

# Santiago's Leadership Quest and Adherence to the EH-PC Code in *The Old Man and the Sea* and *The Alchemist*

**Parveen Kumar and Dr Manju**

## **Abstract**

After World War I, those who had become adults amidst the violence and austerity found themselves isolated from other age groups, especially those who had come of age prior to the war. This group came to be known as 'the lost generation'. Ernest Hemingway and Paulo Coelho have both written about the loss of self, the weakening of inner strength, and the dilemmas of the lost generation, establishing a 'Dejection to Determination' allegory. The Ernest Hemingway-Paulo Coelho Code (EH-PC Code) of Leadership, Self-Enhancement, and Determination is rooted in the works of these two literary giants. This article considers *The Old Man and the Sea* and *The Alchemist*, and how these texts approach selfhood and self-determination among those of the lost generation. Hemingway and Coelho adhere to the established and relevant attributes of leadership in their selected works. This article will further deliberate up on the making of Santiago as a Leader, their adherence to the EH-PC Code, and the establishment of a leadership treatise.

**Keywords:** Santiago, Leadership, Motivation, Will-to-Meaning, Self-Help, Coelho, Hemingway.

## **Introduction**

World War I redefined the ways life was seen and lived. It shattered the age-old beliefs in humanity and existence. Harmony between men was far more difficult to believe in following the mass bloodshed from so many nations. The adolescent generation in particular became disillusioned with the world their elders grew up believing in. It has been difficult for "many individuals

to create a sensible, integrated and reasonably stable personal style.”<sup>1</sup> T.S. Eliot considers this in *The Waste Land*, Section V “What the Thunder Said”:

He who was living is now dead  
We who were living are now dying  
With a little patience.<sup>2</sup>

This nihilism is evident in much of the literature written around this time. This Existentialism became a defining feature of post-war thought and literature. Authors such as Ernest Hemingway, Scott Fitzgerald, and Norman Mailer in particular considered these topics; in several of their collective works, they even endeavoured to produce an answer. This was largely approached through the paradigm of re-empowerment and self-actualisation.

Over the convalescent decades after World War I, the shattered minds slowly began to rebuild. One particular obstacle was the popularity of Friedrich Nietzsche’s concept of ‘will to power’, which was often accompanied by a highly cynical view of other, less fortunate members of one’s community. The idea was later appropriated by the Nazis. Many authors rejected this concept and instead considered a participatory form of existentialism. These works focused on both individual and community empowerment. This article considers their respective works *The Old Man and the Sea* and *The Alchemist*, and how these texts approach selfhood and self-determination among those of the lost generation.

### **Establishing *The Old Man and the Sea* and *The Alchemist***

Of the aforementioned authors, Ernest Hemingway is perhaps the most notable. His “live in action” style proved a great success, capturing the attention of many of his disillusioned peers.<sup>3</sup> Part of the appeal of his novels was the man himself, who was known to be brash, confident, and the ringleader of his social engagements. He embodied a pre-war social joy while still being identifiable to his own generation, as he had notably served

---

Parveen Kumar is a research scholar at the University Institute of Liberal Arts and Humanities at Chandigarh University, Mohali (Punjab). His research focuses on the philosophical adherence of Hemingway and Coelho. Dr Manju is a Professor at the University Institute of Liberal Arts and Humanities at Chandigarh University, Mohali (Punjab). She received her PhD from MJPR University Bareilly. Her research interests include modern Indian literature.

<sup>1</sup> Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1970), p. 155.

<sup>2</sup> T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1922), p. 45.

<sup>3</sup> Khaleel Bakheet Ismail and Mohamed Ali Musa, ‘The Concept of Death and Violence in Ernest Hemingway’s Works’, *Journal of Science and Technology*, vol. 13, no. 2 (2012), pp. 113–124.

in the war and suffered a great deal of psychological distress. Much of his work combines these two aspects of his worldview. *The Old Man and the Sea* was published in 1952, making it one of the last significant works Hemingway wrote. The novella concerns an aging fisherman, Santiago, who hooks a marlin so large that he is unable to reel it in. He is thus dragged across the ocean by the fish. Eventually it dies, but as he sails back, sharks devour its body, leaving only its head. In its short arc, the work captures the essence of both futility and hope, with Santiago longing to reclaim his mastery as a fisherman, while battling against nature itself and his own aging body.

