is also a required healing process that pulls the hero out of his comfort zone to face the unknown

#### 2. Call to Adventure

In this stage, the hero faces unusual situation or an unprecedented challenge. The call to adventure is more of a motivation for the hero to start his journey. This call might be in the form of a restless consciousness (visions and dreams), or in the form of a message indirectly delivered by a mentor or even an enemy. The hero is encouraged to start his journey due to dull life he carries or because of his aspiration for a better world. Sometimes, to start his own journey is the only solution for the hero to get away from a critical situation he suffers from.

### **3. Refusal of the Call**

In many cases the hero denies his desire to start his journey at once. This is mainly because he is unaware of his need for change or the wrong situations with his community. This may also be attributed to his fear of death at the journey, or simply not being convinced that the journey is worth joining. Also, certain painful past experiences with people or places may convince the hero to refuse the journey at all. This is usually the case with most heroes before starting their mythical archetypal journeys until something strongly motivates the hero to start his journey. Whatever the reasons for the hero to refuse and no matter the real causes for him to accept the journey, he must be tested by the guardian of the threshold to see his worthiness for the journey.

### **4. Meeting the Mentor**

The relation between the hero and his guardian is considered one of the archetypal themes of all the heroes' journeys. This relation is more similar to a god-man, parent-child and a teacher-student. In this relation, the mentor (strange wise old man or woman) usually trains, protects, motivates, supports, guides, and prepares the hero for his journey. He even gives the hero some essential magical tools and equipment without which the hero cannot complete his journey. The real important role of the Mentor is actually to supply the hero with confidence and knowledge whenever the hero is about to give up the whole journey. Archetypally, the Mentor's role is played by wizards, witches, god-mothers/fathers, gods, spirits, counselors or loyal friends who can see in the hero traits that he himself is incapable to acknowledge. Without the Mentor's role, the hero's consciousness, will and mind can never be guided to the correct direction.

### **5. Crossing the Threshold**

By crossing the first threshold, the hero willingly agrees to face many future challenges to which he believes he will be up to. The benign and also the malign guardians of the first threshold test the willingness and the courage of the hero to go through his journey. A real hero overcomes them by his courage or even by his wit. It is a leap of faith into a strange world where there is no turning back or surrender.

### **6. Tests, Allies, Enemies**

The hero is now at the unknown world. Throughout this stage the hero learns the rules and the laws of the new special world. By tests, Vogler means the challenges, situations and the tasks the hero faces. These tests are meant to prepare the hero for harder future challenges he must overcome. Usually the hero resorts in this stage to search for allies and new friends to help him in both his training and in winning these tests. Normally, the hero as a human would definitely make enemies in the form of the villains he faces or due to the rivalry between him and other competitors in his journey. Thanks to the different tests the hero faces, he learns to differentiate between his true friends and his enemies.

### **7. Approach to the Inmost Cave**

This stage is considered the second threshold that the hero must cross to go to the Inmost Cave. The Inmost Cave differs from a journey to another. It might be a strange place full of enemies, or a derelict place that everyone avoids, or even the land of the dead itself. It is more like a zone which the hero manipulates for preparing his mind and plans to face the supreme ordeal. If the hero did not believe in his ability to succeed and instead spent his time doubting his abilities facing the coming ordeal, he most probably would fail and will never pass the coming stage.

### **8. Ordeal, Death, Rebirth**

It is one of the darkest moments that the hero faces. In this stage, the hero faces his greatest fear of death and incapability of facing his enemies. The only way out for the hero to pass this stage is to die, symbolically and even for real, in order to be reborn again. The rebirth of the hero is crucial since the resurrected hero is a wise, mature and stronger person. The Ordeal is a confrontation of the hero with his enemies as well as with the weak dark sides of his character. In some journeys, the Ordeal takes other forms such as breaking the hero's heart, a betrayal from the least expected person or even the death of the closest person to the hero's heart. The Ordeal helps the hero – in Jung's words – to achieve a balance between both sides of his character, the Anima and the Animus. Thus, the Ordeal helps the hero in his personal transformation into a better person. Through the Ordeal, the hero's ego is dead transcending him into a newly reborned conscious. The newly born hero has a god-like soul which Campbell calls Apotheosis.

