



ELUCIDATION OF HUMAN THEMES IN THE WORKS OF PAULO COELHO, ESPECIALLY IN THE NOVELS “THE ALCHEMIST” AND “VERONIKA DECIDES TO DIE”

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ABSTRACT

This article examines how Paulo Coelho's novels reveal hidden themes, notably the portrayal of elegant human emotions in "The Alchemist" and "Veronica Decides to Die," while also shedding light on aspects of human nature that resonate universally. Readers are provided with a thought-provoking exploration of nuanced human experiences and characteristics through Coelho's compelling storytelling..

Introduction

It is widely acknowledged that the primary aim of producing a literary or artistic piece is to elevate, encourage, and advocate for the welfare of humanity. Despite the sheer volume of creative works produced throughout human history, only a few of them have managed to deeply resonate with human emotions, thus attracting and captivating readers for generations. In this esteemed group of works, we should rightfully recognize the literary contributions of the renowned Brazilian author Paulo Coelho. While Coelho's writings frequently delve into topics such as self-actualization, personal evolution, and spiritualism, the exploration of the concept of "humanity" is depicted from diverse angles in his novels. Coelho's works not only touch upon themes of self-discovery and inner development but also provide multifaceted insights into the essence of what it means to be human, showcasing his breadth of understanding of the human condition and the intricate layers of existence, and the triad of Man, Universe and God.

"The Alchemist" (1988) is widely regarded as Coelho's magnum opus, chronicling the odyssey of Santiago, a fledgling shepherd embarking on a transformative journey to uncover his unique destiny. While the novel foregrounds the significance of individual fate and the relentless pursuit of personal aspirations, it also serves as an eloquent testament to the interwoven nature of human experience. Along Santiago's pilgrimage, he encounters a diverse array of characters, each leaving an indelible mark on his odyssey. Coelho intricately examines the profound notion that every individual Santiago encounters imparts wisdom and insight that is fundamental to his evolutionary passage, underscoring the interconnectedness

of human existence. The novel broadens the scope of the individual quest by encapsulating the multifaceted roles that each person assumes in the grand tapestry of human experience, offering a contemplative meditation on the symbiotic relationships that define and enrich the human paradigm. Through Santiago's powerful odyssey, Coelho illuminates the inherent unity and collective interconnectedness of humanity.

Manju Muraleedharan, Assistant Professor at Lady Doak College, Madurai, Tamil Nadu, India, ("The Triad of Man, Universe and God in Paulo Coelho's novel *The Alchemist*". 2011) comments on the portrayal of the characters in this novel: "The *Alchemist* is a symbolic representation of the triad of Man, Universe and God. The relationship they share among one another is gradually exposed through the protagonist Santiago's journey in pursuit of a treasure. His quest starts at a material level and runs through the spiritual realm and ends in the stage of supreme goal of life, i.e. Selfrealisation. Through Self-realisation, the protagonist Santiago reaches the state of pure Consciousness where this triad is realized as an inseparable whole". Undoubtedly, Santiago's journey is rooted in action, as he assimilates wisdom from the alchemist that underscores the sole path to enlightenment as being through active engagement (Coelho 132). His altruistic ethos fuels heightened physical vitality, propelling his endeavors with heightened dynamism. He astutely conserves this vigor by eschewing fruitless preoccupations with the past, anxiety over outcomes, and excessive emotional fluctuations in the present. While reflecting on past experiences bolsters his confidence in the soundness of his choices, he maintains unwavering focus on the immediate task at hand, freeing his mind from trivial desires. Gradually, he cultivates an indifference, evident in his willingness to part with his flock, confront death without acrimony, and depart from Fatima in pursuit of treasure despite the allure of a luxurious life in the Al-Fayoum oasis. Possessing essential virtues such as humility, purity, unwavering resolve, and composure, Santiago epitomizes the qualities imperative for self-realization, as articulated by Parthasarathy (203). He embraces the harmony in diversity, recognizing the elemental potency inherent in all aspects of the universe.

Moreover, "*Veronika Decides to Die*" has great importance to analyse themes of literal works by Paulo Coelho. In this novel, the concept of humanity is explored in various ways. The story delves into the complexities of human emotions, portraying the internal struggles and desires that individuals grapple with. Through the protagonist Veronika's journey, the novel navigates themes of mental health, societal expectations, and the intrinsic human yearning for meaning and purpose. It also delves into the interconnectedness of human experiences, examining how individuals impact one another and the broader human condition. "*Veronika Decides to Die*" offers a poignant reflection on the fragility and resilience of the human spirit, shedding light on the universal quest for self-discovery and fulfillment. Through its portrayal of diverse characters and their intricate relationships, the novel presents a compelling exploration of the multifaceted nuances of the human experience.

"Paulo Coelho's work *Veronika Decides to Die* demonstrates that Veronika is a complex character. Both quotations demonstrate how quickly Veronika can change her opinion, exactly like a real person in real life", according to Doctor Vasant Gawai, Assistant Professor, Department of English, MATS University, Raipur (2023). Veritably, Her personality possesses a multitude of facets and intricacies. Furthermore, as depicted by Paulo Coelho in his work "*Veronika Decides to Die*," the character of Veronika is portrayed with a dynamic and evolving

nature. In accordance with the framework presented in Francis Bacon's article, a dynamic character undergoes a transformation in their values, beliefs, or behaviors as a result of their experiences (page 3). This suggests that over the course of the story, the character experiences growth and evolves to attain a deeper level of insight. As the narrative unfolds, Veronika demonstrates various forms of change - in her mindset, purpose, and actions, embodying a character who evolves and matures as a consequence of her encounters, leading her to a new comprehension of life. Paulo Coelho intricately employs direct and indirect methods to illustrate Veronika's attributes. These insights encapsulate the portrayal of Veronika in the literary work. The subsequent part of the analysis dissects five components of Veronika's response to her suicide. The initial aspect involves her unsuccessful suicide attempt, which follows with her admission to Vilete.

"I'm joking, it's not really hell," the voice went on. "It's worse than hell, not that I've ever actually been there. You're in Vilete" (Coelho, 1998, page 11).

Despite the distress and constriction, Veronika quickly comprehended her situation. Following her suicide attempt, she was saved just in time by someone. Although she was unaware she had arranged for it, she has been transferred to Vilete. In this setting, she is suddenly confronted with the realization of her fatally damaged heart and the limited time left in her life—estimated by a doctor to range between five weeks and possibly even less. Her heart, she learns, has sustained irreversible damage due to consuming four packs of sleeping medication. Medical intervention is futile in mending her heart.

In retrospect, the diverse body of work by Paulo Coelho serves as a profound embodiment of transcendentalism, seamlessly weaving together the intricate dynamics between the human mind and the natural environment. This theme is prominently highlighted in the novels "The Alchemist" and "Veronika Decides to Die," both of which intricately explore the complex relationship between individuals and the world around them. While "The Alchemist" fervently underscores the unwavering determination of an individual and the relentless pursuit of personal dreams, emphasizing the significance of living in the present moment while acknowledging the past and future, "Veronika Decides to Die" offers a much darker portrayal, delving into the internal conflict between positive and negative impulses within the human psyche. Coelho posits that by embracing and acknowledging these inherent imperfections, individuals can embark on a journey of self-discovery, paving the way to personal growth and spiritual enlightenment. Through rich storytelling and profound thematic explorations, Coelho masterfully unravels the intricacies of the human experience and illuminates the transformative power found in the profound bond between humanity and the natural world.

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