

A PSYCHOANALYTICAL STUDY OF ANXIETY DISORDERS IN PAULO COELHO'S VERONIKA DECIDES TO DIE.

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Abstract:

The objective of the paper is to examine the portrayal of mental health conditions, including depression, schizophrenia, and panic disorder, in the novel Veronika Decides to Die, authored by Paulo Coelho. The research examines the circumstances that contribute to the development of anxiety disorders in several characters in the novel, as well as the symptoms that these illnesses manifest in them, using psychoanalytical theories formulated by Sigmund Freud, Karl Abraham, and Edward Bibring. The research examines the existential elements of the novel, along with the recurring themes of despair, freedom, fate, loneliness, and insanity that emerge throughout the narrative. An in-depth examination of anxiety disorders in Paulo Coelho's Veronika Decides to Die, this study delves into the author's own encounters and offers a meticulous interpretation of these experiences. More specifically, it will discuss Paulo Coelho's influence on the narrative.

Keywords: psychoanalysis, anxiety disorders, depression, schizophrenia, panic disorder, Veronika Decides to Die, Paulo Coelho

Paulo Coelho, the writer under investigation has personally experienced the atmosphere of asylum and in *Veronika Decides to Die*, Coelho has tried to recreate his experiences within a beautiful story. This paper will examine mental health problems such as depression, schizophrenia, and panic disorder in various characters in the novel *Veronika Decides to Die*.

Depression occurs at a point when a person can no longer avoid the fact that his life is without any significance. It is an attempt to obstruct the feeling that he is himself responsible for the lack of significance in his life. The initial work on depression (then called as melancholia) was done by Sigmund Freud, and later on, Karl Abraham, a German

psychoanalyst also based his seminal work on anxiety disorders such as depression. Most of the deviations from their work are either expansion or clarification of the same, there is no radical departure from the basic theory. Sigmund Freud in Mourning and Melancholia (1917) explains melancholia with the help of clinical experience. He draws a parallel between his clinical experience and the natural state of mourning to discover the various psychological mechanisms of depression. Mourning, according to Freud, is a natural reaction to the loss of an actual love-object but melancholia or depression is different state. In the state of melancholia the patient cannot tell about his love-object consciously, in other words, he has no idea what it is about the love-object that he has lost. Freud in Civilization and its Discontents explains the causes of depression "[when] any situation that is desired by the pleasure principle is prolonged, it only produces a feeling of mild contentment" (264). The modern civilization, according to Freud, has excessive availability of pleasure, every demand is met with minimum effort especially in developed countries. Because of the easy and prolonged exposure to pleasure, the rate of depression is high in developed countries. The second explanation for depression are three types of suffering undertaken by a man. The first one is caused by the body itself via disease and ageing, the second one is caused by external factors e.g. nature. The third one and the most torturous of all is caused by a person's relationship with other people. The first two types of suffering have to be dealt with because nothing can be done about them but the third type of suffering is the result of the state of civilization. He explains this with the help of the tripartite structure of personality: Id, Ego, and Superego. With the development of the Superego, the instinctual demands of the Id get repressed. Superego is the internalized representation of values and morals, it forbids many hedonistic demands of Id. If one pretends not to follow the instructions of Superego he or she can surely be expelled from society because every society has its own values and norms. If a person wants to fulfil his sex instinct he has to gratify this desire after his marriage only because all the major religions of the world forbid pre-marital sex. Any person who has imbibed proper religious values and societal norms will eventually feel guilty after pre-marital sex. The superego will intervene, it will evoke guilt within a person. Every impulse and desire is to be satisfied at an appropriate time and therefore, at the right point of marriage, the ego intervenes and a person consummates his marriage because now the fulfilment of this instinct is according to the moral lines drawn by the superego. Depression is sometimes a revolt against the acceptance of such societal and religious rules of civilization. Sex is not the only impulse of Id; food, shelter, and a right to pursue one's passion is also a part of the instinctual reservoir of the mind. Many children want to pursue a career in fine arts and humanities but they are forced to take up other streams. This kind of situation frustrates a person and raises a conflict between the demands of Id and superego. While the superego is happy in doing what the guardians decide, the Id wants to take control of the situation and fulfil its passion. Depression is a consequence of such frustrating circumstances. It is a silent psychic revolt against the society. Karl Abraham also explained

