

**INFLUENCE OF INDIAN RELIGIO-PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHTS IN
HERMANN HESSE'S *SIDDHARTHA***

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BRAC University, Dhaka, Bangladesh

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*For a child no one is more precious than his/her parents; hence, I would like to dedicate this
work to my beloved amma and abba*

Sumona Afroz

And

Md Khalekuzzaman

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Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is a result of my own efforts. The contributions of other sources and information have been acknowledged wherever they have been used. It has not been previously included in a dissertation or report submitted to this university or to any other institution for a degree or other qualification.

Signature

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Abstract

Hermann Hesse is one of the Western minds who have come very close to eastern way of looking at thing. Perhaps there is no other man of his quality who understands the east better.

- Osho, Rajneesh (*Books 32*)

For me Hermann Hesse's novel *Siddhartha* represents something which is indefinable, uncategorizable; something impenetrable part of our human condition. This novel represents something which lies in the innermost depth of our being; something so intimate yet unknown to its core. This sense of mystery with its everlasting familiarity is the core tenet of our human condition. One of the reason for which I see Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha* is a unique literary piece because it is one of those rare books in which this core tenet of our human condition is successfully being depicted by its author. I view Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha* in equal footing with Friedrich Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra* and Khalil Gibran's *The Prophet*. Though all these three novels are being expressed in different manners by these three writers, this notion of mystery with its everlasting familiarity" is the common theme which keeps these novels in equal footing. This notion of mystery with its everlasting familiarity may seem contradictory or in its subtle version paradoxical to us. This seeming is quite natural as we live in an age where we train our mind only to see the contradictory aspect of things in place of the unitary aspect.

Jiddu Krishnamurti -the great Indian sage of 20th century in his famous book *Flight of the Eagle* says that-"The great experiences of life can only be expressed through paradoxes" (*Eagle 62*). *Siddhartha* by Hermann Hesse can be seen as a book of paradoxes because it is written in a manner; in a language which will be obviously seem paradoxical to us as our mind is so accustomed thoughts, rationality and logic; or to tell simply 'Linear way of thinking'. We live in an age where we put too much emphasis on thoughts, logic and rationality. We live in an age where almost every one of us possess a blind faith on the power of thought and knowledge. In a domain

where thoughts, knowledge and rationality reigns supreme it is natural that very few people will be aware of the limit of thoughts and rationality. The great eastern thinker and Philosopher D.T Suzuki was among these very few people. In his book *Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism* Suzuki expresses the limit of thoughts and rationality in the following manner-

Thought creates things by slicing up reality into small bits that it can easily grasp. Thus when you are think-ing you are thing-ing. Thought does not report things, it distorts reality to create things, and as Bergson noted, "In so doing it allows what is the very essence of the real to escape." Thus to the extent we actually imagine a world of discrete and separate things, conceptions have become perceptions, and we have in this manner populated our universe with nothing but ghosts. (*Outlines* 85)

In the autobiographical book *The Journey to the East* a new term has been introduced by Hermann Hesse. The new term is- *Philosia*: the love of seeing. *Sia* means 'to see', *Philo* means 'love' (Osho, Books 96). In the term –"*Philosophy*" *sophy* means 'thinking'. So philosophy means 'love of thinking'. So this 'Love of seeing' and 'Love of thinking' are the fundamental tenets which characterizes both Eastern and Western civilisations (way of being) consecutively. In the book *Vigyan Bhairavi Tantra* the great Indian mystic and thinker Bhagwan Rajneesh also known Osho says-"We cannot translate the word 'philosophy' into any Indian language. Our term is *Darshan*. It means seeing. Not thinking, but seeing" (*Tantra* 62). So we can see a kinship in the views of D.T Suzuki, Osho and Hermann Hesse. For me this view is very successfully articulated and expressed by Heman Hesse in his novel *Siddhartha*.

Western way of thinking is obsessed with departmentalization and categorization. Anything or any experience which goes beyond a certain parameter of linearity or limitation of perception it labels them as such and such. As a result we have science, philosophy and religion. The way it is

departmentalized and labeled give us the notion that these experiences are isolated entities and only exist within a context of conflict and chance. Hermann Hesse being a man of west also possesses these western tendencies to a certain degrees and they are very much visible in his novels. But the thing that astonishes me again and again is the fact of his awareness of the limitation of these tendencies. This fact of awareness is again and again consciously reflected in *Siddhartha*. For this reason I see this book as the epitome of those kinds of books which try to capture eastern essence in western language and sensibilities. Saying all of this, I would like to clarify regarding my task in this thesis paper. In this paper my task can be divided in four main parts-

1. Showing and critically analysing the influence of important eastern ideas and concepts in this novel.
2. Critically analysing the similarities among the plot and characters of novel which counterparts can be found in eastern myths and historical events
3. Seeing the seed and place of western sensibilities in the eastern way of looking at things as it is being depicted in this book.
4. Tracing the autobiographical elements of Hermann Hesse's life in this novel.

Chapter 1

Introduction and reflection on various concepts in the novel

The influence and presence of many important Indian religio-philosophical ideas and concepts are thoroughly visible in Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha*. In his autobiography *Visitor from India* he called *Siddhartha* an "Indian Poem". From this statement, one can easily guess the level of influence Indian religio-philosophical ideas and concepts has in this book. This book is divided into two parts. First part consists of four chapters and second part is consist of eight chapters. In this part of my paper, I would go through each and every chapter to trace the presence of various important religio-phiosohical ideas, concepts, and precepts in them. I would also analyze and discuss the context and reference point of those ideas and precepts to have a better understanding on Hesse's intention to write this unusual novel.

In the first chapter "The Son of the Brahman" Hermann Hesse introduces to readers two main characters of this novel. One is the Protagonist of the novel 'Siddhartha' and another is Siddhartha's beloved friend 'Govinda'. The plot of this novel is situated in ancient India and both of these two characters are 'Brahmin' by caste, which was the priestly caste of Ancient India (600-400 BCE). The names of these two characters have important significances. Both Siddhartha and Govinda are Sanskrit names. The name Siddhartha means "He who has found meaning (of existence)" and Govinda means "The Protector of meaning" (Eugene, Gita 346). These two names more or less summarize the whole characteristics of these two main characters of this novel. These two names also summarizes the story of this novel. This novel is about an individual's quest for finding his 'meaning of life'. It is also about strong friendship between two individuals and mutual protection they give to each other in their quest for enlightenment. So by introducing these two names in the first chapter Hermann Hesse foreshadows and summarizes the upcoming events of

this story in a nutshell. In this chapter, Siddhartha finds himself dissatisfied with the traditional religion and its meaningless rituals and thus he starts his journey to enlightenment. In this part of this novel the first important religio-philosophical concept is being introduced and that is the concept of 'Atman'. Atman in Hinduism is thought to be one's innermost self. It is thought to be one's eternal and indestructible part. In Hinduism, to find and abide in ones 'Atman' is synonymous of finding salvation or enlightenment. To introduce this concept, Hesse refers to the verses from Samaveda and Chandogya Upanishads¹ -"Your soul is the whole world" (Hesse 6); Truly the name of Brahman² is satyam- verily, he who knows such a thing, will enter the heavenly world everyday" (6). But in this chapter Siddhartha realizes that this 'Atman' can't be found living among the meaningless rituals and sacrifices practiced by the Brahmins, "The ablutions were good, but they were water, they did not wash off the sin, they did not heal the spirit's thirst" (5). He also realizes living a comfortable priestly life will only work as an obstruction to his ambition of knowing the 'Atman' of his inner self. So he decides to end his life as a Brahmin by being a Samana.³ Near the end of this chapter, we find Siddhartha leaving home after having his father's permission to join the group of Samanas. In this journey, he is accompanied by his childhood friend Govinda and in this way 'Siddhartha's' quest for the meaning of life begins.

