

**Review**

# **Fears, Defenses, And Related Core Issues Of Santiago, A Major Character In Paulo Coelho's Novel 'The Alchemist': A Psychoanalytic Study**

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The purpose of this study was to illustrate fears, defenses and core issues of Santiago, a major character in Paulo Coelho's novel "The Alchemist", the world best-seller novel. The novel consists of two parts. The character analysis of Santiago was made only on the behalf of the first part of the novel. The character analysis was made in the light of Sigmund Freud's theory of Psychoanalysis. The main aim of analyzing Santiago's character was to know that how fears of intimacy, abandonment, betrayal and low self-esteem worked as defenses as well as became the core issues for him. His intimacy with parents, sheep and the girl was main reason of fears. Thus, the first part of the novel revolves around the Santiago's love affair with the merchant's daughter and his dilemma to coup up with these issues. While applying the Freudian psychoanalytic theory on the character analysis of Santiago, it was explicit that the repressed painful experiences remained repressed unless they were activated via obsession but they never could be eliminated. The researcher had used the descriptive method to analyze this data and had followed APA style.

**Key Terms:** Fears, defenses, psychoanalysis, and obsession

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Paulo Coelho is one of the postmodern alive lyricists and novelists. He was born on august 24, 1947, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. He is known for his the best novel 'The Alchemist', which he wrote in 1988, in Portuguese, later was translated into many foreign languages. According to

the New York Times, as of 2015, 200 million copies have been sold throughout the world and have been translated into 80 languages. This novel has been included in Guinness World Records for its translations into various languages. The novel is predicament of the psychological

processes. The plot of novel consists of the story of a wondering boy Santiago who sets his journey from Spain to Pyramids of Egypt in search of a treasure that he dreams about. He remains persistent throughout his journey and endures torturing pains. He becomes victorious due to his decision making and dispelling the fear of loss one of the obstacles in the progress of human beings on this planet. The novel consists of two parts and each part is dominated by wondering boy Santiago who is psychologically disturbed due to unforgettable sorrows.

Santiago is the main protagonist in the novel. He is grown up and will decide what he has to do. He follows his own path. His separation from his parents has left adverse effect on his mind. Being emotionally attached with parents he could hardly sustain separation. For redressing his sorrows he keeps attachment with the daughter of merchant in the first part of the novel and with Fatima in the second part of the novel. In the first part of the novel he comes across several psychological upsets. Accomplishing to the best of Freudian psychoanalysis concepts of fears, defenses and core issues, Santiago gets scared of fears. His intimacy with girl leads him to fears. The first fear on the way is the fear of intimacy, resulted his diversion from the main target. This fear of intimacy leads to the fear of abandonment as he feels he will be hurt being close to the girl. His fear of betrayal is the outcome of persistent ignorance from the side of the girl. His fear of low self-esteem is displayed when he considers himself inferior to the bakers on the matter of marrying the girl. These fears also work as defenses at the same time. Due to these fears, he tries to keep himself at emotional distance from the girl. Thus, Santiago's character is grabbed in psychological stresses. His core issue is obsession. After a long pondering over the ignorance of the girl, Santiago coming out of dilemma, finally decides to give up thinking of the girl. He tries to overcome the issues but unconsciously is encircled by them. Thus, in the first part of the novel Santiago succeeds in repressing, the repressed pains.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

While keeping in view the Freudian concept of a psychoanalytic study of human behavior, according to Tyson (2006) that psychoanalytic study helps to understand the behavior and attitude of characters in literary texts that actually represent to human beings in general. The main purpose of psychoanalysis of characters is to seek help that can resolve our psychological problems while dealing with destructive behavior of persons (Tyson, 2006,p.12).

While quoting to Sigmund Freud (1856 – 1939), Tyson (2006), continues to say that we human beings encounter with enumerable painful experiences including excessive emotions, fears, guilt and conflicts

unconsciously which we do not want to get to be overwhelmed. Those psychological painful experiences are to be tackled with strong defenses in the form of response to fears (Tyson, 2006, p.12-15).