depression and its causes by delineating on the five stages of psychosexual development: oral, anal, phallic, latency and genital. According to Abraham, a child must successfully cross these stages of psychosexual development to be healthy psychologically. A fixation at any of these stages can persist in future as neurosis or depression. Karl Abraham in *Melancholia and Obsessional Neurosis* argues that the depressed or melancholic person is a result of a fixation at the oral stage of development. Yet another reason for depression could be early repeated love disappointments in life. The third factor causing depression could be a disappointment in love prior to the experiencing of Oedipus complex, wherein the mother is the sole love-object.

Edward Bibring is yet another psychoanalyst who is also closely related to Freud. In Bibring's model of depression, he argues that it is the fixation of helplessness in the early stages of an individual's life which leads to depression in adults. An individual's wish to be loved and to love, when not fulfilled at early stages of development results in a feeling of longing and helplessness, this feeling due to further disappointments in life resurfaces in adults as depressive symptoms.

Paulo Coelho's novel *Veronika Decides to Die* (1998) is a poignant novel about Veronika, a woman in her mid-twenties. Despite having a seemingly good job and a perfect life she decides to commit suicide, as the narrator informs us, "she wasn't killing herself because of a lack of love. It wasn't because she felt unloved by her family, or had money problems or an incurable disease" (Coelho 22). After coming from her regular job at a library she consumes sleeping pills to end her life. But God had some other plans for her she doesn't die and wakes up in a mental asylum, Villette, wherein she finds herself tied to a bed with a lot of needles put on her arms and tube going down her throat, "It wasn't hell,

because she felt really cold and she was aware of plastic tubes coming out of her nose and mouth" (Coelho 25). Dr. Igor, the doctor in charge at Villette, "the most famous and much-feared lunatic asylum" (Coelho 11) informs her that the pills had done her more damage than anybody could have thought of and now her "heart was irreversibly damaged, and soon it will stop beating altogether" (Coelho 26). She had only a few days left to her life. The knowledge of the final days of her life makes her see things differently. In the hospital, she talks to many people and in turn, they also talk to her. While few make fun of her, others genuinely advise her and become her well-wisher. Veronica meets Zelda who has clinical depression. She meets Mari and Edward as well who have been diagnosed with panic disorder and schizophrenia respectively. Veronika's five-day stay at the hospital makes her fight for her life.

I was beginning to accept that the meaninglessness of life was no one's fault but mine. I wanted to see the main square in Ljubljana again, to feel hatred and love, despair and tedium—all those simple, foolish things that make up everyday life, but that give pleasure to your existence. (Coelho 86)

Most parts of the novel deals with death, freedom, fate, isolation and insanity which also makes this novel existential in theme.

As a teenager Paulo Coelho was "convinced that he would invest all his beliefs and energy in what he saw not as a vocation but as a profession- that of being a writer" (Morais 75) much to the dislike of his parents, who would have rather have him study engineering. Fernando Morais in A Warrior's life: A Biography of Paulo Coelho reports that when Coelho was sixteen years old "he was among the least successful students in his class in the first year of his science studies and at the end of the year he once had scraped through with a modest 5.2 average" (69) and so on the eve of Christmas in 1963, his mother decided to take him to a psychiatrist or a nerve specialist, "Terrified by what that might mean-what in God's name was a nerve specialist?- he locked himself in his room and scribbled a harsh, almost cruel account of his relationship with his family" (Morais 69). After visiting the psychiatrist Coelho wrote in his diary, "Yesterday I went to the psychiatrist. It was just to meet him no important comment to make" (Morais 70). The account given in the novel about the mental hospital is inspired from the authors own experiences. During his stay at the hospital he observed and talked to patients with mental disorders. Morais in A Warrior's Life records the excerpts from Paulo Coelho's personal dairy to illustrate his experiences at the hospital in the following words:

The people here like to show me new things. I'm fond of them really. Roberto is always showing me things—a way of calculating someone's age, a voltmeter, etc. Flávio is obsessed with knowing important people. There are endless interesting cases here. One man is always sniffing his food, another doesn't eat anything for fear of getting fat, a third talks only about sex and sexual aberrations. My room- mate is lying down, staring into space, looking fed up. They're playing a love song on the radio. I wonder what he's thinking about. Is he desperately searching for himself or is he just drifting aimlessly, lost and defeated?

