



A QUEST FOR ENLIGHTENMENT IN HERMANN HESSE'S SIDDHARTHA

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Article Received:17/08/2020

Article Accepted:06/09/2020

Published online:12/09/2020

DOI: [10.33329/rjelal.8.3.253](https://doi.org/10.33329/rjelal.8.3.253)

Abstract

Hermann Hesse is one of the most widely read German language authors; his books are world literature classics and he is one of the most famous 20th century writers. His great success is based on such works as Siddhartha, Steppenwolf, Demian and the Glass Bead Game. His books which have been translated more than 70 languages, total around 150 million published copies. Siddhartha written in German by an author, who was born with (inherited) Estonian citizenship, grew up in Germany and became a Swiss citizen. And appropriately, like many of Hesse's works, Siddhartha has received a particularly international reception. The heart of Siddhartha is in the portrayal of an intensely personal "restlessness of the soul", and in the exploration of difficult questions of meaning, purpose, truth and enlightenment. Much of the current appeal of Hesse can be attributed to the fact that his writings invite his readers to identify their quests for an integral inner life with that endless struggle for self-realization in which the successive characters of his works are engaged. To a large extent Hesse achieves this effect by addressing himself to just those channels which communicate most directly with our deepest reactive processes-archetypal forms, the most basic personal and social conflicts, and universal philosophical and religious quests. As a conscious response to Hesse's appeal to our innermost selves, we seek, always realizing that we may never fully understand the vectored forces which converge within an artist to produce a dimensioned work of art, to produce a nomenclature for his methods, motifs, forms, and sources. None of his works seems to have been spared such analysis, least of all the Siddhartha. And for a number of obvious reasons, hardly a commentator on this work has failed to mention the close relationship which apparently exists between it and the principal religious philosophy of India.

Key words: enlightenment, spirituality, journey, Indian philosophy, bhagwad gita,

"The writings of Hermann Hesse, the German writer, have a deep and firm root in the Vedas, the Upanishads and in the Buddhism"¹ (Timpe 349). In this contemporary worldly fringe, his writings compel to re-think and unveil the mystery of the self, urge to make a shift from periphery to centre to know Thyself. His novel *Siddhartha* is a true critique of life and it explores the intrinsic flow to reach

Enlightened State. In the novel, an inexorable search for truth is exhibited for creating a harmonious bond with the world. In pursuing the study of this novel, it seems worthwhile to notice Hesse's conception about the East, which is the sole basis of most of his literary art. In his autobiographical novel *The Journey to the East* Hesse states:

For our goal was not only the East, or rather the East was not only a country an something geographical but it was the home and youth of the soul, it was everywhere and nowhere, it was the union of all times(24) .

“Hesse’s confrontation with Indian culture was unreflected and preconscious” (Baumann1). It started from his birth in 1877 and lasted until 1904, the year in which he moved to Gaienhofen and started a new life as a professional writer. 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. His grandfather, Dr. Hermann Gundert, had been a famous scholar who was preoccupied with the Sanskrit and is still well- known in India today. 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 opens to this and so this early confrontation led to a lifelong preoccupation with Indian philosophy and 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 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 young and when he got older his open-mindedness and tolerance towards all kinds of religion grew and he regarded them all as equal. He hated dogmatism of any kind.

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 Bhagavad-Gita and since then never

lost touch with this spiritual world. This period of Hesse which can be characterized as a time of intellectual confrontation with the Indian way of thinking, a time of spiritual quest.

This stage lasted until 1921. It was no accident that this phase started with the confrontation with Schopenhauer's ideas. At the turn of the century Schopenhauer and Nietzsche were fashionable authors and like the young Thomas Mann Hermann Hesse was much attracted by this intellectual world. Links between Schopenhauer's philosophy and Indian spirituality are obvious. Schopenhauer's epistemological maxim of the world being a mere reflection of our consciousness is strongly related to the Indian idea that our factual world is not real but mere appearance. This idea is a basis of Hinduism and Buddhism. And Schopenhauer's anthropological thesis of the "will" as an irrational force within man corresponds to the Buddhist conception of the "thirst" as a source of human suffering. In addition to that Schopenhauer's concept of salvation corresponds with the one based on Buddhism and Hinduism. According to Schopenhauer salvation can only be gained when selfishness and restrictedness are overcome by compassion and the discovery that all beings are brothers and sisters. This corresponds to the traditional "Tat tvam asi" of the Upanishads and the Buddhist idea of salvation by overcoming "Thirst" and egocentricity.

