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SPIRITUAL AWAKENING THROUGH EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL JOURNEYS IN PAULO COELHO'S *THE PILGRIMAGE AND ADULTERY*

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Abstract:

Paulo Coelho, a living legend and proclaimed modern spiritual writer from Brazil has been very candid about numerous ups and downs of life. He has always been loud and bold enough to express his own delinquencies in various interviews, talks, write ups and blogs. His first book *The Pilgrimage* has autobiographical implications as it portrays the writer's long journey to the road to Santiago in Spain in 1986. This journey proves to be a turning point of Paulo's life and he realises his dream of becoming a writer.

Paulo's protagonists undergo an arduous journey and become triumphed and transformed. Paulo Coelho exhibits the process of individuation in *The Pilgrimage* and *Adultery* where his protagonists attain mellowness and maturity after encountering their own foibles and frailties. *The Pilgrimage* describes the hero's external journey for realisation of the self. The hero embarks on the unknown path, faces all the perils and pitfalls, purifies the self and finally prepares himself for the future religious obligations. He develops an understanding with the inner self and the outer world. On the other hand, *Adultery* traces a woman named Linda's internal and psychological journey, consisting of total inner turmoil, despite her perfect ideal family and social life. She undergoes the pangs of depression and deluge due to her routinized drab life. Her existential angst causes a friction in her thoughts and feelings.

The present paper is an attempt to explore the spiritual awakening of the protagonists after coping with internal battle with the self and external encounter with forthcoming trials and tribulations.

Keywords: External Journey, Internal Journey, Individuation, Realisation, Existential Angst, Spiritual Awakening.

Introduction

Paulo's protagonists often escape the stagnant grind of everyday life, sometimes in pursuit of their dreams and destinations, or sometimes in search of the true meaning of life. These characters reflect the joys and sorrows of a layman that are inseparable part of common life. The extraordinary and unwavering spirit of these ordinary persons make them unique. Whether it's the shepherd in *The Alchemist*, a traveller in *The Pilgrimage*, a young girl in *Brida*, an educated and independent woman in *Adultery*, or an extraordinary young woman Maria from a humble background in *Eleven Minutes*; all step out of their comfort zones in search of change, newness, new excitement, or new achievements. Each of these characters faces their own difficulties and challenges. But in any case, they are determined to change their lives and rest only after their destiny has changed. The main protagonists often set out on a journey in the quest of self- discovery and achieve their goal after a long and arduous journey.

The present paper intends to explore life journeys of the two protagonists; a male protagonist (certainly Paulo himself) in *The Pilgrimage* and a female protagonist named Linda in *Adultery*. The former embark on an external journey and the latter undergoes an internal and psychological journey. Their journeys prove to be their personal legend that lead to the spiritual awakening. Life and destiny bring many twists and turns, mountains of difficulties arise to hinder the way ahead, but they remain resolute and unwilling to give up. During an interview in 2010, Paulo tells Brian Draper that he wanted to become a writer since his young age, but he realised this dream at the age of forty, after travelling the road to Santiago. This journey proved to be a turning point in his life (Draper 02). As a result, he wrote his first book *The Pilgrimage*. Afterwards, he



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wrote his second masterpiece, *The Alchemist*, his most famous book. This book was the result of his experience during the journey and served as a metaphor for his own dreams.

Paulo Coelho has very dexterously portrayed the male as well as female protagonists in his fiction writing. This modern spiritual writer himself admits, “I didn’t know compassion or passion for life until I started to discover that I also have a woman within me, which is an extremely important dimension, without which we men will never be complete” (Arias 92).

The Pilgrimage: External Journey to Attain Spiritual Goals

Paulo Coelho's book *The Pilgrimage* encompasses the writer's personal experiences during his journey to Santiago-de-Compostela and encapsulates the impact of this pilgrimage on his life. This novel is a narrative of the positive changes which gives a direction to his faltering thoughts and feelings. The work consists of the details of some true and some fictional events. It is convenient to understand this book from the perspective of Magical Realism. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines Magical Realism as “a style of writing that mixes realistic events with fantasy” (Hornby 937). Through Magical Realism, the author has connected himself with a world of extraordinary and supernatural powers.

The Pilgrimage begins with a special ritual in the author's life, performed by his spiritual master. Under the guidance of his master, the author cum the protagonist and some other disciples gather to complete a ritual of the tradition of the RAM. After the accomplishment of the ritual, his guide will offer him a sword for performing his future assignments. Unfortunate disqualification of Paulo due to instinctive pride and lack of humility consequently makes him unworthy for the investiture. The only way to get back the lost status and his sword is to embark on a pilgrimage to the road to Santiago-de-Compostela.

