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Role of 'Self' in the Select Novels of Hermann Hess: A Reception Study

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Introduction:

A “Self” torn between the Good and Evil” is one of the major motifs of *Demian* and one which descends from Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche's book, *Beyond Good and Evil*, is an incitation to pass humanity's accepted ideas about morality. He recommends people not to be so influenced by what is thought good and what evil, but to adopt other metrics of rating. This idea is fundamental to *Demian*. A large part of Sinclair's arising up is his coming to have that it is all right to love things from the realm of dark, things one might concern to as evil. Eventually, he is even brought to be fascinated by the impression of worshipping such "evil" things, in his study of Abraxas, the god who unites good and evil. Finally, Sinclair comes to protest the notion that he should worry about what is good and what evil in determining how to act. This Nietzschean edict is a critical part of Sinclair's intellectual development. The novel is a story of Jungian individuation, the march of opening up to one's unconsciousness.

Over the course of *Demian*, Sinclair goes from being a sheltered child to being a free conceiving adult. As a youngster, he finds bound to his parents and to religious belief. After in short experiencing the rough worlds of Kromer and Demian, he is happy to handle the ability to be an independent person for the security extended by cohering to his parents. As Sinclair originates, he commences to see that he has many desires that contradict the rules with which he has been raised. There is much to the world that is not holy, but of which he still regards to share. He employs in a long struggle to become independent. This shift takes a number of steps. Even after Sinclair conceives that he ought to follow his will, he is still not completely comfortable doing so. With the help of mentors, he learns not to deny his desires. He commences to feel at home with fulfilling his soul's deepest desires. He finds out to freely exercise his will, and not to feel bad even if this intends violating traditional moral edicts.



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At this point, his transformation is complete. Sinclair's paintings afford him a way to express his inmost feelings—his desires, his hopes, and his fears. They appropriate him to dig into the symbols that prompt him and which are so dear to him. These two symbols are the sparrow hawk and his ideal woman. The sparrow hawk is a bird that can merely soar free. Sinclair, at a certain point in the novel explicates a desire to break himself free of societal bonds, to live unhindered by the traditional opinion of the world. Still, he cannot create himself live like this—though he conceives he desires to break free, he does not find ready to do so. The torment of this perspective is caught in words by Sinclair's reflection that he wishes to live in accord with the suggestions of his "true self," but he comes upon that it is very hard. Finally, Sinclair begins to adopt his inner voice and finds out the way to figure out his self-conflicts.

The novel, *Siddhartha* carries on self-discovery and internal conflicts of an individual. Search for self is the uttermost that a person can accomplish by using his abilities and skills or it is the fulfillment of one's own objectives and goals. Siddhartha develops himself and experiences the brutal realities of nature and after that he arrives at self. Siddhartha is different than Emil-Sinclair who takes help of mentor Max-Demian to overcome his self-conflict but not so with Siddhartha who doesn't take help of any mentor. He himself becomes the mentor for himself. Siddhartha leaves home because his self is in conflict with father's strong and rigid views on religion. Nature guides him about self discovery and makes Siddhartha experience and learn various things through nature. Siddhartha securely conceives that knowledge can be taught, but wisdom cannot be instructed. It can only be acquired through experience.

The critical component in this study of Hesse's Hindu protagonist is his growth from the restlessness and impetuosity of youth and young adulthood to the accomplished wisdom of age. Contempt the fact that Siddhartha leaves his father, the influence of his Brahmin upbringing remains with him, for the aim of his life is the acquisition of Nirvana. It is the means to the end with which he dissents with his father and also with the Samanas, Gautama Buddha, and the Buddha-follower Govinda. The growing pattern of



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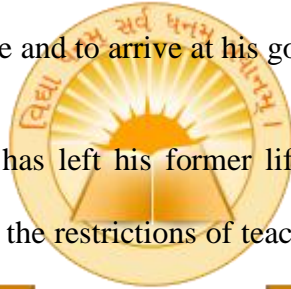
Siddhartha's integral life consists of several stages of conditioning which are requirement to accomplish a perfect unity with the Absolute. Siddhartha must experience Brahman spontaneously and without contrived preparation in order to transcend time and earn Nirvana. In all phases of his life, Siddhartha must, as his name suggests, look for his own goal in an untutored, single-handed quest. His traversing the river into the city is, similarly, an integral phase of the quest. The transparentness of this illusory world only becomes apparent to Siddhartha after he has had the opportunity to experience this time-bound world instantly. The despair which compiles prepares us for the final realization of a middle-aged Siddhartha: following the way of the sense deity, Kamala, will lead to nothingness. Vasudeva finishes Siddhartha's entry into his final stage of self-recognition by not undertaking to teach or indoctrinate, but by showing Siddhartha that the incomprehensible paths of the river promise revelation.

