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THE REPRESENTATION OF SELF-DISCOVERY IN ALEPH BY PAULO COELHO

Abstract. This article explores the representation of self-discovery in Paulo Coelho's novel Aleph through a qualitative literary analysis supported by secondary scholarly sources. The study examines how self-discovery is portrayed not as a single moment of realization but as a continuous spiritual, emotional, and psychological process shaped by memory, guilt, time, relationships, and healing. The research focuses on the narrator's journey as a reflection of inner transformation that involves confronting past experiences, overcoming emotional wounds, and developing spiritual awareness. The methodology is based on close textual analysis of selected passages from the novel and the interpretation of five academic articles that address postmodern spirituality, reincarnation, psychobiographical elements, emotional healing, and philosophical perspectives on time and identity. These sources provide a theoretical framework for understanding how Coelho constructs the narrator's journey of self-discovery across multiple dimensions. The findings of the study identify five major aspects of self-discovery in Aleph: struggle and imperfection, the necessity of releasing the past, emotional healing, vulnerability within relationships, and active spiritual engagement. Together, these dimensions demonstrate that self-discovery in the novel requires conscious effort rather than passive waiting, and that personal growth emerges through reflection, acceptance, and openness to change.This study contributes to literary and spiritual studies by highlighting how Aleph presents self-discovery as a holistic and dynamic process that integrates emotional, psychological, and spiritual development. It also suggests that Coelho's narrative encourages readers to reflect on their own processes of growth, healing, and self-understanding.

Key words: Self-discovery, Paulo Coelho, Aleph, spirituality, memory, emotional healing, identity, time, reincarnation, personal growth, literary analysis, psychobiographical criticism, postmodern spirituality.

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PAULO KOELHONING ALEPH ROMANIDA O'ZLIKNI ANGLASHNING TASVIRLANISHI

Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqolada Paulo Koeloning Aleph romanida o‘zini anglash (self-discovery) mavzusining qanday tasvirlanganligi ikkilamchi ilmiy manbalarga asoslangan sifatli adabiy tahlil orqali o‘rganiladi. Tadqiqotda o‘zini anglash bir martalik anglash emas, balki xotira, aybdorlik hissi, vaqt, munosabatlar va ruhiy shifo bilan bog‘liq bo‘lgan uzluksiz ruhiy, hissiy va psixologik jarayon sifatida talqin qilinadi. Tadqiqot markazida qahramonning ichki o‘zgarishi, ya’ni o‘tmish bilan yuzlashish, hissiy jarohatlarni davolash va ruhiy ongni rivojlantirish jarayoni

turadi.Metodologiya romandagi tanlangan parchalarni yaqin matn tahlili asosida o‘rganish va postmodern ruhiyat, reenkarnatsiya, psixobiografik yondashuv, hissiy shifo hamda vaqt va shaxsiyatga oid falsafiy qarashlarni yorituvchi beshta ilmiy maqolani tahlil qilishga asoslanadi. Ushbu manbalar Koelo asarida o‘zini anglash qanday ko‘p qirrali jarayon sifatida qurilganini tushunishga yordam beradi.Tadqiqot natijalari Aleph romanida o‘zini anglashning besh asosiy jihatini aniqlaydi: kurash va nomukammallik, o‘tmishni qo‘yib yuborish zarurati, hissiy shifo, munosabatlarda ochiqlik va faol ruhiy izlanish. Ushbu jihatlar shuni ko‘rsatadiki, o‘zini anglash vaqt o‘tishi bilan avtomatik yuz bermaydi, balki ongli harakat, tafakkur va ichki ochiqlikni talab qiladi. Mazkur tadqiqot adabiyotshunoslik va ruhiy tadqiqotlar sohasiga hissa qo‘shib, Aleph romanida o‘zini anglash insonning hissiy, ruhiy va psixologik rivojlanishini birlashtirgan murakkab jarayon sifatida tasvirlanganini ko‘rsatadi. Shuningdek, asar o‘quvchini o‘z shaxsiy o‘sish va shifo jarayonlari haqida mulohaza yuritishga undaydi.