### **9. Reward**

The hero is now mature enough to collect his reward for successfully facing the ordeal. The reward differs from a hero's journey to another. It might be an Elixir, a Sword, a Grail, unprecedented knowledge, or an epiphany. It might also be a better reconciliation with the beloved. It might also be one of the previously mentioned rewards or some of them but not all of them. In this stage, the title hero is rewarded for the brave adventurer who risked it all for the sake of transcending himself to help his own society to be better. The Reward stage buys the hero some time to be ready to go back to the ordinary world leaving the special one. Unfortunately, some heroes are seduced by the evil they defeated. Thinking of the Ordeal they went through successfully taint some of the

heroes to be arrogant, abusing power and enjoy shedding blood. This is mainly because the hero at that stage may underestimate the Ordeal or overestimate it.

#### 10. Road Back

Once the hero is rewarded, he has to return to the real world. However, the hero is given the choice to stay in the special world, or to leave it to go to the real world where he will try to improve and transcend his own society. This does not mean the hero is safe from further tests and challenges. Certain powers and forces in the special world would be definitely angry of the hero for seizing the reward. Chasing the hero is considered in itself a motivation for leaving the special world for the real world. The Road Back is in itself another threshold that the hero must cross. What really concerns the hero in this stage is the doubts in him that he will see in the eyes and acts of the people of the real world. However, the hero collects what he has gained and learnt and leaves the Special World for the real world.

#### 11. Resurrection

On his way back, the hero faces his last test in his journey. Just before he enters the real world, the hero has to be rebirthed again since he was rebirthed before for the Special World only. Although it is his last test in the special world; nevertheless, it is so important to test what he has really learnt in the Ordeal. This second rebirth changes the hero again and transcends him into a new being totally different from the one who started the journey. It proves to him that he is wise and mature enough to face any future challenge in the real world.

#### 12. Return with Elixir

A successful journey of a true hero is the one that ends with the hero bringing home back the Elixir. The wisdom he learnt or the magical power he gained to help his own society is the real target since the first stage. After his return, the hero accepts the responsibility of serving his society usually as their leader. The hero's journey ends with changing him into a wiser more aware leader and a wholesome human who cares more about his society for the rest of his life. To both Campbell and Vogler, the structure of the hero's journey should be followed in most of stories with the possibility of having certain variations. The hero's journey is a framework that should be followed with all its surprises and challenges. The stages of the journey can be modified, or even shuffled according to the vision of the writer without losing its effect and power. Next to the importance of its structure, the values of the hero's journey should never be overlooked. The scenes of the basic version of the hero's journey – in the form of a young heroes sacrificing their souls to help their communities either by fighting lions and dragons, or seeking magic swords from wizards ...etc - are universal life experiences. These scenes and images can easily be changed to suit every culture and society. Nevertheless, the essence of these stories should remain the same.

Modern heroes might not go to labyrinths or caves to fight mythical dragons and beasts, however they still do enter an Inmost Cave and a Special World by bravely venturing into the depth of their souls, or the dark venues of a modern city. The Hero's journey is definitely flexible and matures as new experiments are tried within this framework. The structure of the hero's journey accepts an endless horizon of variation without losing its values and magical effects on its readers.

This paper suggests that the selected novel of Paulo Coelho follows Vogler's framework of hero's journey. In a sense that Santiago, the hero, goes through his journey and transcends into a better leading personality who helps and benefits his society. Stories, as Vogler asserts, have their own magical healing ability. "Stories are alive and conscious and respond to human emotions" (299). The main character in *The Alchemist* faces many situations and struggles similar to the situations readers face in their lives. The solutions that Paulo suggests motivate readers to try different survival strategies. This is the core of the hero's journey. That is to try to transform the reader from hesitation and ignorance to encouragement and dedication.