So it is quite obvious that Schopenhauer led Hesse to a new approach to the Holy Texts of India. Another motivation for Hesse's new interest in a systematic occupation with the religious tradition of India was surely his former dislike of Christianity. He was bored and disgusted by its theory and practice and by his parent's narrow-mindedness. Therefore he was looking for a deeper and more personal spirituality and India offered this to him.

Gunter Baumann in his essay “Hermann Hesse and India” says, “ 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”(3). He was accompanied by the painter Hans Sturzenegger who was his friend. There were several reasons for this voyage: His marriage to

his first wife had entered a stage of crisis and ended up in divorce. But it was also an escape from Europe and its political development which drifted towards World War I and a European culture industry which he regarded as unbearable and disgusting. 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. His main impressions of this journey are collected in his "Remembrances of Asia"

In the end the human impression is the strongest. It is the religious link of all these millions of souls. The whole East breathes religion in a way the West breathes reason and technology. Occidental inner life seems to be primitive and exposed to chance if you compare it to the spirituality of the Asian which is protected, secure and trustful. This impression is outstanding because here you can see Eastern strength and Occidental misery and weakness and all doubts, troubles and hopes of our soul are confirmed. Everywhere we can see the supremacy of our technology and civilization and everywhere we can see that the religious people of the East enjoy something we are deeply lacking and therefore appreciate more than any superiority. It is quite clear that no import from the East can help us here and no returning to India or China and no escape to any religiousness organized by any church. But it is also quite obvious that salvation and continuance of our culture is only possible if we regain spiritual mastery in the art of living. I don't know whether religion is something that could be done away with, but I have never seen more clearly and relentlessly than among Asian people that religion or its substitute is something we are deeply lacking. (Baumann 3)

Before discussing the plot, narrative technique and his indebtedness to Indian materials in creation of characters, incidents, one may like to quote Hesse's own words which show his source materials in constructing Siddhartha and other writings on India. In 1920 Hesse writes:

My preoccupation with India, which has been going on for almost twenty years and has passed through many stages, now seems to me to have reached a new point of development. Previously my reading, searching and sympathies were restricted exclusively to the philosophical aspect of India—the purely intellectual, Vedantic and Buddhist aspect. The Upanishads, the sayings of Buddha and the Bhagavad Gita were the focal point of this world. Only recently have I been approaching the actual religious India of the Gods, of Vishnu and Indra, Brahma and Krishna. And now Buddhism appears to me more and more as a kind of very pure, highly bred reformation—a purification and spiritualization that has no flaw but its great zealotry, with which it destroys image-worlds for which it can offer no replacement (150).

Siddhartha develops out of Hesse's knowledge of eastern religions. For example, many of the characters are named after either Hindu or Buddhist gods: Siddhartha is the personal name of Buddha, Vasudeva is one of the names of Krishna, and Kamala's name is derived from Kama, the Hindu god of erotic love. Clearly, the most obvious and significant aspect of Hermann Hesse's Siddhartha is its use of images, themes, and ideas drawn from Eastern religions. Having both traveled to India and studied extensively about Indian religions, Hesse was able to integrate a substantial understanding of Eastern religious traditions into his novel. In fact, Siddhartha does such a good job of developing Eastern religious themes that it has been published in India, and Indian critics have generally praised its sensitive understanding of their religious traditions.