The external journey is apparently a pathway to attain spiritual awakening. He is titled a pilgrim, who has to traverse the path of the common people in order to shed pride and regain purity of heart. The guide announces, “...at the supreme moment you stumbled and fell. Because of your avidity, you will now have to seek again for your sword. And because of your pride, you will have to seek it among simple people” (3).

Basically the purpose of this journey is to undergo the experiences of layman's routine life and daily struggles. In order to make them eligible for the title of master of RAM, the spiritual guides send their disciples on such journeys to identify their own capabilities, recognise virtues and evade vices from deep inside. The disciples embarking on such purposeful journey are called pilgrims. The journey is called the pilgrimage. The pilgrimage would be on physical level and after facing all kinds of perils and pitfalls, the pilgrims will have to prepare themselves for earning the title of the masters of the RAM. The purpose of the pilgrimage is not just to cover a distance of seven hundred kilometres. It is more than an excursion or an expedition. As mentioned by his spiritual master, Paulo will witness extraordinary experiences and inexplicable situations. He has to prepare himself to struggle with language and cultural barriers. He must acclimatise with strange people and difficult situations by becoming more accessible. Treasuring ordinary things and conceding simple incidents of day to day life will pave the way to attain the objective of this pilgrimage. He would be provided a guide who will teach him many rituals, practices and exercises during the journey. New places, unfamiliar faces and unknown dangers will prepare Paulo for his future responsibilities. Petrus, his new guide, decodes the purpose of the pilgrimage by stating, “... since all things are new, you see only the beauty in them, and you feel happy to be alive. That's why a religious pilgrimage has always been one of the most objective ways of achieving insight” (32).

The journey puts new challenges, difficulties and troubles at every turn. The guide prepares the pilgrim to face all upcoming hindrances with wisdom, valour and patience. Just like a layman, the pilgrim has to struggle for small favours and with daily life challenges. Petrus as a guide, teaches Paulo various exercises and rituals by giving unexpected tasks and setting unversed circumstances.

Ultimately all the exercises bring Paulo close to self- introspection and personal growth. The Seed Exercise helps transforms Paulo's personality and his perception about life and opportunities offered by the surroundings. An overpowering sense of love and admiration towards the bounty of nature replaces the self-centred motives and ambitions. The Speed Exercise helps



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Paulo to slow down in the rush of life and observe the surroundings minutely. In order to control the inner flow of thoughts, Petrus teaches him the Cruelty Exercise. Next, the Water Exercise arouses Paulo's intuition power. Soon after, Paulo learns the Blue Sphere exercise which introduces him the Ritual of Agape; the highest and ecstatic form of love. The Burial Alive exercise provides Paulo an opportunity to assess the strength of each and every element of the nature and consequently win over the fear of death.

The lessons do not stop here, he is further taught RAM Breathing exercise for focus, the Shadow Exercise for dealing with the darkness, the Listening Exercise for noticing and understanding the value of every sound, and the Dance Exercise for a free and clear expression of thoughts and feelings.

Petrus does not remain with Paulo throughout the entire journey. His duty as guide was assigned to him till the Dance Exercise. Paulo has to continue the remaining journey on the basis of the lessons and exercises taught by Petrus. He has already learnt to believe in his own intuition. He has become self-reliant and confident after performing various tasks and lessons taught by Petrus. However, after the departure of Petrus, Paulo is guided by a little girl, a person named Angel, a lamb and finally by the road itself. Still, there is no sign of his sword. He finds himself alone and helpless. He meditates "Is this story never going to end? Nothing but more and more tests, battles, and humiliations- and still no clue about my sword" (209). Paulo has to rely upon himself and become his own guide. A swift flow of agape inside him makes Paulo understand the real purpose and secret of his pilgrimage as well as sword. "And the secret of my sword, like the secret of any conquest we make in our lives, was the simplest thing in the world: it was what I should do with the sword" (213).