In the second chapter, Siddhartha and Govinda joins the group of Samanas. In this part, we find Siddhartha practicing hard Samana's way of self-denying by means of voluntary suffering and thus overcoming pain, hunger, thirst and tiredness, "He killed his senses, he killed his memory... A goal stood before Siddhartha, a single goal: to become empty, empty of thirst, empty of wishing, empty of dreams, empty of joy and sorrow" (Hesse 11). He goes through the way of

¹ Chandogya and Samaveda Upanishads are revered by Hindus as the holy text.

² In Hinduism Brahman means the ultimate truth of life and Atman is thought to be its reflection in Individuals.

³ Samanas are the wandering ascetics of the ancient India.

self-denial by means of meditation, through imagining the mind to be void of all conceptions (Hesse 13). But as time passes, Siddhartha soon realizes the pointlessness of the practice of denial of the Samanas. He begins to find similarities between the practices of self-denial of the Samanas and the practices of self-indulgences of the worldly people.

What is meditation? What is leaving one's body? What is fasting? What is holding one's breath? It is fleeing from the self, it is a short escape of the agony of being a self, it is a short numbing of the senses against the pain and the pointlessness of life. The same escape, the same short numbing is what the driver of an ox-cart finds in the inn, drinking a few bowls of rice-wine or fermented coconut-milk. (14)

This realization of Siddhartha as depicted in this novel has Buddhist root. This realization of Siddhartha is a indicator of Buddhist concept called 'Madhyamika' or Middle way. According to this view both the extreme practices of self-indulgence and self-denial are pointless to find the ultimate meaning of life. When an individual is finally aware of this fact a new way will appear in the midst of those practices which will lead an individual to the ultimate meaning of life. This way in Buddhism is called 'Madhyamika'. In this chapter 'Madhyamika' or middle way also appears in Siddhartha's life in the form of Gotama's teaching. When he and Govinda lived among Samanas for about three years some news, rumors or myth had appeared regarding a man named Gotama. Rumors were spread that Gotama had overcome the suffering of the world in him and had gone beyond the cycle of rebirths. Teachings of Gotama also reached Siddhartha's ears. He immediately recognized the truth of those teaching. At the end of this chapter, we find both Siddhartha and Govinda starting their new journey to meet this holy man Gotama after leaving the group of Samanas.

In the third part of the novel, after facing many obstacles in their path Siddhartha and Govinda finally meet Gotama, the exalted one. In this chapter, Hermann Hesse introduces many important Buddhist concepts and precepts to the readers. The most important among them are the Buddhist precepts of four noble truths. In this novel Hermann Hesse introduces these precepts in the following manner –

Gotama taught the teachings of suffering, of the origin of suffering, of the way to relieve suffering. Calmly and clearly his quiet speech flowed on. Suffering was life, full of suffering was the world, but salvation from suffering had been found: salvation was obtained by him who would walk the path of the Buddha. With a soft, yet firm voice the exalted one spoke, taught the four main doctrines, taught the eightfold path, patiently he went the usual path of the teachings .(Hesse 23)

Four important Buddhist concepts lay hidden in this four noble truth. These four concepts are- the concept of Dukkha, the concept of Samsara, the concept of Nirvana and the concept of Marga. These four concepts are also the recurring concepts of the novel. Four noble truths are thought to be the core teaching of Buddhism. From the Buddhist world view to its religious practices; in short, the whole Buddhist way of life is oriented to these four simple precepts. If I have to explain these four precepts in the shortest manner, it can be only explained like this-We crave and cling to impermanent states of things, which are Dukkha. This craving keeps us caught in Samsara, which is the endless cycle of birth, rebirth, death and transmigration. There is a way to end this endless cycle of birth, rebirth, death and transmigration by the cessation of craving and clinging. This state of cessation is called Nirvana. This state can only be achieved by following and practicing the path of the Buddha; which is Marga or the eightfold path of Buddha (Jane and Loon 16). After hearing these teaching from Gotama's mouth Siddhartha finally able to get insights to these sacred words

which in his youth he read in sacred scriptures many times without any profound understanding. He found truth and beauty in Buddha's teaching. He recognizes the scientific nature of Gotama's teaching which he admires from the core of his heart.

I have admired in your teachings most of all. Everything in your teachings is perfectly clear, is proven; you are presenting the world as a perfect chain, a chain which is never and nowhere broken, an eternal chain the links of which are causes and effects. Never before, this has been seen so clearly; never before, this has been presented so irrefutably; truly, the heart of every Brahman has to beat stronger with love, once he has seen the world through your teachings perfectly connected, without gaps, clear as a crystal, not depending on chance, not depending on gods. (25)

Though Siddhartha respect and admires Gotama's teaching he still does not want to be his disciple as these teachings are not the direct product of his own inner realization. "If I merely were one of your disciples...only deceptively I would be calm. For then I had replaced myself with the teachings, my duty to follow you" (27). Siddhartha realizes the fact that the ultimate meaning of one's life can't be borrowed from others; It can't be found in books or others teaching. It can only be achieved through direct experience of one's life. By this realization of Siddhartha, Hesse is referring to another important concept of Buddhism and it is the concept of self-realization or Swabhava⁴. At the end of this chapter, Govinda decides to be Gotama's disciple and as Siddhartha does not want to be his disciple their path gets separated. After this chapter, we find Siddhartha continuing his journey all alone without any friend or companion.

⁴ The equivalent idea of Swabhava in Hinduism is 'Atma bodh'

The name of the fourth chapter is the 'Awakening'. This name bears significance as in this chapter Siddhartha goes through his inner awakening. After his separation with Govinda, we see Siddhartha contemplating on his past life and his lost identities, "I am no longer the one I was, I am no ascetic anymore, I am not a priest any more, I am no Brahman any more. Whatever should I do at home and at my father's place? Study? Make offerings? Practice meditation? But all this is over, all of this no longer alongside my path" (Hesse 32). In this part of this novel he questions his goal for the first time, "I searched Atman, I searched Brahman... the divine part, the ultimate part. But I have lost myself in the process" (30). By making Siddhartha questioning his goal, Hesse is hinting on the Buddhist concept of 'Anatma'. In Buddhism any sort of ego identity religious or social is thought to be illusory or impermanent in nature. So according to the Buddhist teaching one should not cling to these identities as clinging to these identities produce suffering in one's life. This precept of the impermanence of all identities or ego substance in Buddhism is expressed through this word - 'Anatma' (Suzuki, *Lankavatara* 86). For many years Siddhartha had been without home but his previous identities never left him. "Still, even in the deepest meditation, he had been his father's son, had been a Brahman, of a high caste, a cleric" (32). This questioning of his goal and identities make him realize that there is nothing in this world he knows less than himself. This realization makes him to take a resolution of seeking self-awareness - "I want to learn from myself, want to be my student, want to get to know myself, the secret of Siddhartha" (33). And in this way the last chapter of the first book ends.

