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Theme of "Nirvana" In *Siddhartha* by Hermann Hesse

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Abstract:

Nirvana is a term that is most tied to the religion, Buddhism and Hinduism. It is best defined as a state of total self-contentment and an emptiness in feelings. Throughout the novel, Siddhartha finds his way down the path to Nirvana through the following of many very influential teachers, Buddhist religions, Nirvana is the highest spiritual state that can possibly be achieved. Entering the realm of Nirvana is only possible for those who have become pure. People sometimes refer to a state of complete happiness and peace as nirvana.

Key Words: Nirvana, Hinduism, Buddhism, Spiritual self-realization, spiritual Enlightenment.

Research Methodology:

The research intends to follow Interpretive methods of research.

Objectives:

- Explain concept of Nirvana in Hinduism and Buddhism.
- Discuss the importance of self- realization to attain Nirvana.
- Evaluate the journey of Siddhartha (main character of novel) from worldly pleasures to enlightenment.
- Siddhartha achieves true Nirvana by end of the Novel.

Introduction:

Herman Hesse's classic novel has delighted, inspired, and influenced generations of readers, writers, and thinkers. In this story of a wealthy Indian Brahmin who casts off a life of privilege to seek spiritual fulfilment Hesse synthesizes Jungian archetypes (innate patterns of thought and behaviour that strive for realization within an individual's environment) Western individualism-into a unique vision of life as expressed through one man's search for true meaning of life.

Siddhartha, novel by Hermann Hesse based on the early life of Buddha, published in German in 1922. It was inspired by the author's visit to India before World War I. The theme of the novel is the search for self-realization by a young Brahman, Siddhartha. Realizing the contradictions between reality and what he has been taught, he abandons his comfortable life to wander. His goal is to find the serenity that will enable him to defeat fear and to experience with equanimity the contrasts of life, including joy and sorrow, life and



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death. Asceticism, including fasting, does not prove satisfying, nor do wealth, sensuality, and the attentions of a lovely courtesan. Despairing to find fulfilment, he goes to the river and there learns simply to listen. He discovers within himself a spirit of love and learns to accept human separateness. In the end, Siddhartha grasps the wholeness of life and achieves a state of bliss and highest wisdom. It does not mean to be in a place where there is no noise, trouble, or hard work. It means to be in the midst of those things and still be calm in your heart.” In Asian culture, the Buddha is the most superior being, attaining inner peace by achieving True Nirvana. Gotama, a man from both the novel Siddhartha and in actual history, was the only one to complete this tiring task. In the novel, the main character Siddhartha decides to venture out on a power-hungry journey to achieve True Nirvana, changing his life many times on the path of enlightenment. In Siddhartha, Hermann Hesse uses the river as a symbol to illustrate the source of which Siddhartha becomes enlightened, which is evident through the sacred Om, Siddhartha’s path to "Nirvana".

When Siddhartha ventures to the river for the first time, it was the first time that he had become awakened and sees the world in a new light. “‘Om,’ he pronounced inwardly, and he was conscious of Brahman, of the indestructibility of life; he remembered all that he had forgotten, all that was divine” (89). At this point in the novel, Siddhartha has been reawakened from a rich merchant to a poor man who lives to learn from the river. This new life portrays all that Siddhartha had forgotten, giving his life a new purpose. Siddhartha has the river help him through his journey to enlightenment.

With the assistance of the river, Siddhartha learns many things including the art of listening. “Above all, he learned from it how to listen, to listen with a still heart, with a waiting, open soul, without passion, without desire, without judgement, without opinions” (106). Siddhartha sought to obtain the art of listening as soon as he left the river bank after he heard Om. He met Vasudeva and learned from both the ferryman and the river. Once Siddhartha dawned on this new knowledge, he became more at peace with his Self and the world around him. “He was now listening intently, completely absorbed, quite empty, taking in everything. He felt that he had now completely learned the art of listening”

Throughout the novel, Siddhartha struggles with spiritual self-realization and the attempts of others to teach him how to find the path to Enlightenment. The practices of asceticism, while beneficial in many ways, do not lead Siddhartha to a better understanding of his path. After he and Govinda speak with Gautama, Siddhartha acknowledges the wisdom of Buddha's teaching but believes it neglects the uniqueness of every individual. While working with the merchant Kamaswami, Siddhartha becomes a successful businessman



but finds he has more to teach Kamaswami about life than Kamaswami has to teach Siddhartha about business. In Vasudeva, Siddhartha finds a teacher who instructs without words. This is the major difference in each of the people Siddhartha views as teachers. It is the instruction to sit and listen to the river that brings Siddhartha spiritual discovery, allowing him to understand and experience things that cannot be explained in words. Unity, morality, and truth are revealed to Siddhartha when he stops seeking them. He discovers that not all concepts can be explained in words but must be experienced to be understood, and each individual must follow their own path in order to experience Enlightenment.