*The Alchemist* (1988) is a saga of true love, alchemy, omens, dreams, bravery and the Secret of the World. The novel tells the story of the long journey of the brave young Andalusian shepherd Santiago who chases his dream far from Spain to Egypt. Throughout his journey with all its challenges and setbacks, Santiago never gave up his dream about the treasure buried in the Pyramids of Egypt. In his journey, Santiago meets the old king, Melchizedek, who advises him to sell his sheep and start seeking his treasure journey. He teaches Santiago about his Personal Legend and thus reveals the theme of the novel. He tells him that "when you want something, the entire universe conspires in helping you to achieve it". Through his journey, Santiago meets a beautiful tribal girl, Fatima, into whom he falls in love with. Her only condition to marry him is to complete his journey till the end. Unless he succeeds in his journey, he can never marry her. Then, Santiago meets the old alchemist who teaches him the universal language which will be of a great help in seeking his treasure. After a long series of situations through which Santiago became an alchemist himself, he learns that his treasure is buried in the same place where he dreamt about at the very beginning, the ruined church in Spain. Throughout this fictional story, Paulo Coelho followed Vogler's idea of the hero's journey and thus delivered many lessons to his readers. Vogler's stages of the hero's journey are embodied in *The Alchemist* as follows:

### 1. Ordinary World

Coelho starts *The Alchemist* by providing a detailed description of the surrounding environment along with some personal traits of the protagonist. Santiago is a young shepherd in his early twenties who likes to read books a lot. He loves to travel and to see the world, but his parents try to convince him to be a priest. However, travelling for Santiago is far more important than “knowing God and learning about man’s sins” (8). Thus, he became a shepherd since he is not rich to afford his dream. Even his father used to have the same dream, but he gave up due to life responsibilities. That is why he can understand his son’s fascination with discovering the world.

Santiago traveled for two years with his sheep. He saw many places and learnt many things. Everything sounds perfect for him. He will never stop travelling with his sheep and he will never stop reading new books and meeting new people. Paulo Coelho portrayed Santiago’s ordinary world of a shepherd to readers by saying;

The boy’s name was Santiago. Dusk was falling as the boy arrived with herd at an abandoned church. The roof had fallen in long ago, and an enormous sycamore had grown on the spot where the sacristy had once stood. He decided to spend the night there. He saw to it that all the sheep entered through the ruined gate (3)

This Andalusian atmosphere with its abandoned church and the sycamore tree growing within is a portrayal of the pastoral simple life of the hero of the novel. He is just a young simple shepherd who carries a simple life that has nothing strange or extraordinary. Coelho asserts the idea of how far ordinary the world of the hero looks like. Reading the first few pages, most readers are convinced that the novel narrates an ordinary story of a young man where nothing sounds strange or even remarkable. However, Coelho starts to show his readers why Santiago is different from any other shepherd or any other hero that one may read about. The story begins with this simple Andalusian image and ends up with the same image. Between these two scenes, readers follow Santiago’s journey for his dream.

### 2. Call to Adventure:

The adventure itself is not probably what differentiates Santiago from others; it is rather the call to adventure and its target that makes Santiago the different remarkable hero. Santiago’s persistent dream and his solid will to achieve his dream is mainly his call to adventure. The hero’s call to adventure took place in many ways and in so many times that tempted Santiago and aroused his curiosity to conquer the Special world regardless of its dangers. At the beginning, Santiago is sure that he is not ready for the journey; yet the temptation of the call spared him no chance but to undertake the adventure.

"I have had the same dream twice", he said. "I dreamed that I was in a field with my sheep"... "The child went on playing with my sheep for quite a while, and suddenly, the child took me by both hands and transported me to the Egyptian Pyramids. Then, at the Egyptian Pyramids, the child said to me, 'if you come here, you will find a hidden treasure.' And, just as she was about to show me the exact location, I woke up. Both times." (13)

This recurrent dream is the call to Santiago’s journey itself and it kept tempting him to start chasing his dream. The kid in Santiago’s dream is the messenger from the unconscious realm who persuaded and invited the hero to start his journey seeking the assumed treasure. Whereas the gypsy woman is the real world messenger who interpreted the dream to Santiago and also encouraged him to accept the call for the adventure to find the Secret of the World. “Dreams are the language of God” the gypsy woman says to Santiago, “when he speaks in our language, I can interpret....But if he speaks in the language of the soul, it is only you who can understand” (13). The gypsy woman tells him to go to find his treasure in Egypt, but she was not much of a help to him. He further decided not to believe in dreams and instead to carry on his life as it is.

