



# The Achievers Journal

Volume 2, Issue 4

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 October-December, 2016

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## **Dialectic of Being and Becoming in Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha***

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### **Abstract**

*The peculiar character and personality of an individual in society is formed by the dialectical force of being and becoming. The character of Siddhartha in Hermann Hesse's novel too results from this force of dialecticism and makes him a truly transformed human and an enlightened being. The present research article looks into this aspect of the novel and tries to reach at the truth of Siddhartha, the hero of the novel.*

**Keywords: dialecticism; change and transition; conflicts and contradictions; transformation**

The word 'Dialectic' means 'conflict' or 'contradiction' of opposite forces which leads to some kind of change and transformation. Though this term owes its origin to ancient western philosophy (Greek philosophy), but its roots can be traced in eastern philosophy as well. The principles of dialectic were followed in ancient times in both western thought and eastern philosophy (Indian spiritual concepts). The concept of dialectic is based on two basic principles: First, everything (whether living or non-living) is in a continual state of change and second, this change comes because of the opposite or contradictory nature of things. So according to the philosophy of dialectic, everything is made of certain opposite things and the conflict of such opposite things results in the change or transformation of that particular entity. Even the modern psychoanalytical critics believe that one's self, his/her personality is made of opposite things and these opposite aspects bring about some change in him or her.



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The terms Being and Becoming are used both in spiritual manner (as in Indian philosophy) and in existential way (as in western thought). According to the Indian spiritualistic philosophy, being is the innermost part of one's self, one's true self. It is the Atma with which all living beings are born into this world. This being is purely selfless and is devoid of all worldliness. William Wordsworth's glorification of the earliest childhood in his famous "Immortality Ode" is nothing else, but affirmation of his faith in that pure being with which all humans are born. Wordsworth has talked of this pure being in the following terms:

Mighty prophet! Seer blest!

On whom those truths do rest,

Which we are toiling all our lives to find. (511)

Even the western philosophers like Jean Jacques Rousseau have said a great deal about such a pure being and have warned against the harmful effects of becoming which corrupts and deforms one's being. Becoming stands for one's existence in society, one's worldliness which gradually swallows one's innocence and selflessness. This happens when one moves ahead on the earthly journey called life and starts learning the tricks of this materialistic world, but in this process loses contact with his/her true being. With every single step on the path of becoming a social participant, an individual moves away from his being and loses contact with it. The only way to escape from the disastrous and soul-destroying effects of becoming, as suggested by Rousseau, is to "Return to Nature", which means returning to the natural simplicity of being.

So, Being is the natural self of an individual, whereas Becoming is his attempt to adjust himself in the social set-up and the resultant involvement in the worldly materialistic or carnal pleasures of life. The character of every human being living in society is characterized and determined by that particular point between the extremes of being and becoming at which the pendulum of his/her



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personality rests at that particular point in his life. The dialectical tension or conflict takes place when a human being living in society tries to grow by learning and getting exposed to the social milieu in order to acquire the skills required to play the roles in society in accordance with the social norms and demands. While trying to fulfill the demands which the society makes on his personality he may become a normative member of society, perfectly adjusting himself to the social roles he is expected to play. But his complete identification with his social roles without any sanction from his real being, the inner centripetal, leads to an alienation from his own-self, resulting in a schism in his personality. Eventually, one part of his self leads him to one direction, while the other part pulls him into some opposite direction. Because of these pulls and pressures and complexity of inner forces, man remains in a state of fix. He behaves in an unpredictable manner and the pendulum of his life wavers between the two poles of spiritualism and sensuality, asceticism and carnality. At one time, he touches the pinnacles of glory and spiritualism and at the other he falls into the bottomless pits of sensuality and carnality. But if an individual, in the course of this dialectical journey, remains centered in his/her true-self, then the dialectic of being and becoming leads to the inner transformation of his/her character and personality.

