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**Paulo Coelho's *Hippie*: A Critique with Special Reference to
Spiritual Aspects**

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Abstract

The brief period in which Paulo Coelho lived the hippie lifestyle serves as the backdrop for his novel "Hippy." In the 1960s, those looking for spiritual enlightenment travelled to India and even Nepal hoping to find it there. A subculture in the 1960s was associated with groups with distinctive looks and opposed established conventions. This article's goal is to achieve that goal, and one method it plans to do is by describing how the protagonist grows during his trip and experiences a spiritual awakening after it. The themes of the novel Quest for Spiritual Knowledge are examined in this essay through the prism of popular culture since Paulo Coelho's Hippy is linked to its cultural archetype in contemporary society. This is carried out because the novel is pertinent to the contemporary world. Paulo Coelho's original work's themes of the hero's journey and spiritual education are examined, and those ideas relate to modern popular culture. In Paulo Coelho's book Hippy, Paulo and the other young boys and girls study Western and non-western ideas of culture while making their first forays into the world independently. The hippie movement seems to have been started and coordinated by these young people, who also appear to live in numerous communes and travel widely in search of love, freedom, and peace. They appear to have started the trend as well. I will refer to the works and theories of Joseph Campbell, John Storey, Ray Brown, and Marshall Fishwick to give a theoretical context for my interpretation of the text. Even if the hippie movement develops as a counterculture of the 1960s youth movement, the article contends that the protagonist's quest for spiritual enlightenment merits consideration.

Key Words: Subculture. Popular culture, Hippy, quest, spirituality

Introduction

The protagonist of Paulo Coelho's Hippy is on a quest to find spiritual enlightenment, and this trip is the topic of discussion in this article. This section explains how Paulo, the main character in the book, can finish his journey and discover his spirituality after it. The event that marks the beginning of Paulo Coelho's life is a difficult birth in Rio de Janeiro. In the end, he is successful in surviving despite everything that happens. Before he became a famous author throughout the world, Paulo lived different lives in various places. His parents have taken him to various psychiatric facilities because he has expressed interest in ending his life. He is a victim of the severe treatment of electric shocks. He experiments with sex, does drugs, and serves time in jail. He transformed rock music in Brazil. He finally reaffirms his trust. Paulo is a young, thin Brazilian man in Hippy with long, flowing hair and a goatee. He sets out on a tour via many nations. Karla,



a young woman seeking a trip partner to Nepal, is introduced to him. They board the Magic Bus and journey to Kathmandu through Europe and Asia. On the drive, the other passengers discuss their relationships. Paulo embarks on a voyage with no specific goals for the future, yet his adventure improves his life. He gains from it in his search for the meaning of life. An examination of the book from the viewpoint of popular culture is aided by the hero's journey and desire for spiritual understanding. Thus, the article makes the case that pursuing spiritual Truth might benefit from the hero's journey.

Literature Review

Several writers and reviewers have given the text several analyses and comments. Critics who have commented on the text include Chethana Dinesh and Indrani Bose. The protagonist of this uninspiring book is a young man named Paulo who spends the 1960s learning about love, spirituality, and the outside world. After learning of a new movement for love and sexual freedom in Amsterdam, an aspiring Brazilian writer by the name of Paulo gets a ride to the city (Coelho, 2018, Para: 1). The author discusses the voyage and how successful it was, but he doesn't go into much into on the cultural myth. In a similar vein, Chethana Dinesh (2019) contends that “In *Hippie*, his most autobiographical novel to date, Paulo Coelho takes us back in time to re-live the dream of a generation that longed for peace and dared to challenge the established social order” (para: 1). She usually talks about previous generations who desire peace and struggle against the societal framework. Still, she neglects to bring up the hero archetype. Similarly, Bose (2018) mentions, “Paulo Coelho’s latest is about the journey that helped him in his search for meaning. Love and spirituality are the two dominant themes in *Hippie*” (para: 4). She sees Paulo as being on a lengthy journey and always looking for spirituality and love in his life. The two main topics of the work are love and spirituality. On a different note, another critic writes that Karla harbours the “aspirations of seeing the world from a different perspective”, so Paulo and Karla start journeying together on a bus trip to explore the innermost truth “along the hippie trail” (Menon, 2021, para:1). Conversely, in “The Hippie Narrative”, Scott MacFarlane (2007) argues, “The novel as a cultural form could be the most overlooked popular cultural artefact of the 1960s counterculture” (p.161). He asserts that the well-known cultural item has been overlooked in the discussion thus far. In the alternative viewpoint, Robert A. Segal (1978) makes the following observations, “Modern man finds life meaningless because he has no myths, which alone give life meaning; that modern man has no myths because science precludes his acceptance of myths at the literal level” (p.67). He is adamant that without myths, contemporary existence is pointless. A meaningful