### 3. Refusal of the Call

Although Santiago finally accepts the call for the journey, nevertheless, he refused the whole idea at the beginning. Like any ordinary man, Santiago prefers to stay in his comfort-zone of his ordinary world away from any possible danger. Santiago’s attitude is understood and justified once readers knew that Santiago thought that his dream was just nonsense and it is not worth any serious attempt to seek. Thus, he preferred to carry on in his daily activities than to think of searching for the unknown.

He [Santiago] remembered that he had a number of things he had to take care of: he went to the market for something to eat, he traded his book for one that was thicker, and he found a bench in the plaza where he could sample the new wine he had bought. The day was hot, and the wine was refreshing. The sheep were at the gates of the city, in a stable that belonged to a friend. (15)

This is one of Santiago’s obvious indecisive moments when he thought of not responding for the call to start a long unknown journey. Furthermore, Santiago resumed a number of activities in order to keep his mind busy from thinking of accepting the call. To answer the call means to trade his sheep and his life for an ambiguous future that he might not survive to see the results. “He had to choose between something he had become accustomed to and something he wanted to have” (28). Thus, he decided to forget about his dreams and to

engage in the thought of the merchant's girl he likes. However, Santiago kept thinking that the sheep and the merchant's daughter will get used to his absence and they are just stages in his journey to his personal legend. He felt helpless, and indecisive in a way that "there was nothing to hold him back except himself" (29).

#### 4. Meeting the Mentor

This exhausting psychological state occupied Santiago till he met the wise old man, his mentor. Actually, the mentor plays an important role in listening to Santiago's thoughts and replying to all of his doubts. The mentor offered Santiago with the required advice, knowledge, directions, guidance and even the required magical equipment. Melchizedek, The King of Salem, or Santiago's mentor, succeeded in changing Santiago's mind by telling him that he knows about the dream as well as a way out to find the treasure.

The King of Salem, Melchizedek, teaches Santiago many valuable lessons about the importance of seeking "Personal Legend" and the "mysterious force". The King of Salem believed in Santiago's spiritual ability to uncover the Secret of the World. He told Santiago that, at a young age one knows about his/her destiny and mistakenly believes that everything is possible. However, when time passes, one is incapable of achieving that dream. So people usually give up their dreams and forget the reason for their existence. Melchizedek, then, assures to Santiago that the whole world will be on his side in his journey for his personal legend. "When you want something the entire universe conspires in helping you to achieve it" (23). The King of Salem used to help people to achieve their journey for their personal legends and never to give up their dream. Moreover, Santiago received some magical equipment which helped him in his journey. They were white and black stones called Urim and Thummim. The King of Salem tells Santiago to

"Take these," said the old man, holding out a white stone and a black stone that had been embedded at the center of the breastplate. "They are called Urim and Thummim. The black signifies 'yes' and the white 'no'. When you are unable to read the omens, they will help you to do so" (30)

These stones helped Santiago in his long journey when everything looked the same to him and whenever he is incapable of making the right decision. These stones and the wise sayings of his mentor enlightened the darkest moments of Santiago's journey. "He asked if the old man's blessings were still with him then he took out one of the stones. It was yes" (41).

#### 5. Crossing the Threshold

Reflecting a true determination to start his journey, Santiago crosses the first threshold. By doing so, Santiago leaves the ordinary world to start his journey in the Special World. It is a new phase in the novel where the coming events are colored by magic and supernatural events. From now on, the two stones as well as the theoretical guidance by Santiago's mentor are put to test. Santiago's thinking will be directed to overcome any possible obstacle not regretting or doubting his decision to start his journey. At this moment, readers may feel that Santiago is not aware of the dangers he might face. Still, readers are a bit confident that Santiago is one of the few heroes who will probably succeed in such a journey. Coelho fictionally portrayed this idea in the form of a ship sailing to the unknown leaving the ordinary familiar world behind.

At the highest point in Tarifa there is an old fort, built by the Moors. From atop its walls, one can catch a glimpse of Africa. Melchizedek, the king of Salem, sat on the wall of the fort that afternoon, and felt the levanter blowing in his face... Melchizedek watched a small ship that of was plowing its way out of the port. He would never again see the boy (33)

The departure of Santiago's ship from Andalusia to Morocco is a symbolic journey where the wind is the levanter. It is a journey that Santiago must ride alone leaving behind everything he learnt and everything he knew, so that he can accept the new terms of his mythical journey. This journey is blessed by the levanter wind that will take Santiago to the first stop of his long anticipated journey.