Earlier, the strong desire to get his sword did not let Paulo give a thought about its role and relevance. A single thought of the sword used to overshadow every task, practice and ritual. Now everything is clear in his mind. Road to Santiago has awakened his intuition. His purpose is clear and his journey is about to end. During his prayer, Paulo realises that the secret of happiness lies in fighting the good fight. People are often occupied with daily grind and fail to value little joys and contentment. A lamb's sudden appearance and his direction to follow the path towards the church of a nearby hamlet is a clear indication for Paulo to follow the path ahead. Paulo understands the language of this lamb, "He said that I should forget forever my unworthiness because the power had been reborn in me, in the same way that it could be reborn in all people who devoted their lives to the good fight. A day would come said the lamb's eyes when people would once again take pride in themselves, and then all of nature would praise the awakening of the God that had been sleeping within them" (222).

Paulo happens to regain his faith in miracles because he had seen the chalice and the paten during the Dance Exercise which are placed in this chapel. His master's presence along with his sword at this altar and sudden rainfall at this exquisite moment symbolises completion and fruition of the pilgrimage. The rain becomes a symbol of rebirth, life and energy. The pilgrimage has made him worthy of holding his sword and fighting a good fight. In order to inspire every fighter, he states, "A warrior of light always has a second chance in life. Like all other men and woman, he was not born knowing how to use a sword, he made many mistakes before he discovered his Personal Legend" (Manual of the Warrior of Light 161).

Adultery: Self Discovery through Internal Journey

In *Adultery*, Paulo scans and explores the minute emotional turmoil taking shape in the psyche of the main protagonist Linda. She struggles hard with feelings of depression and overwhelms, brought on by the monotony and emptiness of her daily routine. Her life is a reflection of many women around, who find the routine life most tedious and dismal. Irrespective of being a wife, a mother and a successful career- oriented woman, she feels a void which cannot be overcome. Adultery is an abysmal portrayal of the female protagonist who is a successful woman in her thirties. Her mind is obsessed lately with the mania of getting Jacob's time and attention at any cost. Recently Linda interviews her ex-boyfriend Jacob who is now a famous politician. After this meeting, she confronts her inner demon that does not stop her thinking about Jacob, even when she is with her husband and children. She forgets all about modesty of a married woman and commits adultery at the very first advancement on part of Jacob. Her passion moves inside her unswervingly which seems to be interminable. In the



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verse play *Luna*, the conversation of Suterdhar (Director) and Natti (wife of Director) apparently refers to the exasperated erotic desires of a young maiden craving for her lover's company:

“... no water can quench,

The thirst of roused passion.

The flesh on fire,

Is like ocean of desire.” (Batalvi 03)

Linda is a rebellion who intends to break all the social norms and conventions. Her internal journey confronts numerous psychological breakdowns. Her perfectly flawless life is the source of her existential angst. She encounters a deep sense of boredom and complains for being blessed with a caring husband and lovely children. Her perfect family life fails to give her satisfaction, rather she feels acutely miserable and pathetic. Even after her intimacy with Jacob, Linda feels stronger pangs of sensual craving. Again her lust for Jacob starts raising inside and she desires to strengthen this immoral relationship.

An inexplicable passion takes over Linda's heart at the sight of Jacob. Jacob advises her to be mindful and value her family over all such frenzied desires. She is happily married and is blessed with two lovely kids, what more would she expect from life? This illicit and immoral advancement is a mad pursuit of running after the mirage and has no future as they both are married and enjoy good reputation in the society. Instead of backing such illegitimate demeanor, Jacob advises her to consult a marriage counsellor for improving her deteriorating mental balance. Jacob's undeviating revelation about Linda's mental sickness is like a blow to her. Instead of paying heed to his advice, she determines to do every possible effort to undo Jacob's marriage. Her behaviour is as abnormal as Igor of Paulo's fiction *The Winner Stands Alone*, who believes that he can take lives of the guiltless individuals just “in the name of love” (*The Winner Stands Alone* 4) and there is nothing wrong in doing so just to get back his wife. Linda plans to trap Marianne in a fake drug- addiction case.

Lust and jealous have overpowered Linda's mind and there is no scant realisation of doing any wrong to Marianne. During his tour to Rishikesh in 2016, Acharya Prashant discusses with one of the questioners, “Wrong action comes from one's own personal priorities, and one's own likes and dislikes, one's own choices and preferences. Whatever comes from there is the wrong action. Whatever you decide and do for yourself, even with the best of intentions, is the improper action” (Prashant 09). For Linda, her strategy of harming Marianne is precisely imperative to get back her childhood love. This is quite apparent that she has turned into a cauldron of desire and is unable to come out of her perverted mental state.

