

Chapter IV

Humanistic Social Work - Value of Life

Interpretation of the text leads one to understand the ideology of the creator through the narratives he has designed for the characters he creates. If hermeneutics helps to decipher the intentions of the author towards the right interpretation, Psychosynthesis helps in appreciating the characters, their purposes in their achievement of a synthesis which leads them towards a holistic living. This chapter views the stories of people from the psychological and social work perspective. Abraham Maslow, the architect of humanistic psychology elaborated on the fulfilment of hierarchical needs for actualization. The hierarchy of needs arises from the idea that only when primitive needs are satisfied, an individual can progress towards satisfaction of higher order needs of self-esteem and self-actualisation. This points to the humanistic concern towards the growth of the individual in the domains of personal life and social life within the sub domains of love, self-worth, fulfilment and autonomy. Carl Rogers, who initiated the process of humanistic psychology, opines, man understands the world based on his experiences and develops his personality. Psychology perceives personality as distinguishing behaviours, understandings and emotional configurations evolving out of the ecology of a person. Humanistic psychology also considers the existential view of life, of trying to understand the meaning of life, the importance of being, living and of life.

Existentialism places the responsibility on the individual themselves to eke out a meaning of life despite all odds. It does not recognise the divine intervention in the lives of human beings and thus the whole management of life's affairs is placed within the power of the individual, thus assigning to the individual not only the strength for achievement but

also accountability in life. As felt by Sartre, man at first is nothing and only in the course of his life will he be something, and he is responsible for who he is.

Lena Dominelli defines social work as “the practice of intervening in the lives of individuals who need assistance in the acts of everyday living” (Dominelli 5).

Intervention and assistance are the two key words which need explanation. Intervention in this context means the desired support that any individual needs in order to accomplish something. And assistance is the backing that is necessary for this accomplishment. When these are realised in the proper order a new narrative is formed out of interaction between people and shapes the realm in which people live. This is realised in the stories taken for study.

In all the stories, the people find themselves in such situations which would decide the course of their lives. In *The Pilgrimage* (TP), Coelho had to undertake the journey to find the sword which just slipped past him. His dream of becoming a Magus has to be realised. So the pilgrimage becomes indispensable. He should also understand the reason why the sword slipped away from his hands and the purpose of finding the sword. In this endeavour he is assisted by his wife and Petrus, his guide and a host of others who actually become obligatory. In *The Alchemist* (TA), if Santiago’s dream should come true, he has to first understand the dream and then find ways and means to realise the dream. In this he is helped by the old woman, the interpreter of dreams, The King of Salem, Melchizedek, the crystal merchant, the Englishman who is still a student of alchemy and the real Alchemist. The services of these people are so necessary for Santiago to find the treasure as predicted in the dream. In *The Zahir* (TZ), Coelho will be able to find his disappeared wife only with the help of Mikhail, Marie and others.

They have to help him in his search and in the due course he will understand the purpose of his life. *The Devil and Miss Prym* (TDMP), is the story of the battle between the good and evil. In order that Miss Prym who is encountered by the Devil, in the guise of the stranger, overcome the temptation, and the stranger, too to find out the answer to his question that pushes him towards enticing people to commit the sin, each have to mutually help each other to come out of the fix. In *Veronika Decides to Die* (VDD), Veronica is assisted by the other characters like Mari, Zedka and Eduard, who also suffer like Veronica, unable to find a meaning in their lives. But together in the mental asylum they are able to put things in order. In *By the River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept* (BRP), Pilar and her beloved prove to be complementary to each other in discovering their love and the purpose of their lives. Pilar should understand that love is accepting the person as he is and journeying through life with him. It should be a life of sharing. For the lover, having accepted the calling to serve God, he has also to realise that family life is as important and noble as a life of celibacy and healing people. In this excursion of life other fellow passengers like the priest, the woman who calls herself Brida are all important for the understanding that will make their lives a realised one.

As social work is considered as an exercise of engaging people to facilitate telling their story and participate in a healthy conversation leading towards a purposeful life, these are stories of people who with their association with others help each other. Humanistic aspect of social work focuses on the shared humanity of the practitioners with their clients. In these stories each of the characters are seen as practitioners and also clients. In the interview with Ariana Huffington, Coelho states that the theme of transformation pervades in all his stories. The characters transform themselves into better

beings than they were before because of the interaction that they allow to happen among themselves, and sharing becomes an important phenomenon. Humans are social and this quality entitles them to share the most treasured value – love. The quality of social work is enhanced by the empathy that each of the characters feel for each other. As felt by Egan in *The Skilled Helper: A Problem Management Approach to Helping* the capacity to step into the shoes of others, and go beyond the realm of one's own personal experience yet be within the limits of accepted range of behaviour, becomes the core value of social work principle.

Payne, Malcolm in his *Humanistic Social work, Core Principles in Practice* lists Creativity in human life and practice, Developing self and spirituality, Developing security and resilience, Accountability, flexibility and complexity in human life and practice, as the tenets of humanistic social work.

Analysing these principles in relation to the characters of the novels, it is found that these principles underlie the growth or the transformation of the personality into a whole being which meets the highest need of actualization of Maslow. Actualization needs, has within itself an urge to grow, to realise the potential within oneself. It also drives an individual towards self-contentment. A self-actualized person desires to gain more knowledge, engage himself in serving others and be creative and aesthetically sensitive.

The 'self' can be understood as the sum total of the qualities of a person which is influenced by the experiences of life. Self-actualization is a significant factor in an individual's growth and development. It has to be accepted that self-actualization does not mean that an individual is dissatisfied or feels incongruent with the circumstances

around him. Nor does it mean that the person is trying to fulfil the social expectation. It refers to the inherent quality in the person to reach a point of satisfaction in life where he will fit in his ecosystem perfectly well without any shortcomings and inadequacies. According to Coelho, spirituality is not concerned with or related to any religion, rather it is a way of life. He shares this view in an interview with Sekhar Gupta for the NDTV (Gupta). It is imperative that each one recognises the importance of self as a personal and social identity. This helps in understanding the role of spirituality in one's life and also in that of others. This is worked out in *The Alchemist* (TA). Santiago, the shepherd boy, chose to be a shepherd to travel. Each of the characters that he meets impacts upon him and leads him towards the learning which is the ultimate purpose of his life and also the theme of the story. Learning the lessons of life becomes the alchemy which would turn every experience into lessons that are more important than any material treasure. His wanderlust becomes his first teacher. The sheep are his next teachers. There is a perfect understanding between his sheep and himself. This is the first prerequisite for effective social work intervention. "It was as if some mysterious energy bound his life to that of the sheep, with whom he had spent the past two years, leading them through the countryside in search of food and water" (Coelho, TA 4). This is an example of the perfect relationship between the client and the practitioner. Such a relationship is necessary in order that Santiago learns the lessons of life. Being aware of their identity was pertinent to bring about the desired change. Here identity means more than knowing who a person is. As Dominelli puts it, "...identity has a substantive impact on interpersonal interactions regardless of whether these are undertaken with members of one's own group or other groups" (77). Here the 'other group' can be taken as the sheep with which Santiago's life is intertwined. This is further echoed by the statement,

“He had always believed that the sheep were able to understand what he said. And so there were times when he read them parts of his books that made an impression on him, or when he would tell them of the loneliness or the happiness of a shepherd in the fields” (Coelho, *TA* 4). The sheep also sometimes becomes his teacher as he says to the daughter of the merchant “Well, I usually learn more from my sheep than from books” (Coelho, *TA* 5). Santiago is trying to establish his identity as a person who will pursue his dreams. He had chosen to become a shepherd so that he could travel, when his parents wanted him to become a priest. “Amongst us, the only ones who travel are the shepherds” (Coelho, *TA* 9). So he became a shepherd.