I talk to some of the other patients. Some have been here for three months, others nine; q still others have been here for years. (120)

Paulo like Veronika in the novel has escaped the asylum not only once but twice. The chapter will also draw a parallel between the life of the author and *Veronika Decides to Die* to establish a psychobiographical link.

The story begins on 11 November 1997, "Veronika decided that the moment to kill herself had-at last! – arrived" (Coelho 1). The opening chapter introduces the main protagonist Veronika as a young woman who in all her senses puts out four packs of sleeping pills with the singular motive to give an end to her life on a "lovely Ljubljana afternoon" (Coelho 9). Instead of mixing all four packs into the water, she figures out to consume them one by one, just in case if she wanted to give life a second chance. She gives an account of the two reasons that made her choose death in the following words:

The first reason: everything in her life was the same and, once her youth was gone, it would be downhill all the way, with old age beginning to leave irreversible marks, the onset of illness, the

departure of friends. She would gain nothing by continuing to live; indeed, the likelihood of suffering only increased.

The second reason was more philosophical: Veronika read the newspaper, watched TV, and she was aware of what was going on in the world. Everything was wrong, and she had no way of putting things right- that gave her a sense of complete powerlessness. (Coelho 6)

Veronika believes herself to be perfectly sane but on closer examination she is actually suffering from depression partially of an existential type. Existentialists view an emotional disorder such as depression as a consequence of the difficulties faced in coping with freedom. They believe that a man is essentially free and is therefore responsible for his quality of life from moment to moment. People who try to escape or deny this responsibility are likely to lead an inauthentic life. Existential depression is the end of a chain of events to escape the recognition that a person is responsible for his own life. Veronika in her reasons to end her life states that she wanted to end the "likelihood of suffering" (Coelho

6) but as existentialists would say that life is inheritably meaningless and that one has to bear the suffering brought about by this fact. To end her own life is also a choice that she makes, it is a matter of free will wherein she could have chosen otherwise.

Freud's Explanation on Causes behind Depression or Melancholia

At Villate, Veronika gets a chance to look back at her childhood memories. In a conversation with Dr. Igor, in which he tries to explain to her that normal is relative. Behaviour which is acceptable to the majority of the people is considered normal. From time to time people show acceptability towards various things which were earlier unacceptable, therefore, the entire concept of normal is relative. Veronika reminiscences about her childhood wherein she was forced to learn piano by her mother, but as soon as her passion started to become her vocation her mother intervened and forced her to study law as it would land her into a good profession and would increase the chances of getting a good husband. She had to follow the footsteps of the majority of people otherwise she would have been unacceptable to her parents as well the society. But even after doing what she was told by her mother, she ended up working in a mediocre job at the library.

Veronika had known since childhood that her true vocation was to be a pianist.

This was something she had felt ever since her first lesson, at twelve. Her teacher had recognized her talent too and had encouraged her to become a professional. But, whenever she had felt pleased about a competition she had just won and said to her mother that she intended to give up everything and dedicate herself to the piano, her mother would look at her fondly and say:

'No one makes a living playing the piano, my love.' 'But you were the one who wanted me to have lessons.'