The second book of this novel begins with the chapter five named 'Kamala'. The previous four chapters show Siddhartha's unreflected stage and the stage of his intellectual quest. In the previous four chapters, we see a Siddhartha whose intellectual education is more developed than his emotional maturity. Intellectually, Siddhartha knows that enlightenment is based on the

coincidence of Atman and Brahman. It is not based on his own personal experience. The previous chapters show us Siddhartha's discrepancy between the lack of authentic experience and mere intellectual knowledge. The chapter five shows us the beginning of Siddhartha's first step towards the authentic experience of life,

Now, he had to experience his self. It is true that he had already known for a long time that his self was Atman in its essence bearing the same eternal characteristic as Brahman. But never, he had really found this self, because he had wanted to capture it in the net of thought. (Hesse 34)

In the chapter four 'Awakening' Siddhartha realized that the experience of enlightenment or Nirvana is not alone based on the intellectual capacity of man. Many aspects of personality are involved in achieving this state. It is a holistic experience where not only intellectual but also emotional, irrational and effective parts have to form a unity and especially those subconscious parts which cannot be activated by the will or the intellect. The chapter five represents Siddhartha's pursuit for this holistic experience. In this chapter, we see the development of Siddhartha's emotional and irrational parts which had been previously neglected, suppressed and avoided by him. In the third, chapter Siddhartha reveals that he does not want to become a Buddhist but to become a Buddha Himself. This confession cannot lead him back to any philosophy, intellectualism or to any religious community. There is only one way left for Siddhartha- the simple and naïve life of worldly man which he has been eager to avoid up to now. This kind of life is offered to him by beautiful courtesan Kamala in this chapter five. The character of Kamala has important significance in this novel. The character Kamala represents the concept of Kama which means sensual pleasure in English. Kama or sensual pleasure is one of the four goals of human life. In chapter five, Siddhartha achieved this goal by falling in love with this spoiled promiscuous

woman. He attracts her attention and starts courting her. Very quickly he understands that she only expects expensive gifts as the demonstration of his love. She does not want to give her love to a poor beggar. These preconditions are Siddhartha's only reason to work for the Kamaswami.⁵ Here he can earn the money he needs to satisfy Kamala's needs, "Pursuing his goal, he allowed the city to suck him in, drifted through the flow of the streets, stood still on the squares, rested on the stairs of the stone by the river" (39).

In chapter five, Siddhartha came to meet the ferryman Vasudeva and his beloved for the first time. Through Vasudeva's words Hesse initiates a significant concept of Hinduism which is 'Karma' literally means the circularity of human action and life's event. Hesse represents this wisdom through the event between Vasudeva and Siddhartha. This is the event where Siddhartha after being ferried by Vasudeva informs him that he has nothing to pay and nothing to offer. The reply then given by Vasudeva summarizes Hesse's understanding on the concept of 'Karma',

I haven't expected any payment from you and no gift which would be the custom for guests to bear. You will give me gift another time...This too, I have learned from the river: everything is coming back! You too, Samana, will come back. Now farewell! (37)

Chapter six and Chapter seven are about Siddhartha's involvement with the deeds of worldly men. In these two chapters he confronts society, the so called "world of the child people". Siddhartha's life in "the world of the child people can be divided in to four stages. These four stages have been characterized by Hesse with outstanding psychological insights. On the first stage Siddhartha still defines himself as a philosophical and religious person. He does not really take his daily works seriously and he distances himself from the people he works with. He views worldly men as childish people; he has a low regards for their works and deeds as he sees them as trivial.

⁵ Kamaswami is a character in this novel which will be later introduced by Herman Hesse in chapter 6.

He saw mankind going through life in a childlike or animal like manner, which he loved and despised at the same time. He saw them toiling, saw them suffering, and becoming grey for the sake of things which seemed to him to entirely unworthy of this price, for money, for little pleasures, for being slightly honoured. (52)

Siddhartha accepts the work of worldly men only as a means to get the money he needs to meet Kamala's demand. This inner distance cannot be kept so long. On the second stage he gets more and more attracted towards the luxury and comfort of worldly men. Increasing wealth coincides with an alienation from his real life, "And then, for an hour, he became aware of the strange life he was leading, of him doing lot of things which were only a game, of, though being happy and feeling joy at times, real life still passing him and not touching him"(53). He suffers from the mental, emotional and spiritual diseases such as dissatisfaction, anxiety, lethargy and hatred which is the typical of many rich worldly men. But this is not the lowest phase of Siddhartha's secular career. There comes a time when he becomes addicted to sex, alcohol, gambling and greed. The man who formerly longed for spiritual salvation now becomes like one of the worldly men he previously despised. In chapter seven, he finally becomes a child himself and is even more greedy, more unscrupulous and more wasteful than most of them. That is the third stage of his worldly life.

He had been captured by the world, by lust, covetousness, sloth, and finally also by that vice which he had used to despise and mock the most as the most foolish one of all vices: greed. Property, possessions, and riches also had finally captured him...Siddhartha lost his calmness when losses occurred, lost his patience when he was not paid on time, lost his kindness towards beggars, lost his disposition for giving away. (59)

The lowest point in Siddhartha's secular life makes him mature for the fourth stage which leads to turning point that's bringing about a new way of existence. Previously Siddhartha only has

intellectual understanding to the way of the worldly men and to the nature of their passion and attachment. In those times though he knew pride, lust, vanity, greed is bad for spiritual progress, this knowing or understanding was only on the surface level of intellect. He did not have firsthand experience to the way of the wordly man and their negative passions and attachment. In chapter six and seven, Siddhartha gets the firsthand experience of the passions and attachment of the worldly people. In these two chapters he experiences lust, greed, anxiety, misery and hatred directly first time in his whole life. “Never before, it had become so strangely clear to Siddhartha, how closely lust was akin to death”(60).

Though in earlier times, Siddhartha used to disdain and mock the passions and desires of the worldly men, there is tinge of attachment on those mockery and disdain as there is pride and vanity mixed in them. He mocked those passions and desires of worldly men because it made him feel superior. He was unaware of the fact that in those mockeries, there was suppressed desire for the worldly objects, passion and desire of the worldly men. In the chapter seven, he finally experiences those passions and desires directly. This experience is not merely intellectual now rather he experiences those desires and passion directly from his heart and soul. This experience leads Siddhartha to the realization that the Samsara or the world of the childish people is nothing but a pointless game, “The name of the game is Samsara, a game for children, a game which is enjoyable to play once, twice, ten times – but forever and ever again? ”(62).

Seeing worldly life as merely a child’s game is very common in Indian culture. In Hinduism, there is word or concept for such kind of worldview and that is-‘Leela’. So through the words of Siddhartha, Hermann Hesse is doing nothing but echoing the Indian religio-philosophical concepts of Leela. This realization of Siddhartha drives him into a profound despair. Siddhartha finally knows that the game is over and he cannot play it any longer. At the end of chapter seven,

Siddhartha leaves the city, his life as a merchant and Kamala's company at last in the hour of night and again starts his journey for self-realisation.

The chapter eight "By the river" begins with Siddhartha reminiscing on his past secular life. The memories of his secular life lead him to a severe depression and he decides to commit suicide. Just at the moment when he is standing on the bank of a river looking at his own reflection in the water, spitting at it and willing to die, suddenly a strange thing happens to him. This strange happening makes him aware of a change within himself.

Then from a remote part of his soul, from the past of his tired life, he heard a sound ...the holy Om, which had the meaning of "The perfect one" or perfection. At the moment, when the sound of holy 'Om' reached Siddhartha's ears, his slumbering soul suddenly awakened and he recognized the folly of his action (Hesse 65).