The sheep did not fail to teach him worldly lessons. In tending the sheep, he learnt the ways of the world. Santiago moves towards actualization. Here the need for self-actualization is not because he is deficient in something. Seeking is an inherent nature of humans arising out of curiosity and he travels towards seeking the unknown. It is to ensure the quality of life that he would like to lead. Self-actualization also entails looking inward, to ensure the quality of life to be lived. In this regard, the urge to travel will ensure Santiago a strengthening of the purpose of life. This is ensured by the choice of his vocation, to be a shepherd, unlike his father who could not realise his dream. “The boy could see in his father’s gaze a desire to be able, himself, to travel the world – a desire that was still alive, despite his father having had to bury it, over dozens of years, under the burden of struggling for water to drink, food to eat, and the same place to sleep every night of his life” (Coelho, *TA* 10). As Malcolm Payne puts it, human interaction with the social environment enables one to identify one’s expectations which in turn opens up new possibilities and varied opportunities. “The world was huge and

inexhaustible; he had only to allow his sheep to set the route for a while, and he would discover other interesting things” (Coelho, *TA* 11). Self actualisation can be achieved only by realising the environment in which the self functions. When Santiago let the sheep take the route of their choice, he respected the choice of the sheep and thereby respected the environment. Here happens the mutual relationship between the client and the practitioner. Both of them become the client and the practitioner at the same time, each in turn helping each other.

Next person whom he meets is the old woman of Tarifa. She is supposed to have the ability to interpret dreams. Santiago seeks her help to understand what the treasure could be. Interaction with the social environment becomes necessary to identify one’s expectations. Santiago’s expectation of finding the treasure needs the help of many people and the first person is the old woman, the interpreter of dreams. As Malcolm Payne feels, actualising the self can be realised in the environment in which the self operates. This can be achieved only if both are benefited. This is what happens when Santiago meets the old woman. She agrees to give a try to interpret his recurring dream, but also adds it is he who has to understand his dream. This accent is on the individual’s interest and motivation to translate his wishes to become a reality. Intervention of any kind and in particular, social work, will prove effective only with the consent of the client. An informed consent is essential for any change to happen. Santiago being the client now, has to will to execute his vision. The onus is on the client and the practitioner equally. And Santiago takes the lead. “Shepherd always takes his chances with wolves and with drought, and that’s what makes a shepherd’s life interesting” (Coelho, *TA* 13). The old woman tells him to go to the Egyptian pyramids and find the treasure. She adds

she cannot say about how he will get to Egypt, he has to find his way. This is indicative of the person's innate desire to explore the possibilities leading to actualisation.

His next encounter is with the old man, who introduces himself as Melchizedek, the King of Salem. This becomes the most significant meeting as it paves way for further understanding of the nuances of life which will lead him to finding and understanding what the treasure is. As self-actualisation implies understanding the real self to lead a better life, it also has in it the right way of interaction with the social environment and drawing from it the energy and "removal of barriers to participate in the social interaction" (Payne 161). This is a crucial aspect of social work involvement where the King of Salem dons the cap of the social worker enabling Santiago to interact with the society. The King talks about 'destiny' (Coelho, *TA* 22) which is what everybody always wants to achieve. Santiago learns the most important lesson that destiny also entails that circumstances may force one to give up the dreams. "But as time passes, a mysterious force begins to convince them that it will be impossible for them to realise their destiny" (Coelho, *TA* 22). This might appear to be a negative force, all the same it prepares one for pursuing the dream because, "when you want something, all the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it" (Coelho, *TA* 23). Here actualizing the self is achieved by realising the environment. His father, and the crystal merchant, whom he meets later and the baker are those people who could not realise their destiny as they lost themselves in the daily scurry of things and settling the chores of their family or society. At this point of time, the old man is the interventionist who steers Santiago to move forward in his realisation of self and thereby his dream. He further cites the baker as an example for those people who set aside their dreams and decide to give a thought to it later in their lives.

The baker decided to settle with the bakery, rather than travel, which was his dream, and spend a month in Africa when he becomes old. This is not an even compensation. Even the lavender which brushed his face seemed to contribute to the realisation of his dream. He felt jealous of the freedom of lavender and realised that he could have the same freedom. Nothing mattered to him from now and everything of the past were only “steps along the path of his destiny” (Coelho, *TA* 29). Another element of the environment that aids the realisation of the dream is the omens. That Santiago was able to sell his sheep for a fair price is considered a good omen. The old man speaks of the viability of the omens in one’s life. “God has prepared a path for everyone to follow. You just have to read the omens that he has left for you” (Coelho, *TA* 30). This conversation is followed by the fluttering of the butterflies between the old man and Santiago, and Santiago recalls his grandfather telling that butterflies are also a sign of good omen. The old man gives him ‘Urim’ the black stone signifying ‘yes’ and white stone ‘Thummim’ signifying ‘no’. His final advice to Santiago is the story of a young man who wanted to find the secret of happiness. It is “to see all the marvels of the world, and never to forget the drops of oil on the spoon” (Coelho, *TA* 34). Santiago took the cue, he would never forget the sheep. Another important lesson that Santiago learns is that he has to make his own decisions and not escape from one’s destiny. The next intervention is from the crystal merchant. The merchant too had the dream of going to Mecca, as it is the obligation of any true Muslim. But time passed looking after his shop. But the reason is where the intervention really happens. Achieving human potential is the aim of self-actualization. Humanistic practice aims at giving a free hand to the individuals to decide their choices in life (Payne 160). “You dream about your sheep and the Pyramids, but you’re different from

me, because you want to realise your dreams. I just want to dream about Mecca...But I'm afraid that it would be a disappointment, so I prefer just to dream about it... not everyone can see his dreams come true in the same way" (Coelho, TA 57). As Payne puts it, the quest for self-actualization does not mean one is not using the resources available towards achievement. Humanistic practice allows the person to decide on what and how they want to achieve and individual decisions are given the priority (159-160). This is seen with the crystal merchant. He is satisfied with being a merchant in Tangiers rather than planning to go to Mecca. His satisfaction in life is more important than anything else. Santiago gets permission to build the display in the shop to invite more customers so that the business would improve and he would earn more money. He also convinces the merchant to serve tea in crystal glasses. At this point of the story Santiago initiates the social work intervention. The merchant says he had not thought of expanding the shop because he did not know how to deal with change. He had been used to a sort of living and did not want to change. But now it appears change cannot be avoided. He has to accept the change in order to move on in life. He realises, "every blessing ignored becomes a curse" (Coelho, TA 60). As Santiago proceeds towards the Pyramids, comes into contact with the English man who wants to study alchemy and in search of an alchemist. The Englishman observed that in the process of discovering the Elixir of Life and the Philosopher's Stone, the alchemists spend long hours close to the fire and they learn the life lessons and purification of metals led them to purify themselves. Santiago realised what happened to him in the crystal shop. As he cleaned the crystals he could get himself out of the negative thoughts that were tying him down with doubts and confusions and he was "becoming more convinced that alchemy could be learned in