To develop your artistic gifts, that's all. A husband likes that kind of thing in a wife; he can show you off at parties. Forget about being a pianist, and go and study law, that's the profession of the future.' (Coelho 85)

Historically, psychoanalysis believed that depression was the result of anger turned inward, how this happens can be explained by a scenario in which parents who are neurotic, demanding, lacking in warmth and inconsiderate to the wishes of their children create a hostile world, for their children. In this hostile world, the child is left alone, confused, helpless and angry. The child, however, is not in a position of power, he is entirely dependent on his parents in other words, his parents are his means to survival. So, the anger which he should have directed towards them is directed towards his own self. He has the feeling that he is incompetent or a bad person on inside because he hates his parents but on outside he has to put up a façade to convince his parents that to follow their wish is his responsibility and his happiness also lies within their joy. He has to meets the standards to find acceptability and love. The inner conflict between the belief that "I can never be good enough" and the desire to be good enough to seek approval of parents can generate anxiety which can become depression. Veronika had also been in the same conflict all her life, after paying the price of her dreams to seek parental approval she studied law "went to the university, got good grades, but ended up working as a librarian" (Coelho 85). She felt like a complete loser because she was not able to fulfil her own dreams as well as the dreams of her parents. She suffered from both ends and her daily routine was a façade to convince her parents that she was still acceptable. This neurotic need for approval from people around her and a constant belief of their disapproval was one of the many reasons that led

Veronika to show symptoms of Introjective depression. Rashmi Nemade, Natalia Reiss and Mark Dombeck in *Psychology of Depression-Psychodynamic Theories* argue that

Introjective depression occurs when a person feels that they have failed to meet their own standards or the standards of important others and that therefore they are failures. Introjective depression arises from a harsh, unrelenting, highly critical superego that creates feelings of worthlessness, guilt and a sense of having a failure. A person with introjective depression experiences intense fears of losing approval, recognition, and love from the desired object.

The piano at Villate had set her thoughts in motion, it had brought back a memory which she had repressed for so many years. Her failure of becoming a pianist was always at the back of her dull life of a librarian.

Her parents would still have loved her, but, afraid of hurting them, she had not dared to pay the price of her dream. That dream was now buried in the depths of her memory, although sometimes it was awoken by a concert or by a beautiful record she happened to hear. Whenever that happened, though, the feeling of frustration was so intense that she immediately sent it back to sleep again. (Coelho 85)

Her unrelenting superego had produced an unconscious desire for punishment which had led her straight to the thoughts of committing suicide and ending her life while she was young and healthy. Donald Carveth in *Civilization and Its Discontents—A Kleinian Re- View* differentiates between punitive guilt and reparative guilt, Carveth says that, "If I injure someone and while he bleeds I self-flagellate, that is punitive guilt; but if I put down my cat-o'-nine tails and reach for my first-aid kit and start bandaging, that is reparative guilt", reparative guilt is produced by conscience, it has more to do with the process of healing. Whereas punitive guilt is more about beating oneself down. Guilt is necessary but it is the reparative one which is good, what Veronika suffers from is punitive guilt which makes her commit suicide as a punishment for not meeting her own expectations as well as the expectations of her parents.

Sigmund Freud in *Civilization and Its Discontents* gives two possible reasons for the malaise in people, the first one is the superfluity of pleasure in the society and the second one is the plight of the civilization itself. Freud explains that:

We are threatened with suffering from three directions: from our body, which is doomed to decay..., from the external world which may rage against us with the overwhelming and merciless force of destruction, and finally from our relations with other men... This last source is perhaps more painful to use than any other. (77)

Sheila Armstrong in agreement with Freud expounds that the suffering from disease, ageing, and natural world are inevitable but the hurt caused by the relationship with other human beings is caused by the state of our civilization. Civilization places restrictions on our basic instincts. As we start to grow the superego starts to develop, it places restrictions on our behaviour because if we randomly act upon our impulses we can be expelled from the society. D. Leader in *The New Black: Mourning, Melancholia and Depression* says that depression is a way to say no to what we are meant to be.

Another psychoanalyst Edward Bibring in The Mechanism of Depression (1953) wrote "Depression is ... primarily an ego phenomenon" (27) David Rapaport in Edward Bibring's Theory of Depression quotes Bribing "[Anxiety and depression] both are frequent ego reactions [and since] they cannot be reduced further, it may be justified to call them basic ego reactions" (34). Bribing defined Depression as an Ego-state. In his exploration of depression, he has used Freud's and Fenichel's ideas mainly, which view depression as an inter-ego phenomenon. In the infant stage of development a child is not able to distinguish between the temporary absence and the permanent loss of a love-object like his mother. When the mother gets busy and disappears and afterwards when she finds time and reappears, the child, through this repeated experience experiences the feeling of longing out of his own miscomprehension. The feeling of longing is a traumatic one because the mother ought to gratify his needs on time. According to Freud in *The Problem of Anxiety* (1926), "It is to this innovation that the reaction of grief is referable. Grief is, therefore, the reaction specific to object loss, anxiety to the danger which this object loss entails (119). This grief is actually the concept of helplessness experienced by the child, while Freud associated helplessness with grief, Bibring generalized it to all depressions. The frustration of the infant stage alone