Through this event, Hesse describes a psychological secret-unintentional and spiritual rebirth. The same happened to the historic Buddha who was only able to experience enlightenment after he had given up looking for it. Siddhartha is only able to find his new self when he is definitely willing to give up his old one. After Siddhartha's experience of rebirth he again meets his old friend Govinda coincidentally. This time Govinda is a follower of Buddha; a yellow robe wearing monk. Though Siddhartha is able to recognize his friend immediately, Govinda fails to do so. "You're Siddhartha, Govinda exclaimed loudly. Now, I'm recognizing you and don't comprehend anymore how I couldn't recognize you right away" (68). Govinda asks Siddhartha about his destination and in reply Siddhartha answers that he is in a pilgrimage. But this answer does not satisfy Govinda as he has never seen a pilgrim wearing such clothes, shoes and jewelry as Siddhartha does. Then Siddhartha elaborates his answer in the following manner,

I believe you, my dear Govinda. But now, today, you've met a pilgrim just like this, wearing such shoes, such a Garment. Remember my dear: Not eternal is the world of appearances. (69)

The answer given by Siddhartha echoes the Buddhist doctrine of 'Anitya'. The doctrine asserts that all of conditioned existence, without exception is impermanent, transient and inconstant (Suzuki, *Outlines* 167). Hesse further explains this doctrine of Anitya through Siddhartha's mouth in the following way-

I was a rich man and am no rich man any more, and what I'll be tomorrow, I don't know...Where is Siddhartha the Brahman? Where is Siddhartha the Samana? Where is Siddhartha the rich man? Non-eternal things change quickly, Govinda you know it. (69)

After this conversation, Siddhartha and Govinda gives salutation to each other and again depart from each from each other to walk on their own chosen paths and in this way the chapter eight ends.

The name of the ninth chapter is "The Ferryman". In this chapter Siddhartha decides to stay on the river where he comes to know the old ferryman Vasudeva more closely who soon becomes his friend. Vasudeva hardly ever speaks. He hardly says anything about himself. The one quality which Siddhartha admires in Vasudeva most is his gift of listening. Vasudeva appears to Siddhartha as the godliest listener he ever experiences in his life. Siddhartha wishes to learn this art from Vasudeva and in reply Vasudeva informs him that he learnt it from the river and from it Siddhartha will learn it as well. He also informs Siddhartha that the river has spoken to him and allows him to stay with him in his hut beside the river. 'Vasudeva'- the ferryman has a very symbolic meaning in this novel. Not only does he helps people to reach the other side of the river, but also helps them to reach another side of the soul. He does so not with the help of words, but

with the help of his charismatic personality. He is the Indian archetype of the old wise man. He signifies Indian religio-philosophical belief that “Wisdom is not communicable. Wisdom sounds like foolishness if you want to convey it with the help of words” (Suzuki Mahayana 132). Siddhartha learns many things both from the river and Vasudeva in this chapter. In this learning event of Siddhartha Hesse initiates an important Indian religio-philosophical doctrine and that is ‘Advaita’. In both Hinduism and Buddhism ‘Advaita’ is a very important religio-philosophical doctrine which means the nonduality of existence. According to this doctrine everything in existence and non-existence is closely connected, interlinked, complementary, somehow different and same both at the same time. The wisdom of Advaita at first reflects on the statements of Vasudeva in this chapter and those statements go like this-

I am only a ferryman, and it is my task to ferry people across the river. I have transported many, thousands; and to all of them, my river has been nothing but an obstacle on their travels. They travelled to seek money and business, and for weddings, and on pilgrimages, and the river was obstructing their path, and the ferryman’s job was to get them quickly across that obstacle. But for some among thousands, a few four or five, the river has stopped being an obstacle, they have heard its voice, they have listened to it and the river has become sacred to them as it has become sacred to me. (Hesse 79)

In this statement, this river symbolises the nondual state of life. For some people it is an obstacle in their travel as they are busy in fulfilling their wishes and childish desires. These men view this river a part of ‘Samsara’ and ignore it. Another group of people ignore this river in the name of ‘Nirvana’ as for them ‘Nirvana’ is goal to be achieved against the flux of ‘Samsara’. These two group of people are misled as they fail to understand that life is not a goal to be pursued or a place to pursue blindly ones desires and wishes; it is simply to be lived and enjoy each and every

moment. According to this doctrine, one who lives in the moment and is content with everything life offers goes beyond the duality of both Samsara and Nirvana. For example, those people in the statement above, who can hear the voice of river; who care about the river and listen to it; who view this river as sacred entity and simply revere it; in short, people who take each moment with great care and live each and every moment to its fullest have this experience of nonduality of life and existence. The wisdom of 'Advaita' further reflects on Siddhartha's words and it goes like this-

The river is everywhere at once ,at the source and at the mouth, at the waterfall, at the ferry, at the rapids, in the sea, in the mountains, everywhere at once , and that there is only the present time for it, not the shadow of the past , not the shadow of the future...And when I had learned it , I looked at my life and it was also a river, and the boy Siddhartha was only separated from the man Siddhartha and from the old man Siddhartha by a Shadow , not by something real. (79)

Though Siddhartha learns a lot in this chapter regarding himself, his life and about the whole existence, he has not reached the end of his long journey. His former love Kamala has turned into a old woman looking for salvation. She meets Siddhartha on the bank on the river and dies in his arm. She leaves their son to him, and new complications start in Siddhartha's life; and that's how chapter nine ends.

The chapter ten 'The Son' starts with Siddhartha-the enlightened man- is now confronting with the problem of being a father. But this is also positive for his personal development. Up to this moment Siddhartha's love was universal, but it was also free and non-committal. Now he learns to love one real person in a responsible and total way.

Siddhartha, has also become completely a childlike person, suffering for the sake of another person, loving another person, lost to love, having become a fool on account of love. Now he too felt, late once in his lifetime, this strangest of all passions, suffered from it, suffered miserably, and was nevertheless in bliss. (91)

The calmness of Siddhartha's inner life is endangered, but this has also become richer. But there is one big problem, his son does not want to be loved and protected by him. Siddhartha wants to help him avoiding all the errors and dangers he had experienced in his own life but his son's blunt refusal to take any help for him creates anxiety, depression and unnecessary sorrow in Siddhartha's mind. Vasudeva, in the meantime, was observing this drama between father and son. After seeing Siddhartha suffering from unnecessary sorrow, Vasudeva gives advice to him in the following manner,

My dear, have you entirely forgotten that story, that story containing so many lessons, that story about Siddhartha, a Brahman's son, which you once told me here on this very spot? Who has kept the Samana Siddhartha safe from Sansara, from sin, from greed, from foolishness? Were his father's religious devotion, his teachers warnings, his own knowledge, his own search able to keep him safe? Which father, which teacher had been able to protect him from living his life for himself, from soiling himself with life, from burdening himself with guilt, from drinking the bitter drink for himself, from finding his path for himself? Would you think, my dear, anybody might perhaps be spared from taking this path? That perhaps your little son would be spared, because you love him, because you would like to keep him from suffering and pain and disappointment? But even if you would die ten times for him, you would not be able to take the slightest part of his destiny upon yourself. (90)

In the advice of Vasudeva there lies a Buddhist religio-philosophical concept 'Pravitti' or 'Niyati'. Pravitti does not have an equivalent concept in English but it can be loosely translated to destiny without its highly fatalistic or deterministic element. The concept of 'Pravitti' is directly linked to the concept of Karma or 'Action'. According to this concept of 'Pravitti' the life of each human individual is determined by the action he takes. This determining factor is known in Buddhism as 'Pravitti' though this determinism is not so rigid as there is element of choice in it. The western concept of fate is too deterministic as according to that concept an individual's future or destiny is fixed.⁶ But this element of over-determined fixation is not a part of this concept of 'Pravitti'. In the concept of 'Pravitti', the word determination is used more in the sense of direction than fixation. According to this concept one's destiny is shaped or direction of one's future outcomes changes according to the action one performs. So through this advice, Vasudeva wants to teach Siddhartha this fact of existence; this fact of destiny or 'Pravitti'. Though Siddhartha understands each and every word of Vasudevas advice his fatherly love keeps him blind and he continues to suffer from unnecessary sorrow and grief. But his sorrow and grief comes to an end when his son rebels against him and leaves him in rush. He follows him near to the town and realizes pretty late how foolish his behavior is. Vasudeva's advice finally penetrates Siddhartha's heart and he returns to the hut leaving his son alone in the hand of his own destiny.