In spite of the appreciation and adoration which Siddhartha experiences from his family and friends, his soul is constantly restless and pregnant with troubling dreams. Unable to detect inner peace, Siddhartha inducts his search for Atman. He experiences that Atman, the individual spirit or self, is within him and is prepared toward Brahman, the supreme universal Soul, and he strives to find his own path to experience Atman. Siddhartha is bothered by the fact that nobody-- not the wisest teachers, or his father, or the holy songs-- can lead him to the discovery of self. The individual soul will not merge with the all-perfect Being unless the individual soul is cleaned of guilt. The syllable "Om," the sacred syllable of the Hindu yoga resting exercise, is brought in and we become aware that concentration on the word and abstraction from all routine things enhance unity with Brahman and set aside the concept of time.

Siddhartha seeks to achieve salvation through asceticism. Using as an assumption the ascetic idea that the sensual world is short-lived and illusive, Siddhartha efforts to void his self and hence void with it all the agonies of the senses. He decides that if he can let the self die, then something deeper than the self will come on that is, being. Siddhartha, nevertheless, discovers the process of attempting to void the self a



vicious circle because even though the ascetic meditation of which the aim is abandoning the self implies the assuming of different forms, it inevitably contributes him back to self again. Siddhartha roams through the grove and meets Gautama. They engage in a deep conversation in which Siddhartha proclaims Gautama's doctrine of understanding the world as a complete, unbroken, eternal chain, connected together by cause and effect. It is in this conversation that Siddhartha points out that the doctrine of salvation is neither shown nor proven. Gautama yields the flaw in logic but affirms that his message is not for the intellectually curious, but that he seeks only to instruct salvation. Siddhartha again voices the central idea of the novel. He prompts the Buddha that the process of enlightenment which he experienced is unteachable, that there is no way of communicating first-hand experience to disciples. One can discover the secret of self-recognition only by going one's own way. Siddhartha, speaking only for him and not for the other pilgrims, tells of his resolve to leave all doctrines and all teachers backside and to arrive at his goal alone.



Siddhartha contemplates that he has left his former life behind him and has now matured from youth to manhood. He again contemplates the restrictions of teachers and reflects that among the things that they cannot teach is the matter of the self. The tone approaches despair as Siddhartha tries to rid of self, or at least to try to flee from self. He assures that there is nothing about which he knows less than his self. He ponders that his lack of knowledge of his self grew out of fear and the desire to flee, and that in his search for Atman he becomes lost. He feels an awakening and asserts that he will not attempt to escape from Siddhartha. He thinks now that he can get rid of his search for Atman, his asceticism, and the sacred scripture. He settles to instruct the secret of Siddhartha from himself.

Siddhartha sets out to find the bliss of perfect agreement and unity with Atman, the creator and centre of the universe. He accomplishes his goal, but only by steps. The first step is when he discloses that it is the world of creation- nature itself- which he must realize and embrace. The next step is his credit that it is he, himself, whom he has been try to escape, but whom instead he must instruct to know. And when at last



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he complies the teaching of the river, he discovers a way known to hermits and mystics of all the great religions both Eastern and Western: the way to wisdom and unity with the world that lies through the patient exploration of the self.

He refuses first the Brahministic teachings of his father, then the self-denying practices of the Samanas, and eventually the teachings of the Buddha, greatest of all teachers during his journey of self-discovery. At this point Siddhartha has refused all teaching, believing that one must discover one's own way to get the meaning of life. Knowledge can be taught, but not wisdom, he says. He mentions that the Buddha reached his blissful realizing not through any teaching but by path of his own patient search. Accordingly, the Buddha's teachings comprise knowledge requirement for living a good life, but omit the secret of enlightenment, which can only be received, not taught. So Siddhartha goes on alone. He finds the beauty of nature, which in Hindu belief must be dismissed because it is Maya, illusion. In Christian teaching, the world and everything in it is God's creation and hence to be covered and respected. But this also proposes the unity of all things, which is a Hindu concept, and the All of Buddhism, so that Siddhartha's discovery of the natural world may be a first step toward the wisdom that all life is one.