Kalit so’zlar: O’zlikni anglash , ruhiyat , xotiralar, lahza , qayta tirilish , shaxsiy o’sish,hissiy shifo,ma’naviyat, adabiy tahlil, psixologik tanqid,zamonaviy ruhiyat, emotsional tuzalish.

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ПРЕДСТАВЛЕНИЕ САМОПОЗНАНИЯ В «АЛЕФЕ» ПАУЛО КОЭЛЬО

Аннотация. В данной статье рассматривается репрезентация самопознания в романе Пауло Коэльо Aleph на основе качественного литературного анализа и вторичных научных источников. Самопознание интерпретируется не как единичный акт осознания, а как непрерывный духовный, эмоциональный и психологический процесс, связанный с памятью, чувством вины, временем, межличностными отношениями и исцелением. В центре исследования находится внутреннее преобразование героя, включающее осмысление прошлого опыта, преодоление эмоциональных травм и развитие духовного сознания. Методология исследования основана на близком текстуальном анализе отдельных фрагментов романа и интерпретации пяти научных статей, посвящённых постмодернистской духовности, реинкарнации, психобиографическому подходу, эмоциональному исцелению и философским концепциям времени и идентичности. Эти источники формируют теоретическую основу для понимания того, как Коэльо конструирует процесс самопознания в своём произведении. Результаты исследования выявляют пять ключевых аспектов самопознания в романе Aleph: борьба и несовершенство, необходимость освобождения от прошлого, эмоциональное исцеление, уязвимость в отношениях и активное духовное участие. Эти элементы показывают, что самопознание требует осознанных усилий, а не пассивного ожидания, и что личностный рост происходит через размышление, принятие и открытость изменениям. Исследование вносит вклад в литературоведение и духовные исследования, демонстрируя, что в романе Aleph самопознание представлено как целостный и динамичный процесс, объединяющий эмоциональное, психологическое и духовное развитие. Оно также побуждает читателя задуматься о собственном пути личностного роста и исцеления.

Ключевые слова: Самопознание; Пауло Коэльо; Aleph; духовность; эмоциональное исцеление; память; идентичность; время; уязвимость; личностный рост; литературный анализ.

INTRODUCTION

The essay analyzes the novel called Aleph written by Paulo Coelho through the concept of self-discovery, highlighting that the narrator’s own existential crisis and tries to understand his past lives, relationships, and inner desires. Paulo

Coelho's Aleph is a really interesting novel that deals with themes of spirituality, personal growth, the research for meaning in life and self-discovery. The narrator Paulo, the protagonist, who is feeling stagnation in his life, both spiritually and creatively, tells his story. In order to escape from his stagnation, he set off on a journey along the Trans-Siberian Railway, where he meets Hilal, a woman from his past life. At the heart of the novel is the idea of the Aleph—a mystical place where all time and space come together. This concept helps Paulo see the connections between all things and understand the deeper meaning behind his experiences. The novel combines spiritual ideas with philosophical reflections, encouraging readers to think about their own lives and the ways in which everything is connected.

The essay consists of 4 main sections: a literature review, methodology, textual analysis, and conclusion. Besides that a number of scholar's opinions and viewpoints related to self-discovery will be analysed in this literary review part of the essay.

To make the understanding of this theme more clear, analysis of five articles provide various insights into which the novel explores self-discovery. This study aims to analyze how self-discovery is represented in Paulo Coelho's Aleph as a spiritual, emotional, and psychological process. It seeks to answer the following research question: How does Coelho portray self-discovery as a process of confronting the past, healing emotional wounds, developing vulnerability, and engaging in spiritual growth? Through close textual analysis and the use of secondary scholarly sources, the study explores how these elements shape the narrator's transformation. Gem Cherian in his article called "Conquering One's Own Kingdom: Analyzing the Postmodern Spiritual Condition in Paulo Coelho's Aleph" explores the postmodern spiritual condition reflected in Aleph. She argues that the protagonist's search for self-discovery is set against the background of a fragmented, postmodern world where traditional spiritual practices and beliefs are uncertain. According to Cherian, the novel illustrates the main character who seeks not only personal growth but also spiritual logic in a world filled with uncertainty.