#### 6. Tests, Allies, Enemies

The new Special World is a challenging world with so many threats and dangers. That is in addition to the ordinary tests that any character may face. Santiago has to face and pass through a different kind of tests in his journey for the Secret of the World. The intensity and the difficulty of these situations usually put Santiago in a deep feeling of despair and frustration. In so many times, Santiago was so close to give up the whole journey. However, Santiago has no way back till he finishes his journey because he crossed the first threshold. No matter how far these tests may sound cruel and harsh, they did help Santiago to discover the true color of his personality as well as of the surrounding people.

Tired, sick and alone, Santiago arrived to Tangier. He was a stranger in a strange land. He did not know the language. He had also no money after being fooled and robbed by a man whom he thought he was a friend. To



Santiago, all of these ordeals were considered a new beginning and a new learning experience. With the help of a seller in the market of Tangier, Santiago started to learn a new language that did not depend on words. It is the language of heart and emotions. If he masters this language, he will understand many fundamental issues in the Special World.

Santiago also learnt to carefully notice and interpret omens. Santiago is now in need of a friend and a companion whom he can trust and rely on when he is deeply depressed. At the beginning of his journey, Santiago was incapable of telling an enemy from a foe. His soul was not mature enough and he was easily attracted to the external distractions. He could not even imagine that his new friend was a thief and he paid the price for his lack of wisdom. He lost all his money and was further kept miles away from his personal legend.

By working with a crystal merchant, Santiago wished to earn enough money to travel to Egypt. However, it would take him many years of hard work to earn enough money. Lucky for Santiago, the merchant offered him enough money to go back to Spain, but Santiago preferred to work and save money to buy sheep later on. Days pass and Santiago became a successful crystal seller. He kept consoling himself that selling crystal and using the language with no words may be his personal legend. This has been the case for almost a year till the crystal merchant told him about his unfulfilled dream of travelling to Mecca. He gave up his dream of travelling to Mecca in order to marry and to be rich. He justified his decision to Santiago by saying it is "written - Maktub" (60). Only then Santiago remembers the words of his mentor of not giving up his dream. He tells himself that he can always buy sheep or become a crystal merchant, but he may not be allowed again to achieve his dream. Thus, Santiago's journey to Egypt continues.

In this journey, Santiago meets an Englishman who told him that he is searching for the old alchemist of Al-Fayoum oasis. The Englishman wants to learn the language of the whole universe. It is "a language understood by everybody, but already forgotten" (68). To achieve his dream, the Englishman spent much of his wealth and life seeking the philosopher's stone. It is his journey towards his personal legend. So, both of these dream hunters embark on a caravan that leaves for Egypt.

## 7. Approach to the Inmost Cave

Throughout his long journey in the desert, Santiago learnt so many valuable lessons. Coelho uses the vast derelict desert to symbolize the unknown inner self, or the unconscious of the human being. Santiago's journey throughout the desert embodies the archetypal hero's journey into the inmost cave. The leader of the caravan teaches Santiago how to survive the cruel life of the desert. Living in the desert for so many days taught Santiago how to listen carefully to everything around him. It also taught him to keep moving forward and to continue his journey regardless of the obstacles and the challenges.

For so many long nights, the Englishman kept telling Santiago about the soul of the world and how everything on the earth has a soul. He told him that according to alchemy, if you want something with all your heart, a positive force is created. Alchemy is not only about purifying metals, but it is also about purifying souls. All these souls are connected to the Soul of the World. He tells him that, "All things are the manifestation of one thing only" (83) which is the Soul of the World.

The camel driver also taught Santiago other valuable lessons through the way he reacts to events. The breaking news of the tribal wars in the desert did not worry the camel driver at all. He is not afraid of death any more. He prefers to live the present rather than worrying about the future. He advises Santiago to concentrate on the present with its details in order to be able to see hidden sides of the desert. To him, "Life will be party for you, a grand festival; because life is the moment we're living right now" (89). Santiago needs to read the omens on his path very well or else he will never succeed in his journey.