In the chapter eleven 'Om' Siddhartha is still lamenting on his separation with his son. We see him cursing his fate. He envies others who have the privilege of enjoying the joy of being a father, "So many, so many thousands possess this sweetest of good fortunes-why don't I? Even bad people, even thieves and robbers have children and love them and being loved by them, all except for me" (96). Day by day, his longing for his son increases. At one time, he ferried across

⁶ For example: The character King Oedipus from the play *Oedipus Rex* written by Sophocles.

the river driven by the yearning to see his son, got off the board and was willing to go to the city. But at the moment he heard laughter from the river. He bent over the water to hear it better and he saw his face reflected on water. The reflection of his face resembles his father and he finally realizes the circularity of events. He recognizes the pain that his father had suffered when he got separated from him. He recognizes the similarity between his separation with his father and the separation with his son. “Yes, so it was, everything came back, which had not been suffered and solved up to its end, the same pain was suffered over and over again” (98). He came back to his hut and shared everything with Vasudeva. When he was sharing his thoughts to Vasudeva he felt a change in his inner self. He felt all his depression, lamentation of yearning, anxiety had begun to left him. At the end of this chapter Siddhartha, finally achieves his inner enlightenment through the acceptance of his fate and compassion for others.

In this hour, Siddhartha stopped fighting his fate, stopped suffering. On his face flourished the cheerfulness of a knowledge, which is no longer opposed by any will, which knows perfection, which is in agreement with the flow of events, with the current of life, full of sympathy for the pain of others, full of sympathy for the pleasure of others, devoted to the flow, belonging to the oneness. (101)

This sympathy for others and total acceptance of fate is known in Buddhism as ‘Karuna’ (Suzuki, *Lankavatara* 64). Siddhartha achieves his inner enlightenment by learning this ‘Karuna’. Siddhartha becomes a fully enlightened person. After achieving enlightenment, Siddhartha finally departs with Vasudeva as he leaves the hut and goes to the forest leaving Siddhartha behind as his successor. In this way chapter eleven ends.

Chapter twelve ‘Govinda’ is this novel’s last chapter. In this chapter, Hesse adds a little episode to sum up the main essence of his work. Siddhartha and Govinda meet again. They are old

men now. Together they had once left in order to find insight and salvation. Govinda has become a Buddhist but in contrast to Siddhartha he is still looking for truth and salvation. Govinda urges Siddhartha to talk about the truth and wisdom he has found. And Siddhartha talks about the insight he has gained: about the relativity of all truth, about the insufficiency of words, about the unreality of time, about the perfection of all beings, about the meaning of love-but then he realizes that his friend cannot understand him or can only understand him in an intellectual way. Govinda has never experienced the reality of his words and cannot experience it now. Wisdom cannot be taught, truth can only be experienced and this cannot be brought intentionally. That's why Siddhartha asks his friend to kiss him on his forehead. Govinda is puzzled but because he loves his friend and he has some strange intuition, he kisses Siddhartha on his forehead. The kiss is the symbol of unintentional self-abandon, dedication and devotion of the ego to completeness, to the union of the universe, to the divine and this kiss suddenly brings about the unexpected experience of enlightenment which Govinda hitherto has looked for in vain.

He no longer saw the face of his friend Siddhartha, instead he saw other faces, many, a long sequence, a flowing river of faces, of hundreds, of thousands, which all came and disappeared, and yet all seemed to be there simultaneously, which all constantly changed and renewed themselves, and which were still all Siddhartha. He saw the face of a fish, a carp, with an infinitely painfully opened mouth, the face of a dying fish, with fading eyes--he saw the face of a new-born child, red and full of wrinkles, distorted from crying--he saw the face of a murderer, he saw him plunging a knife into the body of another person--he saw, in the same second, this criminal in bondage, kneeling and his head being chopped off by the executioner with one blow of his sword...Not knowing any more whether time existed, whether the vision had lasted a second or a hundred years, not knowing any more

whether there existed a Siddhartha, a Gotama, a me and a you, feeling in his innermost self as if he had been wounded by a divine arrow, the injury of which tasted sweet, being enchanted and dissolved in his innermost self...Deeply, Govinda bowed; tears, he knew nothing of, ran down his old face; like a fire burnt the feeling of the most intimate love, the humblest veneration in his heart. Deeply, he bowed, touching the ground, before him who was sitting motionlessly, whose smile reminded him of everything he had ever loved in his life, what had ever been valuable and holy to him in his life. (Hesse 111-112)

With Siddhartha's help, Govinda is able to experience the unintentional salvation beyond words and doctrines. With the help of love, Govinda can feel enlightenment he has been looking for in vain up to now. No words and doctrines, but love and devotion lead to salvation- this is the core wisdom of Indian religiosity. With the preaching of this wisdom and Govinda's attainment of salvation, this novel finally ends. After all these discussions, there shouldn't be any doubt in our mind that the presence and influence of Indian religio-philosophical thoughts in this novel is gigantic. Now question should be raised in our mind –why would Hesse write a novel which is full of Indian religio-philosophical thoughts and insights? What is the intention behind writing such kind of novel? Answers to such questions are a matter for speculation and opinion. According to my opinion, this novel is a kind of diary for Hermann Hesse. In this diary he wrote down his deep insights regarding Indian religiosity and its important religio-philosophical thoughts in the form of story of an individual. This novel can also be seen as Hermann Hesse's own thought experiment regarding a person's spiritual salvation in a given situation, place and time. Whatever the real answer may be there is no denying that this novel is full of important insights regarding human existence and human spirituality. Because of this valuable insights and wisdom *Siddhartha* by

Hermann Hesse was, is and will continue to inspire a group of readers who have a knack for spirituality and philosophical thoughts.

Chapter 2

Historical myths, events and other elements in *Siddhartha*

The plot and many characters of the novel *Siddhartha* is influenced by many Indian myths, historical events and elements. The most obvious influence of Indian myths and historical events can be seen in the Plot of this novel. The plot of the novel is situated in ancient India; most specifically the time of Gautama Buddha- The historical Buddha. The story of Siddhartha is directly influenced by the story and myths of Gautama Buddha. Hesse is very honest in recognising this influence as one of the most important character of this novel is named Gotama-the exalted one; and this character directly refers to the actual historical Buddha- 'Siddhartha Gautama'. There are many parallels between Siddhartha's life in this novel and Gautama's life in history. Now let's take a brief look on the important events of "Gautama's life" to understand the similarities and difference between his life and the life of 'Siddhartha' in this novel. This will also make us understand what elements Hesse takes from Gautama's life to develop the character 'Siddhartha' in this novel.

Siddhartha Gautama was born in the kingdom of the Sakyas, on the border of what is now Nepal and India. He was born into a life of luxury as a Kshatriya, the warrior or ruling caste of Hindu. The name Siddhartha means, "One whose aim is accomplished." The historic life of Siddhartha Gautama is cast in a series of significant events. The first of these is his mother's dream of a *white elephant* entering her womb prior to his birth, signifying that he would be either a universal monarch or a Buddha. After the birth of Gautama many sages, hermit and prophet predicted that one day he will be a great ruler of the world or a great religious leader. As a child, he was a sage, or yogi, who was capable of deep meditation. Siddhartha's father wanted his son to be a great leader of the world and he did not want him to be a religious leader. For this reason, he

provided Siddhartha with all the luxury that worldly life can offer-money, power, wealth, women etc. so that he got indulged or habituated to those luxuries and aspired to be a great world ruler .The next important event in Gautama's life is his early encounter with four signs that led him to question his life of ease. He saw an aged cripple, a sick and suffering man, a corpse and a wandering monk. His father tried to keep him home, away from the traumas of the world, and although he had married and had a son, he decided to go off on a journey of self-discovery.

