THEME OF ENLIGHTENMENT IN HERMANN HESSE'S *SIDDHARTHA*

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Abstract

Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha* is a classic of its own kind in the modern European fiction. as it deals with the life of Siddhartha, a fictional character that is similar to Lord Buddha. In this novel, both are brought face to face. Siddhartha, like Buddha, leaves his home, lives with Samanas for some time, and learns the art of breathing and then being unsatisfied goes to Lord Buddha and lives him for some to attain the ways of enlightenment. There, he, being unsatisfied to away to a city where he meets Kamala, a courtesan, who introduces him to Kamaswami and the business world. He embraces, material life, giving up his quest for spiritual life. After some time, he gives up that also and reunited with his friend Govinda, a Buddhist monk. At last, he passes his enlightenment to Govinda; both become enlightened.

Keywords: Siddhartha, Brahmin, Govinda, Samanas, Kamala, material life, Kamaswami, Vasudeva, the ferryman, enlightenment,

Hermann Hesse, the Nobel Prize winning writer of Switzerland, was born with the religious background; his grandparents and parents were in the missionary work in the South Asia and India. He became a famous writer who published several novellas, novels, non-fiction, poetry and short stories - *Freunde* (1908), *In the Old Sun* ((1914), and novels- *Gertude* (1910), *Demian* (1919), *Siddhartha* (1922) and *Der Steppenwolf* (1927)- a collection of short stories *Strange News from Another Star* ((1919) and several collections of poetry. For all his literary contribution, he was awarded the Nobel for Literature in 1942. The present paper explores the similarity and dissimilarity between two main characters- Siddhartha and Lord Buddha and their ways of attaining the enlightenment in life.

His novel *Siddhartha* (1922) is about the life of Lord Buddha from her different point of view. In this novel, Hesse creates a fictional character named Siddhartha was a son of a Brahmin. He has all his knowledge and observation of religious practices. The people of the village valued his father very much; so was Siddhartha grew into a staunch Brahmin son. he was very handsome and respected by all in the village. He enjoys a near-idyllic

existence with his best friend, Govinda, " "his shadow; he travelled along the same path."(p.22) but he is secretly dissatisfied. Although he learnt a lot, he felt that something is mission. He had a friend named Govinda.

One day a group of wandering ascetics called Samanas passes through the town. They are starved and half naked. They were begging for food. They believed that enlightenment could be achieved through asceticism, a rejection of body pleasures. Siddhartha's father did not want him to join the group of Samanas but he cannot dissuade him. His father was helpless as his desire to join the Samanas was urgent. Joining them, he lives with them for some days. Siddhartha "learned to save his breath, to manage with little breathing , to hold his breath."(p. 21). On the contrary, both of them join the group of Samanas and he leisurely learns the art of spiritual living and has control over the worldly pleasures. Siddhartha learnt a great deal from the Samanas; he learnt many ways of losing the Self."(p.21). They lived for many years and but they yet to attain the spiritual enlightenment. The Samanas have been unsuccessful as the Brahmins- Siddhartha and Govinda were left behind. He realized later that none of them achieved enlightenment. So he decides to leave them and go away.

At that time, they hear about another holy man named Gautam Buddha who has attained the total spiritual enlightenment called *Nirvana*. Leaving the unsuccessful Samanas, Siddhartha and Govinda go to the so called "the wise man"- Lord Buddha. Siddhartha "saw him, and recognized him immediately, as if pointed out to him by a god." (p.30). They are initially pleased with Buddha and they were instructed the Eight fold path and the Four Nobel Truths and other aspects of Buddhism. However, Govinda is convinced of Buddha's philosophy. But Siddhartha finds a contradiction in the teachings of Buddha who could give satisfactory answers to Siddhartha's questions about the "unity of all things.". For some time, he meets Lord Buddha and be with him, discussing the spiritual life. He was not satisfied with the answers of Buddha for some of the questions. So he wants to attains enlightenment.

Siddhartha decides to embark on a life free from meditation and spiritual quests he has been pursuing, instead to learn from the pleasures of the body and the material world. By this time, he meets a ferryman, named Vasudeva by whose help he crosses the river. Crossing the river, he goes into a town where he meets Kamala, a courtesan. Siddhartha meets and goes with her to her house. In her house, "she kissed him deeply, and to

Siddhartha's great excitement she felt how much she taught him, how clever she was, how she mastered him, repulsed him, lured him, and how after this long kiss, ,,,,all different, awaited him."(p. 53) In her house, he discusses with her and she introduces him to Kamaswami, a businessman. It is Kamala who encourages him to become a businessman to attain her love. So he, after undergoing some training by Kamaswami, "a supple, lively man with grey hair , with clever prudent eyes and a sensual mouth"(p.57). After doing a lot of business, Siddhartha becomes a rich man in course of time and enjoys all worldly pleasures. He lives with Kamala for some months. After enjoying all kinds of pleasures, he feels that the material life is a burden to him; so he wants to escape from that kind of life.

Siddhartha leaves her and comes to river bank; for a while he thinks of committing suicide; he gives up that idea and sleeps on the bank of the river. There he meets Govinda, a monk, who finds a different Siddhartha- a business man. He becomes a ferryman and learns to listen to the river which bring shim enlighten in life.

Vasudeva gives him hints about the way of enlightenment, by listening to the sound of the flowing water. He retires from the job of ferryman. Siddhartha himself becomes a ferryman, in course of time; once, he meets Kamala who wants to cross the river with her son who is going to see the ailing Buddha. Meanwhile, she is bitten by the snake and she dies. Before dying, she reveals to him in the boat that Siddhartha himself is the son of her son. Siddhartha accepts him as his son but she dies soon. Then he "waited patiently in the hope that his son would come to understand him," (p.96) thinks of living with him but he does not like to live with him. The boy, having no love for Siddhartha, runs away from him stealing Govinda's money. Siddhartha, as his loves him as his son. He "could not give up his son"(p.98) goes in search of his son but he does not find and returns hopelessly. He becomes unhappy and sorrowful for having lost his son. Meanwhile, Vasudeva asks him to forget the loss of his son in listening to the river.

When he meets Govinda, the monk on the same river bank. Govinda asks him to give enlightenment but Siddhartha advises him that any amount of words do not communicate the enlightenment from person to person. He. asks him to kiss his forehead. and enlightenment is passed on to Govinda. At the end both Siddhartha and Govinda become enlightened persons.

In conclusion, it may be said that Siddhartha and Lord Buddha both are contradicted in Hermann Hesse's novel. Lord Buddha has enlightenment under the Bodhi tree, doing penance for fifty-nine days at Uruvela ; but Siddhartha get it in listening to the flow of the river sound-"om". Siddhartha learns about the material life from Kamala, a courtesan but Buddha has his thirteen years of material life of material pleasures in the palace.

Thus, Hesse vividly presents a different version of the individual's enlightenment in his novel, entirely different from that Lord Buddha's. He gives Lord Buddha's previous name, Siddhartha to the Brahmin boy. The dialogue is invigorating. the descriptions of the places and persons are picturesque. The images of like the river stands as a central metaphor in the novel. The third-person narrative technique used by Hesse is captivating. The fictional language of Hesse is undoubtedly poetic and his prose is full; of illustrations and examples, images and metaphors.

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