Paulo Coelho's works, while written decades after Hemingway's death, nonetheless capture the same essence. *The Alchemist* is his most well-known work. It follows a young man, also named Santiago, as he travels to Egypt, having dreamt of finding treasure there. The novel is largely allegorical, presenting themes of self-actualisation and destiny.

Coelho read *The Old Man and the Sea* as a child and was highly influenced by it.<sup>4</sup> That was some intuitive act of recognition by the would-be-legend Coelho. Coelho has spoken on his admiration of Hemingway, citing him as a major source of inspiration in pursuing literature.<sup>5</sup>

**Rita Braver:** Why did you call the shepherd boy who takes this journey 'Santiago'?

**Paulo Coelho:** Because of Ernest Hemingway. Because when I was young, I read a book *The Old Man and the Sea* and Hemingway starts the book with 'The Old Man's Name was Santiago' And I said I will write a book one day and I am going to use the same thing that he did on in the first sentence, so I did this to pay my homage; my honour to Hemingway.

For Coelho, his Santiago, a young boy, has come to be a modern legend who has accomplished the timelessness of persona. Millions of readers have been inspired by the Santiago motif in *The Alchemist* and the attached Quest for the Personal Legend. This work established that an ultimate example of leadership in life is present in Coelho as his overall philosophy.

This is a case to study to what extent both the writers and their *Santiago* has been able to adhere to the leadership codes and concepts. The

---

<sup>4</sup> Claude-Hélène Mayer and David Maree, 'A Psychobiographical Study of Intuition in a Writer's Life: Paulo Coelho Revisited', *Europe's Journal of Psychology*, vol. 13 (2017), pp. 472–490.

<sup>5</sup> CBS Sunday Morning, 'Paulo Coelho's homage to Ernest Hemingway', YouTube, published 18 December (2016). At: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GkNsPD86YrY>. Accessed 10/07/2021.

*Santiago* keeps a strong face, and his endurance helps us to unearth a treatise about leadership in life. As the works have established that man is not made for defeat (Hemingway), we seek a widened approach and elaboration of leadership. Earl Rovit revealed some of the unvisited aspects of Hemingway's genius in his book titled *Ernest Hemingway*: "The whole body of Hemingway's writing proved to be of such a single piece that individual fictions written twenty years apart demanded to be treated together."<sup>6</sup>

While we discuss, describe and decode the two selected novels for their leadership treatise, we can first elaborate on what leadership shall mean here. The primary assumption to reach a rational understanding must see leadership as a personality attribute that is not alien to human character and wisdom. A leader shall surely have an impression on the people around him and will inspire millions just by his example. There are three aspects of the human mind and intellect that initiate the inculcation of leadership instincts: 1) Thoughts; 2) Feelings; and 3) Desires. We need to see into *The Old Man and the Sea* and *The Alchemist* as well, to determine whether the attributes on display in the works conform to these three values or not. Along with this, the conversations, participations, struggles, reactions to loss, and the subsequent victories, motifs, and symbols will also provide a ground for the leadership lessons available.

There is one more literary concept relevant to the philosophical idea of the Leadership Treatise in the selected works. Viktor Frankl gave this idea of 'Existential Psychotherapy' or Logotherapy. The strength of the mind leads to earning the reward of being a leader. To substantiate our argument that Hemingway and Coelho's novels represent that popular leadership phenomenon strongly, we can mention 'existential psychotherapy' known as Logotherapy. It is further added by the *Society for Humanistic Psychology Newsletter* that: "Logotherapy has much to offer psychological leadership, practices, and research."<sup>7</sup> In the world of utterly complex personal conflicts, there has been a dire need to invent a safety valve. The charisma of self-determination works to treat one and it also spreads healing vibrations to the people around. When Frankl himself came out of the camps and started

---

<sup>6</sup> Earl Rovit, *Ernest Hemingway* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1963), p. 10.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Mookie Manalili, 'Reflections on Existentialism, Logotherapy, and Responsibility,' *Society for Humanistic Psychology Newsletter*, (2020). At: <https://www.apadivisions.org/division-32/publications/newsletters/humanistic/2020/10/existentialism-logotherapy-responsibility>. Accessed 31/03/2022.

sharing on a mass scale, we realized that it was not a fortune by chance. He survived as many others did. We do not know their names, but there must be some people who saw Frankl's fight for life from death and got motivated.