In addition, Hesse bases most of the novel's themes on various Hindu or Buddhist principles. For example, Siddhartha seeks to gain an understanding of Atman, the individual soul, and Brahma, the universal soul that unifies all beings. In order to achieve this understanding, however, he must experience a vision that reveals to him the true meaning of Om, the sacred word that Hindus chant when meditating upon the cosmic unity of all life. The vast majority of Siddhartha's philosophical and

religious questions develop out of his attempt to understand these religious principles or other themes drawn from Eastern religions such as meditation, fasting, renunciation, timelessness, transcending suffering, etc. While it would take an entire book to explain all of the religious ideas that Hesse develops in his novel, he generally presents at least a basic description of these ideas within the book itself. Consequently, readers can at least get a rudimentary understanding of these ideas even if they do not understand all of the subtle complexities of Eastern religious thought. Not only does Hesse borrow names, themes, and ideas from Eastern religions, but he also bases and structures his narrative on the life of the historical Buddha. Much like Siddhartha in Hesse's novel, the historical Buddha was born into a wealthy family, but he renounced his wealth to live as an ascetic. After several years of self-denial, however, he came to realize the errors of asceticism. After leaving behind his austere life, he meditated under a Bodhi tree until he received Nirvana (or complete Enlightenment), and then he spent the rest of his life trying to help others reach Nirvana. This is very similar to the path that Siddhartha follows in the novel as he passes through similar stages of wealth, renunciation, meditation, enlightenment, and striving to teach others.

Siddhartha begins with the traditional conflict between the Brahmanical and Buddhist way. Buddha was the main force behind the protest against the traditional theology, Brahmanical priesthood and sacerdotal ritualism, establishing a more rationalistic, liberal and subjective thinking. Siddhartha, therefore, is introduced in the first chapter of the novel as a Brahmin's son, rigorously observing all the hieratic, externalist and ritualistic pattern in daily life, but still lingering at heart to comprehend the 'Brahman', learning the art of practising contemplation, offering sacrifices, listening to religious discourses, and reciting hymns from Veda and Upanishads could not satisfy him. He decides to try the path of the Samanas (ascetics). This attitude in itself shows how Hesse tries to expound the conflict in the religious tradition of India. This is reflected in his statement about Siddhartha:

Govinda knew that he would not become an ordinary Brahmin, a lazy sacrificial official, an avaricious dealer in magic sayings, a conceited worthless orator, a wicked sly priest or just a good stupid sheep amongst a large herd (04).

But when Siddhartha lives his father's house, he waits for the permission of his father in the traditional Indian way, and succeeds in getting his permission for the devotion to his aim in life. In the first chapter itself, Siddhartha rejects the Brahmanical way of ritualistic life. In the second chapter he joins the Samanas. But he realizes that the asceticism does not lead him on the proper path. Through self-denial, and following the ascetic rules he 'killed his senses, he killed his memory, he slipped out of his Self in a thousand different forms. He was animal, carcass, stone, wood, water, and each time he reawakened thus reaching at a conclusion,

Govinda, I believe that among all the Samanas, probably not even one will attain Nirvana. We find consolations; we learn tricks with which we deceive ourselves, but the essential thing—the way—we do not find (20).

In the following two chapters Hesse introduces Gautama Buddha and his followers in a legendary setting in the 'Jetavana grove, which the rich merchant Anathapindika' had presented to Buddha and his followers. Siddhartha and Govinda listened to the teachings of Buddha. Govinda joins the teacher, but Siddhartha departs from him in search of the 'unity of time', 'overwhelmed by a feeling of icy despair'. He now finds that the world from which he has so far tried to flee is attractive. As Hesse puts it:

That was the last shudder of his awakening, the last pains of birth. Immediately he moved on again and began to walk quickly and impatiently, no longer homewards, no longer to his father, no longer looking backwards (44).

In the next four chapters known as Kamala episode, Siddhartha has been exposed to the pleasures and pain of the worldly man. On his way

to the city he meets for the first time the longing for sex. 'Here Hesse is presenting a picture from the classical Indie 'Art of Love' ¹⁰(Misra, 117). Next he proceeds to the city, meets Kamala, a courtesan, learns the art of love from her, discards his beggar's cloth and becomes a successful merchant. In course of his conversations with Kamala in their first meeting, Siddhartha explains that resolution is the key to success in each sphere. Siddhartha explains to her:

That is what Siddhartha learned from the Samanas. It is what fools call magic and what they think is caused by demons. Nothing is caused by demons; there are no demons. Everyone can perform magic, everyone can reach his goal, if he can think, wait and fast (63-64)

In the following chapters Siddhartha's self-analysis is the main theme of Hesse's description. Siddhartha meets Vasudeva, a ferryman, and spends the rest of his life with him. Here Siddhartha learns the 'timeless unity' from the river. At the bank of this river he meets Kamala, Govinda and his son. This is how Hesse reunites the plot. Thus Siddhartha in his own way achieves eternal bliss.