Cherian says in her article "Coelho's protagonist embarks on a journey to reclaim his 'kingdom,' which symbolizes his personal and spiritual authority." This statement delves into the main themes of self-discovery in the novel. Cherian's interpretation suggests that self-discovery in Aleph is about regaining control over one's life and understanding one's place in a disoriented world. The protagonist's journey, as she argues, is a reflection of the search for spiritual peace in a world that often feels chaotic and fragmented. This perspective supports the novel's portrayal of self-discovery as a journey to regain one's identity and spiritual mind. The idea of "conquering one's kingdom" reflects the main character's struggle to find clarity and purpose in his life, making self-discovery as an act of personal improvement. In this sense, Aleph is not just about understanding one's current self, but about overcoming external and internal problems to find a deeper, more sensible notions of identity. Moreover, "Time and Perennial Philosophy in Paulo Coelho's Aleph" by Mohammad Safaei portrays a philosophical perspective on Aleph, focusing on the themes of time which lasts very a long time and eternal philosophy. He suggests that Coelho's novel includes timeless spiritual wisdom, especially through the concept of reincarnation. Safaei argues that the narrator's self-discovery is tied to understanding the cyclical feature of existence and the interconnectedness of all lives across time.

Safaei explains in his article: "The novel's exploration of reincarnation suggests that self-discovery is not confined to a single lifetime but is a continuous process that transcends time." This extract supports the novel's metaphysical approach to self-discovery. According to Safaei, the narrator's understanding of his past lives is important to his present spiritual awakening. The narrator's journey through time becomes a means of reconnecting with his past selves and understanding the connections between past and current lives and how these experiences shape his current identity. In terms of self-discovery, Safaei's article supports the idea that true understanding of the self requires acknowledging the past and recognizing the fact that one's existence continues eternally. The character's journey in Aleph is not just a search for answers in the pre-

sent but a process of combining knowledge of previous lives with present. This view helps us to understand the self-discovery as a multifaceted process, one that involves both examination and the recognition of the interconnectedness of all lives across time.

"The Magical Life and Creative Works of Paulo Coelho: A Psychobiographical Investigation" by Claude-Hélène Mayer & David Maree discusses psychobiographical investigation, analyzing Coelho's personal experiences and their influence in his creative works, particularly Aleph. They suggest that the narrator's search for self-discovery reflects Coelho's own search for meaning and spiritual happiness. Mayer and Maree explore how Coelho's problems in his life, including his search for purpose and identity, are reflected in the novel. Mayer and Maree says: "Coelho's protagonist embarks on a journey that mirrors the author's own search for meaning, making the narrative not just fictional but deeply autobiographical." This quote emphasizes the connection between Coelho's personal life and the narrators's journey of self-discovery. The novel, in this sense, becomes a reflection of Coelho's own struggles with identity, spirituality, and purpose.

This perspective analyses the novel through a psychobiographical lens which view self-discovery in Aleph. The main character's journey is not just a fictional exploration but a deeply connected with personal one that reflects Coelho's own life experiences. This connection between the author's life and the narrator's transformation suggests that self-discovery in Aleph is derived from real-life experiences, making the novel's themes more authentic and reliable.

Besides that in the article "Expression of Personal Experience in the Novels of Paulo Coelho" by P. Geetha & Dr. Olive Thambi focus on how Coelho expresses his personal experiences and his thoughts in his novels, particularly in Aleph. They argue that Coelho's personal life and spiritual insights are expressed in the narrative, influencing the narrator's journey of self-discovery. According to Geetha and Thambi, the main character Paulo's search for meaning is an expression of Coelho's own spiritual growth and transformation.

