

Paulo Coelho: A Writer of the Universe*Dr.L.Suresh**Assistant Professor, Department of English**KARE, Anand Nagar, Krishnankoil-626 126**tiposuresh@gmail.com***Abstract**

Paulo Coelho, an evolutionist writer of the brain based society who majorly deals with the man's heart and soul of the universe. Through his writing, he seems as a mentor, a philosopher, a guide to his writer. He guides all his readers to live the meaningful life. In his novel, *The Zahir*, Coelho picturises the story of a writer who take a journey in search of his wife and the transformation of the journey from physical into inner self. Coelho clearly shows the protagonist's inner development through his own style of philosophical depictions.

Paulo Coelho, a writer of the modern society owns the reading hobbies of the young minds. Coelho is totally different from the writers of the present era in posing the protagonist at the unique point. With his well known novel, *The Zahir*, Coelho crafts the story with the spiritual quest in the scape of love. It is like his first book, *The Pilgrimage*, that deals with the complete consciousness of the one's true self, *The Zahir* reached the readers' eyes in the year 2005. The story of the novel sets to focuses on the search of a writer for his missed wife, Esther. It resembles Coelho's own reflections during the pilgrimage in the book, *The Pilgrimage*. It moves by the travel of the protagonist in search of his wife. The obsession of the protagonist leads him to move with the spiritual quest that leads him to rediscover himself. In the novel, the initial

search for the writer's wife is totally transformed into the search of the self realistically. On tracing the protagonist's guiding character in the novel, it resembles the book, *The Pilgrimage* as the name of the protagonist's guide is Petrus in both the novels.

This magical, mystical love finds a potent space in *The Zahir*, where the protagonist, a successful writer makes a prophetic resignation, "I accept the Zahir... let it lead me into a state of either holiness or madness "(TZ 61) and sets the tone for the entire novel. The narrative begins with the writer's obsessive madness at the sudden disappearance of his wife, Esther and progresses spiritually leading him into holiness towards its close.

The crafting circle of Paulo Coelho's philosophical view abstracted in the two words, 'awkward presence' that he coins to estimate the being of his protagonist in *The Zahir*. The term, majorly, defines the existential dilemma of contemporary individual and is suggestive of his meaninglessness in the existence. The following lines from *The Zahir* express Coelho's existential condition expressed in his own words.

I got out my mobile phone, after all, I had a reasonable number of friends in the city, but it was too late to phone anyone. I considered going into one of the bars and ordering a drink; someone was bound to recognize me and invite me to join them. But I resisted the temptation and tried to get through that moment, discovering in the process, that there is nothing worse than the feeling that no one cares whether we exist or not, that no one is interested in what we have to say about life, and that the world can continue turning without our awkward presence. (*The Zahir* 248-249)

A compelling saga of a man's love for his absconding wife, *The Zahir* virtually lives the philosophy of existentialism. It is an interface between human existence and its essence that

virtually finds expression in the life of the protagonist who dreams of becoming a writer. He is a man of bad faith, for he admits, “I have money, I have contacts but what I don't have is the courage to write a book” (*TZ* 15). His frustrated dream leaves him an embittered soul that is, however, aware of one great reality called freedom which essentially goes with his being.

The protagonist finds in Esther, his wife, the person who equips him with the ability to choose and to commit himself to what is best for him. She shows him the only way towards its realisation by making him undertake a journey on the road to Santiago. The protagonist begins to overcome his anxiety by saying ‘yes’ where he wants to say ‘no’. Thus he chooses to realise his dream of becoming a writer by setting off for thirty-eight days on the road to Santiago. This liberates him from the bad faith that denies him freedom. It lends him transcendence and evolves him as a writer who collects his experience and makes it a raw material for his first publication, opening the door for many others to come. His journey on the road to Santiago is actually the journey from his inauthentic self to authentic self. It imparts an essence to his existence, and he is what he has always purposed to be, a writer.

The writer-protagonist is verily a paradigm of modern age where boredom and tedium exist, where people lead identical days and nights in which adventure is just a word in a book. The protagonist’s life is no exception. Having carved his career as a writer, he cannot help confessing before his wife,

I have the woman I love, the career I always dreamed of having, the kind of freedom that is the envy of all my friends, the travel, the honours, the praise. But there’s something...I have the idea that if I stopped, life would become meaningless.(*TZ* 39)

His wife herself has her moments of profound sadness, occasionally mingled with feelings of guilt or fear. She believes that everyone harbours at a great sadness within his soul. Her melancholic thoughts find a blatant expression when she says,

I have everything, but I'm not happy. Also, I'm not the only one either; over the years, I've met and interviewed all kinds of people: the rich, the poor the powerful, and those who just make do. I've seen the same infinite bitterness in everyone's eyes, a sadness which people weren't always prepared to acknowledge, but which regardless of what they were telling me, was nevertheless there.(TZ 37-38)

Though sad and embittered, Esther is not the kind who would succumb to the circumstances and accept the given. Esther is an epitome of authenticity. She is decisive, self-creating and has the knack to create her own patterns. She chooses to be a war correspondent as a part of her search for happiness. She believes that in war zones, men live life on the edge as they can die the very next moment. Concerning her sad and meaningless existence, she regards a soldier's life as meaningful as he is ready to offer himself up for a cause. So it is a soldier who experiences the true essence of being a man. Esther herself feels that her life has a meaning as long as she is in a war zone. There is no room for boredom or sadness, for the fear of death makes her enjoy every second of her life. In other words, it is love, the love of life that she calls the energy of pure, absolute love existing in war zones is much greater than hatred which causes men to kill each other. So Esther believes that love is the medicine for all sorrows. She keeps transcending and becoming what she chooses to be.

In her attempt to forge herself into the new, Esther does not even mind sacrificing her family and abandoning her husband. She disappears secretly as a war correspondent to

Kazakhstan where she intends to write an article about the imminent war. She borrows the assistance of a native called Mikhail, who also becomes her interpreter in one of her interviews. This interview serves as an eye-opener to Esther who finds several results to her existential concerns. As regards the reason for unhappiness, she discovers that people accumulate memories and forget their dreams which lead to sorrow.

Overtaken by anxiety at the sudden disappearance of his wife, the protagonist in *The Zahir*, recognises that it was Esther's presence that formed his world. He is shocked, shattered, obsessed and helpless until he meets Mikhail, his wife's friend, who is on a path of self-discovery. This meeting gets him to realise how he had been living inauthentically in the world like a bull looking for the bullfighter without any idea where the target is. With this realisation comes the understanding that, "Before I could find her, I must first find myself"(TZ 179). Thus his search for his wife becomes a search for himself. He discovers that love is the common thread that has woven his past, his present and is likely to do his future. It has persuaded him to accomplish his dream of becoming a writer. Love has filled him with anxiety at the abandonment of Esther. Moreover, it is the only hope that he believes will unite him someday with her. This lends authenticity to his character that saves itself from losing in the immediate present dominated by the absence of his wife and gathers his past, present, and future into the wholeness of his self.

On considering *The Zahir* in the perspective of philosophical views, its two principal characters, the protagonist and his wife Esther, emerge as symbols of man's senseful freedom. They are free, so they create themselves. They exercise their freedom and act following their true nature, namely the writer picks his writing career in response to his passion for writing, and his wife becomes a war correspondent to fulfil her urge for living life on the edge and seeking

happiness. So what the protagonist and his wife choose actions in keeping with their true nature, it finds its full expression and thereby lends substance to freedom and even increases it. This amply describes their existence that has eventually found its essence.

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