

Santiago strives to accomplish the Abraham Harold Maslow theory -Hierarchy of Needs in the novel The Alchemist by Paulo Coelho

Anuvesh Sylvester Gill

Ph.D. Research Scholar

Department of English

Paulo Coelho, a Brazilian author, born in Rio de Janeiro in 1947 is one of the world's top five bestselling authors, says Newsweek International. He is the recipient of illustrious international awards, amid them the Crystal Award by the World Economic Forum. Coelho novels echo the soul of ordinary people who put themselves in exceptional situations to nurture their inner selves, using unpretentious, unadorned prose. "I try to be direct without being shallow," he says¹. The Alchemist is one of the biggest influential literacy phenomena of 20th century, published in 1988, translated in 67 different languages, sold more than 100 million copies, winning the Guinness World Record² for the most translated book by the living author.

This research paper cynosure on how the central character Santiago accomplishes the Maslow theory of Hierarchy of Needs. The Alchemist novel is conscientious and precisely analysed using the theory by Abraham Harold Maslow - Hierarchy of Human Need. This theory is classified in to five subsidiary sets of need. The needs are Physiological Needs, Safety Needs, Love and Belongingness Need, Esteem Needs and Self –Actualization. These needs are portrayed often in the form of Pyramid with Physiological Need – the most indispensable and fundamental need at bottom and Self – Actualization at pinnacle of the Pyramid. The Physiological needs comprise physical requirement for Human survival. The Safety Needs consist of personal, financial, health and well –being, Safety against War/accidents. The third Needs deal with friends, Intimacy and family. The fourth need – Esteem needs include Self-esteem and Self respect. The last needs i.e. Self –Actualization refer to what a person's full potential is and the realization of that potential.

The first level of Hierarchy of Needs – Physiological Needs can be effortlessly satisfied by Santiago. In the other remaining level, he get the challenge in accomplish the needs because of so many threats he had. Santiago the Shepherd, spirituality - the kind of spirituality that people can use in their day-to-day lives makes him travel through the process of life. So he can fulfil the needs. As a conclusion, the shepherd can fulfil all the needs from the lowest to highest level.

The Alchemist apprise about Santiago, the main character that tries to reach his dreams, the treasure and the Woman that he loved. For the sake of accomplish his dreams, he must pursue the signs and understand the language of the world. In his journey, Santiago has the needs which must be fulfilled in hierarchy viewed to Maslow's theory.

a. The First Level: Santiago Physiological Needs.

Santiago a young Andalusia, belongs from a farmer family, his parent's desires that he should become a priest, but he resisted their inclination and instead preferred to be a shepherd as he would have an opportunity to travel around the world. He attended a seminary until the age of sixteen. He studied Latin, Spanish and theology. Infact his education continued, as he travelled more and more and discovered new knowledge. The Physiological need of Santiago was not a piece of a cake, infact he faces hurdle in pleasing his Physiological Needs. This can be reflected from the Novel that how he accomplishes his Physiological need of hunger, drink and sleep. In the Novel, Santiago gets his meal from the market that he went as a shepherd to satisfy his hunger.

...He went to the market for something to eat, he traded his book for one that was thicker, and he found a bench in the plaza where he could sample the new wine he had bought.

(Coelho 2013, 14)

In the journey to uncover treasure, he faces intricacy in getting wine as wine was forbidden in that area. He decides to take tea, but it tasted sour to him. Auspiciously, he has some wine left in his travelling bag.

..... The owner of the bar approached him and the boy pointed to the drink that was served at the next table. It turned out to be bitter tea. The boy preferred wine. (Coelho 2013, 32)

Santiago gold was robbed by his new friend. It became complicated for him to execute his physiological need without money. He tries to hunt for a job and get it in a gift shop.

"I can clean up those glasses in the window, if you want" said the boy.

“the way they look now, nobody is going to want to buy them”

The man looked at him without responding.

“In exchange, you could give me something to eat.” (Coelho 2013, 43)

Santiago at all times sleeps with his sheep till the time he was a shepered in order to save them. He can fulfil the need whenever he wants. At one time, he decides to sleep in an abandoned church along with his sheep.

He decided to spend the night there. He saw to it that all the sheep entered through the ruined gate, and then laid some planks across it to prevent the flock from wandering away during the night. (Coelho 2013, 3)

Sometimes, Santiago doesn't want to carry out his physiological need, such as when in the oasis he felt sleepy but avoided due to curiosity to know the sign that desert give to him.