Defenses are the systematic processes, which help to hold back the repressed feelings in order to avoid knowingly, which otherwise cannot be handled consciously. Defenses like regression, selective perception, selective memory, denial, avoidance, displacement and projection play a key role in dealing with human behavior. Regression is one of the chief defenses that help to return to normal state from any present worries (Tyson 2006, p.15).

According to Tyson (2006), there are many psychological experiences which also can be helpful defenses such as fear of intimacy, fear of abandonment, fear of betrayal, low self esteem, insecure or instable sense of self and oedipal fixation. These defenses provide a secure sense via keeping oneself at emotional distance from beloved ones (Tyson, 2006, p.16). These psychological defenses can be protective for one, to avoid going closer to loved ones, by keeping engaged with other friends and families (Tyson, 2006,p.16). It is also possible that these defenses can be broken momentarily and this happens when one feels anxiety which in result reveals core issues (Tyson, 2006, p.16).

Fear of intimacy is a defense, resulted in powerful feelings that closeness with someone can devastate, so it is better to keep emotionally away from loved ones all the time. But, simultaneously, this defense becomes a core issue when it takes place persistently. Fear of abandonment is a defense, becomes a core issue when one feels the fear of being desert by someone either physically or emotionally. Fear of betrayal is a defense, becomes a core issue when one excessively feels that someone will mistrust, backbite and cheat. Low self esteem is a defense, becomes a core issue when one falls in inferiority complex being ignorant. Insecure sense of self is a defense, becomes a core issue when one feels inability to tolerate the influence of others. Oedipal fixation is a defense, becomes a core issue when there is a dysfunctional attachment with parents of opposite sex (Tyson, 2006, p.16-17).

Most importantly, above mentioned core issues appear alone or in combination. The one begets the other. Thus, these core issues remain attached with us throughout life and cause our destructive behaviour about which we are unknown and their link is with anxiety (Tyson, 2006, P.17).

Asl (2014), in his article "The Shadow of Freudian Core Issue on Wuthering Heights" says that Freud argues that the one way to obtain some control over those core issues and to exorcise the pain is by repeatedly echoing what was traumatic and unpleasurable. Further carrying the Freudian concept of core issues, Asl (2014) is of the opinion that these core issues are interconnected to one

another. One core issue leads to another and thus, expands in combination. Each of these core issues can act as a defense and can keep an individual isolated.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

One of the chief aspects of human behavior, discussed in Coelho's novel 'The Alchemist', is the romantic relationship, in the form of fear of intimacy, abandonment and low self-esteem that gives psychological implications. This novel is divided into two parts, in each part, the protagonist Santiago falls in love with a girl i.e. in the first part he falls in love with the daughter of merchant and in the second part falls in love with Fatima, a girl resided in the desert. Santiago's objection of his parents' desire to be the priest at seminary and his choice to be the shepherd is a conflict between denial and regression which later is overwhelmed by defenses in the form of active reversal.

Santiago's journey starts with a recurrent dream which he dreams about the treasure in Pyramids of Egypt, under the sycamore tree, beside the broken church at Andalusia. He sets off his journey from Andalusia (Spain) to Pyramids of Egypt with his sheep that he buys. He, being psychologically distressed by denial of the choice of his parents, is now, somehow, seems to be contented with the psychological defenses of his desire to achieve his mission. His abandonment of his parents' intimacy again leads to another intimacy when he falls in love with a girl. The one who is emotionally detached from someone again needs to have someone else to get attached.

Santiago, each year goes to nearby city Tarifa along with sheep to sell the wool of sheep to a textile merchant. He falls in love with the girl of merchant and this version of the story adds a good deal of revealing a psychological behavior that is responsible for the progress of the story interestingly. The boy now has got the opportunity to forget the pain of separation from his parents, being emotionally attached with the girl. This part of the novel progresses with the boy's fear of intimacy, the unconscious tradition that binds him emotionally to other human beings and leads him to the emotional distraction, in the form of drama of dysfunctional love.