Geetha and Thambi think that: "Coelho's novels, especially Aleph, are an expression of the author's own experiences of spiritual awakening, making the protagonist's journey deeply personal." This extract shows the autobiographical features of the novel, where Coelho's own experiences creates the main character's path to self-discovery. His search for meaning is presented as a reflection of Coelho's own spiritual journey, making the novel not just a work of fiction but a rather personal exploration of self. In terms of self-discovery, Geetha and Thambi's article emphasizes the connection between personal experience and spiritual growth. The character's journey in Aleph is not just about finding intellectual answers but about emotional and spiritual cure. This supports the idea that self-discovery is a deeply personal process, influenced by one's own life experiences and insights.

Professor Iman Abdulsattar Abdulatif's article called "Self-Discovery in Paulo Coelho's Aleph" focuses directly on the theme of self-discovery in Aleph. Abdulatif explores how the narrator's journey involves cope with personal difficulties, facing emotional traumas, and achieving spiritual realization. The article emphasizes that self-discovery in the novel is not just about intellectual understanding but also about emotional healing and personal growth.

Abdulatif writes, "The protagonist's journey is a process of confronting his emotional wounds and past traumas, which ultimately leads to spiritual and emotional healing." This statement proofs the novel's depiction of self-discovery as a process of inner healing. The narrator must face his fears, regrets, and unresolved emotional issues to achieve a strong understanding of himself and his purpose in life.Abdulatif's analysis connects with the idea that self-discovery in Aleph is not just about gaining knowledge but also about emotional growth and healing. The protagonist's journey is a holistic one, involving both spiritual awakening and emotional changes. This view highlights the complex nature of self-discovery, where personal growth is achieved through both intellectual and emotional strength.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative textual analysis method supported by secondary scholarly sources. The primary text for analysis is

Paulo Coelho's Aleph (2011), and five peer-reviewed academic articles were selected to provide theoretical and critical perspectives on self-discovery, spirituality, time, memory, and autobiographical elements in the novel.

Relevant ideas from the novel were identified based on their connection to the theme of self-discovery and categorized into thematic groups such as emotional healing, memory, vulnerability, time, and spiritual transformation. These textual extracts were then interpreted using concepts drawn from the selected secondary sources. This method allows for an in-depth exploration of how self-discovery is constructed in the narrative and how it reflects broader philosophical and psychological concerns.

The qualitative approach is appropriate for this study because it enables detailed interpretation of literary meaning rather than measurement or statistical comparison, making it suitable for analyzing symbolic, emotional, and spiritual dimensions in a literary text.

RESULTS

The analysis of the extracts and secondary sources reveals five major dimensions of self-discovery in Aleph:

1.Self-Discovery as Struggle and Imperfection

The novel shows that self-discovery is not smooth or ideal but filled with frustration, setbacks, and feelings of stagnation. The metaphors of "wet ground," "mud," and "abyss" represent the difficulty and instability of spiritual growth.

2. Self-Discovery as Releasing the Past

Novel emphasizes the danger of living in past guilt and memory. The narrator realizes that dwelling on past mistakes burns the present and imprisons the mind, preventing happiness and growth.

3. Self-Discovery as Emotional Healing

In the novel Abdulatif's interpretation show that confronting emotional wounds is necessary for transformation. Healing requires facing pain, not avoiding it.

4. Self-Discovery as Vulnerability and Relationships

The novel highlights the importance of learning to receive love, help, and kindness. This challenges pride and self-worth and shows that healing is relational, not only internal.

5. Self-Discovery as Active Spiritual Engagement

The novel rejects the idea that time alone brings growth. Instead, self-discovery requires conscious effort, reflection, and spiritual presence. The following section discusses these findings in relation to the novel's narrative structure and the existing scholarly interpretations.

