LIBERAL JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE REVIEW
An International Double-Blind Peer-Reviewed Open Access Journal
ISSN (Online): 3006-3175 | ISSN (Print): 3006-3167
Volume 5, Issue 7 September, 2026

A STUDY OF FREE WILL THROUGH THE LENS OF SUPER MIND MANIFESTED IN THE ALCHEMIST BY PAULO COEHLO

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DOI:https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23036764

Keywords
Free Will, Journey, Transformation, Identity, Super Mind, Sublimation

Article History
Received: 01 June 2026
Accepted: 23 August 2026
Published: 28 September 2026

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Abstract

This paper attempts to explore the exercise of free will on the part of an individual while going through the journey of mind and analyzes the development of super mind as exhibited in The Alchemist by Paulo Coleho. The novel depicts a transformation in the central character who exercises his free will resultantly contributing to the birth of Super mind. The Super mind is a mind that has the power of decision making and exercising his free will. The journey of the central character is not only marked by an experience of spiritual love that elevates his stature as a human being but is also characterized by the process of forging multiple identities and finally achieving success in making his dream a reality. As a theoretical framework, this research uses the idea of Super mind propounded by two philosophers Ogi Ogas and Sai Gaddam. This study finds that the journey of mind is beyond societal status and is a successful effort to transform the original identity into a better version of the same self. The selected text is analyzed further to emphasize the reality that human mind is potent enough to embark upon the supreme strata of existence. This study has further implications for future researchers excavating the mystic sublimation in the light of the latest theories on the post- modern human psychology. This research is qualitative in nature and the method used is that of content analysis.

1.INTRODUCTION

The Alchemist is a novel by a Brazilian author named Paulo Coelho which was first published in 1988. The novel was originally written in Portuguese. It soon became popular and was frequently translated into various languages including English. In the novel, a shepherd boy named Santiago, makes a journey across North Africa to Egyptian pyramids after seeing a dream about a treasure hidden in pyramids. He sees this dream while sleeping under a tree in a ruined church. On his way to Pyramids, the shepherd boy named Santiago, meets Melchizedek, the king of Salem. The king asks him to sell his sheep if he wants to collect some money for his journey. Early on his arrival in Tangiers, a man robs him and takes away all his money. Santiago then works for a crystal merchant to earn money. The boy meets an Englishman who is in search of an alchemist who can turn baser metals into gold. The boy continues his journey along with the Englishman. Both of them reach an oasis where Santiago meets an Arabian girl named Fatima. He proposes marriage to her and she promises to marry him with the condition of completion of his journey. He soon learns that true love will not stop rather encourage him to pursue his dreams. Finally, the boy's encounter with the alchemist who makes him recognize his true self. Ultimately, the boy learns that the treasure he is looking for is hidden in the ruined church in his homeland. He returns back to find the treasure and the novel ends with a resolve to return back to Fatima.

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1.1 Objectives

To explore and trace out the exercise of free will on the part of the central character in the selected text.
To identify how the exercise of free will leads the central character towards the creation of a Super Mind.

1.2 Questions

Q : How does the central character of the selected text exercise free will in the course of his journey?
Q : How does the exercise of free will leads the central character towards an identity shift culminating into Super Mind ?

2. Literature Review

There has been made a great deal of literary criticism on The Alchemist. The novel has been approached by critics in a variety of ways all over the world. Nasrullah Mambrol, in his article titled" Analysis of Paulo Coelho's The Alchemist" points out the beginning of a conflict in the novel as Santiago sees the dream. Mambrol further says that the shepherd in the novel meets various people who encourage and motivate him when he becomes somewhat complacent in his pursuit.