In the oasis where the caravan stays till the tribal war ends, Santiago falls in love with a beautiful Arab girl, Fatima. She helped him to focus on his journey whenever he is distracted. Just by looking at her, Santiago understood the true language of love.

At that moment, it seemed to him that time stood still, and the Soul of the World surged within him. When he looked into her dark eyes, and saw that her lips were poised between a laugh and silence, he learned the most important part of the language that all the world spoke - the language that everyone on earth was capable of understanding in their heart. It was love. Something older than humanity, more ancient than the desert (92-93). Their true love has taught him another important lesson, namely the meaning for his existence. A personal legend without true love is meaningless. "When two people meet, the past and the future become unimportant... without such love, one's dreams would have no meaning" (98). Being a tribal woman, Fatima is not afraid of losing her man. She insists that Santiago should continue his journey till the end. She is sure that he will succeed and come back to her one day. If their love is true, he will come back to her. If ever he never returns, his soul

will be part of the soul of the world. Fatima's true love was the strongest motivation for Santiago to keep on trying to achieve his personal legend and to face the supreme Ordeal of his journey.

## 8. Ordeal, Death, Rebirth

At this stage, Santiago trusts his ability in analyzing omens. He also learnt the language of the world and he knew the meaning of true love. He follows the advice of the camel driver. Everything around him makes sense. He noticed the fight between two hawks which immediately brought to him a vision of an army invading the oasis. Thus, he warns the chieftains immediately who put a bet. If the attack happened, Santiago will be rewarded a golden coin for every ten dead enemy men. If there is no war, on the other hand, he will be killed. For a moment, Santiago remembers what the camel driver told him about stop worrying about the future and start thinking of the present. Santiago's prediction did happen and he was held high among the seniors of the oasis. This situation was just a practical test to some of what Santiago learnt to see if he can face the supreme Ordeal.

At the same day, Santiago meets the old alchemist who chose to be his mentor. To the old alchemist, Santiago knows everything he needs to know and his role will be limited to direct him for a short time. After the war, Santiago is nominated to be the counselor of the oasis that is next to the gold, sheep and marrying Fatima. For a moment, Santiago thought of giving up his dream, but the old alchemist and Fatima encouraged him not to. The old alchemist tells Santiago that, "love never keeps man from pursuing his destiny. If he abandons that pursuit, it's because it wasn't true love... the love that speaks the language of the world" (126).

Throughout their journey, the old alchemist teaches Santiago many lessons about the parallel universe that exists as a representation of God's world. He also kept advising Santiago about the importance of listening to his heart and to omens. The old alchemist kept soothing Santiago's heart by teaching him that a heart that is in search of its dream will never suffer because it is connected with God and eternity during every moment of its journey.

As their journey progress, Santiago knows more about the Soul of the World. He started to believe more and more in his heart (his unconscious). He firmly believes that happiness is having God within every action. When asked how to transform lead into Gold, the old alchemist replies Santiago by saying, "When something evolves, everything around that thing evolves as well" (144). Thus, the soul of an alchemist needs to evolve as well in order to reach a higher spiritual state.

Two days later, Santiago had to face his supreme Ordeal. In case he succeeds he can go through his journey, or else that will be his final stage. The old alchemist and Santiago were caught by tribesmen who mistakenly thought of them as spies for the enemy. Unpredictably, the old alchemist gives them Santiago's saved money. He further introduces him as the alchemist. He asks them to spare their lives for three days only so that Santiago can change himself into wind and blow their camp away.

In these three days, Santiago contacted with the desert, the wind, the sun and the Soul of the World to help him in his ordeal using the language of the universe. Santiago managed to communicate with the earth, the sun and the wind because he succeeded in contacting with the "hand that wrote all". Santiago has finally found the Secret of the World. His firm belief in the idea that everything is made by the same hand and has the same soul assured his success not only in the Ordeal but also in his own journey.

In his silent prayers, Santiago achieved his Personal Legend. He understands now that the Soul of the World is part of the Soul of God and which in turn is a part of his soul. Thus, he can perform any miracle like transforming into wind. The idea of understanding the Secret of the World is a precious knowledge that will change the life of Santiago and his community forever. Santiago managed to reach through to the Soul of the World, and saw that it was a part of the Soul of God.