DISCUSSION

This discussion interprets the five identified dimensions of self-discovery in relation to the narrator's spiritual and emotional transformation and the broader philosophical framework of the novel. It shows the narrator's thoughts about his journey of self-discovery, feeling annoyed and disappointed. "wet ground" and "sneakers… covered in mud again" represents no matter how the narrator tries to deal with problems carefully, there always will be challenges and setbacks. These words are metaphors for the fact that personal growth is not easy thing to achieve and can seem a difficult process. Also, the narrator suggests that searching peace, knowledge and awareness of realities seems repetitive and unproductive for them. The author argues that when we are on the journey of self-discovery, it is a common feeling to progress slowly for us or to feel unclear when facing the path. When the narrator mentions starting their "apprenticeship in magic" at twenty-two, it shows that they started their spiritual journey with excitement and purpose. However, as they visualize the years of struggle, they confess that the journey has been full of difficulties and setbacks. The word "abyss" in this extract represents the challenges and risks faced by narrator along the way, while "slipping and falling" represents the mistakes and failures that occurred during growth.

So, the narrator's reflections suggest that personal growth is continuous, and his main focus is not directed towards reaching perfection, but about continuing to learn and grow despite the challenges.

This novel explores how the narrator struggles with guilt and face the challenges of past mistakes. The metaphor of "traveling to past lives" as "making a hole in the floor" emphasizes the danger of dwelling on the past. The imagery of flames rising up to "scorch and burn the pre-

sent" suggests that if we focus too much on past errors, it can end up harming our current life and emotional state.

The statement, "I made mistakes then that I can't put right now," shows the narrator's regret and he accepts that some mistakes cannot be corrected. This may support a main idea of the theme in the novel: the importance of acknowledging the past but we should not let it to dominate the present. The advice to "never go back again" emphasizes the need to go forward, as thinking only past lives or mistakes may only trigger feelings of guilt and it can prevent personal growth.

This connects with the broader theme of self-discovery by showing that healing and growth require us to let go of things that cannot be changed. It suggests that self-discovery is not about exploring and thinking only the past but about learning to lead fully good lifestyle in the present. The narrator realizes that exploring past lives can cause harmful consequences and supports the idea that true self-discovery involves finding balance—admitting past experiences while focusing on the present to have a better future.

The novel gives information about a huge observational skills about people's relationships and the powerful effects of giving and receiving. The narrator thinks about the opposite attitudes people have toward these acts. While many find helping others generous and joyful activity, far fewer people are comfortable with the receiving process because they think that if they receive something, it is not good for their pride and honour. This discomfort with receiving may harm their deeper issues of pride, self-worth, and trust.

The narrator mentions that, "It's as if the act of receiving made them feel inferior," suggests that many people consider that accepting help or gifts shows their weakness or inadequacy. This belief come from societal norms that often emphasize independence and self-reliance, making depending on others seem undignified. The inner thoughts—"If someone is giving us something, that's because we're incapable of getting it for ourselves" or "The person giving me this now will one day ask for it back with interest"- with these sentences, the narrator thinks many people do not trust anybody and fear that people may ask extra things or interest in return after giving. These thoughts may proofs a defensive mindset, causing to think that generosity always comes with hidden motives or plans for other bigger things.

The line, "I don't deserve to be treated well," shows the role of self-esteem in this world. Many individuals have problems with feelings of unworthiness, which causes them to fear from accepting kindness or love. This fact gives more meaning in Aleph: the journey of self-discovery and healing often comes with these internal barriers and challenges learning to accept our weaknesses and defects.

It emphasizes that receiving is as important as giving in developing meaningful connections. It encourages readers to rethink their own attitudes toward accepting help, love, or kindness from others and to recognize that true strength is hidden in the ability which is open to both giving and receiving without fear or shame. Through these perceptions, Aleph guides us to have a more balanced and compassionate view about human relationships. The novel explores our dependence on memory and the realities we create to lead a meaningful life. It reflects on how memory is vital for our survival intinct, helping people to avoid danger, create social relations, find resources, and transmit knowledge to future generations. The comparison between memory and a computer are given for its function as a tool for storing and organizing information necessary for survival. However, with the statement, "it is not the main matter of life," the author suggests more complex philosophical insight: even though memory is practical and vital, it is not the main purpose of our existence.