For comprehending the concept of fear of intimacy and related core issues let us analyze Santiago's affair with the girl of merchant. It is unclear that when the boy first time met with the girl but the story is shown progressing with the preparation of boy for driving his sheep towards Tarifa where the girl dwells. The boy used to go each year to sell the wool to the merchant likewise this time he prepares to go. While driving the sheep the boy talks to the sheep about the girl, it portrays the boy's intimation with the girl. The boy remains anxious to wait for the time of his departure to the city. His, this anxiety was merely

for meeting the girl that made him uneasy. Girl's black hair and Moorish eyes pulled his heart out of his control.

Santiago's affair with the girl topples up. He tells very interesting stories regarding his travel and rearing of sheep in order to draw her attention towards him. He does each year as he may have closeness with the girl but each time he feels failure of convincing the girl. In the first meeting with the girl he passes two hours. He feels so anxious that he wishes that day may not fade very soon and girl's father may remain busy in his work as he may have more time with the girl.

"He recognized that he was feeling something he had never experienced before; the desire to live in one place forever, with the girl, with the raven hair, his days would never be the same again."  
(as quoted in *The Alchemist*, 1993, p.6)

Santiago's this desire is a psychological need because he is now grown up and wants to quit his mental pains of his denial of his parents' proposals. The girl was booty for him to shade off his past painful experiences but meantime his worries are double when girl's father appears and asks him to come the next year. This separation from girl creates a fear in boy because his instincts are stimulated emotionally. He is now left with the intimacy. However, the relationship between the girl and Santiago at this stage suggests psychological motives that drive in the mind of Santiago who is now intensely anxious to have closeness with the girl. The boy cannot wait for the next year as he his emotions run high and most importantly he is fearful losing the girl because the girl has not still responded according to the boy's desire. She does not love as the boy does.

Santiago is now under emotional drive that leads him towards distraction of loneliness. It is his compulsion to pursue the girl because he is now at the stage where he cannot see the girl out of his sight. He is justified to assess that if she wasn't with him, she might forget him and might pursue to someone else.

"He was excited, and at the same time uneasy; may be the girl had already forgotten him. Lots of shepherds passed through, selling their wool."  
(as quoted in *The Alchemist*, 1993, p.6)

The boy is psychologically in doubtful conditions that he may lose the girl. Someone else may resolve the girl from him. Now his fear of intimacy gets start. He thinks of losing the girl that he does not want at this stage. The reason of his fear is shepherds because they also sell the wool and it may happen some of them attract the girl. He assumes that if he loses the girl he will be distressed drastically, which actually is the result of girl's ignoring of the boy. He, even, does not want the girl to forget him. She never shows her sentiments. His obsessed feelings

are resulted in his changed attitude towards the girl. For his, this psychological distress he needs a defense which can escape him in a safer position. For time being, he consoles by saying that;

“It doesn’t matter”, he said to his sheep. “I know other girls in other places”. (as quoted in *The Alchemist*, 1993, p.6)

It is clear that fear of intimacy with others is actually outcome of fear of intimacy with oneself. One cannot ignore close interpersonal relationship consciously but rather it becomes a painful psychological part of one’s life. Santiago has close intimacy with the girl, psychologically, it is painful for him to ignore her but the fear that arouses in his mind is fear of separation from the girl, the psychological wounds overcome his mind and he tries to avoid. At this stage the defense of fear of intimacy arises. He has constituted that if she ignores him he will see for other girls because there are many other girls in other places. This idea is merely to repress the conflict of separation.