doesn't make up for later anxiety, it is the repeated episodes of frustration even after the infant stage that are responsible for depression. According to Erickson and Karl Abraham, they may include the need for love and support or a need for a good child-mother relationship. The depression in adults is a fixation to this helplessness. Bibring's theory of depression could be explained with the help of the following diagram:

Once while walking in the icy garden of Villete, Veronika thinks that ever since her childhood she had to beg for the love and attention of her parents. She had to sacrifice her desires for her parents especially her mother, as the narrator reports, "In adolescence she thought it was too early to choose; now, in young adulthood, she was convinced it was too late to change" (Coelho 39). The narrator further explains that:

She had given up many of her desires so that her parents would continue to love her as they had when she was a child, even though she knew that real love changes and grows with time and discovers new ways of expressing itself. One day, when she had listened to her mother telling her, in tears, that her marriage was over, Veronika had sought out her father; she had cried, threatened, and finally extracted

a promise from him that he would not leave home, never imagining the high price her parents would have to pay for this. (Coelho 39)

The decision to give up her passion for learning piano and to play it safe as a librarian was also her attempt to keep everything stable at home. The boredom of a mediocre job had to resurface as anxiety and her desire of ending her seemingly perfect life. However, the other reasons for this state to precipitate is the fall of self-esteem. Freud in *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917) argues that "...the melancholiac displays... an extraordinary fall in his self-esteem, an impoverishment of his ego on a grand scale" (155). Veronika's disappointment with herself and the fall in her self-esteem can be estimated from her pessimistic view of her future life.

One day I'll get tired of hearing her (mother) constantly repeating the same things, and to please her I'll marry a man ... We'll make love often in the first year, less in the second, and after the third year, people perhaps think about sex only once every two weeks...we'll barely talk. I'll force myself to accept the situation, and I'll wonder what's wrong with me because he no longer takes any interest in me, ignores me, and does nothing but talk about his friends as if they were his real world...I'll begin to put on weight like the aunt...At that point, I'll take those magic pills that stop you from feeling depressed... (Coelho 20)

Bibring (1953) explains the resurfacing of the fixation to helplessness as a blow to the subject's self-esteem, this blow happens when the narcissistically significant self-esteem "goals and objects are strongly maintained" (24). Bibring further argues that "It is exactly from the tension between these highly charged narcissistic aspirations on the one hand, and the ego's acute awareness of its (real and imaginary) helplessness and incapacity to live up to them on the other hand, that depression results" (24-25). In other words, it is the awareness of the incapacity to live up to her own expectations that cause depressive symptoms in

Veronika. The loss of self-esteem in Veronika happens because her narcissistically significant aspirations are still maintained. According to Bibring, these aspirations may include the following:

- (1) The wish to be worthy, to be loved, to be appreciated, not to be inferior or unworthy
- (2) The wish to be strong, superior, great, secure, not to be weak and insecure; and
- (3) The wish to be good, to be loving, not to be aggressive, hateful and destructive. (24)

Living alone for six years in a rented room at a convent Veronika's behaviour had become like an automaton she would watch the same old programs, set the alarm to wake up exactly at the same time, she would even sit on the same bench and eat the same sandwich. In a conversation with Veronika's parents, Dr. Igor discovers that she had been living alone without her parents for six years and for these six years she had maintained the same routine. How long has she lived on her own?" 'Six years.'

'You see? She's fundamentally independent. But, because of what a certain Austrian doctor—Dr. Sigmund Freud, I'm sure you've heard of him—wrote about unhealthy relationships between parents and children, people today still blame themselves for everything...