The idea of creating a "visible reality" suggests that people need tendency to construct frameworks such as social, cultural, and personal which helps to understand the world. These frameworks give us secure feelings and order in life. This allows people to function as individuals and communities.

But it challenges the reader to look beyond these frameworks, suggesting that life's meaning is more than survival mechanisms and practical tools like memory.

This reflection has a connection with the broader themes of Aleph, particularly the journey of self-discovery and spiritual awakening. It im-

plies that true self-satisfaction does not come dwell on past experiences or the realities we created but from finding more deeper meaning and connection.

The journey in the novel shows this idea as they try to move invisible world to explore spiritual features of life. The author says that "We can never wound the soul, just as we can never wound God,". It means the soul, like the God, is endless and we can't touch it. However, while the soul remains untouchable, the human mind can torture itself in the trap of memories and it is like a self-imposed prison. This idea highlights how thinking only past experiences—whether regret, guilt, or trauma—can prevent people from fully enjoy the present, even when external circumstances such as family, money, health, food and shelter for happiness are in place. This suggests that the metaphor of waking up on Earth and finding oneself "inside a golden temple" symbolizes the beauty and blessings of the present moment. It suggests when we see life through fresh eyes and don't pay attention to our painful memory, life is inherently important and lovely. Unfortunately, sometimes we fail to "be entirely here" and this may reflect individual's struggles: the tendency to dwell on the past or worry about the future, which interferes our ability to lead fully and happy life now. It emphasizes how important for us to free from the chains of memory to live life with happiness, beauty and joy. The narrator's journey in Aleph involves confronting and revealing these burdens, allowing them to reconnect with the present and rediscover how wonderful our live are. The main character Paulo admits "despite all my efforts, I still can't honestly say that I feel closer to God and to myself,". This implies that by saying these words he is revealing his struggle to find meaning in his life and connection with God. These kinds of ideas are exactly what a common feeling in self-discovery reflects: working hard but not seeing the results we expect. The narrator's anger highlights the difficulty of noticing progress in something as abstract as spirituality. J.'s response rejects the idea that time naturally leads us to grow. Many people feel that as time goes, we gain wisdom gradually and understand matters clearly, but J. argues that time alone is not enough. Instead, it often leaves people feeling exhausted or disappointed when time doesn't live up to their expectations. This idea is a key part of self-discovery—it reminds us that growth doesn't just happen with the passing of time. It requires people to actively effort, reflect, and have a willingness to confront challenges. So, it can be observed that elements of self-discovery in this dialogue. The main character Paulo learns that waiting for time to bring them closer to God or themselves isn't enough. True progress results from being present and taking deliberate actions toward our desires and harmony with God. Overall, the discussion demonstrates that self-discovery in Aleph is presented not as a final achievement but as an ongoing, conscious process that integrates emotional healing, memory, relationships, and spiritual awareness.

CONCLUSION

It can be seen that Paulo Coelho's Aleph is a personal and life-changing journey. It requires facing the past, accepting weakness, and focusing on the present. The novel reveals how guilt, fear, and memories can trap us, preventing us from connecting with our true selves and with God. Coelho emphasizes that one cannot progress by waiting the time to pass but from making an active effort to reflect, learn, and change. They show how Coelho uses these ideas to teach readers that self-discovery is not just about solving problems but about understanding life more deeply. The novel's lessons go beyond its story, offering guidance on how to find peace and forgiveness in our own lives. In the end, Aleph reminds us that self-discovery isn't about being perfect or reaching a final goal. It's an ongoing process of learning and growing. By letting go of the past, living in the moment, and searching for deeper meaning, we can find true happiness and purpose.

By examining the viewpoints of Gem Cherian, Mohammad Safaei, Claude-Hélène Mayer & David Maree, P. Geetha & Dr. Olive Thambi, and Professor Iman Abdulsattar Abdulatif, we can gain a more detailed understanding of how Coelho's novel portrays the complex personal struggles as well as emotional and spiritual thoughts of characters.

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