existence breaks free of fiction. Because of contemporary science, men forget the mythologies. On the other hand, the hero quest is not mentioned in any of these two evaluations.

The authors, reviewers, and critics mentioned above have brought attention to both the central topic of the work as well as many cultural points of view. Hippies are considered part of the youth movement's counterculture of the 1960s. This subculture entails disliking traditional morals. As a result, the study asserts that the hero quest has received very little attention. The current research aims to analyze a problem related to the protagonist's search for spiritual understanding.

Methodology

To understand the material, the research author refers to the insightful perspectives of Joseph Campbell, Marshall Fishwick, and John Storey. In particular, Joseph Campbell's explanation of the hero's journey supports the article's main argument, as found in the previous section. Both the hero's journey and the search for spiritual insight serve, in their ways, as theoretical frameworks. Joseph Campbell's monomyth "The Hero's Journey" describes the hero-journey-quest in this passage. He says the hero's journey is divided into three distinct parts. The hero breaks away from the sphere of everyday life. This phase refers to the beginning of the journey that will be taken. The hero embarks on an adventure into new territory. It is a one-of-a-kind environment in which he overcame challenges and obstacles to become a great champion. The beginning of this process is referred to as "initiation." However, the hero must return to the everyday world while carrying an elixir. The hero victoriously leaves the scene. In this regard, Campbell (1985) makes the following observation: "The archetypes to be discovered and assimilated are precisely those that have inspired, throughout the annals of human culture, the basic images of ritual, mythology, and vision." (p.17). The archetypal symbols said to work in Hindu and Buddhist philosophy in the name of wisdom are described here by C. G. Jung.

Similarly, according to another critic, "If aesthetics is a way of seeing objects aesthetically, rather than a way of recognizing intrinsic aesthetic properties in objects, then there is no reason why we should not have an aesthetics of anything, including popular culture" (Storey, 2004, p. 92). As a literary topic, he lays a significant amount of stress on the aesthetics of popular culture. The things ought to have an appealing appearance. According to the research conducted by Marshall W. Fishwick (1985), "The hero is archetypal, a paradigm who bears the possibilities of life, courage, love—the commonplace, the indefinable" (p.59). The Greek concept of a hero possesses magical strength. This idea of heroism comes from the tales that



serve as the foundation for religion and tradition.

Discussion

Paulo decides to embark on a trip to discover the mysterious world and maybe his uncharted area. As a result, the regular world is where the hero's adventure begins. His desire to become an accomplished writer drives him to travel. He was affected by the Hippie movement, which was a powerful response against the state and society. As this movement spreads quickly from the United States to Europe and South Asia, it has ingrained itself in popular culture. According to Joseph Campbell (2004): “This first stage of the mythological journey—which we have designated the “call to adventure” —signifies that destiny has summoned the hero and transferred his spiritual centre of gravity from within the pale of his society to a zone unknown” (p. 59). Let's consider the setting for the journey of the main character. In essence, the hippie culture of the 1960s and 1970s is to blame for the global mobility of certain young people. To go to distant regions, the main character decides to hitchhike. Coelho (2018) says, “In September 1970, aeroplane tickets were outrageously expensive, which meant only the rich could travel. OK, that wasn't entirely true for an enormous number of young people whom these outdated media outlets could see only for their outward appearance [...]” (p.3). Because aircraft tickets were so expensive in the past, wealthy people were the only ones who could travel by airbus. Long-distance travel is made possible, despite this fact, by a significant number of young people. The young people defy their parents and sneak out of the house to pursue their desire for independence, despite their tremendous challenges and risks. As a result, the protagonist decides to explore uncharted territory. He is leaving the everyday world with this.