Hermann Hesse's novel *Siddhartha* is very much dialectical in nature. It deals with the transformation of a character named Siddhartha and his transformation follows both Indian and Western designs. *Siddhartha* is the story of a young man named Siddhartha who leaves his home and family on his quest of truth and illumination. Embarking on his journey that takes him from the austerities of renunciation to the profligacy of wealth, he is led through the range of human experiences; from hunger and want to passion, pleasure, pain, greed, yearning, boredom, love, despair and hope. This journey finally leads him to the river which represents the flow of life and where he gains mental peace and spiritual wisdom.

Hermann Hesse in writing *Siddhartha* was inspired by the life of Gautam Buddha and in this novel he has thrown light on Buddha's experience of self-discovery. The novel presents in detail the



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various obstacles one comes across on his way to spiritual illumination. By writing this novel Hesse, as observed by Shridhar Shrotri, has tried

to remind man of inherent dangers in his personality... tried to bring home to him the real meaning of self-experience for his spiritual self. He seeks the reflection of his search of this self-experience in the light of Gotama Buddha. *Siddhartha* is dedication to this search. (233)

Siddhartha in the novel goes through many dialectical pulls and pushes which make him act in a particular manner and decide the course of his life. Siddhartha is the son of a Brahman who has gained great knowledge through the study of scriptures and by listening to the religious sermons delivered by his father and other learned persons of his area. He, along with his close friend and associate Govinda, has learnt the art of reflection on spiritual matters and of meditation. He appears quite promising in his young age and even his parents feel proud of him,

Joy leapt in his father's heart for his son who was quick to learn, thirsty for knowledge; he saw him growing up to become a great wise man and priest, a prince among the Brahmans. Bliss leapt in his mother's breast when she saw him walking, when she saw him sit down and get up... (8)

Even Govinda, his friend knows that he will turn out be a great spiritual man like Buddha in his future life and he himself wants to follow his footsteps. He knows,

He (Siddhartha) would not become a common Brahman, not a lazy official in charge of offerings; not a greedy merchant with magic spells; not a vain, vacuous speaker; not a mean, deceitful priest; and also not a decent, stupid sheep in the herd of the many. (8)



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Though all feel hopeful of Siddhartha, but he does not find at peace with himself as he feels dissatisfied of his learning and knowledge. He lacks all joy in his heart and remains restless even amid that disciplined and spiritual life. He feels that whatever his venerable father and the wise Brahmans have told is insufficient to quench his thirst for spiritual wisdom. Though they have poured much knowledge into the empty vessel of his mind, but the vessel has not been filled to the full even by all that. He feels that though much has been said about this creation of God in the form of religious books and hymns, but still his questions and queries about self are not answered by them. He feels tormented by such questions as:

And where was Atma to be found, where did He reside, where did his eternal heart beat, where else but in one's own-self, in its innermost part, in its indestructible part, which everyone had in himself? But where, where was this self, this innermost part, this ultimate part? It was not flesh and bone, it was neither thought nor consciousness...(11)

He realizes that the *Atman* is the supreme source of knowledge, and all other sources (scriptures and religious practices in the form of ablutions) are just part of it and they do not result in any everlasting joy or spiritual pleasure. Even his father who is the greatest learner of scriptures has not achieved that state of transformation and blissfulness, and he, even after devoting the whole of his life to religion and religious practices, has remained just a seeker, 'a thirsty man'. He desires to achieve transformation through a realization of his own-self, the *Atman*, about which he seeks to know, "It had to be found, the pristine source in one's own-self, it had to be possessed! Everything else was searching, was a detour, was getting lost" (12).

In his quest for self-realization and self-knowledge, Siddhartha decides to set out on a journey which ultimately leads him to illumination after gaining a variety of experiences. He embarks on his journey with the desire to know not about anything else, but his own real-self, his *Atma*. Shrotri



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puts it as, “The beginning of a great call of an individual to himself, and in such a way that the human to himself, and in such a way that the man experiences himself as one who must find the readiness to the way of one’s own-self” (393). He seeks to know about his own-self and for this he resolves to become an ascetic, a Samana and joins their group after taking leave of his father. A Samana believes in self-denial, in tormenting and torturing his body in order to get spiritual illumination. Now Siddhartha too passes through that process of self-denial and self-mortification. He undergoes great physical torture in order to purify his soul. He makes it the goal of his life:

