

GREEK WORDS FOR LOVE IN PAULO COELHO'S THE ALCHEMIST

DR.BH.V.N. LAKSHMI, D.VIJAYA LAKSHMI

Abstract: The word 'love' is ingrained in human life and everyone wants either to love or to be loved. In the world of Literature 'love' is sometimes referred to as being the "international language," overriding cultural and linguistic divisions. Keeping this in view this paper focuses on depicting the reflections of Greek words for 'love' in one of the modern writers' uncanny portrayal of it in his creative writings. Ancient Greek has four distinct words for 'love.' They are storgē, éros, philía, and agápe. Storge refers to the love of kinship or **familiarity**, eros refers to the love of sexual and/or **romantic desire**, philia refers to the love of **friendship** and agape refers to **self-emptying** or divine love. These aspects are lucidly visible in Paulo Coelho's The Alchemist.

Keywords: agape, journey, love, treasure.

The word 'love' is ingrained in human life and everyone wants either to love or to be loved. It gives a kind of happiness and feeling of well being. "Love" can refer to a variety of feelings, states, and attitudes, ranging from interpersonal **affection** to pleasure. According to Greek legend humans were originally made with four arms, four legs and were half male and half female. After conspiring to climb Mount Olympus, Zeus ordered them cut in half. Since that day, every human spends their life **searching for their other half**. Reiterating this idea Aristotle wrote that 'love is composed of a single soul inhabiting two bodies.' It is quite interesting to know how 'love' is defined by eminent people despite its complex and abstract nature. Socrates associates the word love with the right actions of human beings. Bertrand Russell describes love as a condition of "absolute value," as opposed to **relative value**. 'Love is eternal,' says E M Foster and for Victor Hugo love is the honey in life. In the world of Literature 'love' is sometimes referred to as being the "international language," overriding cultural and linguistic divisions. Keeping this in view this paper focuses on depicting the reflections of Greek words for 'love' in one of the modern writers' uncanny portrayal of it in his creative writings. Ancient Greek has four distinct words for 'love.' They are storgē, éros, philía, and agápe. Storge refers to the love of kinship or **familiarity**, eros refers to the love of sexual and/or **romantic desire**, philia refers to the love of **friendship** and agape refers to **self-emptying** or divine love. These aspects are lucidly visible in Paulo Coelho's The Alchemist. Santiago, the protagonist in the story, is an Andalusian shepherd boy. The book is a record of Santiago's epic journey of finding the treasure. The trials and tribulations of his journey transcend him and at the end the shepherd boy wins the treasure. This allegorical novel has a therapeutic effect on the readers. Santiago starts his journey from his homeland Spain to Egypt, after having a recurring dream of finding treasure there. In the process of the journey he understands the power of love, his

personal legend, elixir of life, symbols and alchemy. Storge (Affection): Storge, also called familial love, is the **Greek** word for natural affection such as the love of a parent towards offspring, and vice versa. Santiago's routine as a shepherd boy is to take care of the sheep and travel distant places trading the wool. He often takes the sheep through the villages in search of food and water. In the process they become his companions. He prods them and calls them with names. He shares his emotions with them treating them as friends.

"He had always believed that the sheep were able to understand what he said. So there were times when he read them parts of his books that had made an impression on him, or when he would tell them of the loneliness or the happiness of a shepherd in the fields."(4)

Santiago's affection towards sheep is nothing but the 'storge.' It is a natural affection and for Santiago they are not mere animals. Sometimes he showed parental love towards them. His association and companionship with the sheep is just like that of a family. The sheep are so innocent and they have never read a book and do not understand what the boy tells of the cities. Yet they are content with the food and water provided by Santiago and returns their love in the form of wool and once in a while even in the form of meat. We see the same storge or affection in Santiago's family. Wishing to see him as a priest, his father sends him to a seminary. As a simple farm family they work hard just to have food and water like the sheep. At the age of sixteen Santiago decides to fulfill his childhood ambition of knowing the world as a traveler, as a shepherd. The love and affection of the family leaves them with no choice and they silently accept Santiago's will. Thus, his journey begins. Eros (Physical Love): Eros is a passionate love with sensual desire and longing. It is something like 'love at first sight.' Santiago falls in love with the merchant's daughter in his first encounter. After a year, his chance to see the merchant in the context of trading the wool reminds

him the beauty of the girl. His heart longs for the girl. On his way to the merchant's place he shares his excitement with his sheep. Recollections of the girl's beauty take Santiago into a dreamy world. Though his love is pure it is physical. In his previous visit both of them had a time to share their experiences. The girl talks about town life and Santiago describes countryside. Her bright Moorish eyes widen with fear and surprise listening to Santiago. He is simply enticed by her beauty and wishes that the day would never end. Santiago's love towards this girl gives him a new experience and he desires to live in one place forever. His family affection allows him to dream of travelling whereas the girl's love tempts him to become a settler. After meeting the merchant's daughter Santiago, despite being a shepherd, never thinks of any other women. He tries to look handsome in all physical aspects to win the girl's heart and marry her. But his passionate love or eros is intervened by his recurring dream of treasure, Gypsy woman's interpretation and old Melchizedek's encouragement to discover his Personal Legend. The words of the old man disturb Santiago's excitement to see the girl. He ponders that