Hippy outfits and behaviours are now well known to a large audience thanks to hippy descriptions, which have taken on a new persona due to the increasing commercialization of popular culture. Paulo's travels across the world bring together the hippie way of life, their style of thinking, and their understanding of society from their perspectives. In this interpretation, Coelho (2018) looks at the characteristics of hippies who were around at that time “wore their hair long, dressed in bright-coloured clothing, and never took a bath”. However, these young kids barely reflected on the tabloid; therefore, the story in the newspaper was inaccurate. In addition, the older generation believed that each news story demonized those seen as “a danger to society and common decency” (p.3).

Most importantly, the group's attire makes the hippy obvious. Social expectations and ordinary civility are at odds with the new look and mannerisms. They create a group of their type to denounce the laws as unfair. In



search of values, meanings, and justifications for human life, hippies travel this way. Here, Browne (2005) lists the precise functions of several organizations that influence popular culture and serve as trendsetters for emerging popular culture (p. 32). According to this viewpoint, companies set cultural patterns for consuming material items. The market and advertising are frequently used. It makes the economy stronger.

Making a hippy trajectory entails a certain level of international acceptance of the hippie way of life. Many young boys and girls like taking cheap trips abroad and living in communes with others who have similar perspectives on life, family, and music. They express their sentiments and emotions via music. Storey (2015) defines popular culture as a “quasi-mythical rural “folk culture,” and the other – and it was very much the “other” – was popular culture as the degraded “mass culture” of the new urban- industrial working class” (p.1). The critic acknowledges that popular culture may be traced back to folk culture, which appears acceptable in that it is understood to be the inferior form of mass culture consumed by the urban working class. The following characterization of a hippie might serve as an example of the hippie way of life:

A new hippie trail was created, from Amsterdam (Holland) to Kathmandu (Nepal), on a bus that charged a fare of approximately a hundred dollars and travelled through countries that must have been pretty interesting: Turkey, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and part of India. (Coelho, 2018, p.10)

The excerpt covers the history of the hippie movement from Europe to Asia. With a very inexpensive bus cost, one may go through some incredibly intriguing countries just using the bus. This is how the hippie movement as a subculture became the most well-known figure among the young, curious generations worldwide, albeit not everyone followed the hippie route.

However, the first barrier is only traversed when Paulo decides to travel to Holland. Then, he meets his partner, who is looking for a male companion to accompany her to Nepal. After some time in Amsterdam, Paulo and Karla take a trip to Istanbul, and while they are there, Paulo takes some time to investigate the Sufi religion. The commentator points that that “The personifications of his destiny to guide and aid him, the hero goes forward in his adventure until he comes to the “threshold guardian” at the entrance to the zone of magnified power” (Campbell, 1985, p.68). He lists the guardians who have been there for him and assisted and supported him throughout his life. For example, Karla gives him both service and the company of other professionals. They will stay together on their journey till they both get back from Nepal. According to Coelho (2018) says, “Paulo and the man from Argentina had already discussed just everything [...] they



both carried with them memories, names, curiosity, and above all a deep fear of what might happen when they reached the Dutch border” (p.17). Despite being free and willing to experience new things, most individuals lack the confidence to follow their goals. Paulo is still travelling from Argentina to Holland with his memories and interest, but he feels a certain amount of anxiety about a bad experience at the border.