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. Dead to himself, not to be a self any more, to find tranquility with an emptied heart, to be open to miracles in unselfish thoughts. (19)

With this goal in mind Siddhartha moves on the path of asceticism and self-denial and torments his body to the extreme. He meditates in the scorching heat and in the incessant rain. He fasts continuously and loses his hunger and appetite. He kills his senses and feels numb to pain and pleasure, heat and cold, day and night. He feels that by killing all his desires and inner urges he will be able to wake the inner most part of his self, his true being. This is what he aspires, “Once all my self was overcome and had died, once every desire and every urge was silent in the heart, then the ultimate part of me had to awake, the innermost of my being, which is no longer my self, the great secret” (19). With regular practice, he learns to lose his own-self and enter or slip into the bodies of other beings, birds and animals to live and experience their lives. But every time he comes back he has to wear the same garment of his body which he is unable to get rid of. He wants to achieve *nirvana* or salvation, but feels entangled in the cycle of birth and death. This process of entering into and coming out of the bodies of other beings and to return to his own body and self appears inescapable and tiresome to him.



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His existence as a Samana can not set him free of the dialectic of being and becoming as he feels dissatisfied even of this life. He finds it difficult to get rid of his self, of his status of being Siddhartha, and achieve oneness with the whole cosmos even after going through all that asceticism and torment. He realizes that whatever he has achieved through his life of an ascetic could have been experienced even without undergoing all that pain and suffering. The temporary numbness of senses, which he has achieved after putting his body into so much pain and agony, can be achieved even by a drunkard who loses all sense of pain and pleasure under the intoxication of alcohol. He finds it just a temporary relief, an escape from his self, but not an authentic medium of transformation or *nirvana*. He tells Govinda,

What is meditation? 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 brief 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,... he will find the same what Siddhartha and Govinda find when they escape their bodies through long exercises, staying in the non-self. (22-23)

Even after going through all that chain of exercises, Siddhartha finds himself in the same state of being which is far away from any real illumination. He feels, "I am just as far removed from wisdom, from salvation, as a child in the mother's womb" (23). Even the life of Samana can not quench his thirst for spiritual wisdom; it remains as strong as it was earlier. He finds his life and existence of being an ascetic circular; moving round and round in a circle without having any way out.

After spending three years of his life in the form of an ascetic both Siddhartha and Govinda come to know of Buddha, the exalted one who, as it is told to them, has achieved blissfulness and rare spiritual wisdom. Though Govinda is quite keen to meet the exalted one as he feels that by



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attending to his teachings they will be able to achieve spiritual wisdom, but Siddhartha is not so hopeful of him, as he has lost all faith in the teaching and preaching of people. He believes that even the exalted one will not be able to tell anything special to them than what they already know. He tells that his “faith in words, which are brought to us by teachers, is small” (29). But still to meet Buddha, the exalted one, both Siddhartha and Govinda leave their place and go in search of him. Even the teaching of the exalted one does not bring any surprises to Siddhartha; though he realizes that he is really an illuminated soul and has achieved, what is termed as, nirvana. But that nirvana is sought by Buddha himself through his own experiences and not through sermons or preachings. So even Siddhartha has to gain this spiritual wisdom himself through his own experiences and not through some one else’s. This is what he tells the exalted one,

You have found salvation from death. It has come to you in the course of your own search, on your own path, through thoughts, through meditation, through realizations, through enlightenment. It has not come to you by means of teachings! And, thus is my thought, O exalted one, nobody will obtain salvation by means of teachings! (40)

He goes away even from Buddha and leaves his friend behind in the spiritual custody of the exalted one. He leaves Buddha not because he finds him lacking in spiritualism or in search of a better guru or teacher, but to escape himself from all teachings and teachers and to “reach my goal by myself or to die” (41). In fact, he believes that no teaching can take him to the innermost part of his self as he has to find the way himself and reach through his own experiences. He can not get transformed in a readymade way, and in this belief of him he is quite right because no one can achieve self-realization only by listening to the sermons of a spiritual person or by reading scriptures; one has to pave the way for this illumination himself. This is how he expresses his urge to know and liberate himself from his real-self:





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It was the self, the purpose and essence of which I sought to learn. It was the self I wanted to free myself from, which I sought to overcome. But I was not able to overcome it, I could only deceive it, could only flee from it, hide from it. (45)

Right from the beginning of his quest, Siddhartha had sought to know about his own-self and whatever he had done till then was an attempt to know about his own-self. First he tried to do it through religious books and sermons, and then in the form of an ascetic he tried to achieve it through self-mortification and self-denial, through self-dissection and tormenting. But in all his attempts the real cause or the real motive of his quest was perhaps lost which he now once again tries to focus on. Now he realizes:

That I know nothing about myself, that Siddhartha has remained thus alien and unknown to me, stems from one cause, a single cause: I was afraid of myself, I was fleeing from myself! I searched Atman, I searched Brahman, I was willing to dissect myself and peel off all its layers, to find the core of all peels in its unknown interior, the Atman, life, the divine part, the ultimate part. But I have lost myself in the process. (46)

Now he realizes the importance of his own-self- his body, which is termed as 'matter' by Sri Aurobindo, and feels that he has killed it to achieve self-knowledge. But one can not get knowledge of self by killing it; it can be achieved only by knowing it in all its shades. Though he has known the whole world but to his surprise he has not tried to understand his own-self as he says "There is nothing in this world I know less about than about myself, about Siddhartha!" (45)

Now he realizes the value of both body, which he had neglected so far, and soul for the real understanding of self. He moves ahead on his path to understand his own-self with a different outlook. Now the different scenes of nature and physical world attract his eyes and fill his heart with great pleasure. Even earlier these scenes had been there, but he has not considered them worth



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seeing as he has always felt they are various manifestations of this illusionary world, Maya and the real world lies beyond them. He has always felt that his involvement in these worldly things will blur his vision and lead him astray. But now his view gets radically changed as he looks to them with the eye of a child who sees everything with the feeling of wonder and attraction. Now he realizes that both body and soul; spiritual world and physical world “had to be listened to, both had to be played with, both had neither to be scorned nor overestimated, from both the secret voices of the innermost truth had to be attentively perceived” (56). Thus, he realizes the importance of physical world, the world of senses which he had avoided till then. He no longer oppresses or curbs his inner self; he rather decides to listen and go by his inner voice. Now he decides to “strive for nothing, except for what the voice commanded him to strive for, dwell on nothing, except where the voice would advise him to” (56). His new realization brings Siddhartha to a city where he feels enchanted and “he allowed the city to suck him in” (61). Here he comes across Kamala, the beautiful courtesan whose beauty bewitches him at the very first glance. Now he no longer runs away from his desires or suppresses his inner urges, he rather accepts and respects them. He tells Kamala, “You are the first woman whom Siddhartha is not addressing with his eyes turned to the ground. Never again do I want to turn my eyes to the ground, when I come across a beautiful woman” (62).

Now Siddhartha accepts life in totality, in all its shades. He feels attracted towards Kamala the moment he sees her and wants her to tell him the secret of love, teach him the different pleasures of love. But she asks him to make a lot of money to win her. By doing so she paves the way for his entry into the world of senses and desires, into the matter life. Now Siddhartha no longer remains an ascetic, the begging Samana, he gradually dives into the mire of worldliness and feels involved in it. He comes in contact with a merchant named Kamaswami and takes part in his business. He starts copulating with Kamala and indulges in what is termed as “climbing on a tree”. But though he takes part in the business affairs, he does not feel concerned about the profit or loss



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of business. He still remains an ascetic at heart who is not moved by greed and avarice, pleasure and pain. The affairs of worldly life and the pain and pleasures of others still appear to him quite trivial and meaningless; he often feels amused to see people in such a state. He still seems to be walking on a fixed course, and is not moved by anything. He tells Kamala,