.....He felt sleepy, in the heart he wanted remain to awake, but he also wanted to sleep. “I am learning the language of the world and everything in the world is beginning to make sense to me.....Even the flight of the hawks,” he said to himself.

(Coelho 2013, 95)

From the above justification, it is clearly visible that Santiago can accomplish his physiological need as stated by Maslow. Hence, physiological needs are fulfilled.

b. The Second Level: Safety Needs.

When Physiological needs are fulfilled, then individual's safety needs take priority and govern behaviour. In the same manner, Santiago feels the need of Safety – security of body, stability, freedom from fear, tendency, protection, decency, from anxiety and chaos, strength in protector and so on.

In the novel, The Alchemist Santiago always feels the need of safety due to threat of danger. On his stay in oasis, he tells the chieftains that there will be war as per the omens and sign revealed to him by Hawk to which the chief oppose as oasis is a neutral ground. If war happened, he will receive piece of gold on every ten dead men and if in case war didn't happen then he will be killed.

“But arms cannot be drawn unless they also go in to battle. Arms are as capricious as the desert, and, if they are not used, the next time they might not function.If at least one of them hasn't been used by the end of the day tomorrow, one will be used on you.”

(Coelho 2013, 103)

Interpretation of Hawk flight by Santiago gets threats not only from the chieftain of Oasis but also from those, who were unknown to him such as strange horseman. Santiago pretends not to be frightened but feels scared within his heart. He leaves everything on his destiny.

“The stranger withdrew the sword from the boy’s forehead, and the boy felt immensely relieved .But he still couldn’t flee.” (Coelho 2013, 106)

Santiago tries hard to accomplish his safety needs at any cost, trying to save something, what he has, his heart demanding to pursue his mind. He feels frightened in reaching his dream.

“That make sense,” the alchemist answered. “Naturally it’s afraid that, in pursuing your dream, you might lose everything you’ve won.” (Coelho 2013, 123)

“My heart is afraid that it will have to suffer.” The boy told the alchemist.(Coelho 2013, 124)

Alchemist being on his side made him fear also of his safety needs. Santiago still gets threat. On one instance, they were taken to nearby military camp, where the alchemist tells the chief, that this boy can transform himself into in wind. But the chief need validation, this made Santiago unsecured, if he didn’t change in wind, then it will be his last day.

The boy was shaking with, but the alchemist helped him out of the Tent.

“Don’t let them see that you’re afraid,” the alchemist said. “They are brave men, and they despise cowards.” (Coelho 2013, 134)

The alchemist left him, as the treasure was near; persistent his journey approaching his treasure unless and until he found his treasure, facing threat at every step.

Because he was terrified, the boy didn’t answer. He had found where his treasure was, and was frightened at what might happen. (Coelho 2013, 154)

From the above explanation, it is clear that the main character can fulfil his safety needs under any circumstance.

c. The third level: Love and Belongingness Needs.

After physiological and safety needs are fulfilled, the third level of human needs is interpersonal and involves feelings of belongingness. According to Maslow, humans need to experience a sense of belonging and acceptance among their social groups, regardless whether these groups are large or small. Absence of friends, or a sweetheart, or a wife or children makes human feel keenly.

Santiago being a human being needs friends and sweetheart to fulfil the needs of love and belongingness. Being a shepherd, he has many friends in different places, which he makes while travelling.

The sheep were at the gates of the city, in a stable that belonged to a friend. The boy knew a lot of people in the city. That was what made travelling appeal to him – he always made new friends. (Coelho 2013, 15)

He make new friend at new places in order to fulfil his physiological needs, buying selling the wool of the sheep to another shepherd or merchant.

“I need to sell some wool,” (Coelho 2013, 5)

Sexual Intimacy was also an important in Santiago life besides friendship. In his dream, he knows the girl that will be his wife. He effortlessly gets connected to merchant daughter and feels something with her. He narrates his feeling which he never experienced – a desire to live in one place forever with a girl with the raven hair. But the merchant would not like this proposal, as he is a shepherd, his search for his affectionate continues.

At Oasis, he met a girl Fatima, which according to him will be her wife.

...At that moment, it seemed to him that time stood still, and the soul of the world surged within him. When he looked into her dark eyes, and saw that her lips were poised between a laugh and silence, he learned the most important part of the language that all the world spoke – the language that everyone on earth was capable of understanding in their heart. It was love. (Coelho 2013, 88)

He loved her without knowing her name; he found his love from desert – a place which he didn't wanted to travel. He just followed his heart to fulfil his affectionate. He believed that she will give him all the happiness of the world and will discover every treasure that he has ever dreamt of.