Maha Sarfraz, a lecturer in Government College Women University, Sialkot, has made a stylistic analysis of the novel. She says that the novel has a unique narrative structure and profound symbolic meaning. An article titled " Destined Journeys : Decoding Free Will in Paulo Coelho's The Alchemist Through Narrative Stylistics" was written in collaboration by three writers namely Zaydun A. Al-Shara, Lee Jung Ae and Myasser Yousef Alseid. They trace out that there is an interplay between fate and individual agency in Santiago's journey. His journey is transformative and is a good learning experience. This study examines the narrative structure, dialogue, symbolism, character perspectives, and language use. This study highlights the narrative portayal of destiny as a predestined path guided by omens. While exploring the internet sources, a study is found that talks about the strong religious background of the novel. The article available is titled " Literary Theories, Linguistic Aspects and Interpretations of The Alchemist". It is argued in the article that the ideas presented in the novel support Islamic belief system. The article further discusses the positive impact of the novel on the mind of the readers stating that it influences very conveniently the perspectives of readers about the reality of life. The article points out the universal appeal of the novel and the fact that the novel equals readers belonging to different ethnic and religious backgrounds.

3. Research Methodology

The paradigm of this study is qualitative as it does not contain any statistical data. The subjective analysis of the selected text is made by the researcher in which the entire novel is read and analyzed very carefully in the light of the theoretical framework. The data is collected neither through survey nor interviews. The sample of the research is the novel titled The Alchemist by Paulo Coelho. Some incidents and dialogues are chosen from the novel and are analyzed with the lens of the theory propounded by two philosphers in the field of psychology namely Sai Gaddam and Ogi Ogas.

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3.1 Theoretical Framework

Sai Gaddam and Ogi Ogas contend in their book titled The Journey of Mind that with the evolution in organisms came human "Super Mind". Super Mind refers to a capability of humans to conceptualization, complex communication, and a deep inter-connectedness of thoughts across individuals (70). The advent of Super Mind is a transformational point in the journey of mind which makes human beings transcend biological constraints. The book draws parallels between the dynamics of personal relationships and an evolution of" Societal Super Minds" ; collective networks where thoughts and actions are shared among individuals. The advancement of human mind leads to a tension between individual aspirations and

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collective needs, leading to the free- will dilemma. According to the book, the individuals have the power both to influence their destinies and the collective direction of the Super Mind.

4. Content Analysis

Santiago exercises his free will to materialize his dream by embarking on a journey towards Egyptian Pyramids. It is also the first step taken by him towards the immersion of his soul in the all conclusive soul of the universe. The process of learning and consequent transformation continues in the desert. The boy lost the money he earned from selling of sheep. At that time, he faces a dilemma to make a choice between two options. He could go back to his hometown, buy the sheep again and start living his life as a shepherd or make a decision to continue his journey in the search of treasure. He chooses the second option and his journey becomes a catalyst of transformation in which he undergoes the process of learning and ultimately fulfills his dreams regarding material wealth and wisdom as wealth of soul. In the course of his journey, the shepherd boy meets the Englishman . This meeting gives him an experience of reciprocal learning; the Englishman shows the desire to learn about caravans and deserts while the boy is attracted towards the books of the Englishman. He reads books about Alchemy and learns that soul can understand the language of things in the entire universe. Reading the books of Alchemy is freedom of choice exercised by Santiago. What unites the Englishman with the boy is the desire to search for their destinies. The boy continues to travel in the desert and listen to the language of desert. This silence immediately disappears as the caravan enters oasis. At the oasis, the boy had a special experience of meeting Fatima and he learned the language of love; the language that is understood by everyone in the universe.The novel describes the first meeting of Santiago and Fatima is described in these words.“ There is only that moment and the incredible certainty that everything under the sun has been written by one hand only. It is the hand that evokes love, and creates a twin soul for every person in the world. Without such love, one’s dream would have no meaning (51).”