“But in his heart he knew that it did matter. And he knew that shepherd, like seaman and like traveling salesman always found a town where there was someone who could make them forget the joys of carefree wondering”. (as quoted in *The Alchemist*, 1993, p.6)

Consciously he has settled the issue that it is no matter but actually it has become now the core issue for him unconsciously. Another defense appears when he considers himself only the shepherds who always travel and find soothing places where they can shake off their tiredness. The boy’s psychological needs seem to be unfulfilled that he wants to have the love of a woman. For avoiding this painful experience he can only ignore the girl consciously. But, his that ignorance leads him towards low self esteem, the result of fear of intimacy. Meantime, he defends his mental distress with the recurrent dream that he dreams about the treasure. He goes to a gypsy woman, an interpreter of dream in Tarifa and represses the pain of intimacy with the girl.

The boy cannot forget the girl. Unconsciously, the memory revolves around the meetings with the girl because regression is the active reversal. The boy tries hard to break up the thinking momentarily but is infuriated again and again. The reminiscences cannot go off whenever he is alone. It is apparent when he sits on the bench alone, in Tarifa, his memory is fed up with the past meetings with girl. Though, he is interrupted by a magical character Melchizedek, he goes on remembering the girl. He tries to avoid the old man as he may pass with the girl more in utopian world. The boy imagines that he is shearing the sheep before the girl and making her realize

that it is the hardest business in the world. His every effort, even, in imagination is to convince the girl and to win the heart but each time he is utterly failure. His, this complete failure leads him to psychologically devastation. In order to relieve the psychological pains the boy engages with old man in unwilling talk and gets convinced with the illuminating magical power of the old. Now, the boy, for time being period is in a secure world of forgetfulness.

Psychologically, one may escape from the past memories, in order to redress his grievances but simultaneously, one may get entrapped more in those pains. The boy while talking with Melchizedek is now relaxed and easy but his ease is converted into anxiety when Melchizedek tells him that how people want their daughters to marry with bakers and other prosperous persons because according to Melchizedek they are more important persons than shepherds. The boy is shocked with this who short while ago had forgotten the girl. The boy’s fear of intimacy now is changed into the fear of low self-esteem.

He, now, is caught with another core issue of psychology that devastates his psychological behavior. The boy now is sure that his only chance of marrying with girl is off because he is inferior to bakers. The merchant will marry his daughter with baker for that he is sure there is a baker in the city.

“The boy felt a pang in his heart, thinking about the merchant’s daughter. There was surely a baker in her town.” (as quoted in *The Alchemist*, 1993, p.24)

The boy is now struck with class difference and his low self-esteem, like fear of intimacy, is portrayed in his disappointment. His failure of winning the girl suggests that his conscious choice to quit thinking about her is the result of psychological emotions. Now, he feels again insecure. He says;

“Sometimes, it’s better to leave things as they are, he thought to himself, and decided to say nothing.” (as quoted in *The Alchemist*, 1993, p.26)

The boy’s ego is overwhelmed with the idea that he will no more be emotionally attached with girl and will rather care of the sheep who understand him. Actually, it is a defense that arouses in the result of psychological pains. It seems that he is psychologically insulted and for that he seeks consolation that he finds in his engagement with the sheep. His, this repression as defense manipulates that his psychological behavior is reversed. It also implies that there is a fair deal of painful issues avoidance. Santiago is committed to avoid further intimacy with the girl, as a defense.

Santiago's this fear of low self-esteem leads to the fear of abandonment. He, now, realizes that his further emotional attachment with the girl will drag him down into the mire; it is better to avoid her. His years of his devotions and desires to make the girl, the part of his life are gone momentarily. For him, now onwards, girl is no more important. The boy after dilemma decides;

"Here I am between my flock and my treasure, the boy thought. He had to choose between something he had become accustomed to and something he wanted to have. There was also the merchant's daughter, but she wasn't as important as his flock, because she did not depend on him. May be she didn't even remember him." (as quoted in *The Alchemist*, 1993, p.28)

Santiago's decision to disintegrate from the relationship is the result of his digressive life with his parents and the girl. Due to uncountable psychological wounds from which he suffered in his life, he is regretting to avoid his emotional attachment as a defense, with his parents and the people and the girl. From psychological point of view, Santiago's rejection of parents' choice and the girl is also a form of denial, a psychological defense to help him repress the memory of his past life. As the boy says;

"I left my father, my mother, and the town castle behind. They have gotten used to my being away and so have I. The sheep will get used to my not being there, too, the boy thought." (as quoted in *The Alchemist*, 1993, p.29)

Santiago is a character who suffers from a psychological upsets but same time overcomes those via a strong repressive defense. He, being, in dilemmas resolves to shade worries. His, this choice is, indeed, escape from psychological traumas.