one's daily life" (Coelho, *TA* 85). The camel driver is yet another person who creates the needed difference of attitude. The war between the tribes of the desert was looming and posing a credible difficulty in the journey. But the camel driver seemed to take it in its stride. His lesson was to live life every moment. "I am alive...I'm interested only in the present...Life will be a party for you, a grand festival, because life is the moment we're living right now"(Coelho, *TA* 88-89) This is the echo of Coelho's views about life that he shared in an interview with Tian Wei for the CGTN when he said, "The world is. Try to be here and now." (Wei, 12.24) The next intervention was by Fatima. He considers meeting her as an omen that he had been waiting for all these days. Fatima gave him the assurance that he will find his treasure and so to follow the dream and also she will wait for him. The alchemist is another prevailing intervention. He teaches him that only through action one can learn. He also taught how to listen to his heart. "Because, wherever your heart is, that is where you'll find the treasure" (Coelho, *TA*135). His encounter with the desert, the sun and the wind help him get closer to the treasure. These are the elements of nature and they also 'conspire' to help Santiago to find the treasure. The sun shines brighter, the wind blows harder and everything is a part of the Whole. "It is true that everything has its destiny, but one day that destiny will be realised. So each thing has to transform itself into something better, and to acquire a new destiny, until, someday, the Soul of the World becomes one thing only" (Coelho, *TA* 158). Santiago was able to move forward in his journey towards his destination. The alchemist was happy that, "he had found his perfect disciple, and the chief, because that disciple had understood the glory of God" (Coelho, *TA* 161). He reached the Pyramids and his encounter with the Arabs revealed to him where the actual treasure was. As he was digging the sand, one Arab came back to him and said, he

too had the same dream recurring and in the dream he was told that the treasure lay under the sycamore tree. The boy understood the experience is the treasure and living the life is the alchemy that everyone wants to learn. This proves the statement, “Actualizing our self can be achieved only by actualizing the environment in which the self operates, and that can be achieved only by actualizing for the benefit of other participants in that environment, too” (Payne, 161). Another aspect of understanding the Self in social work intervention is spirituality. In social work intervention spirituality has to be taken in the practical sense. Principles of social work relating to spirituality are non-sectarian, which is, committed to serving people of all faiths, being secular. While trying to understand spirituality in relation to humanistic psychology, two aspects of spirituality have to be taken into cognizance. The first is spiritual as opposed to material. As Malcom Payne observes, “Spirituality is concerned with human life and experience that is different from, though perhaps connected to, physical experience” (173). The second is considering the spiritual aspect of the self as the cause of energy and course for life. This helps an individual to understand the world and its ecosystem. This in turn leads to arriving at a meaning to significant experiences that will make life intelligible. In this regard, the profession of social work concentrates on how influences, particularly social influences build meaning for people. Religion and spirituality help in identifying the overall meaning for life.

Jim Dudley, Professor Emeritus at UNC Charlotte and a licensed Clinical Social Worker at North Carolina, in his book *Spirituality Matters in Social Work* talks about how spirituality manifests in ways that are relevant to the helping process in social work. It is apparent as love, inner peace, wonder and as a higher power. He further adds, love is

an important portion of spirituality and it is also the ultimate goal of individuals in their relationships. It engages other concepts such as forgiveness, gratitude, other-centeredness, fulfilment and transcendence. Hope and the strength to cope up with and overcome anxiety can be gained if one experiences inner peace. One who is in a position to help others can benefit greatly if the person experiences inner peace. It becomes a feature of social work and both the social worker who is in the capacity to help the client to overcome anxiety and also the client who needs to be cured of this anxiety to lead a meaningful life will do well if they gain strength by developing inner peace. Being human is the most wonderful of all gifts. It makes one realise one's importance in this universe. Wonder is an emotion which aids in this. It helps a person to realise at a deeper level the miracles that happen in our lives and relationship between the universe and ourselves.

The social worker can help the client realise this beautiful emotion and help in discovering and exploring the wonder in the lives of the clients. Spirituality includes a belief in a Supreme Power to whom people turn to during times of distress. Prayer, meditation, worship and supportive activities in the place of worship can be appropriate topics between the social worker and the client to engage into a meaningful conversation leading towards a solution. In the novels of Coelho, it can be seen that each of the characters possess or cultivate or realise these feelings and engage each other towards fruition.

This aspect is reflected in the novels of Coelho. Religion and spirituality are not imposed upon. He says to Winfrey in the interview for Oprah Winfrey Network that spirituality is a reality that cannot be seen, but should not be ignored. In the novels it almost becomes a way of life. Santiago, in *The Alchemist* meets Melchizedek, the King of Salem as referred to in the Book of Genesis. He is supposed to have brought bread and

wine and blessed Abraham. It is he who shows Santiago the path he has to take, by instilling in him the hope and determination. The story of the man who wants to know the secret of life and happiness is the first lesson that Santiago learns. Just as the man should be mindful of the oil in the spoon and at the same time explore the beauty of the surroundings, he too has to be mindful of the surroundings and still has to move forward. He had realised this when he decided he cannot confine himself to a seminary to know about religion. “I couldn’t have found God in the seminary” (Coelho, *TA* 10). Later on during his stay with the crystal merchant, he understands another aspect of religion. The crystal merchant spoke to him about the five obligations that a Muslim should satisfy during his life time. The fifth was taking a pilgrimage to Mecca, the holy city. The merchant said that those who were poorer than him were able to fulfil this duty, but he had no inclination, rather, “I just want to dream about Mecca” (Coelho, *TA* 57). This makes religion very personal and reaffirms the earlier statement of Santiago. Each person’s perception of religion is different. “Not everyone can see his dreams come true in the same way” (Coelho, *TA* 57). Later, the meeting with the alchemist and the journey through the desert is a manifestation of deep spirituality. Santiago read all the books that the Englishman had given and he had understood that the world has a soul, and “whoever understands the soul can also understand the language of things” (Coelho, *TA* 87). The alchemist shows him his strength. This is displayed when he is urged to become the wind. Though fantastic, the spiritual aspect of being is impressed upon here. His conversation with the wind, the sun, “the hand that wrote all” (Coelho, *TA* 159) shows the spiritual aspect of the self, “and he saw that it was a part of the Soul of God. And he saw that the Soul of God was his own soul. And he, a boy, could perform miracles” (Coelho, *TA* 160). Thus it is seen here that

all the personalities do intervene and influence one other in order that each of them realise their destinies.