At the end of his journey of quest for the meaning of life, the protagonist realizes that he must live in a world which is a combination of the spiritual world and the materialistic world. Once he accomplishes this, he lives in harmony with the universe once again. This affords him to the opportunity to dig into what he is and he is not, allowing him to build his own world that admits both components. The combining of the worlds is represented by the river in Siddhartha. He is at the river where Siddhartha comes upon the need for both worlds. He sits there and listens to the river. It has told him a great deal, it has filled him with many great thoughts, with thoughts of unity of the two worlds. The river has components of both the pure and materialistic life. On the road to self-discovery, Hesse furnishes an all-knowing figure to guide Siddhartha along the journey. Because of the belief in first-hand experience, the mentors do not bring out all of the secrets to life.



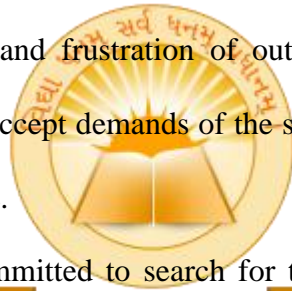
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The Steppenwolf is a novel in which Harry Haller like Peter, Emil-Sinclair, Siddhartha, takes journey of self discovery and he tries to get rid of his self- conflicts and further he attempts to quest for the meaning of life. At the beginning of the novel, we come to know about Harry Haller who is acquainted to us through the eyes of a nephew of Harry Haller's landlady. Harry Haller is forty eight years old, who lived in the house for about ten months, and most of that time has dealt himself in a quite manner. His room is perpetually full of vacate wine bottles, books and overflowing ashtrays. Harry Haller departs from house without saying good-bye, but he leaves a holograph, which allows for the young man to realize the reasons for Harry Haller's depression. It shows that he is not satisfied with his self. His self is in conflict that is why he stays away from the society and the mass of the people. Harry is in conflict which involves his uncertain attitude about the place in society. He experiences that he is out of place in normal society and that he is the lone wolf. Harry Haller finds the loneliness and frustration of outsider. He like other protagonists such as Siddhartha, Emil-Sinclair is not ready to accept demands of the society. He wanders in his own areas where he attempts to discover the meaning of life.



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Harry Haller who is as much committed to search for the true inner self as were Sinclair, Peter, Siddhartha, and Goldmund. Hermann Hesse tried to find the resolution of his self conflicts within the aesthetic life of western man. Harry feels conflict between the sensual life and ascetic life. Hermann Hesse had discussed on the issues of desires and its kinship to the journey to find the pure self in his novels. Harry Haller's discontent comes at despair as he recognizes that there is no solution of his self-conflicts and he is ready to commit suicide. The "Tract" nevertheless aims a solution to Harry Haller's problem in the sense of allowing him to live life with peace. The solution lies in humour. However, in order to be able to use humour as a source of solution for his self-conflicts, Harry Haller demands to repair his own shattered self and he has to achieve the task of resolving the conflict of his own self by allowing him to move totally into the realm of the disorderly. In order to wrench him from this unhealthy and stultifying order, He must have the courage to face the chaos of his own self and he also must be prepared to learn to live his life in a new



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way. Harry learns the lesson of sensual life from a prostitute named Hermine. He lives in his narrow, bourgeoisie circle, instructs to accept the directions of Hermine as she inserts him to dancing, jazz, the love orgies of her friend Pablo and Maria, his own sexuality and drugs. He also attempts to enter in the Magical Theatre in order to get relief from his self-conflicts.

Conclusion:

Hermann Hesse conceived in the truth of unconscious and spoke of alienation in the society. Harry Haller applies the subjective aspects of it – closely mirrors the situation of Hesse's life. Both illustrate the alienated outsiders who took journey of self-discovery that is such a common picture of man and society in modern literature. Harry Haller realizes that knowledge acquired from any teacher cannot bring one to the true self. Hermine helps him to get rid of self conflicts and he also realizes the importance of sensual life during the journey of quest for the meaning of life. Harry Haller's life is full of multiple personalities. During his journey of self-discovery, he conceives himself as a wolf of the steppes, the steppes being the alien domain to which such divided personalities are exiled by self and society. He cuts himself off from bourgeois. Harry tries to commit suicide but at the end of his journey of self-discovery, he realizes that man can overcome his self conflict not by suicide but by meditation, an ascendancy of intellect which comprehends eternity- suspending time, affirming life and denying death. He stands out from ordinary men because of his individuality. Harry as introspective man becomes aware of the guilt inherent in individuation. Like Siddhartha, Harry Haller also believes that meditation process requires self-examination; one must look profoundly into the chaos of one's self and plumb its depth. Harry Haller's self is not split into only two parts but into a thousand fragments.



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