The next stage of his journey is called the 'Great Renunciation'. At age 29, he gave up his princely life and became a wandering Hindu ascetic. In a state of extreme self-mortification, and emaciation, he lost faith in this path. His companions left him, and he embarked on his own journey. After many days of struggle, meditations and suffering one day he finally renounced all his pursuit and goals and simply sat under a bodhi or bo tree and started meditating without any preconceived goal and pursuit .In that moment of meditation it is said that he's tempted by Mara, the evil one, lord of the world of passion, but he resisted. He went through a inner struggle as he resisted those passion. He finally stopped resisting Mara and accepted him as a part of himself. Through that acceptance, he got enlightenment. He was 35 years old when he formed the doctrine of Buddhism, after which, he gathered disciples who went forth, teaching. He died when he well past 80 years old (Jane and Loon 52).

Now let's look at the similarities between Gautama's life in history and Siddhartha's life in this novel. First similarity is that they both share the same name. In childhood, Gautama was also addressed as 'Prince Siddhartha' by his family member and the people of his father kingdom. The similarity of name can be taken as Hermann Hesse's tribute to all Siddhartha's whose journey of self-realisation are not documented in the history. Both Siddhartha and Gautama are gifted and talented individuals. Like Gautama, in this novel "Siddhartha" is also a sage, a yogi, an observant

and intelligent person. Like Gautama, he also shows merits in deeds which he decides to accomplish. Then as Gautama in his childhood was predicted by the sages, prophets and hermits that in future he would be a great ruler or a great religious leader; Siddhartha's future in this novel is also predicted by his friend Govinda that one day "Siddhartha would become a god"(Hesse 4) Like Gautama's father, Siddhartha's father is also very protective and they both leave and join a group of ascetics name 'Samana' in their pursuit of self-realisation. Siddhartha gets frustrated to the teachings of Samanas and finally he loses his faith in all kind of teaching, pursuit and goal in this novel. The historical Buddha also went through similar experiences. Finally, the last similarity is that as Gautama got his enlightenment suddenly after the total renunciation to goal and pursuits, Siddhartha also gets his enlightenment in this novel suddenly by sitting by the side of a river and going through similar experiences.

There are not only similarities between Siddhartha and Gautama's life. There are some differences also and now it is time to talk about the differences between their life journeys. The first and most important difference is that Gautama was born in a 'Kshatriya class' which was the warrior class of ancient India; where as Siddhartha in this novel was born in 'Brahman class' which was the priestly caste of Buddha's time. Their journey of self-realisation began from different points, from different socio-economic and cultural positions and this positioning leads them to different directions and experiences in their pursuit for salvation. The second difference is Siddhartha leaves his home to join the group of Samana after getting permission to do so from his father, on the other hand, from the history we know that Gautama literally had to run away from his palace to join the group of ascetic. Third difference lies in the different route they take in their journey to salvation. Siddhartha in this novel begins as a son of a Brahman, then he becomes a Samana, after that he becomes a man of the world and at last after being a ferryman he gets self-

realisation. On the other hand Gautama began his life as a Kshatriya, he was a prince then he left home and became an ascetic; after that he stopped being an ascetic and simply became a beggar. After being a simple beggar, Gautama got his enlightenment. So there are a lot of differences in the routes they took in their journey to self-realization and this difference has a lot to do with the socio-economic and cultural positioning from which they started their journey. Though there are differences in their routes, they are united at the destination they both reached and this reminds me of a quote by an Indian sage Ramana Maharishi to whom Hermann Hesse had a great admiration – “There is more than one path to the top of the mountain”(Osborne, Talks 61). In this novel, Siddhartha’s decision to take his own course of destiny by not being a part of Gotama’s group can be seen as Hesse’s tribute to human individuality, uniqueness and authenticity. The last difference is that Siddhartha had a teacher named Vasudeva who helps him to achieve his enlightenment, on the other hand, from the history we know that Gautama had no such kind of teacher and he himself figured out his enlightenment. This difference again reminds us of the uniqueness of human individuality. Some might need the help of others and some might depend on the situation they are in. The one who sorts out his own enlightenment is not at all superior to one who takes the help from others to get enlightened and that is one of the messages I think Hermann Hesse wants to give to his readers through this novel. From this discussion, we can notice that the similarities and differences between Siddhartha and Gautama’s life journey is not clear-cut as in their journey for salvation there are similarities in differences and differences in similarities. Maybe this paradoxical state is the only reality of life and clear-cut similarity and difference are nothing but illusion. As there is Gautama in every Siddhartha, there is Siddhartha in every Gautama. In extension in each and every one of us there is a Siddhartha or a Gautama from which we can take inspiration. This is the message I think Hesse wants to give his readers through this novel.

Chapter 3

Hesse's Western sensibility and its place in *Siddhartha*

Siddhartha is a novel about India written by a Western writer. This book represents a deep appreciation for Indian spirituality, philosophy, sensitivity, ideas and values by a Western writer. This place also represents a close examination of the Indian or Eastern way of looking at things by a Western writer. There are seeds of Western sensibilities in this close examination as the writer of this book Hermann Hesse was born and brought up in West. Hesse was very conscious about his Western orientation and limitations of Western sensibilities in representing the eastern way of looking at things. By writing *Siddhartha* Hermann Hesse tried to explore and understand both Eastern and western way of looking at things. He also tried to locate the place for Western values and sensibilities in the Eastern way of looking at things in this novel. Before I start talking about Western values and sensibilities as it is depicted in this novel, I would like to share some thoughts regarding Eastern and Western way of looking at things and their fundamental differences.

Western understanding of life is based on thoughts, ideas and rationality. On the other hand, Eastern understanding of life is based on immediate experience and intuitions. 'Reflection' is the word which summarizes the whole Western understanding of life whereas 'Focus' is the word which summarizes Eastern understanding. One of the interesting tendencies of human reflection is the fact that it gives more importance in seeing the reflection of sun on the surface of the water than seeing it actually with open eyes. The nature of focus is totally opposite of reflection as it dares to see the sun with open eyes. For this nature, of reflection Western understanding of life is based on finding semblances in different experiences, formulating ideas and categories to fix that semblance, create symbolical realms to fix those ideas and categories which will in return regulate

and preserve those semblances and so on. This means Western way of looking at things longs for certainty and novelty. On the contrary Eastern way sees life as something not to be thought about, but to be lived and experienced. In Eastern view of life, there is a celebration for uncertainty and change and that's why thoughts, ideas, categorizations and labeling are given little value because they are seen as illusion or in Indian/Eastern terminology 'Maya'. According to Eastern view thoughts breeds more thoughts, ideas breeds more ideas which will lead us to the vicious circle of confusion and self-stagnation. This vicious circle is termed as 'Samsara' which generally means world but a false one as the world originated from ideas, reflection and mediation not from focus, awareness and meditation. That's why the main focus of Eastern way of looking at things is to be free from words, ideas, identity, categorization and conceptions; not to hold them but a release from them. That's why where Western way of looking at things longs for novelty Eastern way long for emptiness/ 'Shunyata'.