And he saw that the Soul of God was his own soul. And that he, a boy, could perform miracles... the men were terrified by his sorcery. But there were two people who were smiling: the alchemist, because he had found his perfect disciple, and the chief, because that disciple had understood the glory of God. The following day, the general bade the boy and the alchemist farewell, and provided them with an escort party to accompany them as far as they chose (152-153).

By turning himself into wind, Santiago bravely witnessed the fear of death and the blessings of the rebirth and thus he was rewarded with the knowledge of the language of the universe as well as the great Secret of the Soul of the World. The old alchemist is no longer needed and Santiago deserves to be rewarded. The old alchemist departs happily for Santiago's success and reminds him that every person on earth "plays a central role in the history of the world. And normally he doesn't know it" (167)

## 9. Reward

Santiago is thankful to God for all the rewards he got throughout his journey. During his journey, he met two mentors who helped him greatly to achieve his Personal Legend to become an alchemist himself. He met the true love of his life. He also learnt the language of the world and he can now communicate with the Soul of the World. His treasure of knowledge is priceless.

All these rewards must not distract Santiago from the goal of his journey. The secrets he learned and the maturity of his character will definitely change his way of seeking his treasure. Instead of travelling back to Spain after all the dangers he faced, Santiago is now more determined than before to go forward to the Pyramids of Egypt to seek his journey to the end.

#### 10. Road Back

In his journey towards the Pyramids of Egypt, Santiago implements all the lessons he learnt before. Now, he carefully listens to the universal language, pays attention to the omens and focuses mainly on what his heart is telling him. He is sure that his heart is going to tell him the exact place of the treasure buried in Egypt because he is now connected to the Soul of the World.

Where your treasure is, there also be your heart, the alchemist had told him. As he was about to climb yet another dune, his heart whispered, be aware of the place where you are brought to tears. That's where I am, and that's where your treasure is. The boy looked at the sands around him, and saw that, where his tears had fallen, a scarab beetle was scuttling through the sand... in Egypt the scarab beetles are a symbol of God(159-161)

Santiago's journey has a different approach now. Before, he doubted his success and even the significance of his journey. Now, he is sure that he can succeed. All he has to do is to listen carefully to his heart, to speak the universal language and to interpret correctly the signs and omens. At that moment, everything seems clear and connected to the Soul of the World expressed by the universal language that Santiago masters.

#### 11. Resurrection

The penultimate stage of Santiago's journey is resurrection. The resurrection happens when Santiago succeeds in finding the buried treasure. Like in the Ordeal, Santiago is almost killed in achieving his journey. The only difference between the Ordeal stage and the resurrection stage is the knowledge and the wisdom that Santiago gained and learned.

Santiago's heart tells him to look for his treasure at the exact place where his tears fell. So he immediately starts digging for a long time against sand and wind. While he was digging, Santiago was attacked by some refugees from the tribal war. They stole the gold the alchemist gave to him, and beat him severely. They laughed and mocked the idea that he is searching for a treasure of which he dreamt.

As he was attempting to pull out the rocks he encountered, he heard footsteps. Several figures approached him. Their backs were to the moonlight... they made the boy continue digging, but he found nothing. As the sun rose, the men began to beat the boy. He was bruised and bleeding .... and he felt that death is near (161-162)

This is a test for Santiago's authentic belief in what he learnt as well as his determination to succeed in his journey. At that moment, everything is going to change whether he is going to correctly interpret the omens and the dreams or not. In case he does, he will connect again with the Soul of the World, or else he will be another disconnected creature and thus his journey will be futile. Only Then, their leader tells Santiago that he himself had the same dream twice at the exact time Santiago had his own dream. It was a dream about a treasure buried under the sycamore tree in a ruined Spanish church. It is the exact place where Santiago had his own dream. The only difference between these two men is that Santiago believed in his dream and accepted the challenge of the journey to get his own personal legend, whereas the leader found it a foolish idea to cross the desert and travel to Spain. The same dream, omens and signs happened to both of them. The only difference is the determination to have a long journey to achieve your personal legend.