The Pilgrimage (TP) is as spiritual in its theme as *The Alchemist*. Though there are only two important characters, about whom the story, in the conventional sense of the term, is, the other personalities whom they come across do influence and intervene in the actualization of the dream of acquiring the sword to become the Magus. The story, as such, is about the author himself undertaking the pilgrimage in order to recover the sword which slipped from his hands at the moment of victory. Spirituality here is transcending reality to understand life in its manifold manifestation. The influence of all the characters from the Master, his wife, who initiate the pilgrimage, to the guide Petrus, the devil who tries to deceive him in the beginning, and the host of others along the journey assume the role of social workers whose intervention becomes necessary for Coelho to win the sword, to come to terms with life and benefit from an indispensable mediation. This is in keeping with the objectives of social work, to enhance empowerment of the individual in every possible way. During the ceremony of ordination as the Master of Order of RAM, when he would get the coveted sword as a mark of recognition and power to achieve, the sword is denied to him and given to his wife instead. The winning of the sword is the actualization for Coelho. He lost the sword because, “of your pride, you will have to seek it among simple people. Because of your fascination for miracles, you will have to struggle to recapture what was about to be given to you so generously” (Coelho, *TP* 3).

The process of self actualisation needs self-understanding. This can be achieved, as the Master had said, only by being open to every stimuli, the stimuli being all that a person comes across in his life. Each of them, people and situations mould a person. He has to

take the route of the common man on the strange Road to Santiago, to the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Spain to find the sword. In this endeavour he would have a guide, who will walk along with him. This journey becomes a spiritual journey and a journey towards actualisation as well. While undertaking the journey, he has to purge himself of all the impurities of any kind for actualisation to take place. He was sure that, “Even if I were not able to find my sword, the pilgrimage along the Road to Santiago was going to help me to find myself” (Coelho, *TP* 14).

The first lesson that he learns is to knock at the right gate. Mme. Lourdes, the first person whom he meets before embarking on the actual pilgrimage, initiates the journey with a prayer and necessary instructions. Social work intervention needs to be specific, so that the client will have the desired confidence. This is what Mme. Lourdes does. She prayed that he may be protected by the apostle San Tiago and instructed that he walks neither too fast nor too slow but according to the requirements of the Road. This echoes the idea of admiring the marvels of the world and at the same time not losing the conviction of life as advised by the King in *The Alchemist*. As he goes out to meet he is misled by the devil in the form of a gypsy and the real guide Petrus appears on the scene to save him from the devil. This is the first lesson that the pilgrim learns, to be aware of the snares around. This is the elementary rule in self-protection. The rituals, the exercises, that are known as RAM practices which Petrus teaches Coelho are intervention practices that help the author to understand the real meaning of possessing the sword. The first exercise, the seed exercise, is to feel the ecstasy of birth. The exercise is performed by sitting in the foetal position and imagining to be a seed sprouting. Just as the seed germinates and breaks open the earth to see the sunshine, it helps freeing “from the

burden that you have created in your life” (Coelho, *TP* 26). An important aspect of social work intervention to free the client from those unresourceful thoughts that become impediments to success. Once, when he was doing the exercise he felt ecstatic.

When I reached that point, with the gigantic sun shining there in front of me, I felt myself entering into a state of ecstasy. My memories of human life began to slowly dim, and I was no longer doing an exercise; I had become a tree. Don’t lose sight of your objective! He said, enraged. Don’t forget that you still have a great deal before you find your sword!

(Coelho, *TP* 34)

This is an instance of understanding the identity of the character. As Payne feels, personal identity is formed by two aspects. One is the subjective cognizance of us and the other is the social identity that is built through relationships. Petrus becomes the social identity because; it is from him that Coelho learns how to conduct himself. This is again the reiteration of not to lose sight of the achievement while living in the world. The third exercise, the speed exercise, that Petrus teaches is, to be aware of the surroundings. Imbibing the surroundings in a way determines a person’s social identity but spiritual identity as well. Coelho is given to understand the meaning of the Second Coming. When the two meet Father Jordi, the latter talks about the treasure that each one is trying to find. The different roads of which, the Jacobean, on which the pilgrimage is now happening is one of the four roads which people undertake in order to find their treasure. And wherever the treasure is, “there will be your heart” (Coelho, *TP* 43). And Petrus refers to the Second Coming, as, “It is always happening. That is the secret of your sword” (Coelho, *TP* 44). According to Father Jordi, the second coming is the manifestation of

faith and love that exists in the world. However many generations of men try to suffocate love, it continues to manifest. Just as the brother who murdered love found his retribution in being back to the church that his sister had built and continue the good work that was interrupted by him. This is the meaning of the Second Coming. Petrus explains that it is necessary to keep the dream alive.

People give up on dreams because they are “afraid to fight the good fight” (Coelho, *TP* 51). And Petrus teaches the third exercise, the cruelty exercise. Self-punishment like self-pity does not have a place in the realisation of the dream. It is this that causes spiritual pain. This can be dealt by changing the spiritual pain into physical pain. The exercise is done by pressing the fore finger on the cuticle of the thumb of the same hand till the pain becomes unbearable. “By transforming the spiritual pain into physical one, we can learn what harm it can cause us” (Coelho, *TP* 53). Another profound aspect of spirituality in the novel is the invoking of the Messenger. The Messenger, according to the RAM practice, is the personal devil. The devil is also an angel, but a rebellious one. If the angel is the shield that protects us, the devil is the sword. It fights and it can be used on any field. Thus it helps us gain knowledge. The physical forces of the world that surround us create a congenial atmosphere to achieve. The spiritual force that surrounds us, undeniably contributes to the same. There are two spiritual forces, an angel and a devil. The angel will always protect us. The devil also does the same by acting as a link between us and the world. According to Petrus, the messenger can be a counsellor and his friendship would be a benefit in the everyday dealings of the world. Social work intervention, more than anything else, should help people in living a fruitful life. Petrus, the guide, does everything for Coelho to understand the meaning of a well lived life, and

that is also implied in winning the sword. In the course of the journey, Coelho learns to exorcise the devil that was haunting an old woman's family. The local people considered it a curse. But Petrus showed that love can change everything. He taught Coelho the meaning of agape, which the feeling of love creates. Agape is the feeling of primal enthusiasm. It is intensified with the feeling of intuition. To Coelho, intuition is very important to understand the meaning of life. Petrus says "intuition is your secret side" (Coelho, *TP* 84). It defies logic and cannot be controlled easily like water, but at the same time, "little by little, in a non-violent way, is going to build a new relationship between you and your universe" (Coelho, *TP* 84). Petrus teaches The Water Exercise, The Arousal of Intuition. He also tells Coelho to trust intuition whenever it begins to manifest itself.