There are uncanny similarities between legendary tale of Buddha and plot construction of Siddhartha, it is found that there is a strong sense of parallelism. Buddha left his wife and child to become an ascetic. Similarly, Siddhartha leaves his wife Kamala and his still unborn child to seek truth. Both of them have spent some time of their lives with the Samanas and have practiced yoga. Revelation came to Buddha under the sacred Bodhi tree, whereas Siddhartha takes important decision under the mango tree. River is the final place in both of their lives where they realize the ultimate truth. These parallel incidents prove to a certain degree that Hesse imitated the legendary life of Buddha in constructing the moral allegory of Siddhartha. But the incidents in the life of Siddhartha have been rearranged in an opposite direction than that of Buddha to meet his purpose, in creating Siddhartha as a protest against Buddhist way. Another important character in the novel is Vasudeva, who plays a dominant role in the life of Siddhartha.

Though Vasudeva is portrayed as a simple, unconcerned, lone ferry man, many of his statements lead the reader to believe that Hesse created Vasudeva on the model of Krishna's role in the Bhagavad-Gita. After Siddhartha's revelation, Vasudeva leaves him forever. Before leaving he says

I have waited for this hour, my friend. Now it has arrived, let me go. I have been Vasudeva, the ferryman, for a long time. Now it is over. Farewell hut, Farewell River, farewell Siddhartha (139).

In addition to structuring the novel according to the Buddha's life, Hesse also structures the novel according to various principles found in the Buddha's teachings. In fact, several of the chapters are named after specific religious principles. For example, the chapter titled "Awakening" describes how Siddhartha comes to recognize the Buddhist belief that the path to enlightenment must be rooted in the here and now instead of focusing on other distant or transcendent worlds. In addition, the chapter titled "Samsara" describes how Siddhartha is caught in a continuous cycle of death and rebirth because he has not yet achieved a state of total enlightenment or Nirvana, and the chapter titled "Om" describes how Siddhartha eventually escapes from Samsara to achieve a vision of the essential unity of all things. These chapter titles accurately describe the spiritual development that Siddhartha undergoes in each chapter, and these stages of spiritual development provide the structure that organizes both the novel's development as a narrative and Siddhartha's development as a character.

Siddhartha is one of the names of the historical Gotama, the life of Hesse's character; Siddhartha resembles that of his historical counterpart to some extent. Siddhartha is by no means a fictional life of Buddha, but it does contain numerous references to Buddha and his teachings (Misra 114).

Both Hinduism and Buddhism religions stem from India before the Common Era and hold ranks as being one of the top five main religions around the world, therefore, having similar origins and

philosophies. Hinduism places third as an organized religion and is much older than Buddhism. Hinduism and Buddhism have lasted for centuries and today is widely practiced among the world. Hinduism is considered to be monotheistic as they believe in the idea of cosmos being thus god takes variation of forms and manifestations, whereas, Buddhism is believed to be non-theistic, which is not belief in God. Hinduism has not been able to identified a founder as it dates one of the oldest history, while, Lord Buddha (recognized as Siddhartha Gautama), was the founder of Buddhism. Buddhism is founded on the knowledge of Lord Buddha which had been a Hindu before achieving Nirvana, and thus you find many similarities and differences in festivals and feast such as worship, birth of a child and festivals of lights

Therefore, no one can deny the strong influence of Indian culture and philosophy on Hesse's Siddhartha. However, it is equally true that Hesse's intention was not to write an authentic Indian work based on Indian religious thought and philosophy. Hesse had faith in his own views which he tries to put down through the protagonist of Siddhartha. This work ensures development in Hesse as a writer and reflects his own ideas and beliefs based on the world religion. Hence at the end Siddhartha's departure from the world of spirit to the world of senses shows Hisses thought that represents a complete change in Siddhartha's experience of reality. Siddhartha's experience of Samsara is an important aspect of spiritual development. The affection between Kamala and Siddhartha is rewarded by a son who enables Siddhartha to reflect and understand the proper relationship between the son and the father. Like him, Siddhartha's son too rejects the existence of Siddhartha and prefers his own way to lead life. This brings maturity in Siddhartha. About the synthesis of spiritual and material world in Siddhartha's life Madison Brown writes:

The awakening in question is that of Siddhartha's sense and his sense experiences of the second epoch are an antithesis to his spiritual experiences of the first epoch. In order to continue with his development from the spiritual into the sensuous, Siddhartha

must reject maya as illusion and accept it as real in order to experience it. (191)

Through his protagonist's quest, Hesse wants to convey that neither intellectual efforts nor sheer sensual and physical gratification is sufficient to attain self-realization. It needs a synthesis of both in order to cope with the problematic existence. In this novel, Hesse concludes his philosophy convincingly by introducing the emotional value to the protagonist's search. This enables him to achieve his much intended goal of enlightenment.

Siddhartha is known as Hesse's wisdom book. The last part of Siddhartha portrays the spiritual progression. It assists Hesse to reemerge in the world of Indian religion and culture which was available to him since childhood. Once again Hesse started indulging in a profound spiritual experience by reading the Upanishads and the Bhagavad-Gita of Hinduism and speeches of Buddha. He also acknowledged the contribution of Chinese Spiritual Tradition and psychoanalysis in bringing him out of the letdown in his career. All these philosophies and thoughts serve as the path of healing and progression for Hesse to complete Siddhartha. Hesse's mid-life crisis offered him a non-dogmatic form for his religious beliefs. This non-dogmatic formulation had drawn on the Christian, the Indian, and the Chinese spiritual traditions.

Hence, Siddhartha's modified version of the Moksha state is Hesse's Buddha because Siddhartha accepts life in its entirety. It seems that Siddhartha's Moksha reflects Hesse's own modified philosophy which is an amalgamation of Hinduism and Buddhism.

Siddhartha follows its eponymous central character (the name plays on the birth name of the Buddha) not only on an "inward" journey, but one through space and time. The young Siddhartha's quest is prompted by nagging restlessness, typical of almost all Hesse's characters, and driven by his thirst for understanding. He abandons home and family to become an itinerant monk. He learns from the Buddha but refuses to become a "follower". He transforms himself into a "worldly" man, guided by a courtesan and a merchant. And most famously he ends his life as a ferryman, achieving an

extraordinary harmony with the universe and with time, embodied by the eternally flowing river.

The novel was written at a time of international crisis and transition in the aftermath of World War I. It was also a time of personal and artistic problems for Hesse. Like many of his modernist contemporaries in the aftermath of the war, he was seeking new directions away from the romantically-tinged realism that had characterized his early successes. Siddhartha was inspired in part by his reading of Eastern religions and philosophy, in particular that of Buddhism, Hinduism and Taoism. And so it is perhaps unsurprising that the book displays few of the qualities of popular drama. There's no development of rounded characters and no dramatic tension in its consciously sparse and focused depiction of a quest for "the essential thing" beyond the physical world. Siddhartha searches for a truth that can only be attained by an "inward journey" of self-discovery, one that can be experienced but not taught.

This rejection of formal modes of instruction and dogma was an important theme for Hesse. It undoubtedly relates to his unhappy experience of a bourgeois education in the formal rigidity of imperial Germany. Yet at the same time the compact, episodic narrative of Siddhartha, in depicting the key "stations" of a life, displays an affinity both with the German tradition of the Bildungsroman, the novel of education, as well as dramatic forms that have an even longer tradition, for example in the Christian passion play.

There are in fact few works of literature from the 20th century that have enjoyed comparable reach and resonance. The first wave of enthusiasm was during the 1920s and 1930s. Then there was a second from the 1960s, when the novel's themes of spirituality and rebellion found a ready audience among a young generation seeking authenticity and value in an increasingly secular and material world. Siddhartha has been translated into more than 30 languages, including many Indian languages, has sold countless millions of copies and was lavishly adapted into a film, directed by Conrad Rooks in 1972.