Following the regular cycles of life is discouraged in *Siddhartha*. Choosing a life based on avoidance of routine is preferred to reach enlightenment. Abandoning cyclical routines allows Siddhartha to gain a true understanding of the world because he is forced to live a life closer to nature, thus getting closer to enlightenment since he isn't concerned with the everyday habits of society.

For example, the narrator says, 'Then for an hour was aware that he was leading a strange life, that he was doing all sorts of things that were merely a game, that he was cheerful, granted, and sometimes felt joy, but that a real life was flowing past him and not touching him.'

Siddhartha is reflecting on his path and the strangeness he feels for not leading a life with a single direction. Here, Siddhartha's life is like a river, bouncing off banks and trickling into the cracks of the earth, but never sticking to one course. His wandering lifestyle, void of routine, allows him to remain grounded and ultimately become one with the world as he realizes that cycles impede his ability to become enlightened.

Siddhartha was born and raised within the highest castes of Indian society, and it was clear to his family and others that he would follow in his father's ways of living as a Brahman. While members of Siddhartha's society enviously looked upon his life of ease and leadership, Siddhartha was plagued with a deep need to step outside of his comfort zone in search of deeper meaning for his life. Going against his father's wishes, Siddhartha leaves his home with his best friend Govinda on a journey to find enlightenment. Hesse parallels his protagonist with the historical Buddha, Siddhartha Gotama Sakyamuni, who lived sometime in the first millennium B.C.E. and started what is today known as Buddhism. Like the historical figure of Siddhartha Gotama, Hesse's Siddhartha leaves society in search of the true meaning of life. In fact, Hesse's character at one point of his journey meets and follows Gotama (Buddha) who claims to have reached the state of Nirvana or enlightenment.



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Siddhartha by Hermann Hesse discusses the many paths of teaching that relate to Hinduism that Siddhartha followed on his journey through life and how each path helped him realize what he wanted with his life. Siddhartha follows many teachings or paths in which to reach his spiritual destination, which at the beginning was to reach Nirvana. The four stages of life choices, which favour both renunciation and world upholding, are 1) student 2) householder 3) forest hermit and 4) wandering ascetic in the book, Siddhartha participated in each of these lifestyles for a significant amount of time. Unlike his father, Siddhartha did not want to be a Brahmin. He thought his calling.

Siddhartha parted from Govinda to leave behind the childhood memories and with that decision, he felt at peace, he had renounced friendship too. He was no longer going to leave himself behind and begin his day with the thinking of Atman. Atman is the subject of knowledge (Smart 203). His identity was plain and simple, Siddhartha, the awakened one, not his father's son and not a Brahmin. (Hesse 38). Siddhartha never fully reached the definition of a householder by raising a family but held a position that would be deemed householder by our society today. Siddhartha found his way into the village after leaving Govinda and saw Kamala who propositioned herself to him and his sensual pleasure that he had suppressed for years while following the samaras was awakened. Siddhartha for many years was Kamala's lover and helped him to become a rich merchant and have all the personal wealth he had taught himself not to want for most of his life. His ego was the focus of his life. He followed the teachings of greed and personal prosperity, everything he once disbelieved that was right for him. After years of pleasure and learning that, he was not amazed and entertained by the simple pleasures that gave him such joy many years before. He found those simple pleasures distasteful, and he realized why being a merchant was not his choice of life choice. As he chooses to leave Kamala and that life behind, he doesn't realize that he has fulfilled a quota of being a " He has robbed me, the Buddha, Siddhartha thought, and yet he has given me a greater gift he has given me the gift of Siddhartha, myself. "

After speaking with Gautama, the Buddha, Siddhartha realizes that he cannot reach enlightenment through following another's teachings-he must go alone. Gautama has helped Siddhartha crystallize this very important insight about his path and direction. Siddhartha knows that this truth also means he must leave Govinda behind, which saddens him greatly



“He had died, a new Siddhartha had woken up from the sleep.”