"There was nothing to hold him back except himself. The sheep, the merchant's daughter, and the fields of Andalusia were only steps along the way to his destiny." (29)

Philia (Mental Love): Philia' means a dispassionate virtuous love. According to Aristotle it includes loyalty to friends, family, and community, and requires virtue, equality, and familiarity. 'Philia' is motivated by practical reasons and can also mean "love of the mind." Santiago sets his journey to Egypt following his dream. Gypsy woman's interpretations and the old man's words about the Personal Legend distance Santiago from his love towards the merchant's daughter. His experience of 'eros' one way unburdens him driving him towards his destiny. Leaving the sheep and the girl Santiago goes in search of the treasure. He reaches Tangier and loses everything, deceived by a stranger. He regrets and laments for sudden and drastic change in his life. Recollecting the old man's advice to read the omens, Santiago resolves to walk forward. The patience he acquired as a shepherd gives him strength in the strange land, Tangier. Finally he finds work with crystal merchant. The merchant and the community love the boy and take care of him. Gradually a new hope arises and changes the direction of his journey. Instead of going towards his homeland, he moves with the caravan towards the Pyramids in Egypt to find the treasure. When the time of his departure comes, unable to bear the sadness, Santiago leaves without saying a good bye. Santiago meets Fatima following the words of the English man in the

caravan. The moment he sees Fatima, he feels that the Soul of the World surged within him. It is not just her physical beauty that attracts Santiago but something else. She communicates through the language of love that is older than humanity and ancient than the desert. Enmasse she is the omen that Santiago has been awaiting all his life. They both enjoy the bliss of love and become one soul with two bodies. As a true desert woman she guides him towards right direction and prepares him to move forward in pursuit of his dream. Love of Fatima frees Santiago from 'philia' and he moves to the final part of his journey. Agape (Spiritual Love): 'Agape' is pure love and is unveiled. It frees us from every kind of binding, makes us speak truly, think truly, and act truly. It unifies us with the whole universe. Santiago feels sad to leave Fatima behind but the words of the old king echoes in his heart.

"Tell your heart that the fear of suffering is worse than the suffering itself. And that no heart has ever suffered when it goes in search of its dreams, because every second of the search is a second's encounter with God and with eternity." (137)

Free from everything Santiago is now ready to go with the alchemist. Travelling with him towards the final destiny, Santiago proves his uncanny alertness to dangers in the desert as he understands the language of the universe. Whenever Santiago's heart longs for Fatima, the alchemist counsels him saying about true love never keeps a man from pursuing his dreams. Travelling with him, Santiago learns the alchemist's secrets. On the occasion of losing his life for want of a miracle, the ultimate enlightenment dawns upon him as he realizes that the Soul of the World is a part of the Soul of God and the Soul of God is his own soul. He becomes one with wind and thus, performs a miracle. Santiago's spiritual love transcends him and makes him one with God. The alchemist's quest comes to an end as he identifies the power of Santiago. Before bidding farewell, he prepares gold from lead and gives a piece of gold to Santiago as a proof of alchemy. His duty comes to an end as he makes the boy experience agape. His last words to Santiago are

"No matter what he does, every person on earth plays a central role in the history of the world." (167)

Santiago all alone moves towards the pyramids listening to his heart and reading the omens. He thanks God for making him believe in his destiny and for providing guiding agents if not guardian angels - the king, the merchant, the Englishman, the alchemist and Fatima. He digs before the pyramids and finds nothing. In that exhausting moment he is attacked by the tribal refugees. Taking away the piece of gold from Santiago the leader mocks at the foolishness of Santiago. He says that he is not a stupid like Santiago

to follow his recurring dream of a hidden treasure in Spain at the roots of sycamore in a ruined church where shepherds and their sheep slept and disappears along with his men. Pyramids laugh at Santiago and at once his heart bursts with joy understanding the truth, the treasure. Wrapping in a semblance of love, Paulo Coelho narrates the life journey of Santiago making the reader realize the ultimate truth that true love allows one to reach one's 'Personal Legend.' Santiago experiences all phases of love in his journey.

Each phase promotes him to the next. The experience of storge takes him to eros; eros leads him to philia; philia guides him towards agape and agape makes him find his treasure. Santiago's journey to his spiritual destiny named either as a treasure or an ultimate realization is similar to Christian's journey to the celestial city narrated in Pilgrims' Progress by Bunyan. In the texts of yesterday it was Christian and in the writings of today it is Santiago who guides humanity towards love of God.

References

1. 'Analysis Of Paulo Coelho's The Alchemist.' Anti Essays. Retrieved September 14, 2013, from the World WideWeb:<http://www.antiessays.com/free-essays/105940.html>
2. Coelho, Paulo. The Alchemist. 1993. Harper Collins Publishers Limited. New Delhi.
3. 'GreekWordsforLove.' Viewedon22dSeptember2013. Retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_words_for_love
4. 'True Love and Spirituality are Indivisible.' Viewed on 7th September, 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.speakingtree.in/spiritual-blogs/seekers/science-of-spirituality/true-love-and-spirituality-are-indivisible>.

Professor,
Shri Vishnu Engineering College for Women, Bhimavaram, A.P. India,
drbhvn.lakshmi@gmail.com
Sr. Assistant Professor,
Vishnu Institute of Technology, Bhimavaram, A.P. India,
dvlakshmi1973@gmail.com