Logotherapy by Viktor Frankl provides us with the treatment of mental trauma after a holocaust, a disaster, a personal loss, or even after a relationship failure. The trilogy of 1) Freedom of Will; 2) Will to Meaning; and 3) Meaning in Life is the conceptual foundation of Logotherapy. Frankl established that the determined endeavours of an individual certainly lead to the recovery of self-leadership. The content that is found in the pulp-fiction or fabricated self-help books creates a repetition or distasteful redundancy. What has been said in the form of literature, through stories and attention-grabbing plots, is far more powerful to provide the leadership attribute.

The selected works give two-fold joy to the readers. Going by the literary explanations and derivations, the readers get a pleasant study with affirmation about life and motivation. Another takeaway from these works is the fulfillment of the self-leadership treatise, provided in the Logotherapy concept. This Leadership idea also exists in Existentialism. The characters and the occurrences, along with the response and renditions, leave the reader elated and improved. The Code Carriers transcend the limits of time and territories. As a leader, our Santiago conforms to the Leadership Code of 'Initiative, Inspiration, Responsibility, Perseverance, Firmness, and Psychological Strength'. We see skill and competence of decision-making as the saviour of the current generation. However, the development of this skill gets inculcated in the early childhood years when a child learns to take a call.

Making a Choice or being able to fight for one's dream is a form of Self-Actualisation that makes one a leader. Without being firm and determined in oneself, no one can aim to lead others. The person who dares to pursue his dreams, like the Shepherd Santiago or the Old Fisherman Santiago is the 'Code Carrier'. The moment of making a choice, and going ahead with one's own decision and dream is the hallmark of being a leader.

Leaders are not those who sail out in the ocean and leave none inspired. An actual leader responds to the tensions by facing them outright. He keeps all the comrades (in this case, readers) together and in spirits. A leader presents an invitation to the followers to join in the efforts. In *The Old Man and the Sea* and *The Alchemist*, Hemingway and Coelho have done exactly the same. A leader does things that are understood and acknowledged as well. The baton of action is handed over to the teammates to pass it on to others. Hemingway and Coelho have this strong connection of 'cast

selection'. Both of them define their characters and set them free to do what shall bring the best to them.

While we define the benchmarks for a leader and also put forward a treatise of leadership, we can put together some of the acknowledged attributes of leadership. The pursuit of meaning as stated by Viktor Frankl is our primary touchstone in this quest. We derive the formula that who has a purpose, a sense of loyalty towards the expedition called life, and the belief that from the hard times shall come the better days shall be a leader only.

In addition to the above, it is noteworthy to bring the reference to Sam Manekshaw and his leadership concept.<sup>8</sup> The Field Marshal gives a two-factor authentication prescription for a leader. According to him, someone with reasonable common sense can turn himself into a leader by having two qualities: 1) Professional Knowledge; and 2) Professional Competence. Navin Gulia pointed out that a leader shall not join the status quo or the overwhelming trend. The first and foremost thing that a leader would do is to provide the masses with an alternative while rejecting their self-destructive choices. A leader sets an example by facing things himself, and by providing a corrective lead to the masses. He works like Gandhi who led people from the possible path of violence to a principled, peaceful strong belief for the world. A leader sees what is lacking in the life of people around him and offers sincere learning as a remedy. It is never an intent of a leader to rule or instruct. We can claim that a leader does not take hasty decisions. Scholars and elders in society can assist the kids to learn from their routine work. It is an interesting thought to add that a leader never wants to win!

A leader is always *In Quest of the Last Victory*.<sup>9</sup> A leader convinces people that they put their trust in his intent. A leader corrects the stereotyped notion that leaders need to be selfless. Rather they need to be selfish and must have ethical selfishness. This special target of ethical selfishness means that the life-long learning urge has to be acknowledged as a fundamental part of our existence and growth.