#### 12. Return with Elixir

The final stage to Vogler is the return with Elixir. This stage indicates the end of Santiago's journey to signify the completeness of the twelve archetypal stages. Santiago succeeds in bringing back the Elixir from his journey. Still, he has to apply all what he learnt in his life to transcend his own community. Readers expect that the treasure is buried in Egypt. However, Coelho surprises readers with a plot twist that leads readers to finish reading from where the story began. This narrative technique is called "circular story form" in which the narrative ends in the same beginning point. This narrative technique is usually used to tie up "loose ends and make a story complete"(217). *The Alchemist* closes in the exact place where everything started. At the end of his journey, Santiago says;

In my dream, there was a sycamore growing out of the ruins of the sacristy, and I was told that, if I dug at the roots of the sycamore, I would find a hidden treasure. But I'm not so stupid as to cross an entire desert just because of a recurrent dream. And they disappeared. The boy stood up shakily, and looked once more at the Pyramids. They seemed to laugh at him, and he laughed back, his heart bursting with joy. Because now he knew where his treasure was. (162-163)

Now and after his long journey, Santiago knows the truth about the location of the treasure. The question remains, would Santiago apply all what he learnt through his journey and go back to find the treasure in Spain, or would he stop connecting with Soul of the World and decides to give up. Santiago now knows the real

treasure he travelled for. It is not just some gold coins; it is rather his ability to be connected with the Soul of the World. His journey to Egypt allowed him to know that his treasure is buried in Spain waiting for a true alchemist to find. Santiago travels back to Spain and digs out his treasure. Then he goes back to Fatima, his true love. Fatima's heart is another treasure that Santiago wins for believing in destiny. "It's true; life really is generous to those who pursue their destiny" (176).

In *The Alchemist* world, Paulo Coelho used many symbols that suit the archetypal nature of the novel. Coelho wrote his novel using a 'universal language' that attracts readers all over the world. From the title of the novel, Alchemy is the science of turning metals into gold via complicated purifying processes. Similarly, to be an alchemist, Santiago must pass Vogler's twelve stages to purify and transcend his soul and mind. Thus, Alchemy became the predominant symbol throughout the whole novel. When Santiago believed in his dream, he started to listen to the omens and became closer to the Soul of the World. Only then he was capable of speaking the language of the universe and communicating with God. His soul has been purified like a purified gold.

Paulo's choice of desert to be the setting of the novel is another symbol. Due to the hard nature of the desert, with all its wind, heat, tribes; it is the best place to symbolize all the ordeals and the difficulties one can face in the journey for a personal legend. The desert, with its emptiness, silence and barrenness is another teacher for Santiago. It taught him how to communicate with nature and with God. He learnt how to meditate in God's creation of a simple grain of sand.

The wind itself is a symbol of freedom. Santiago's transformation into the wind means his success in breaking all the boundaries of thought. He is now an enlightened person who can transcend the limited horizon of humans to look at the bigger picture of the Soul of the whole World.

Finally, the crystal merchant and the sheep are both symbols of ordinary people who did not believe in the importance to accept the call for their journey. Those who are content with their lives and never tried to pursue their destiny have deprived their own selves from appreciating God's creation. Their souls have never been enlightened by connecting with God. Their horizon is limited to the daily life activities of survival.

Paulo Coelho adopts the archetypal hero-journey in *The Alchemist* as set by Vogler. His adaptation is flexible and with limited variations without losing any of its glamour. Paulo Coelho's message in *The Alchemist* is that a personal legend is one's own destiny in life, and that is by identifying a purpose in life and pursuing it. Similarly, Joseph Campbell coined the expression "follow your blessing" to refer to the same meaning. It is important for every human being to have a call in one's life that awakens the passion and the desire to start a journey to be rewarded with the Elixir which will be one's lasting legacy. *The Alchemist* is not just about Santiago and his journey. It is rather a call for every reader to start his own journey for his personal legend. Like Santiago, it is not an easy journey and even the decision to start that journey is not an easy one either. It is a long path full of challenges, setbacks and ordeals, nevertheless, it is worth the effort. The reward at the end of that journey will be far better than neglecting the dream. Being an alchemist and realizing your personal legend is always worth to start the long journey. If one is strongly determined, the whole universe will be on one's side throughout the journey and only then a personal legend will be unavoidable "Maktub" as mentioned in *The Alchemist*. By Maktub, Paulo Coelho means to be written by the Hands of God.

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