The Buried Alive exercise teaches to confront death in all its intensity. Like love, death is another feeling that no one can escape from. It is another manifestation of agape, because it teaches confrontation with one inescapable reality. It teaches one to accept death, not with resignation but with clarity and without fear. In this instance, Petrus helps Coelho to understand the reality. The next instance of Petrus as an interventionist is when they climb the waterfall. One aspect of spirituality is instilling faith in oneself. As Petrus urges Coelho to climb, he reinforces the faith that Coelho has on himself. "You have your own way of living your life, of dealing with problems, and of winning. Teaching is only demonstrating that it is possible. Learning is making it possible for yourself" (Coelho, *TP* 144). As they further proceed on the journey, which nears completion, Petrus has to leave Coelho. This is the stage when every individual's journey has to be alone. He has to find the power of doing, accomplishing things alone. He reaches a church following a sheep. There, after a ritual, he finds the sword in his hands. It becomes his responsibility to take the tradition further,

by helping another individual to find his sword, to help recognise the power within oneself to realise the duty assigned to him.

The Zahir is the story of discovering the writer in himself as he tries to find his disappeared wife. Zahir, the word comes from the Islamic tradition and it means that which cannot go unnoticed. It is someone or something which, having come into contact with them or it, gradually occupies our every thought, until nothing else can be thought of. According to the story, his wife is a war correspondent and one day she disappears from the scene giving rise to wild speculations. Has she left the famous Author, because by this time Coelho has become a famous and sought after writer? Did she have to pay the price for being a war correspondent? As Coelho goes through the ordeal of police enquiry, he settles down to his writing and book signing and fixing contracts with the publishers. After a book signing event, he meets Mikhail, who seems to know everything about his wife. His friend Marie in one of their conversations had said, “The energy of hatred won’t get you anywhere: but the energy of forgiveness, which reveals itself through love, will transform your life in a positive way” (Coelho, *TZ* 67). Jim Dudley, Prof Emeritus of Social work at UNC Charlotte, USA, who is also a licensed clinical social worker at North Carolina, when asked by Wills Citty in a discussion about spirituality and how it expresses itself in a person, he says

Possibly the most important specific descriptor of spirituality, love, is the ultimate goal of most people, including our clients, in their relationships. Often with help, their spirituality can offer many ways to more fully experience love in their lives based on engaging concepts like forgiveness, transcendence, gratitude, other-centeredness and fulfilment. (Dudley)

After his wife's disappearance, as he was getting back to the normal life of writing, book signing, and spending time with Marie, he decides to visit the Cathedral of Compostela in Spain on the special day, when the day of St. James falls on a Sunday. During the drive, because of the unexpected and heavy snowstorm, he had to change the route and visited the Cathedral of Santa Maria. There he realised, just as the Cathedral had withstood the changes that the devotees did to the structure from time to time through the centuries, and had withstood all, human beings also had to undergo structural changes which eventually gets them nearer to God.

We are all growing and changing shape, we notice certain weaknesses that need to be corrected, we don't always choose the best solution, but we carry on regardless, trying to remain upright and decent, in order to honour not to the walls or the doors or the windows, but to the empty space inside, the space where we worship and venerate what is dearest and most important to us". (Coelho, *TZ* 59)

He found his wife Esther, the Zahir, there. All personal experiences may not contribute to the spirituality in a person but it can definitely guide a person towards personal perfection and a satisfying understanding of the world. This is realised through his meeting and relationship with Mikhail. The meetings in the Armenian restaurant where people share their experiences and the meetings with the beggars all take Paulo Coelho towards spiritual realisation. Esther makes him understand that love is the only energy that helps man in experiencing the essence of himself. This, Esther says, she experienced on the war front. "I know that at any moment someone could lob a grenade into the place where we are sitting, and that makes me live, do you see? Really live, I mean, loving

every minute, every second. There is no room for sadness, doubts, nothing; there's just a great love for life" (Coelho, *TZ* 104). As Malcolm Payne says, "Spirituality may not be entirely about personal experience, but also about either achieving some personal perfection or personally satisfying understanding about the world" (181). Esther tries to make Coelho realise the efficacy of love and understanding. The meetings that Mikhail hosts at the Armenian restaurant also reiterate the same idea. The people share their feelings. These meetings work with the underlying principle of love and compassion. When Mikhail narrated the story of his country Kazakhstan, which was devastated by the war, his responsibility to bring back the lost glory of the land is evident. What was a fertile land once became a desert. Mikhail wants to show the world the transformative power of love. The meetings that he organises, the sharing that happens during the meetings restate the meaning of universal love. It becomes the positive energy that will save the world. Coelho's association with Mikhail and the fraternity that he allies himself with becomes the association like that of a social worker and the client, to lead the client towards a transformed life through spiritual intervention. Coelho as the husband did not get the blood stained bit of cloth from Esther, while even the beggars, whom she was acquainted with had got. Coelho has to be transformed to get that. By the time he reaches the place where Esther had been all the while, he had become a transformed person. In his book, *A Time to Rend and a Time to Sew*, the Persian sage says, "Love is a disease no one wants to get rid of. Those who catch it never try to get better and those who suffer do not wish to be cured" (Coelho, *TZ* 336). In the words of Coelho to Ariana Huffington for Huffington Post, "spirituality is not abstraction ... but it is honouring our lives." (Huffington, 12.01:1209)

By the River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept (BRP) is the story of two childhood friends who want to live their life together but are diffident because of different ideas of life. In the course of their coming together, they prove to be interventionists for each other. In humanistic social work caring more than helping is emphasised. Caring denotes focus on personal development leading to self-actualization and helping the other person also to achieve actualization. When Pilar receives the letter from her childhood friend to meet him she was not sure of what would happen to her. She was in love with him, but she doubted if she would be accepted. He is also in the same situation as to whether he will be accepted by her. He has become a seminarian and he doubted if he could lead a normal life filled with love and passion for the family. Neither of them understands, at this point of the story, that the love that they have for each other will take them through their life. But she responds to his invite and goes to Madrid. This is the first step towards attempting the unknown. As she says “One day I learned that he had begun to give lectures. . . And then he wrote to me that he was going to speak to a small group in Madrid- and he asked me to come” (Coelho, *BRP* 4). Social work practice deals with complexity in human life and tries to find an amicable solution to the complex issues that ordinary man and woman find themselves in. “Social work adds to this human and professional complexity because it aims to deal with the social as well as the personal, so it adds the complexity of trying to respond to families and broader social issues that might affect a client” (Payne 115). At the meeting, she was taken up by the crowd that had come to listen to him. The women were talking about his view on religion, which she did not know. His view of religion was different from the common vision of religion. “All of the great religions – including Judaism, Catholicism, and Islam are masculine. Men are in charge of the dogmas, men make the laws, and usually all

the priests are men. . . I have a different view of things. I believe in the feminine side of God” (Coelho, *BRP* 12).