...I want you to understand one thing: apart from certain grave pathological cases, people only go insane when they try to escape from routine. Do you understand?' (Coelho 70-71)

Overall these years she had changed nothing about her life, her aspirations or desire to love someone or to be loved and the desire to be strong and superior were never fulfilled till she reached Villate, "She had always spent her life waiting for something: for her father to come back from work, for the letter from a lover that never arrived, for her end-of-year exams, for the train, the bus, the phone call, the holiday, the end of the holidays.." (Coelho 27). Inside the walls of Villate, Veronika found Eduard, a schizophrenic patient who would never talk to anybody except Mari, an older woman with panic disorder. Veronika developed feelings for him through the night sessions in which she would play the piano for him. Her death wish is soon replaced by the wish to be alive, to be able to give and receive love.

She turned back to the piano. In the last days of her life, she had finally realized her grand dream: to play with heart and soul, for as long as she wanted and whenever the mood took her. It didn't matter to her that her only audience was a young schizophrenic; he seemed to understand the music, and that was what mattered. (Coelho 102)

In addition to her playing piano every night for Eduard, there was one more aspiration which was fulfilled. Mari on one occasion had advised her to "masturbate and to find out how far I can go. Can I really go farther than I've ever been before?" (Coelho 120). So, she let go of her inhibitions and followed Mari's advice.

Her blood began to race, and the cold— which she had felt when she took off her clothes—was fading. Veronika and Eduard were both standing up, face to face, she naked, he fully clothed. Veronika slid her own hand down to her genitals and started to masturbate; she had done it before, either alone or with certain partners, but never in a situation like this, where the man showed no apparent interest in what was happening. And this was exciting, very exciting. Standing up, legs apart, Veronika was touching her genitals, her breasts, her hair, surrendering herself as she had never done before, not because she wanted to see Eduard leave his distant world, but because this was something she had never experienced before. (Coelho 120)

She let go of the restrictions of her superego and followed the instincts of her Id to be free and to realize her long-felt desire to give and seek love and pleasure. Although Eduard was a mute spectator yet he seems to react. Ann M. Kring and Janelle M. Caponigro explain that "researchers have been able to discover that people with schizophrenia exhibited very few outward displays of emotion but report experiencing strong feelings in the presence of emotionally evocative stimuli or events". Veronika also feels love around herself, "It was so good that I can see love in everything, even in the eyes of a schizophrenic" (Coelho 122). If according to Bribing, depression can be caused by a blow to one's self-esteem, which is directly connected to fulfilment of the aspirations such as to be worthy, to be loved, to be appreciated, not to be inferior etc., then the realization of these aspirations (as in case of Veronika at Villate) will boost a person's self-esteem resulting in the alleviation of depression. This is the process by which Veronika finally gets liberated inside Villate. Further, there are other factors which alleviate her depression, the first factor is the false knowledge that she is going to die within a few days. Dr. Igor's unconventional method of treating Veronika proves fruitful not only for Veronika but for other patients like Eduard and Mari also.

Using a drug known as Fenotal, he had managed to simulate the effects of heart attacks. For a week she had received injections of the drug, and she must have been very frightened because she had time to think about death and to review her own life. In that way, according to Dr. Igor's thesis, the girl had gone on to eliminate Vitriol completely from her organism, and would quite possibly never repeat her attempt at suicide. (Coelho 189-190)

When she is made aware of her coming death she starts to value every minute of her life. Her life gets a purpose at Villate and apart from feeling love, her aspiration to feel strong and superior also gets realized. Veronika had been pusillanimous and evasive previously but when Eduard calls out her name in huge desperation, she fights with everyone in her way to reach him. For the first time in many days she felt the sudden need to react to something around her, and this time she also felt responsible to help.

'Veronika!'

The schizophrenic had spoken to her. He had said her name. With a mixture of surprise and shame, she tried to approach, but one of the nurses stopped her.

'What are you doing? I'm not here because I'm crazy. You can't treat me like this.'