The difficulties Paulo faces start in Istanbul. He struggles to deal with the scenarios when he visits the busiest areas of Turkey and Amsterdam. Before he can enter Holland, the security officers interrogate him thoroughly and torture him to a third-degree degree. However, he is ultimately allowed to go free. As a result, he will be facing several legal proceedings in Istanbul rather than in Amsterdam. The main character makes the observation, “his dream was to become a writer, and he had paid a high price for this: stints in psychiatric hospitals, prison, and torture, the prohibition from the mother of his teenage girlfriend that she get anywhere near him, the scorn of his classmates when they saw he had begun to dress differently” (Coelho, 2018, p.98). The main character has endured tribulations in his youth, including being sent to an institution and being severely abused while trapped in a jail home. His girlfriend's mother also forbids him from speaking to and meeting her. In addition, his pals make fun of him because of how he dresses. In this view, Mary R. Lefkowitz (1990), in the article “The Myth of Joseph Campbell”, states, “In the New Testament, Jesus was led by the Spirit of God into the wilderness, where the Devil tempted him; but he resisted, and the Devil left him, and angels appeared and waited on him” (p.433). The author has a firm belief in God's omnipotence. The protagonist makes valiant attempts to flee but is ultimately saved by a supernatural force. Paulo must have endured much hardship due to his intense enthusiasm for becoming a writer. He encounters similar difficulties when he shares his dreams.

It is a form of youth revolt against the ingrained norms of society. However, the hero pattern developed by Marshall Fishwick is relevant to this discussion and instantly applicable. Fishwick (1985) describes it as follows, “the hero is archetypal, a paradigm who bears the possibilities of life, courage, love—the commonplace, the indefinable which defines our lives” (p.59). The critic now vehemently contends that the hero model has been accepted in the mental realm of humans.

Heroism, bravery, and adventure are the driving forces that inspire people to explore uncharted areas and reap rewards. The protagonist so demonstrates these abilities while venturing into uncharted areas.

The protagonist must go through tribulation in life; as a result, like a hero, he has had to confront his greatest challenge to finish his trip. When he travels, especially to Amsterdam and Istanbul, he runs across many



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problems. A reference to the "difficult tasks motif" is made by Campbell (2004), and this motif becomes analogous to Psyche's search for her lost sweetheart, Cupid (p.81). The protagonist walks around to find a meaningful, tranquil existence, and he converses with anyone he encounters along the way. He probes the depths of his consciousness and ponders the mysteries of the afterlife through the lens of these inquiries. Coelho (2018) explains, "An immense, indescribable happiness washes over the entire universe. Christ on earth. Krishna in your veins. Buddha smiling down on you from heaven. No hallucinations, this is reality, true reality" (p. 100). People around seem happy, yet they still appear to be dried. The main character concludes that regardless of one's beliefs, everyone experiences compassion in God's presence.

Rock music is a strong reaction to the classical music of its day, and hippie culture views rock music as a powerful method of expression. Because of this, the link between rock music and hippie culture significantly impacts the ideas that drive popular culture. Music is an element that may be found in popular culture. Rock music was born in the United States of America and quickly spread to other regions of the world after its inception. In this regard, John Storey (2015) makes the following observation: "Popular culture is simply a culture that is widely favoured or well-liked by many people", and many people approve of a quantitative index undoubtedly (p. 5). Consider how attendance at concerts, athletic events, and festivals increases and how much the general public participates in these activities. The protagonist in the text makes the following observations: ". . . he pretended to be interested in the music below: Simon & Garfunkel, the Beatles, James Taylor, Santana, Carly Simon, Joe Cocker, B. B. King, Creedence Clearwater Revival—a long list that continued to grow with each month, each day, each hour" (Coelho 2018 p.91). Here, the main character makes a lengthy list of current popular music, reflecting his passion for rock music, which in the 1960s and 1970s instantly captured the attention of young people worldwide. Rock musical groups and rock vocalists undoubtedly have a connection to the hippie movement due to their odd clothing rules, way of living, and stage performances. Rock music and the hippie lifestyle have gained popularity in the public realm.