Decoding it further, it is pointed out that a leader must relish and enjoy his works. The pleasant participation and undivided attention shall help the captain to keep the association intact. The code carriers in the selected novels also adhere to these aspects of lifelong learning. Hemingway's heroes are

---

<sup>8</sup> aksharma1947, 'Leadership Lecture Sam Manekshaw,' *YouTube*, 18 March (2016). At: <https://youtu.be/eSvLFPFJjc8>. Accessed 27/06/2022.

<sup>9</sup> Navin Gulia, *In Quest of the Last Victory* (New Delhi: Pearson Education India, 2012), p. 43

## Santiago's Leadership Quest and Adherence to the EH-PC Code

introduced to us in a professionally accomplished state and then face struggles. The case of Coelho is also identical in that the characters acquire competence and put to display their knowledge with utmost accuracy in the course of action. The attributes of their personality are never vague because these work on a pre-defined set of traits labelled as EH-PC code in the article.

Now, we would apply and hopefully, succeed in identifying the writer duo Hemingway and Coelho as leaders in their domain. They possess the subtlety and sensibility of a genius when it comes to writing. They know what they are writing. Be it fishing, travelling across continents, archery, bullfighting, love, war, writing, or politics. They lead their characters from the front. It would be astute to see whether the characters in the selected novels live to the 'code' of their creators or not.

Along with Frankl's Will to Meaning, and the Professional Knowledge and Professional Competence of Manekshaw, we shall also test the works on the attribute matrix of 'Leading by Example' by Navin Gulia. There are pieces of evidence of these aspects and shall bring to a conclusion the discussion of Santiago as a Leader.

This discovery of trust in one's self is primary to the codes of Hemingway and Coelho. This also matches the self-actualisation philosophies. By losing the fear of loss and accepting that the reward lies in their efforts, the characters redeem themselves. There is no "fear of oneself"<sup>10</sup> which leads to imaginary faults and guilt without crime. Characters made choices, fought back against the stereotypes, dared to dream, formed relationships, and had love - that is what we call leadership, for the self and then to others.

*The Old Man and the Sea* starts with an account of the plight and failure of the old fisherman. Similarly, Santiago in *The Alchemist* arrives at an abandoned church with his herd. Just after informing us about their search for their own worth, the writers take us on the journey. The protagonists and their associates make choices. The boy, Manolin, in *The Old Man and the Sea*, had to leave the old man after forty days but before the novel ends, as a true disciple, he decides to join Santiago even though the old man says he is not lucky anymore: "The hell with the luck, I'll bring luck with me."<sup>11</sup>

This journey has been the sole choice of the Code Carriers after

---

<sup>10</sup> A. G. Mears, *The Right Way to Speak in Public* (New Delhi: Jaico Books, 1955), pp. 17-20.

<sup>11</sup> Ernest Hemingway, *The Old Man and the Sea* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), p. 47.

defying what was available to them as an easy alternative. With the Code Hero – who has represented Hemingway in the modern world- he has carved a unique place for his philosophy of self-leadership. The fisherman who ‘had gone eighty-four days now without taking a fish’ rises to become the legendary hero for Hemingway.<sup>12</sup> Santiago, as he named him, also represented his own struggle with his image as a writer. The attempt to bounce back and reaffirm his ‘master’ stature was successful enough to place *The Old Man and the Sea* in the league of the best literary works. As a true leader, Hemingway proclaims “But man is not made for defeat,” he said. “A man can be destroyed but not defeated.”<sup>13</sup>

Santiago is a fisherman who is alone in his fight because the boy he had for the first forty days has been called back by his parents. This is something that seems identical to life situations for the common person as well. Santiago is not complaining, rather he accepts the pain and difficulty. He takes it in his stride. The pursuits of tough missions most often face the challenges of not being able to keep your herd together. Then you see that there is a bright spot in the dark. This is the emergence of the leader in one’s persona. To rise to the occasion and then make a choice to treat troubles as a contestant, is the formula that Santiago brought to the world. He went into the deep sea and was attached to his ‘fish’ more than anything. The marlin symbolizes life, and all our dreams and Santiago’s quest is about leading a life that gives a concept of bouncing back to establish your own worth. The leadership quest for the old man concludes with the words: “The old man was dreaming about the lions.”<sup>14</sup>