.....one day in Tarifa the levanter had bought to him the perfume of that woman, and realizing that he had loved her before he even knew she existed. He knew that his love for her would enable him to discover every treasure in the world. (Coelho 2013, 90)

In order to fulfil his sexual intimacy, he proposes her to be his wife; he did this at the second meeting. It is narrated

“I came to tell you just one thing,” the boy said. “I want you to be my wife. I love you.” (Coelho 2013, 91)

From the above analysis, it can be concluded that love and belongingness need of the main character were fulfilled. At the first, he thought the merchant daughter is his dream wife but he was wronged, he dreamt about oasis where he found his Fatima – desert girl. He always thought that she will wait for him forever.

“Some do come back. And then the other women are happy because they believe that their men may one day return, as well. I used to look at these women and envy them their happiness. Now, I too will be one of the women who wait.” (Coelho 2013, 94)

d. The Fourth Level: Self Esteem Needs.

All humans have a need to feel respected; this includes the need to have self-esteem and self-respect. Esteem presents the typical human desire to be accepted and valued by others. Satisfaction of this level leads to feeling of self confidence, worth, strength, capability and adequacy, of being necessary and useful in this world.

The quality of Self respect was infused in Santiago by his father, that he has to respect elder person, this can be visible, when he had a meeting with King of Salem.

The boy was tempted to be rude, and moved to another bench, but his father had taught him to be respectful of the elderly. So he held out the book to the man for two reasons: first, that he, himself, wasn't sure how to pronounce the title; and second, that if the old man didn't know how to read, he would probably feel ashamed and decide of his own accord to change benches. (Coelho 2013, 16)

The chief of the Oasis, on hearing his interpretation of the sign, he told that if his prophecy is not fulfilled than Santiago will be killed or vice versa. His prophecy got fulfilled, the chief appreciated him.

The tribal chieftain called for the boy, and presented him with fifty pieces of Gold. He repeated his story, and asked the boy to become the counsellor of the oasis. (Coelho 2015, 108)

He refuses to accept the offer of counsellor and continues his journey to find the treasure. Santiago has indeed fulfilled his need of getting appreciation and self respect as an aspect of Self Esteem.

e. The Fifth Level: Self – Actualization Needs.

"What a man can be, he must be."³ This quotation forms the basis of the perceived need for self-actualization. This level of need refers to what a person's full potential is and the realization of that potential. For example a shepherd must protect and understand his sheep, if

he is ultimately at peace with himself. This is called Self Actualization – tendency to become actualised in what he is potentially ⁴.

Santiago could actualize himself. The process of self actualisation started from being a shepherd till he met Alchemist. He has fulfilled the Self Actualisation need of finding the treasure i.e. women and treasure that he dreams of.

The boy smiled, and continued digging. Half an hour later, his shovel hit something solid. An hour later, he had before him a chest of Spanish gold coins. There were also precious stones, gold masks adorned with red and white feather, and stones statues embedded with jewels.

The boy took out Urim and Thummin from his bag. He has used the two stones only once, one morning when he was at marketplace. His life and his path had always provided him with enough omens. (Coelho 2013, epilogue)

The need of self –actualization was full filled at the time he decided to be a shepered. Thus, Santiago has fulfilled the fifth and the last level of Maslow law of hierarchy.

From the above analysis, it can be seen that Alchemist is a novel which tell us about dream and human needs. Santiago’s dream is the sign of his inspiration, the sign to find his hidden treasure in the Pyramids of Egypt which helps him to discover his own personality and to find love and passion. On the other hand, Human needs can be fulfilled, it depend upon the person how much hard work he does to full fill his needs. For example planting good trees we expect sweet and delicious fruits. If we do not pour water regularly, the plant will not grow well and consequently, it will yield no fruit. Without hard work nothing grows, but weeds. No matter what happens Santiago remain steadfast search for treasure despite faced the difficulties. Thus, Santiago – main character in the Alchemist has fulfilled all the level of Maslow law of hierarchy.

In the Last,

Dreams are made to be followed.

Life is meant to be lived.

Some books are meant to be read,

Loved and passed on.

The Alchemist is one of those books.

References

1. <http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/print/20030428/24872-the-alchemy-of-success.html>
2. <http://www.ibna.ir/en/doc/report/93304/paulo-coelho-s-opinions-reviewed>
3. <http://www.pursuit-of-happiness.org/history-of-happiness/abraham-maslow/>
4. <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+10>
5. Coelho, Paulo. *The Alchemist*. London: Harper Collins, 2013. Print
6. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maslow%27s_hierarchy_of_needs