In chapter six and seven, Hermann Hesse specifically reflects on the Western values and sensibilities, and tries to understand its place in Indian or eastern way of looking at things. The name of these two chapters is respectively-"With the childlike people" and "Samsara". Both these two chapters represent a close analysis of Western values. Western civilisation is distinguished by its earthly values. By earthly values, I mean material orientation of Western civilisation which implies emphasis on the notions such as clinging, power, property, conquest, control and action. Material prosperity is the ultimate priority in Western value system. Western civilisation values which is near or immediate rather than far beyond or ultimate. This emphasis on immediacy and graspability is internalised in Western value system. Because of this, a Western mind sees everything in terms of property, possession and utility. From day to day behaviours to relationships almost everything in Western civilisation is based on these notions and terms. Through these two

chapters, Hesse shows us the mindless thirst for power, property and possession that is ingrained in Western value system. Characters such as Kamala and Kamaswami in these two chapters represent these Western values. Kamala represents the notion of Western relationship that is based upon material prosperity. In this novel, we see Siddhartha at first has to be materially prosperous in order to be Kamala's lover. In this novel, Kamala sets the condition for Siddhartha to be her lover in this manner- "Clothes are what he must have, pretty clothes, and shoes, pretty shoes, and lots of money in his pouch and gifts for Kamala" (41). By this line Hermann Hesse's shows us the nature or essence of Western relationship based on material prosperity. Again in these chapters Kamala shares her wisdom regarding love in the following manner- "Love can be obtained by begging, buying, receiving it as a gift, finding it in the street, but cannot be stolen" (Hesse 42)

If we analyse the line given above, we find that Kamala sees love as something obtainable, consumable or receivable. This commoditisation or reification of love is something which is uniquely Western. Through the characterization of Kamala, Hesse tries to explore and understand the material tendencies that is integrated in Western way of being. The characterisation of Kamaswami is important in this novel as like Kamala he also represents the western values and sensibilities in this novel. Kamaswami is a merchant in this novel. He represents money, wealth physical pleasure, mercantile values and restlessness which are the fundamental tenets in a western man. Kamaswami also represents the notion of instrumental rationalism in Western man's psyche. In this novel we see that Kamaswami only value those things, deeds, or objects which brings prosperity in his business. He does not value anything which falls outside the range of his business. For this reason he fails to understand Siddhartha's purposeless wandering in business trips and spontaneity in workplaces. For him, business is a matter of life and death and it should be dealt with seriousness. In this novel, Kamaswami is disheartened every time when he sees the absence

of this seriousness in Siddhartha's deeds. The event between Kamaswami and Siddhartha can be seen as a dialogue between East and West to understand each other's value. When Kamaswami take too much pressure and anxiety regarding his business Siddhartha sees it as child's play;

He saw mankind going through life in a childlike or animal like manner, which he loved and also despised at the same time. He saw them toiling, saw them suffering and becoming gray for the sake of things which seemed to him to entirely unworthy of the price, for money, for little pleasures, for being slightly honoured, he saw them scolding and insulting each other.(Hesse 52)

The lines stating above can be seen as Hesse's critic on Western values. These lines also represent the place of Western values and sensibilities in Eastern way of looking at things. All Eastern cultures, especially Indian culture, see physical life as something as not to be entangle with. As physical world is impermanent or transient by nature, Eastern wisdom dictates its culture to keep this entanglement to its minimum as clinging to objects, things and deeds brings suffering in one's life. Where this entanglement, is maximum it is called 'Samsara'. Samsara in Eastern civilisation is treated as childlike phase of humanity because it creates entanglements and multiplies unnecessarily. As 'Samsara' creates dependence and entanglements it is not given the highest value in Eastern civilisation. The highest value in Eastern civilisation is given to liberation, independence or in Sanskrit terminology 'Mukti'. By liberation or 'Mukti' in Indian culture, it means moving from compulsive behaviour to conscious one. The point at which ones compulsive behavior is zero and the point at which one has total control over his consciousness and conscious behaviour it is termed as 'Nirvana'. As Indian culture is oriented towards this concept or notion of 'Mukti', it values poverty in place of novelty, emptiness in place of prosperity. For this reason, the men who live a life outside the society or 'Samsara' is treated as holy or divine. Though 'Samsara'

is not given the ultimate value in Eastern civilisation, it does not mean it has not any value at all. In fact if we enquire more deeply in Indian spirituality we will find it is given the equal value. A newly born child cannot survive on its own. It has to depend on other at the earlier phases of life for its survival. But as time passes by he can manage his survival and he can concentrate on the other aspect of life. For this early phases of a man's evolution 'Samsara' is important but when 'Samsara' becomes a goal in itself it becomes an impediment for an individual's higher development. In Eastern civilisation, 'Samsara' is seen as a domain where human survival is the ultimate goal that why it complicates and multiply human survival strategies. But according to Indian wisdom, survival is not the ultimate goal for human being as it is believed in Indian culture that humans have the possibility to go beyond survival and cocooned existence of 'Samsara'. So in Indian sacred scriptures, it is said not to hate or glorify 'Samsara' but see it as it is and also see it as an important part of human development. Hatred and glorification in Indian culture is seen as a byproduct of impulsive emotion and it is being advised in different scriptures not to cultivate it as it possess the seeds of entanglement or 'Samsara'. This eastern wisdom is echoed in the following lines of this novel-

When someone reads a text, wants to discover its meaning, he will not scorn the symbols and letters and call them deceptions, coincidence, and worthless hull, but he will read them, he will study and love them, letter by letter. But I, who wanted to read the book of the world and the book of my own being, I have, for the sake of a meaning I had anticipated before I read, scorned the symbols and letters, I called the visible world a deception, called my eyes and my tongue coincidental and worthless forms without substance. No, this is over, I have awakened, I have indeed awakened and have not been born before this very day.(31)

Western emphasis on thoughts, rationality and attachment towards physical or visible world is given a tribute by Hermann Hesse by the lines stated above. Through this line Hesse finally accepts his Western orientation and learns to accept his position in the bigger scheme of existence. He also shows us the position, limitation and possibilities of western values in understanding the views of West. Western values and sensibilities becomes a limitation in understanding Eastern way of looking at things when these values are treated as a end in itself. But Western values become huge possibilities when it is treated as a stepping stone to achieve higher possibilities of existence. This insight is addressed and recognised in different ways in this novel by Hermann Hesse. For this insight Hermann Hesse is able to capture the Indian content (insights regarding Indian religio-philosophical ideas, concepts and precepts) in this Western container- which is his novel *Siddhartha*.

Chapter 4

Hesse's autobiographical elements in *Siddhartha*

Any discussion on the novel *Siddhartha* will be incomplete if it does not reflect on Hermann Hesse's life events. In this chapter, I would like to talk about some of the life events of Hermann Hesse to show the parallel between his life and the character Siddhartha's journey in this novel. This discussion will be limited to those life events of Hesse which are mainly about his introduction, preoccupation with Indian religio-philosophical ideas and concepts; and his growth in understanding those ideas in different stages of his life, in order to have a broader understanding regarding his motive to write this novel.