In the hero's journey story, the main character always emerges victorious and carries the spoils of victory back home. He will occasionally try to get out of making the round journey. For example, Paulo is almost done with his journey when he extends his stay in Istanbul and continues his education in the Sufi tradition. He succeeds in living the life that he deserves. On his return to Brazil, he starts writing. This is how Campbell (2004) sees it: "When the hero-quest has been accomplished, through penetration to the source, or the



grace of some male or female, human or animal, personification, the adventurer still must return with his life-transmuting trophy” (p.179). Before returning with the prize, the traveller completes the hero quest with assistance from the mentor, the heavenly being, or the people. It is the knowledge-filled light. It is the metamorphosis of the hero. Here, Paulo receives his long-awaited reward as he immerses himself in Sufi practices and begins looking for the meaning of life. It teaches him how to sustain an ongoing ecstatic condition. In Istanbul, Paulo regularly runs across an unidentified man. The author writes about Sufism in the following way:

I want to learn the ways of the Sufi. I need a teacher.

Then seek the Truth. Seek always to be on its side, even when it brings you pain. There are times when the Truth goes quiet for long stretches or doesn't tell you what you want to hear. That's Sufism. The rest is a series of sacred rites that do nothing more than intensify this state of ecstasy. (Coelho, 2018, p. 237)

Paulo calls off their remaining voyage together and informs Karla that he must pause to learn the Sufi traditions. He asks to have the man as his mentor. He learns to look for the Truth in it. It calls for endurance and diligent meditation practice. The delight is magnified by performing a sequence of spiritual rituals. The spiritual journey, therefore, starts to form. Similar to how the hero in the epic story progresses and triumphantly completes his unbroken trips. He is greeted with an enchanted flight. In the story, Paulo goes to many different places and has many experiences, all of which contribute to shaping his point of view. He investigates a universe that never occurred to him. Campbell (2004) so observes, “If the hero in his triumph wins the blessing of the goddess or the god and is then explicitly commissioned to return to the world with some elixir for the restoration of society”, all of his patron's magical abilities are used to help the last phase of his quest (p. 182).

Following God's bestowal of the light of knowledge upon the hero, the hero is given the command to return to the earth with some elixir to restore civilization. He is supposed to inform the general public and bring about a change in society. In this context, the author refers to Sufism as an Islamic philosophy that both "modernizes the human mind" and "assists in the realization that language cannot fully "explain the Infinite" (Coelho 2018, page 238). Sufism was founded in the 12th century and has been practised by millions worldwide. The secrets of the world and its creator are investigated and attempted to be explained by humans, but they are unsuccessful. In 2018, Coelho stated: “Listen to His voice each time you pass a beggar



on the street. That's what every religion teaches, and it's the only promise we ought to make—the only one” (p. 275). The argument might be made that the entirety of humanity is the greatest religion. This fundamental belief is common to all of the world's religions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the spiritual journey in one's life (or that of the protagonist) is a way of finding the self. It is comparable to meditation in that it most likely seeks to bring about love and peace for humanity. This can be said of both the spiritual journey in one's life and the protagonist's path.

Coelho's *Hippie* analyzes the hero-journey quest, which is based on the idea of the hero, even though the hippie movement of the 1960s broke away from the restrictions of socio-political phenomena. The genesis of the hippie movement may be traced back to the outspoken resistance of the youth to the war, the attitudes of society, and the government.

It starts as a subculture and then evolves into the culture of the general population through time. According to Campbell, the hero's journey may be broken down into three distinct stages: departure, initiation, and return. The format of the hero's journey serves as the foundation for Paulo Coelho's *Hippie*. The main character, Paulo, decides to leave his own country. He hops on the magic bus, and throughout his exploration of this one-of-a-kind world, he goes to many other places. During the journey, he is put through several difficulties and examinations but ultimately achieves enlightenment. He acquires knowledge and then returns to his home. Myths from antiquity serve as a foundation for popular culture, which eventually evolves into the behaviors and attitudes generally shared in public places. Therefore, the hero quest, myth, and popular culture all illustrate their connections. The critic argues that folklore and folk music are significant contributors to popular culture and help improve its overall quality. In addition to considerations of the hero's journey, the book may be read in many ways, including as it applies to the media, sports, rock and popular music performances, cultural festivals, and other topics.



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