She managed to push the nurse away, while the other inmates continued to shout and kick up what seemed to her a terrifying din. (Coelho 141)

Previously she had been resigning to her fate but at this moment she was fought for Eduard and for his love. Her urge to live had made significate changes in Eduard's life as well, he starts to speak and thus breaks the walls of his own mental world. Eduard becomes her *raison d'etre*, she believes that it is her responsibility to set him on track again. When they escape from Villate, Veronika expresses his feelings for Eduard and for the first time in her life she feels in charge of a situation. This is a further sign of the alleviation of depression because as earlier discussed people suffering from depression don't take responsibility for their lives.

...thank you for giving meaning to my life. I came into this world in order to go through: attempted suicide, ruining my heart, meeting you, coming up to this castle, letting you engrave my face on your soul. That is the only reason I came into the world, to make you go back to the path you strayed from. Don't make me feel my life has been in vain."

"I don't know if it's too early or too late, but, just as you did with me, I want to tell you that I love you... (Coelho 186)

They find a congenial company with each other, Veronika goes through everything from an attempted suicide which ruined her life to her journey inside Villate in which she found Eduard, who also gave meaning and purpose to her life. She finds the purpose of her life in the altruistic motivation of redirecting Eduard back to his life, it makes her feel that her life has not "been in vain" (Coelho 186).

Conclusion

Acknowledgement of the problem is the first step towards a cure. Whether it is Veronika, Eduard or Mari, none of them had acknowledged their problem but after coming to Villate, they slowly recognize their mental health issues and their wrong approach towards life. Veronika in particular had never confronted her parents and had always sustained pressure from their side especially with regard to her career choices. At Villate, Dr. Igor's unconventional treatment of her condition proved successful. She firmly believed in the fake medical report which suggested that she will die soon and she started to "make the most of the little time" (Coelho 126), she was left with. She went on to the extent of asking for medication to "stay awake and enjoy every moment" (Coelho 126) of her remaining life. Her renewed interest in life is signaled by the fact that she wanted to leave Villate, and enjoy her last days of life in complete freedom. She wanted to visit places and meet new people. She wanted to be open to all experience, as she says:

...Dr. Igor, I want to feel the rain on my face, to smile at any man I feel attracted to, to accept all the coffees men might buy for me. I want to kiss my mother, tell I love her, weep in her lap,

unashamed of showing my feelings, because they always there even though I hid them... I want to give myself to one man, to the city, and, finally, to death." (Coelho 127)

Similarly, Mari and Eduard also acknowledge their problem, they understand that "a lot of people go through the same difficulties" (Coelho 138) they had gone through but their reaction to the same difficulties was different. They had chosen the wrong path of turning away from the world and escaping into "a separate reality" (Coelho 138). In the process of healing, Eduard and Mari are together, they express their desire "to live again" (Coelho 138) to each other. Mari like Veronika wants to utilize her days in doing something that she had never done before. In her confession to Eduard, she says that she wants to talk about life and love to people and "quote from Ecclesiastes to the Catholics, from the Koran to the Muslims, from the Torah to the Jews, from Aristotle to the Atheists" (Coelho 138).

She realizes that running risks in life is better than the monotony of sitting in one place. She leaves a note behind stating her last thoughts before going out in the world:

...now I'm off in search of adventure, even though I'm sixty-five and fully aware of all the limitations that age can bring. I'm going to Bosnia. There are people waiting for me there. Although they don't yet know me, and I don't know them. But I'm sure I can be useful, and the danger of an adventure is worth a thousand days of ease and comfort. (Coelho 182)

Her decision of embracing life with all its uncertainties and flaws is phenomenal in itself and it is fully backed by Eduard, who himself flees the Villate with Veronika. On coming out while Mari finds joy in social service, Eduard and Veronika climb up to a castle on top of a small hill in Ljubljana. Veronika does not show any sign of failing health even after climbing a hill but she does not suspect that Dr. Igor would have lied to her, instead, she considers each day a miracle. She encourages Eduard to paint for her sake, lending meaning to his life as well. After the successful treatment of his three patients, Dr. Igor completes his thesis chapter and entitles it as "An awareness of death encourages us to live more intensely" (Coelho 190), the chapter title is apt because it certainly is the awareness of death in Veronika which gave meaning to her life as well as the lives of people around her.

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