Most people are like a falling leaf, which is blown and turned around through the air, as it wavers, and tumbles to ground. But others, a few, are like stars, they go on a fixed course, no wind reaches them, in themselves they have their law and their course. (82)

Thus, he claims to act like a star even amidst all pleasure and pain of the world, but gradually he too starts acting like a leaf which is blown right and left in the flow of sensual winds. Gradually he is also inflicted with common human feelings and starts feeling irritated, happy and angry like an ordinary human being. “Slowly the disease of the soul, which rich people have, grabbed hold of him” (87). Now the same thing, same feeling of greed and avarice which he used to despise in others, inflicts his heart and captures his soul, and he is snared by various worldly temptations:

He had been captured by the world, by lust, covetousness, sloth, and finally 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; they were no longer a game and trifle to him, had become a shackle and a burden. (88)

Now he finds himself involved in the sensual pleasures of life and becomes lusty and greedy. He loses his patience even at the most trivial matters and becomes angry when he suffers losses in business; when his debtors fail to pay the loan or when some beggar comes to him for alms. Now he thinks only about money and business and in this vicious and pointless cycle of “getting and spending” he grows tired, ill and old. He starts taking wine and enjoying the dance of courtesans. He begins to play dice (gamble) recklessly for money; earns a lot of money and loses it in the



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game. So, he gets involved in the worldly pleasures of life to a great extent and loses his own inner-self in this whole process. But the dialectic of being and becoming does not leave him to rest even in this state of sensuality and keeps him dissatisfied and dejected. The more he involves himself in worldly things the more he feels dissatisfied with himself. Ultimately, he feels fed up of his whole existence.

Now Siddhartha starts hating himself and torments his own-self by drinking more and more wine and by playing more and more gamble. Even his affair with Kamala makes him unhappy and dissatisfied now, and it appears to him a “vain, fleeting pleasure” and “akin to death” (90). The whole pleasure-world now appears worthless and transitory to him. Though he knew of this fact earlier also while being an ascetic, but he ignored it during the process of his worldliness. Now he finds the transitory nature of these worldly pleasures in each and every part of life. He sees that he along with Kamala too has started growing old and observes that even she has become tired of her life of a prostitute, a courtesan. Now the life he has led appears to be full of pigsty where he has enjoyed and tried to grab every pleasure of this illusionary world in the same manner as a pig swallows everything from the heap of dirt and dung. Now he seems to be vomiting what he had swallowed in the form of worldly pleasures. Now he realizes,

worthless and pointless was the way he had been going through life; nothing that was alive, nothing that was in some way delicious or worth keeping he had left in his hands. ... he felt death in his heart and horror in his chest, sat and sensed how everything died in him, withered in him, came to an end in hm. (92)

He realizes that though he has led the most lustful and pleasurable life, but it has never made him satisfied. It was “without a high goal, without thirst, without elevation, content with small lustful pleasures and yet never satisfied!” (94) Now this kind of life and the different scenes of this Sansara appear shallow and unattractive to him.



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Now he feels so much fed up of this kind of life that he leaves everything; his money and business, his house and pleasure-garden and above everything his beloved Kamala and goes away into the forest once again without telling anyone. All including his business partner Kamaswami feel worried about his well-being, but Kamala does not feel concerned for him as she knows that though Siddhartha has indulged in the sensual pleasures of the world, but has always remained a Samana, an ascetic in his heart. Now he leaves everything and feels so much ashamed of his all-absorbing life that he thinks himself completely degenerated. He feels that he has lost everything and is left with nothing to redeem him. He has fallen into the bottomless pit of carnality and can not hope of any transformation. He feels,

Deeply, he had been entangled in Sansara, he had sucked up disgust and death from all sides into his body, like a sponge sucks up water until it is full. And full he was, full of the feeling of being sick of it, full of misery, full of death, there was nothing left in this world which could have attracted him, given him joy, given him comfort.  
(96)

His life appears shameful and miserable to him and he thinks of getting rid of this life, his body by drowning in the river. In utter despair and hopelessness he wishes,

Let him be food for fishes, this dog Siddhartha, this lunatic, this depraved and rotten body, this weakened and abused soul! Let him be food for the fishes and crocodiles, let him be chopped to bits by the demons! (99)

Though he is willing to end his miserable and hateful life, but his inner goodness, his inner strength comes to his rescue. His inner voice, the voice of “Om” comes to the fore from the depth of his soul and saves and consoles him and lulls him to sleep, out of which he wakes quite rejuvenated and elevated.