Fatima agrees to marry him but her condition is that Santiago must struggle to achieve his dream of treasure. He could have stopped his journey and live in the comfortable environment of oasis for the rest of his life but he decides to continue his journey in the desert. This is how he exercises his free will one more time. On his way, he meets an alchemist who transfers his wisdom to him through verbal interaction. According to the alchemist, the fear of failure becomes the only hindrance in the way of achieving one’s dream.The boy responds to this insight in these words.“That’s what alchemists do. They show that when we strive to become better than we are, everything around us becomes better, too (85). After meeting the alchemist and Fatima both, the boy learns about the power of love. He learns that love is the force that transforms and improve the world. It is the power that makes human beings better and consequently the world becomes a better place to live. It is the human beings who nourish the soul of the world and whether this world would become a better place or worse depends on the fact the individuals inhabiting it are better or worse. Whenever humans experience love, they always strive to make themselves better than their previous self. Thus love is a magic potion that works for a superior identity shift on the part of an individual and further towards making this world a better place. Love contributes to the creation of “ Super Mind” in which not only the two souls of the lovers unite but also come in unison with the entire universe around. The boy has a fleeting vision about the attack on the oasis by an army. He becomes threatened immediately thinking about safety of Fatima. He takes a decision using his free will to return to the oasis. His desire to save Fatima from the danger instigates him to meet the chief of the tribes. The chief is reluctant to believe him and the boy faces a condition; that is to turn himself into wind and bring a storm in the oasis. The boy does not know how to turn himself into wind but he makes a prayer to God without words with the belief that God can perform miracles. He does not make the prayer for a selfish reason but recognized the ability to unite his soul with the soul of God. The boy here

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turns into "Super Mind" when he realizes that he is God's master work and previously, he was unfamiliar with this recognition of his capabilities and special pedestal assigned to him.

Santiago is forced by the circumstances to demonstrate his oneness with the soul of the world by turning himself into a dust storm. After that he again manifests his free will to resume his journey towards the pyramids. Ultimately, he reaches the pyramids and starts digging. At this point, he is robbed by the thieves. When they inquire about his digging, he answers that he is digging for treasure. The leader of the thieves tells him about a dream that he once had about treasure hidden under a tree in a ruined church. This is a moment of realization for the boy that the treasure he is looking for is actually hidden in the place where he saw the dream about it. Now is the time for the boy to take a free decision to return back to the place from where he started his journey. After finding the treasure back at home, he decides to return to Fatima to materialize another dream; the dream of consummation of love. In their book titled The Journey of Mind, the two Nuero - Scientists discuss that consciousness is a mysterious and magical quality. They further point out that there is a difference between seeing and recognizing. Recognizing is a higher mental process and human beings are capable of recognizing which makes them enter into an awareness through further processing going on in mind. This awareness makes human beings superior than other organisms. In the novel, it is depicted that the shepherd boy achieves "Super Mind" after undergoing the entire process of awareness. On the basis of his innate capabilities of both making independent decisions and achieving a level of awareness, he is transformed into a better version of his previous self. Thus there is a a complete mental journey complementing the physical journey shown in the novel during which the boy undergoes a process of shifting from one identity into another. The Journey is completed when the boy comes to the final realization about the presence of treasure in his homeland. It is a cyclical journey which brings the boy to the same point from where he previously began. But he is no more the same person that he was in the beginning of his journey. A variety of experiences not only facilitated his process of learning and awareness but also nourished his soul to come in unison with the soul of the world. By the end of the novel, he is definitely a wiser man; a person capable of making his own decisions and turning himself into a superior self that can listen and understand the language of silence prevalent in the entire universe.

5. Conclusion

In the novel, Paulo Coelho has emphasized the profound and sublime internal transformation on the part of its central character. The transformative journey is presented as rigorous battle which leads the boy towards total control of himself. This self control is a step towards ultimate freedom achieved by him. This paper has attempted to provide a glimpse into the internal process going on in the mind of the protagonist. This study has explored how an individual can become significant by influencing his own destiny and collective direction of the people around him. The boy's decision to stay in the oasis and perform miracle is a successful attempt to become one with the universal soul. His journey towards becoming a super mind is in reality a positive evolution of consciousness.

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ISSN (Online): 3006-3175 | ISSN (Print): 3006-3167
Volume 5, Issue 7 September, 2026

August 18,2026

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