Adhering to Professional Knowledge and Professional Competence in their role as leaders, the Heroes lead themselves with ease and discipline. The fisherman knows the boat, waters, weather, and the fish. The jargon of fishing that is in the text is a piece of clear evidence that Santiago is not in the sea for a mere experiment. He carries exact and just knowledge of this profession and is there to prove competence by implementing the stock of skills. While he catches the mighty marlin and clashes with the sharks, defending the fish, we see the display of competence. There is no one around – none can be there to help him, but he fights till the end and can bring him to shore, which establishes him as the leader. He led himself to pursue his retribution from the clutches of a failed existence and comes victorious. The

---

<sup>12</sup> Hemingway, *The Old Man and the Sea*, p. 3.

<sup>13</sup> Hemingway, *The Old Man and the Sea*, p. 31.

<sup>14</sup> Hemingway, *The Old Man and the Sea*, p. 39.



reward isn't in the object; the accomplishment is the journey and his will to meaning. This old man kept his faith in determination, and his passion and never lost the hope to rejuvenate his vigour. A leader sets an example by doing something that he feels shall lead others to dare. Harris reinforced this view by saying that "effective leaders exercise an indirect but powerful influence".<sup>15</sup> Santiago here fulfills this criterion of going after something, which is his personal legend but is ultimately a universal lesson of leadership.

Leadership instincts and a mature understanding of life are acquired at a later stage of life. In the youthful days, the novels of Hemingway or Coelho might look like love stories where a lover feels that his beloved has sent him kisses through the wind. It can be a soldier who rejects war to seek love, or it can be a fisherman who does not say bad words to the marlin, or it can even be a husband who has set out to search for his lost wife. The uncomfortable truths have been given a literary wrapping and the readers are able to pass through the hard battles in the course of their reading. They are trained to be leaders. Hemingway, thus, caters to the three-dimensional (thoughts, feelings, desires) standards of creating a Leadership Lesson which is in a story and sustainably serves the people. What stays with the readers is a re-kindled spark to awaken their inherent self-leadership powers.

### **Leadership in The Alchemist: Santiago, the Shepherd as a Leader**

Now we come to citing the textual references and adherence to the leadership concept from *The Alchemist*. As Paulo Coelho has also been a writer with a journalistic style, he writes to inform, entertain and persuade. The modern age legend and his masterpiece *The Alchemist* opens with "The boy's name was Santiago" and ends with "I'm coming, Fatima." Between these two sentences, the young boy who had embarked on a journey to discover the treasure has developed into a giant presence in the reader's life. Santiago travels to far places, sleeps with the sheep, reads, travels across the deserts, learns alchemy, works with Arabs, Englishmen, merchants, gypsy women, and ultimately lands in the Egyptian Pyramids. Then he gets to know that the treasure he was searching for lies right under the same sycamore in the abandoned church. His voyage to the Pyramids, the gigantic creations, was actually a journey within his own self. He discovered that the best that he can do, achieve and share was always right there in and around him. His will to

---

<sup>15</sup> Alma Harris, 'Distributed Leadership and School Improvement: Leading or Misleading', *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, vol. 32, no. 1 (2016), pp. 11–24.

pursue meaning in life drives him that far, teaches him about life, and brings him back to the same ‘shore’ from the deep ‘sea’. This Santiago has found love, realised the worth of togetherness, attentiveness, being enterprising, and had a strong grip on thoughts, feelings, and desires. His professional Knowledge and Competence to perform are quite real as a leader. There is no loose thread in his journey. He ensured, rather did, that he exhibits the best skills and dedication. The attribute of being focused and happy in what he was doing, makes him a trademark hero – a Leader.