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Now he once again meets his long-lost friend Govinda who feels completely shocked to see this state of his friend, who was considered, and actually was, a promising and learned Brahman and a great ascetic. He feels surprised to see the rich attire and costly costume of his friend Siddhartha who tells him about the transitory nature of everything in the following words,

The wheel of physical manifestations is turning quickly, Govinda. Where is Siddhartha the Brahman? Where is Siddhartha the Samana? Where is Siddhartha the rich man? Non-eternal things change quickly, Govinda, you know this. (105)

Gradually a new realization comes to Siddhartha in the company of the ferryman named Vasudev with whom he starts living in his hut. He now realizes that even the physical part of his life was important for his self-realization as it could not have come without transcending the physical world. Even as a Brahman and as a Samana he had cherished ego and arrogance in his self which he had tried to kill instead of knowing it. He had become egoistic, and the life of carnality was just a medium to kill and overcome that ego and arrogance. His diving deep into the mire of this sensual world was a way to rise above spiritually. The ferryman tells him about the secret message of river which represents life. The uneven flow of river represents the ups and downs which one encounters in one's life. Now he no longer feels concerned about what he has lost and what he has gained in his life. He now takes life in its totality and accepts its wholeness. He realizes that Siddhartha the Brahman was not different from Siddhartha the Samana and Siddhartha the Samana was not different from Siddhartha the selfish businessman and money-lender, the lusty and lecherous Siddhartha. When this realization comes to him, he no longer feels worried or ashamed about the sensual part of his life which he has lived zealously.

But later once again he finds himself entangled in the web of worldly snares, in the form of attraction and attachment when his son is left to him by Kamala who dies in his arms after a snake-bite. Siddhartha treats his son quite lovingly and makes him lead the life of discipline like his own



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childhood, but his son does not like it at all. He is the spoilt son of a loving mother and has led the life of lavishness and prosperity. He finds it difficult to live with two old men in a poor hut in the most miserable conditions. The values and mores which are highly respected by Siddhartha are not sanctioned by his lavished son. The son does not want to live in such a disciplined atmosphere and seeks to go back to the city to live the life of lavishness. Siddhartha tries to dissuade his son from going into the city knowing well that all the pleasures of the city are temporary and useless in spiritual sense. But the son does not listen to him and the poor father feels distressed and finds it difficult to part with him. The ferryman tries to insert some sense in his mind by saying,

Won't he become exuberant, won't he lose himself to pleasure and power, won't he repeat all of his father's mistakes, won't he perhaps get entirely lost in Sansara. ... Would you actually believe that you had committed your foolish acts in order to spare your son from committing them too? (134)

The greatest temptation in this illusionary world is the temptation of one's children, and Siddhartha succumbs to this temptation even while being aware that all this is meaningless actually. He craves for the company of his son and wonders, "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 are being loved by them, all except me" (143). Even while knowing everything, he can not set himself free of the love for his son. He is still moved by his inner urges and wishes like an ordinary human being, and does not give way to wisdom and rationality. But his son does not feel concerned for his father and lives in his own way.