During her internal conflict, Linda admits to herself that she has some mental health issues. She tries to consult the psychiatrists but again falls into the trap of insanity. Her self-assurance of getting away from her extra-marital affair proves to be quite superficial. The very next call by Jacob drives her mad and she does not hesitate to meet him and break all the barriers of modesty. She readily accepts his invitation and gets intimated with him. Later she realises her “spiritual crime” (187) and feels a bit remorseful. Even when she is with her husband, her mind is occupied with Jacob's memories.

Linda decides to start her married life afresh. For that she expresses her desire to spend time with her husband outside during the Christmas. They both plan to go to Interlaken. They had visited this place ten years back when they had just begun their married life. Linda relives those amazing memories and becomes nostalgic. She remembers her husband's craze for hiking and running from one mountain to another. She had also been with him during his adventures. At present she prefers to walk with him on the same routes instead of running. She enjoys observing the same mountains, valleys, beautiful nights and church bells. She relives all the moments spent together few years back.

Revisiting the place brings them close and they enjoy every moment. Her husband's insistence for paragliding proves to be a turning point for Linda. She undergoes a transformation and is a completely changed woman now. She attains oneness with the nature and the self. The mountain gives her strength, the lake offers peace and calm to her, the sun provides her



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illumination. All these elements assist her, just like the desert in *The Alchemist* which plays the role of a guide for Santiago to unravel the mysteries and omens of the oasis (*The Alchemist* 114). The flight in the open sky fills the void inside her and introduces a perfect and enlightened Linda to her. She acquires a new meaning of life and finds the next level of hope and positivity. No suffering can affect her now. The inexplicable experience fills her with mysterious power. She wishes to remain in this ecstatic state for eternity. Soon she is on the ground reality. She is back in the real world. She starts crying and her husband tries to comfort her. She intends to reveal that these are not the tears of fear but the tears of bliss that have washed and purified her soul. She wants to share her jubilation with him but words fail to express her emotions. She is now a changed woman with a clear mind and pure heart.

Conclusion

Paulo Coelho's narratives *The Pilgrimage* and *Adultery* explore the complexities layered in the minds of the protagonists. These fictions have their own journey with contradictory challenges and diverse situations.

The Pilgrimage will always be considered the foundation of his successful and brilliant career. *The Pilgrimage* is Paulo's first fiction that has given a direction to his writing career and his recognition as a modern spiritual writer. This journey is not just a journey to reclaim the sword; rather it is a journey of personal growth and self-discovery. The punishment rendered by his spiritual master confers upon him an extraordinary opportunity to recognise his purpose of life. The punishment turns out to be a boon to identify flimsy flaws of his character. The external journey filled with various challenges, obstacles, surprises and sometimes fear is initially taken as an unnecessary and futile exercise by the protagonist. This outer journey balances his inner equilibrium and consequently transforms him entirely. The physical journey leads him to spiritual growth. He learns to face the problems of the routine life and his exposure to the common masses clears his concepts of daily life struggles. He untangles small as well as big challenges and develops faith in the creator as well as the creation, including himself. He learns to accept his mistakes and mend his ways. Construction and destruction are integral part of nature and the universe. Autumn is inevitable, but it is quite obvious that it will give way to the spring season. The external journey of the protagonist provides opportunity to encounter with mystical elements and RAM exercises, which leads to personal growth.

Adultery explores the emotional and existential crisis of the main protagonist Linda. The most selfish, drifted, debauched, implacable, sheepish, erratic, self-destructive, emotionally imbalanced and narcissist Linda undergoes a miraculous change. Paulo Coelho has successfully scanned the mind, thoughts and conflicts of the modern women through the portrayal of Linda. He has always made his characters capable of fighting the "good fight" (*The Pilgrimage* 63) and finally come out a winner. Her internal journey leads to self-discovery and re-evaluation of love, passion and meaning. Sex is elevated to the point for opening the door of self-actualisation. Her internal journey and confrontation with the self lead her to pacify and calm her tumultuous mind. After committing extreme adultery, she gains self-awareness and eventually rejuvenates her crooked emotions and regains feminine tenderness, compassion and warmth.

The comparative study of both the works comes with the outcome that *The Pilgrimage* highlights the traditional lifestyle and *Adultery* portrays the modern day crisis. Both narratives ultimately lead to self-realisation, self-discovery, personal growth and spiritual awakening. The famous line from *The Alchemist* seem to be apparently appropriate to support the outcome, "...when you want something, all the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it" (*The Alchemist* 21).

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