While we see these novels as a treatise in themselves, the subtle life lessons on leadership can be summed up as determination and the Will to seek the meaning of life by commencing a journey that benefits others. In the course of action, as the leader moves from one milestone to the next, there are footprints on the sands of time. Santiago, in both novels, does the same. Readers identify with his call for action and travel along. The courage displayed throughout learning and rising as a leader is in accordance with the leadership templates.

## **Conclusion**

To conclude we reaffirm confidence in literature as the source of inspiration and a transformational remedy for the lost generation, even in the modern world. Hemingway and Coelho have been examined to celebrate their literary bonhomie. As writers, they lead their Code Carriers and their leaders lead readers to a new dawn of hope, meaning, and self-fulfillment.

Hemingway’s heroes take their decisions of their own will. This tendency of “No Explanation”<sup>16</sup> is discussed by William Cain; the absence of explanations in the works actually makes them favourites of readers. There is no rejection of logic or common sense, but the confidence and quickness to take the final call is something everyone craves. The ideal of a successful personality is made on the foundation of decision-making and in the twenty-first century, critical thinking plays a core role. The components of the structure of characterisation, context, and conversations in the text provide a base for the code of leadership, called here as EH-PC Code.

The Code prescribed by both the writers seems to be the leading force in all acts and responses during the course of action. The novels of Coelho develop like a fable, where we do not see the taste of a fairy tale but struggle and elements of determination. A character fights back in the face of

---

<sup>16</sup> William E. Cain, ‘No Explanations: Hemingway on the Making of Decisions’, *The Hemingway Review*, vol. 41, no. 2 (2022), pp. 49-74.

## Santiago's Leadership Quest and Adherence to the EH-PC Code

adversities. The discipline demonstrated has been identical to that of Hemingway's Hero concept. Any reader, who has reflected upon the insights given by EH-PC, can inculcate leadership acumen. The struggle – sustain – survive – and succeed procedure verifies the Leadership Treatise and substantiates the EH-PC Code. It also leads us to recognize Santiago as a Hero who does not lose hope and believes in his inherent qualities.

At a time when the whole world is looking at challenges from unknown sources, leadership has become an eternal necessity. Stephen J. Zaccaro said that communication is the foundation of modern management,<sup>17</sup> and the manager who is also a leader must keep the connection alive. In the case of Ernest Hemingway and Paulo Coelho, the first bond of communication is established by the authors themselves. What they write is a testimony of their own self-leadership trait. More than them, their code carriers authenticate the treatise of leadership. The subtle amalgamation of complex elements of self-leadership is made real in their works. This is made possible and becomes handy for the reader because the characters have the quality to get identified with the readers.

Frankl also says that happiness occurs as a by-product of finding the meaning of one's existence. A meaningful life has three main attributes: 1) Doing a Deed or Creating a Work; 2) Experiencing something or someone related to culture or nature; and 3) Connecting with someone through Love. It is evident in reading the selected works that there is a strong and visible current of leadership lessons. The ideas of "Finding Meaning in Despair," professional knowledge and competence, and ethical role models with corrective alternatives are getting applied to Hemingway and Coelho alike. Personal tragedies turn into human triumphs when the quest is towards the meaning of life and existence. This type of self-discovery is what we were searching for in the selected works because leadership is all about realising one's self-worth. Santiago lives up to the needs and expectations here and brings us, through the allegorical portrayals, a robust literary version of a leadership treatise for life management.

Hence, the deliberations provide the conclusion that Hemingway and Coelho's Santiago is a leader in literature and thereby stands as a leader in life as well. The primary attribute given to the readers is what we know as Self-Leadership and Self-Enhancement. EH-PC Code of Leadership does

---

<sup>17</sup> Stephen J. Zaccaro, 'Trait-based Perspectives of Leadership', *American Psychologist*, vol. 62, no. 1 (2009), pp. 6-16.

have a lot of say in our life as the portrayal of characters and the establishment of context are done so smartly that we cannot even feel the magic of words. Ernest Hemingway and Paulo Coelho achieve this success by leading us through their precision in writing and genius in thought. Their concept of leadership and adherence to the observed EH-PC Code is a testimony to the literary genius they established. Reading their works is surely a kind of therapy for many who seek peace and catharsis in literature.