This belief makes him different from the common view of God and religion. Brought up in a traditional Catholic family, feminine side of religion is not new to her. But the feminine side of God is something that she hadn't thought of so far. The woman who was all in admiration of him spoke about the love of the “Great Mother” (Coelho, *BRP* 15) and the mysteries connected with her. The spiritual aspect of religion, which is lost usually in the glorification of religion, is coloured. This is needed for her to understand him and his conviction towards religion. During the drive to the village, he talks about the stones, round like pebbles smoothed because of the feet of the travellers, labourers, pilgrims, explorers. The stones have changed, so do people. He tells all this that he learnt from the miracles of revelation. Though she could not comprehend the meaning of this statement then, she was a patient listener. Pilar starts growing spiritually. This togetherness will help her in understanding herself and the spiritual bond that unites them. When she realises that he indeed loves her and wants to marry her, she is able to understand this love and move beyond the mundane towards a sphere where love and understanding is without any reservations. As both of them move towards this understanding, they develop a sense of security which is a belief that a person is safe from any harm and exploitation. As the story proceeds it is found that they both give a sense of security to each other. When she met him, she doubted if he would respond to her love, given in that situation, from the crowd that came to listen to him and the popularity that he seemed to enjoy. Security also means having a free hand in making choices. This freedom becomes an important aspect in building resilience. He spoke to

her about the 'Other' that many times takes the upper hand in decision making. The 'Other' teaches what a person should be and how he should be in terms of the materialistic world order. Pilar is no exception when she feared what would happen to her if he was not in a position to accept her? Their meeting with a man who pleaded with him to cure his son made her insecure of his relationship. "Please!" said the man. I heard you were in the city. I need your help. It's my son.....My friend grasped for breath; I watched as he lowered his head and closed his eyes.....Go to the hotel Pilar, he said finally. Get some sleep. I won't be back until dawn" (Coelho, *BRP* 38). This incident makes Pilar muse on who her friend was and how her lifelong relationship with him would be? But once she gets the better of her 'Other', she is able to vision a life of peace and tranquillity. Her conversation with the Padre helps her realise not only the difference between religion and spirituality, but the meaning of sharing a spiritual life without any demands. She was surprised that the Padre also shared her view of being spiritual and serving God when he said, "I would not like to see him ordained a priest. He can serve God in other ways. It was hard for me to believe that he was telling me the truth. But he was" (Coelho, *BRP* 144). Humanistic psychology believes that free will exists and it is the individual's responsibility to bring into effective action this free will for growth and fulfilment. It is hereby that self-actualization is realised. In his interview with Wills City for the book *Spirituality Matters in Social Work*, Jim Dudley says tapping the client's spirituality is important in the helping process and it is also a way of empowering them. Both Pilar and her friend, though they love each other sincerely and want to commit themselves to life together, have their own doubts. He said Christ came down to earth as an ordinary carpenter, "to show us that - no matter what we do- everything can lead us to

the experience of God's love" (Coelho, *BRP* 166). He added, "I want to talk about the other kind of love, the love that a man and a woman share, and in which there are no miracles" (Coelho, *BRP* 167). It is not as easy as said to decide the path of life when confronted with a choice and not knowing the best of them. The Padre spoke about the difficulties and the sacrifices that one had to make in order to live a spiritually fulfilling life and at the same time accepting a family with all one's being without any compromise. They had to understand that love for the Lord becomes meaningless unless one is able to love the family. The Padre has no answer when Pilar asks him the reason for him choosing the Holy Orders. It is a crucial time for Pilar to choose - to let him serve the Holy Mother outside the world of the family or win him for herself. She decides the latter and she prays "Our Lady, give me back my faith. May I also serve as an instrument of work. Give me the opportunity to learn through my love, because love has never kept anyone away from their dreams" (Coelho, *BRP* 162). To develop the security and resilience that is needed to live a full life, as it is imperative when both have to acknowledge each other in their lives, they have let go of the past. This is what Pilar does when she makes him break the glass. As Malcolm Payne puts it, interventions are needed when issues arise. (Payne 167) It is their life issue and the immediate apprehension for both of them is if they will lose each other. But when Pilar makes him break the glass she helps him prevail over his fear. It is, as she says, "a symbolic gesture. Try to understand that I have broken things within myself that were much more important than a glass, and I'm happy I did. Resolve your own internal battle, and break the glass" (Coelho, *BRP* 169). She helps him with understanding and breaking the glass is an exploration in breaking away from conventional ethos and paving a new path. As both of them grew to recognise their love, she understood his commitment

towards society and was ready to go on board with him. But the ordeal is not over. He had bargained his gift of performing miracles and healing the sick for the ordinary life that he would live with her. This was not what she had wanted. She could not imagine ,

”the multitude of the sick who would die, the families that would suffer, the miracles that would never be performed, the smiles that would no longer grace the world, and the mountains that would remain in place” (Coelho, *BRP* 195). Both of them move on to the last step of social work intervention. Having confronted with a situation, which sometime before was expected but at the present was not what they or at least Pilar had not expected, left them with a deep turbulence. If they have to find themselves again they have to leave each other so that they will be able to join the dots again. She left him and found herself in a convent where she was nursed back to health, both mental and physical. In the convent, she is given a pile of papers to write down what she felt in her heart. This helps her in reframing her thoughts that will in turn aid her in life planning and finding opportunities in a new situation. This, in social work intervention is to help the clients who need a way out of the situation and become aware of the situation. As she put her thoughts on paper, she realised the fog was getting cleared. Her friend comes back to her to tell he chose her over his gift by The Virgin, because she is also a gift.

He quotes the Psalm137, “On the banks of the rivers of Babylon...” The Psalmist promises that he will not forget the gift, to get the lost land by faith. He assures her that the Goddess will help them find their path together. As for the gift, he promises that The Virgin has always given him a second chance and they will put that into service of humanity together. Pilar and her friend found themselves in a spiritual crisis. Spiritual crisis, to Coelho, is a new way of seeing life, as he elaborates upon this in an interview in

Stirner's Retrowave. Pilar and her friend understood that they are accountable to each other and life expects a flexibility in its approach as it is complex. Paradoxically, it is the complexity that makes one flexible to attain the best solution to life's Gordian knot.

In the author's note of *The Devil and Miss Prym* (TDMP), Coelho says, the world is beset with the division of Good and Bad. When asked about the problem of good and evil in this world in an interview by Brian Draper, Paulo Coelho answered that the battle between the good and the evil is a cosmic battle. The battle is proposed by God and there is no escape from it, we all live by it and experience it in every facet of our life, and adds "I can't believe that there is a force as powerful as God" (Draper). He also added that he believes in eternity and all of us live in eternity. Further, in the author's note of the novel, he says "it is clear that from its very inception the human race has been condemned to exist within the eternal division, always moving between those two opposing poles. So here we are, afflicted by the same doubts as our ancestors" (Coelho, *TDMP* ix). This is the story of Chantal who is destined to live in a nonchalant little village, Viscos, with only two hundred and eighty one inhabitants. It appears life is a smooth flow with the people going about doing their businesses. Not much happened in everyday life and everyone knew everyone and anything unusual would not go unnoticed. Chantal wanted to break this monotony of life and wanted to go out into the world to a bigger town where she thought she could experience excitement. Though life seemed to be safe and secure for nothing, good or bad, there was a turbulent past. Viscos had withstood the attacks by the strangers and finally only when Ahab, once a fearsome person, but transformed into a strict but a benevolent leader erected a gallows in the village square, did people transform and resisted doing anything that would harm others. Thus Viscos was a village where

people felt no apparent distress or anguish or impairment or ruin. But deep down inside the devil seems to be waiting for an opportunity to catch 22 situations. This happens with the arrival of the stranger to the village. Humanistic social work perceives give and take of social support as a fundamental aspect of human beings.