“It is good,” he thought, “to get a taste of everything for oneself, which one needs to know. That lust for the world and riches do not belong to the good things, I have already learned as a child. I have known it for a long time, but I have experienced only now. And now I know it, don’t just know it in my memory, but in my eyes, in my heart, in my stomach. Good for me, to know this!” For a long time, he pondered his transformation, listened to the bird, as it sang for joy. Had not this bird died in him, had he not felt its death? No, something else from within him had died, something which already for a long time had yearned to die. Was it not this what he used to intend to kill in his ardent years as a penitent? Was this not his self, his small, frightened, and proud self, he had wrestled with for so many years, which had defeated him again and again, which was back again after every killing, prohibited joy, felt fear? Was it not this, which today had finally come to its death, here in the forest, by this lovely river? Was it not due to this death, that he was now like a child, so full of trust, so without fear, so full of joy? Now Siddhartha also got some idea of why he had fought this self in vain as a Brahmin, as a penitent. Too much knowledge had held him back, too many holy verses, too many sacrificial rules, too much self-castigation, so much doing and striving for that goal! Full of arrogance, he had been, always the smartest, always working the most, always one step ahead of all others, always the knowing and spiritual one, always the priest or wise one. Into being a priest, into this arrogance, into this spirituality, his self-had retreated, there it sat firmly and grew, while he thought he would kill it by fasting and penance. Now he saw it and saw that the secret voice had been right, that no teacher would ever have been able to bring about his salvation. Therefore, he had to go out into the world, lose himself to lust and power, to woman and money, had to become a merchant, a dice-gambler, a drinker, and a greedy person, until the priest and Samana in him was dead. Therefore, he had to continue bearing these ugly years, bearing the disgust, the teachings, the pointlessness of a dreary and wasted life up to the end, up to bitter despair, until Siddhartha the lustful, Siddhartha the greedy could also die. He had died, a new Siddhartha had woken up from the sleep. He would also grow old, he would also eventually have to die, mortal was Siddhartha, mortal was every physical form. But today he was young, was a child, the new Siddhartha, and was full of joy.



Literature Review:

ARCHANA KUMARI

(Research Journal of English Language and Literature A Peer Reviewed (Refereed) International Journal) **A**

QUEST FOR ENLIGHTENMENT IN HERMANN HESSE'S SIDDHARTHA

In this article Archana Kumari depicts intense views of novel 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.

Archana Kumari (Research Scholar, University Department of English, Ranchi University Ranchi)

HESSE'S SIDDHARTHA: AN EXPLORATION INTO INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

Siddhartha, set in India, is subtitled an "Indic Poetic Work," and it clearly owes much to Indian religions. Hermann Hesse's novel Siddhartha is set in ancient India at the time of Buddha. We find the roots of Siddhartha's conception in his childhood. Hesse's parents had been in India as missionaries. His mother was born in India. However, the health of Hesse's father declined and the whole family had to shift to Cal. They joined the maternal grandfather of Hesse Dr. Gundert, a well-known linguist and a scholar in eastern philosophy at this place. Hesse was brought up under the influence of Indian songs, books, and discussions about Indian and Chinese writings. The beautiful objects and pieces of art left a profound impression on Hesse's mind. Hence, in the novel Siddhartha, we find an influence of eastern philosophy. But the question



of the exact nature of Hesse's debt to various aspects of Indian religion and philosophy in Siddhartha is quite complicated and deserves detailed discussion. This essay will discuss the elements of Hindu and Buddhist thought present in Siddhartha and make distinctions between them.

Le Hong Linh

(Ph.D. Research Scholar in College of Arts, Commerce and Law, Acharya Nagarjuna University, Guntur-522510) **Journey to Enlightenment in Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha***

In this article Le Hong tries to explore novel's lead character Siddhartha's despite living among adverse conditions and various kinds of temptations, Siddhartha ultimately reaches his goal of self-realisation. As already mentioned earlier this process of self-realisation or spiritual fulfilment is quite difficult to convey in ordinary words. Hesse has turned to nature symbolism to communicate the same. This lends the novel a profound spiritual vision. Hesse projects it through the use the symbols and images. The essential symbols used by Hesse are namely water, river, and the symbolic names of characters as well as other similar devices. However, Siddhartha is the story of a man questioning for the true meaning of life, and it is good and meaningful work. It is a classic work and translated from German. The story reflects the life of the Buddha, but it is not a retelling story. Siddhartha had his way to travel and experience life. He started with nothing; they had everything including a woman angering to teach him to be the best lover she had ever seen. He back to having nothing and living as a ferryman, step by step he learnt lessons from life. It is not the only novel, but it is also a pretty inspirational work. There are wise attempts exploited from it. My favourite is that wisdom cannot be taught, but it can be learned.

Conclusions:

Throughout the novel, Siddhartha struggles with spiritual self-realization and the attempts of others to teach him how to find the path to Enlightenment. The practices of asceticism, while beneficial in many ways, do not lead Siddhartha to a better understanding of his path. After he and Govinda speak with Gautama, Siddhartha acknowledges the wisdom of Buddha's teaching but believes it neglects the uniqueness of every individual. While working with the merchant Kamaswami, Siddhartha becomes a successful businessman but finds he has more to teach Kamaswami about life than Kamaswami has to teach Siddhartha about business. In Vasudeva, Siddhartha finds a teacher who instructs without words. This is the major difference in each of the people Siddhartha views as teachers. It is the instruction to sit and listen to the river that brings



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Siddhartha spiritual discovery, allowing him to understand and experience things that cannot be explained in words. Unity, morality, and truth are revealed to Siddhartha when he stops seeking them. He discovers that not all concepts can be explained in words but must be experienced to be understood, and each individual must follow their own path in order to experience Enlightenment and 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 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. 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 Hence, Siddhartha's modified version of the Moksha or Nirvana 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.



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