"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." (as quoted in *The Alchemist*, 1993, p.29)

## FINDINGS

Santiago is a character who is psychologically disturbed. His intimacy with parents is broken when he resists with them on the choice of the work. His separation from parents forced him to be emotionally attached with the girl thus, one fear of intimacy leads to another fear of intimacy. His emotional attachment with the daughter of merchant is actually a repression of psychological

wounds that he received in the form of separation from the parents. His continuous meetings with the girl again contribute to the fear of intimacy. Fear of intimacy leads to the fear of abandonment when he is ignored by the girl. His ideology about the ignorance leads him to another fear that is the fear of betrayal that ultimately leads to the fear of low self esteem when he thinks that the merchant will marry his daughter to the baker because the shepherds are inferior to the bakers. He strives to handle those fears with the defenses. Fear of intimacy itself becomes a defense for him when he feels that there is no use of going closer to the girl because she does not respond therefore, it is better to see for another girl somewhere else. Fear of abandonment works as a defense for him when he resolves that attachment with her is going to divert him from his goal; therefore, she is going to desert him. It is better to pursue the dream instead of hanging on the love with the girl. Fear of betrayal works as a defense when he feels that the girl cannot be trusted because she can marry with any other shepherd because there are many shepherds who sell the wool. She easily can give her consent for any shepherd. Therefore it is better not to think of marrying her. Fear of low self esteem also works as a defense for him when he feels that no proper attention is given to him by the girl. He feels inferior to the bakers. The girl certainly will marry to the baker than the shepherd because the bakers are superior to the shepherds. Therefore, it is better to avoid the relationships because there will be no result of such relationships. These fears become the core issues for him when he shows his inability to tackle them and becomes indecisive. These core issues become responsible for his destructive behavior which is a psychological problem.

## CONCLUSION

Santiago's obsession is resolved with a welcome distraction due to the fears of intimacy, abandonment, betrayal and low self esteem. He now does not need to have the company with the girl, even, to ponder over this matter. Thus, Santiago's decision of giving up the recurrent thinking about the girl plays a key role as a defense against to fears. If his repressing force were not powerful then he would not have defended against it. Indeed, it is the continuous unconscious move for gaining a treasure that keeps him safe from the psychological devastation. As long as he had remained psychologically engaged with the girl he would have been emotionally attached and would have been terribly devastated. Santiago's desire to pursue the dream resulted from his unhappy life with his parents and the girl. Whatever psychological crisis Santiago suffered in his past life, they were enough to get him rejected emotional relationship

with the girl. Thus, from a psychoanalytic perspective, Santiago leads his previous life based on nothingness, and now he considers that everything in the past was a helping part to go him ahead. It is a form of denial, a psychological defense to help him repress the memory of his past. The merchant's daughter is not only the girl but an emblem of the emotional insulation he unconsciously desires. The proper way to have the emotional insulation one needs to avoid intimacy with others. It is sure that there cannot be intimacy with an ideal. Though, Santiago's intimacy with the merchant's daughter was one sided and was accessed when he went to sell the wool but his that intimacy and obsession protected him from intimacy with other girls. Whatever, Santiago feels is always is a means of feeling the effects of else, something haunting deeply that he wants to keep repressed. It is obvious that the first part of the novel illuminates, love is the stage where our all unresolved psychological wounds are at work. The repetitive destructive behaviour of Santiago portrays that an unresolved psychological pains are driven from the unconscious.

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