A society, if it has to confront the good and the bad which is inevitable, has to be built upon relationships. The coming of the stranger becomes the required eventuality to make this realisation happen. The stranger had come to the village to test and find out the answer to the eternal question if men are good or bad. He chose this nonchalant village of Viscos with two hundred and eighty one inhabitants. And another reason for Viscos to be the chosen land is it had been transformed into a place where people live with a fear of punishment. The fear of punishment in due course changed into a way of life. Now since everybody knew everybody, people did not commit any crime. Chantal wanted to make sure to herself, if the proposition set in front of her was true. Her conversation with Berta, the widow who believes that her husband guides her through their conversations, is to discern this fact. Berta reiterates that the people of Viscos did not do anything to change for, “perhaps it’s a way of achieving peace. But they all think they have everything under their control, when, in fact, they control nothing” (Coelho, *TDMP* 49). Berta contributes to the freewill of Chantal. As humanistic psychology ascertains the importance of freewill and personal responsibility for growth, it also gives space for developing self and spirituality. For Berta the belief that her husband is watching over her and perceiving his presence beside her, is enabling her to live her life committed to God. For everybody, she is just a widow having nothing to do with for the rest of her life. But for her, keeping watch over the small village, sitting on the porch is purposeful. She sat there watching

over people come and go as her husband had warned that Viscos might be destroyed. The reason would not be earthquakes but something different. His love for the land had made him apprise his wife of the impending danger though he knew not of what kind. So Berta kept watch over the village.

When the stranger entered the village, she knew it was the Devil. And she also could see Chantal walk accompanied by an angel and the devil on either side. So she deems it her duty to protect the village from destruction. She will realise her self-actualization only in this way. Whatever the villagers might think of her, she takes upon herself this responsibility of saving the village. It is this attitude that made her a willing target. When the villagers had decided that she would be the scapegoat and came to take her to the square where she would be 'sacrificed' for the good of the village, she knew it but accepted. This is how she keeps up her self-esteem. Humanistic social work is principled upon the interaction of people with their social environment to fulfil the possibility of achieving self-actualization. When Berta submits herself to the murder, she does so not because she considers herself weak to fight against the village nor does she consider herself a sacrificial goat. But it is because she realises, just as her husband lived for, she should become an agency for the empowerment of the village. She also believed in the goodness of humans. She becomes a developed self and her actualization benefits other participants of her society as well.

When Miss Prym is shown the gold bars and given the proposition to win them, she at first is tempted. She dreams of a life in a big city, with more people and engagement and entertainment. "She was holding her dream in her hands, the thing she had always longed for, and which a miracle had set before her. Here was the opportunity

to free herself from all those identical days and nights in Viscos... That moment there in the forest was the most important moment of her entire life” (Coelho, *TDMP* 30). She also weighs the pros and cons of this state. It appears to be a catch 22 situation. The cons seem to outweigh the pros. She might be caught in the legal maze when she tries to exchange for money or any other sort of return. . She is now gripped with fear “fear of setting off along a road heading who knows where, the fear of a life full of new challenges, the fear of losing everything that is familiar” (Coelho, *TDMP* 34).

Her conversation with Berta becomes the intervention that is required to overcome this dilemma. Berta tells her the story of Ahab when he sent his son to buy salt paying only the worth, not a penny more and a penny less. When asked the reason, Ahab replies, “In the world there was only very small amount of injustice abroad in the world, but everyone who came afterwards added their portion, always thinking it was very small and unimportant, and look where we have ended up today” (Coelho, *TDMP* 49). Berta helps her slowly to regain herself, her actualized self, by recounting the story of Ahab. As Malcolm Payne puts it, while deliberating on developing self and spirituality in the practice of humanistic social work, there are two aspects of our identity. One, the personal consciousness as human beings which is within oneself and the other, that is built through relationships with others in the society. It is our social identity. Berta tries to keep up her social identity by keeping watch over the village which is the utmost that she can do. At the appropriate time she warns the village through Miss Pym of the impending danger. This is the social responsibility that she has taken upon herself to attain self-actualization in her own little way. When Miss Pym challenges the stranger

and takes the right side on the day of the execution of Berta, against the whole village, she reaches the highest potential of self-actualization.

As they help each other in developing themselves, realising themselves not only in the worldly sphere but in the spiritual sphere as well. The same is the case with the stranger. He came to Viscos to find out if humans are inherently good or bad. His experience has caused this doubt. Being a good man had left him without a family. If he is able to entice the people with gold to commit the sin of murder, he would be convinced that humanity is bad inherently. This is in opposition to Ahab's contention that every man should contribute not to the destruction of another, but to help each other in living an honest life.

Though the devil seemed to be winning at times, the church, the prayers told for whatever reason, the concern that people have with each other is shown when the community falls behind Miss Pym, when she refuses to pull the trigger. The Priest who had been serving the humanity of Viscos, thereby serving God had been in Viscos for more than twenty years. He had been given the charge of this small town, he understood, because of jealousy by another influential priest. Nevertheless, he had been serving the people of Viscos as their spiritual Father to the best of his ability. When the proposition fell before him he was ready to offer himself as a sacrifice. He was one among the three, Berta and Miss Pym, being the other two, who lived alone. He had no worries, if he had to be the chosen one. The landlord least thought the Priest would offer himself. That he wanted to save Viscos, be it out of his own good will or the fear of the Lord helps him in realising himself. This deepens the spiritual aspect of his life as well. He knew he was sent to Viscos out of envy. But he had done his job in Viscos well. People were God

fearing, attended the Mass every Sunday, listened to his sermon and respected him. In that nonchalant village his services were appreciated. "His role", he thought, "was to be the instrument of Evil; that was the greatest act of humility he could offer to God" (Coelho, *TDMP*151). The Mayor, the landlord, everybody in Viscos, when they agree to play a part in the game between God and the Devil, realise their full potential as they participate in the Devil's mission of making people succumb to temptation. Even while they have their justification for this heinous crime, they are able to overcome this powerful desire to become rich. They are aware that they are a part of the community and their role in committing the sin would weaken it. As Ahab had said, every small sin adds up to a larger one. Their small indulgence would totally upset the strong faith that they had built up over the years. When they file out one by one, on the day of the execution, they are strengthened spiritually. It happens because of the community attachment that they believe in. One of the important characteristics in humanistic social work is being aware of one's identity and self-care. While they identify themselves with the community, their self and spirituality are maximised to the optimum. They realise their spiritual strength. They take the personal responsibility to remain as a community driven towards it. In the wager between the good and the evil, again, the evil is the loser.

Veronika Decides to Die (VDD) is another affecting but redeeming story of Veronika who decides to die because she finds life purposeless. Veronika had decided to commit suicide because she feels life has no purpose. She has two reasons for this decision. She could not bear to live a mundane life and grow old. She also convinces herself on the spiritual line though she does not have any great belief in God. "Unlike many people, this had not been the great inner debate of her life" (Coelho, *VDD* 7).