The influence of Asian culture on Europe stretches back many centuries, and Hesse's novel was certainly not unique in attempting to go beyond cliché in its engagement with Asian themes. Yet for today's multicultural and globalised culture, the synthesis of Eastern and Western perspectives in this unusual novel retains a distinct relevance.

When Hermann Hesse first published this novella in Germany, it quickly became popular throughout Europe. The reason behind Hesse's Siddhartha worldwide popularity lies in its universality of theme and plot construction. Siddhartha the protagonist of this novella is a universal character, his pain and struggle of spiritual quest makes it a popular work of art among all the nations' people. In this materialistic world where each person is running blindly towards worldly desires, the novel comes across as a breath of fresh air. The beauty of this book manifests itself when it is read in different phases of life. The interpretation comes out in various hues depending on the mental picture of the reader. The book is narrated by a third person and has direct and indirect quotes of various characters but the focus is always on Siddhartha. Hesse in his simple way of writing has portrayed an ordinary man's search and journey to salvation and enlightenment. There are many references to Hindu holy books - Vedas, Upanishads and the Gita. The word "Om" has a special significance for the Hindus and it recurs in the novel. In part two of the book the author has assigned a small chapter on this word. Siddhartha practices meditation with the chants of "Om" when he is at his paternal home, training to be a Brahmin. Hilda Rosner, the translator of the novel, lyrically explains the significance of the word in the life of a Brahmin - "Om is the bow, the arrow is the soul, Brahmin is the arrow's goal" The novel starts with a boy named Siddhartha, born in a rich Brahmin family engaged in "the art of contemplation and meditation" He has all the luxuries at his disposal and leads an easy life. However, the feeling of something missing always haunts him. One day he comes across some people called Samanas, who are ascetics, having renounced all their material and physical desires –

"Wandering ascetics, they were thin worn-out men, neither old nor young, with dusty

and bleeding shoulders, practically naked, scorched by the sun, solitary, strange and hostile - lean jackals in the world of men”

Siddhartha is influenced by their way of living, and believing this to be the missing link in his life, leaves his home against the wishes of his father, in quest of enlightenment. After moving with the samanas he realizes that this was not what he had expected. He is still dissatisfied with life. Soon he hears the name of Gautama Buddha who was supposed to have attained Nirvana or total bliss. After meeting Gautama Buddha, he discovers that though Buddha's enlightenment was a unique personal experience, he was not able to convince him to become his follower. None of the wise men he met could teach him the ways and means to achieve salvation. This insight leads Siddhartha to set out again into the unknown on his own. The solitary life he leads amidst the samanas for three years suddenly ends as he enters the court of Kamala - a courtesan and she teaches him the art of love. Siddhartha now enters into business and becomes a wealthy man just as his father used to be. All good things in life surround him. One day while introspecting he feels nauseated with the way he is living. He asks himself a question: - “For what purpose I left my family and friends? Just to stay like them?” He once again walks away into the forest leaving behind all his fortune and friends. Very disillusioned, he contemplates suicide by the side of the river. He is suddenly jolted into consciousness by the word Om. He gives up the thought of taking his life and continues with his journey. This time he comes across Vasudeva, the ferryman, who serves as his teacher and a mutual admiration develops between the two. Inquisitive individuals come, and meet these two people and feel a sense of healing after spending some time with them. The novel follows the life journey of Siddhartha through various stages with different people- with Gautama the Buddha, Kamala the courtesan and Vasudeva the ferryman who teach him specific purposes in life. He yearns for his son's love but is agitated by his indifference when he leaves him and goes away. This reminds him of his younger days when he had left his father alone to pursue his own goal. He goes through various phases in life and is satiated with

both the spiritual and material world. Finally, Siddhartha stops looking for his son and returns to Vasudeva the ferryman and living by the side of the river finds solace and spends the rest of his days ferrying people across the waters. Here living by the side of the river he finds enlightenment and learns an important lesson that knowledge can be taught but wisdom comes from experience. Siddhartha was originally written in German and published in 1922. Although the novel was inspired by Hesse's visit to India and delves on Hinduism and Buddhism, the problems faced by Siddhartha are universal. Any person who has pondered on life can appreciate the book irrespective of caste, creed or religion.

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