Hesse's occupation with India, with its philosophy and culture can be divided into four different stages. In this part, I would like to discuss, explain and characterise these four stages. Through this discussion, I would like to show simultaneously that Hesse's novel *Siddhartha* can be considered as a summary of his preoccupation with Indian ideas and of his personal development. In the first stage, Hesse's confrontation with Indian culture was unreflected and preconscious. It started from his birth in 1877 and lasted until 1904, the year in which he moved to Gaienhofen and started a life as a professional writer (Baumann 1). One can say that he inherited his interest in India and its tradition and culture. Hesse himself often pointed out that his grandfather, his mother and his father had lived in India for many years as missionaries, that they were able to speak different Indian languages and that they possessed many Indian things such as clothes and pictures (Baumann 1). His grandfather, Dr. Hermann Gundert, had been a famous scholar who was preoccupied with the Sanskrit and is still well-known in India today (Baumann 1). His mother told the little boy anecdotes of her time in India and his father enjoyed reading Buddhist prayers he himself had translated into English or German. The young boy was extremely

sensitive and open to this and so this early confrontation led to a lifelong preoccupation with Indian religion. Nevertheless conflicts with his parents were due to come. Although father and mother were open to a certain degree and respected Hinduism and Buddhism, they always pointed out that according to their point of view Christianity was the only real and true religion. They could not get rid of a certain narrow-mindedness in spite of their love for India. This was a source of confrontation because Hermann Hesse could not agree with this lack of acceptance even when he was younger his open-mindedness and tolerance towards all kinds of religion grew and he regarded them all as equal. This confrontation created a distance between him and his parents. As he grew older this distance grew bigger and bigger and finally Hesse decided to become a professional writer so that he could live independently; without his parent's dogmatic influences. We can draw a clear parallel between this stage of Hesse's life and the beginning stage of Siddhartha's life as it is depicted in this novel. Like Siddhartha Hesse also belongs to priestly family. In the novel Siddhartha feels disgusted with the hypocrisy, corruption and mal practices of his class and thus decides to become a Samana so that he can live independently of this evil influence of his class. Hesse also followed a similar pattern as he decided to become a professional writer and not be a missionary like his parents. But this first stage was mainly preconscious. When Hesse left his parents, he had no more contact with India and its philosophical and religious traditions for ten years. Only in 1904, when he was 27 years old and when he started studying the German philosopher Schopenhauer he found himself again in this Indian atmosphere, read translations of Bhagavadgita and since then never lost touch with this spiritual world (Baumann 2). It was then when the second stage started which can be characterised as a time of intellectual confrontation with the Indian way of thinking, a time of spiritual quest. This is the stage where he got his first conscious intellectual understanding regarding Indian spirituality. This stage of Hesse is similar to

Siddhartha's life with the Samanas in the novel where he got many mental and physical teaching from Samanas and develop a conscious intellectual understanding of what is spirituality and what is not spirituality.

Hesse went on a trip to Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Sumatra, his so-called "Trip to India", which lasted from September 1911 to December 1911. This is the time where the third stage started. His voyage to India was not merely blind escape, it was a search for alternatives to personal, cultural and political misery. India seemed to offer this escape because it showed no traits of European decadence. It is typical of Hesse's way of thinking that his prevailing impression was a religious one and that he considered the West to be inferior. This can be explained by the religious background of his family and by his quest for a new orientation for himself and for all Europeans. "Only authentic religiousness can lead to real superiority"- this claim is quite typical of Hesse's ideas. But it is also quite typical of him that he does not support the idea that Europeans should merely adopt Eastern religion. And this is also a characteristic trait of his life: he was quite sceptical towards any kind of religious doctrine of salvation, no matter whether it is based on Buddhism, Hinduism or Christianity. For him intellectual and spiritual development always leads into the future, into new and personally formulated ideas. That's the reason why Hesse never recommends either Buddhism or the membership in a traditional European church. From this trip Hesse gathered many experiential understanding regarding Indian spirituality and religious-philosophical thoughts. This stage in Hesse's life can be seen in parallel with Siddhartha's confrontation with Gotama and his life in 'Samsara' in this novel. In those period of the novel, Siddhartha gets an experiential understanding of spirituality. He develops a more clear understanding regarding religiosity through the experiences which he gathers from his staying with worldly men and women. Spiritual ideas which was previously stuck in the domain intellect in this

period gets the backing of experience and thus enables him to distinguish authentic and fake religiosity. He gathers the ability to discriminate between true individual urge for spirituality and communal commitments. Like Siddhartha Hesse gathered an experiential understanding regarding India and Indian spirituality through this trip. Previously Hesse only had an intellectual or bookish understanding regarding Indian Spirituality. This trip made him aware of the similarities and differences that exist between Eastern and Western cultures which helps to formulate his own individualistic approach to spirituality.

In 1921 Hesse entered the fourth stage in which his individual, creative and critical attitude towards the Indian way of thinking can clearly be seen in his texts. Hesse discovered a world of spirituality not linked to any specific time, culture or religion, not linked to India or Europe. This discovery of him is clearly stated in his autobiographical book *The Journey to the East* in the following manner-

I did not reach India by ship or train. I had to find the magic bridges all by myself. I had to stop looking for my personal salvation from Europe there, I had to stop fighting the European part within my own heart, I had to unite the real Europe and the real India within myself and this lasted more and more years filled with suffering, unrest, war and desparation. Then a new time started for me, a time when I no longer longed for the palm beach of Ceylon and the streets of Benares and when I no longer wanted to become a Buddhist or a Taoist or to have a saint or a magician as a teacher. This all had become unimportant. The difference between the adored East and the sick and suffering West was no longer important to me. I no longer wanted to force my way into Eastern wisdom and cult. I realized that thousand modern admirers of Lao-tse knew less about Tao than Goethe who had never come across the word "Tao. (62)

In this stage of life Hesse stopped seeking escapism in Indian spirituality from the hum drum of Western life. He accepted fact that spirituality is not a matter of place, time and situation and the divide between east and west is merely superficial. Hesse went through a phase of acceptance of Western culture in this stage which he previously thought as spiritually inferior to East. Previously everything related to West was inferior to him and he had a sort a biasness towards India, its spirituality and its religio-philosophical thoughts. In this stage of Hesse's life, he began to view everything in both Western and Eastern culture with equanimity. His search for individual authentic spirituality matured in this stage of his life. At the end of the novel we find Siddhartha achieve his inner enlightenment by accepting the memory, pain and suffering of "Samsara" which he previously defied and tried to escape from. Siddhartha's achievement of 'Nirvana' by this simple acceptance reflects many elements of the fourth stage in Hesse's life that I have discussed above.

The novel *Siddhartha* is the culmination of Hermann Hesse's life long search for authentic spirituality. It is not simply an another novel as it is something written by blood; it is a product of his lifelong experiences. In one level, this book represents an allegorical representation of his own spiritual journey. In another level, this book represents Hesse's insights regarding Indian spirituality and his preoccupation with Indian religio-philosophical thoughts. In this level, this novel can also be treated as his personal diary. This book is multifaceted and simply categorizing it as novel is to do injustice with it. Many essays, paper and articles are written on *Siddhartha* and its Indian influences. All this works are being produced by simply accepting *Siddhartha* as novel only; a book that people read read and derive pleasure from. In Indian culture, a book is not simply a book. It can be used as a tool or medium (Yantra) to awake one's religious consciousness. In Yogacara school of Buddhism, books are treated as tantric tool or yantra to achieve enlightenment.

In the chapter three of this novel Gotama says-“The teachings, you’ve heard from me, are no opinion, and their goal is not to explain the world to those who seek knowledge. They have a different goal; their goal is salvation from suffering” (Hesse 26). For me, this book is a manifestation of the sayings of Gotama and this saying summarizes Hesse’s intention for writing this book. This is not merely a book written only to evoke pleasure by reading it and delving into its intellectual quaries. For me it is a book written on the intention to help other people who is in search for an authentic religiosity. Many paper and articles are written scholars such as Gunter Baumann, Madison Browne, Eugene F. Timpe and others on “Siddhartha” and its Indian influences but most of them do not provide any specifics. Most of them do not specify the particular Indian ideas, precepts, concepts, myths and historical events which had influence on Hermann Hesse on writing this book. What is Hermann Hesse’s take on those ideas and what are the specific insights regarding those ideas that he provides through different plot, events and characterization of this novel- these things are particularly missing on the papers and articles that I have accounted to. Through this paper, I want to show the specific influences in detail that Hermann Hesse had while writing this novel. Through this paper, I also want to understand and show simultaneously Hermann Hesse’s intention of writing this kind of novel. I hope I am successful to a degree to bring out the specific influences and insights of the novel *Siddhartha* in this paper.

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