According to her God only created confusion, poverty and injustice. At twenty four, she felt she had experienced everything in life and was convinced that death would end everything. In Veronika, the issue of choosing death because there was nothing better to do, is not as simple an issue as she makes it appear to be. She needs social work intervention to save her from this disastrous decision. Her relationship with her family and others is a definite problem for her. Her mother's advice to get married even if she did not love the person, and later in life finding out that the person's infidelity, but still living with him for the sake of the children, all these have created an unfair judgement about life for her. "It was best to put an end to everything now, while she was still brave and healthy enough to die" (Coelho, *VDD* 22). Veronika has had a very unsatisfactory life experience and it is one of the aims of humanistic social work to help such people to see possibilities of recovering faith in life and live with satisfaction. After the unsuccessful attempt at suicide she ends up at Villette, "the place from which no one had ever escaped, where genuine madmen- sent there by the courts or by other hospitals- mingled with those merely accused of madness or those pretending to be mad" (Coelho, *VDD* 12). Zedka, another inmate of Villette, was also not satisfied with her life. After marriage, leading a conventional life with a supposedly loving husband, did not suit her. She goes to her lover and after living with him for three years had to come back to Slovenia due to political reasons. She fell sick and was diagnosed with depression. Though the husband seemed to put up with her tantrums for some time, she ended up at Villette. Veronika confides to Zedka that she is not mad. And Zedka gives a classic answer, "Anyone who lives in their world is mad. Like schizophrenics, psychopaths, maniacs. I mean people who are different from others" (Coelho, *VDD* 30). She cites

Einstein, Columbus, Edmund Hillary and the Beatles as examples. All these are people who struck a new path and were happy about it. They had not worried about the criticisms of the world. She wishes that this depression should be cured but “I want to continue being mad, living the way I dream” (Coelho, *VDD* 31). Mari, another inmate whom Veronika is influenced by, is a lawyer by profession. But her sudden fits of headaches finally landed her in this place. Eduard, a young schizophrenic, has visions of Paradise, which obviously was considered as an imbalanced mental state. All the four, around whom the story revolves, serve to be interventionists to each other.

Humanistic social work recognises creativity in life and service. It is observed in the story that whenever anyone finds themselves in a desperate situation, they are able to find comfort in others. Creativity is something that one loves to do innately without any compulsion whatsoever. When Veronika crawls into the bed of Zedka to find out if she was really mad as the nurse had said, she finds Zedka to be very friendly and matter of fact. Her words were so assuring that she also decided to play mad as Zedka was also doing, “They think they’re normal, because they all do the same thing. Well I’m going to pretend that I have drunk from the same well as them” (Coelho, *VDD* 32). Zedka’s astral journey helps her in this pretension. In order to overcome depression, she is given an overdose of insulin when she is able to perceive a different world where there is no pretension or snobbery. Her astral journeys help her understand the pretentious world around her and this cognizance makes her a perfect friend to Veronika. When Veronika vomited profusely she was told that she had a problem in the heart and had seven or so days of life. The empathy shown by the nurse was reassuring to her. She laid her head on the nurse’s lap and cried bitterly letting out all her hatred. The nurse lets her understand

the reason for hating others. It is the inherent fear of being wrong that makes one hate themselves which turns towards others too. It is also cowardice that refuses to acknowledge that we can be wrong sometimes and it is perfectly alright to be wrong. As humanistic psychology concedes with free will and personal responsibility, Veronika moves ahead in her actualization as she says, “I wanted to kill someone I hated. I didn’t know that other Veronikas existed inside me, Veronikas that I could love” (Coelho, *VDD* 59). She hated her mother who was an embodiment of love and sacrifice, who gave the best to her daughter while she satisfied herself with the mended clothes. She hated her father because he was her best company while young and was a charming person. She hated him for being so. She hated the library with books and the subjects she had to learn.

When the nurse opens the door and allows Veronika to go, she has the free will to do so. She goes to the lounge and plays the piano. When she started to play it was not music, but “a mad cacophonous, jangled chord” (Coelho, *VDD* 63). As she pounded on the keys again and again, she felt a release of her hatred until it passed away completely. Accountability is an important feature in humanistic psychology and playing the piano was in a way being accountable to the unsolicited hatred. She had realised the hatred that was gnawing at her all the while. When the nurse allows her to go, it becomes an intervention where Veronika’s self finds development. Once hatred is cleansed out of her system, she is ready for spiritual development also. Zedka in turn finds in Veronika a confidant who can understand her without any reservations. That is the reason she opens up to Veronika and advises her to be a Roman in Rome. “Don’t waste your energy. Save your strength, if you want to get what you asked me” (Coelho, *VDD* 32). Veronika’s association with Mari led her to understand the spirituality within her. She too taught

Veronika to be her usual self and understood the real 'I' "It's what you are, not what others make of you" (Coelho, *VDD* 92). Mari was a lawyer and she was utterly dissatisfied with the way law and justice was working in the world. She felt law cannot be her relative. According to her God had purposely planted the apple tree in Paradise and knew that Adam and Eve would eventually eat the forbidden fruit when they are done with the passive, everything available life. God punished Adam and Eve arbitrarily without giving them the right to appeal. But here in Villette nothing was wrong because it is a madhouse. They could do whatever they wanted as if their rights were sanctioned. Only outside the walls of Villette were the right and the wrong. Eduard was in Villette because he had visions of Paradise. He was a schizophrenic to the world, but he was able to envision a paradise which was his, but definitely not in accordance with the world that reasons out all actions.

Each of these four people help each other by just recognising without any inhibition. They are bonded by simple love that does not expect anything in return. When they empathise with the other, they understand, "There are things in life, though, which however we look at them, are valid for everyone. Like love, for example" (Coelho, *VDD* 146). They are to be themselves. When she played the piano for Eduard, Veronika realised not only this pure love, beyond the physical aspect that is attached to it, but also her love for herself. Developing self and spirituality is an important feature in humanistic social work. As Malcolm Payne puts it, there are two elements for this issue. The first is an individual's interpretation of the world and how it affects his thinking and his reaction to it. The second is how they derive energy and direction to live their life. Spirituality allows them to ascribe meaning to important experiences which makes their lives

meaningful. This spiritual awareness leads to accountability for one's actions. This leads to the achievement of intelligibility of the world, about us and others. Each of these characters are able to achieve this finally. When Veronika leaves Vilete, she does not have the fear of death. She had lived, wanting to die and expecting death. They have been cured of the vitriol, the poison - the dissatisfaction in life - that was creating havoc in them. Vilete proved to be a place where they could arrive at this understanding. And when they leave they leave as transformed persons. Mari's letter to the inmates holds good for all of them. "The danger of an adventure is worth a thousand days of ease and comfort" (Coelho, *VDD* 182). They followed their free will, took personal responsibility for their lives, without blaming anybody or any institution and thus achieved self-actualization. By being accountable to themselves and none other, they develop security and resilience.