But gradually a new wisdom dawns upon Siddhartha and he realizes the real nature of things. He now identifies himself with his own father whom too he had left like his son to follow his own path, leaving his father to the same fate and same distress which he himself is undergoing now and had never gone back to him. He now consoles and finds himself in oneness with the



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situation. He ponders upon the whole course of his life and thinks about the real motive of his quest, the journey of his life and realizes, “It was nothing but a readiness of the soul, an ability, a secret art, to think every moment, while living his life, the thought of oneness, to be able to feel and inhale the oneness” (145). In the company of the river, which represents life to him, and Vasudev, the ferryman who acts as his spiritual Guru, Siddhartha gets completely transformed and enlightened. He sees the ebb and flow of river and hears its different noises which represent the laughter and moaning of life. He now identifies the good and evil of the world, and starts loving the world in its complete form, in its wholeness. He realizes that even his sufferings were important as they had to play a particular part in the whole chronology of events. He also realizes the illusion of time and finds his past and future merged in the present. Now Siddhartha realizes,

The river’s voice sounded full of yearning, full of unsatisfiable desire. For the goal, the river was heading, Siddhartha saw it hurrying, the river, which consisted of him and his loved ones and of all people, he had ever seen, all of these waves and waters were hurrying, suffering, towards goals, many goals... (149)

When this realization dawns upon Siddhartha and makes him truly transformed, Vasudev, the ferryman who has acted as his guide and mentor, leaves him and goes away by saying this to Siddhartha, “I’ve been waiting for this hour (hour of self-actualization), my dear. Now that it has come, let me leave. For a long time, I have been waiting for this hour; for a long time, I’ve been Vasudev the ferryman. Now it’s enough. Farewell...” (152). Vasudev takes leave of Siddhartha in the same manner as the Master takes leave of Raja after finding him completely transformed and enlightened. Both Vasudev and the Master are instrumental in the self-realization and self-consolidation of their disciples.

Though both Siddhartha and Govinda had started their spiritual journey together, but Govinda has not been able to realize the true essence of himself and the world even after leading the most





# The Achievers Journal

Volume 2, Issue 4

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 October-December, 2016

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disciplined life in the form of a monk; and Siddhartha has gained it even after leading the most sensual and lavished life. Govinda has remained still a seeker, a thirsty and restless soul even after putting so many years of his life in his search. “Though he had lived his entire life by the rules, though he was also looked upon with veneration by the younger monks on account of his age and his modesty, the restlessness and the searching had not perished from his life” (153). Though he has learnt many things during his life of asceticism, which has been the life of discipline and self-denial, but he has not achieved any real transformation because he has always kept on searching and in this search he has neglected his findings. He has negated the physical world and all its elements, which too are of utmost importance in the quest of a seeker and help to enlarge his/her vision.

Govinda has not undergone any spiritual and psychological conflict or dialectic which takes place only when one finds himself torn and confused between his/her physical self and his spiritual being. He has made the scope of his spiritual search so narrow that it has rung out all other experiences of the mortal world, which otherwise play an important role in the understanding of one’s real-self. “There are hidden impulses and desires and secret longings of which we can only with the greatest difficulty take account” (Robinson 24), but he has neglected them in his quest. These hidden impulses and desires are like our secret enemy which we can win over only after realizing of them and they can be realized only through our existence in the world of senses. But this does not happen with Govinda because he has never tried to realize them and crushed them without knowing of them, and he, as a result, remained a seeker till the end of his quest. Siddhartha, on the other hand, has realized of his secret longings and desires through his life of senses and carnality, of which he had remained unaware during his life of Samana and has fulfilled them and overcome them after realizing of their uselessness.

Siddhartha has been able to get transformed and achieve what he had aimed at because he has not remained stuck only to the sermons of some spiritual Guru or the teachings of scriptures or the



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recitation of mantras, he has rather made himself and his life his real Guru. He has experienced whatever came into his way in life and has learnt from it. He has made everybody his guru and tried to learn from everyone whom he has met in his life. He has experienced life in all its shades—good and bad, virtuous and sinful, ascetic and worldly, selfish and selfless, and it has helped him in coming out of the grooves in which his mind had remained entangled. Dr. S. Radhkrishnan has observed about it, “So long as we are subject to ignorance, we stand away from God and are immersed in our limited egos. When we rise to self-knowledge, we are taken up into the Divine Being and become aware of the Infinite, Universal Consciousness in which we live” (*Principal Upanisads* 95). It is only after living his life to the full and after coming to know of the nature of everything whether good or bad that he comes to this state of illumination and exaltation. Now he realizes that whatever he has done whether good or bad formed an inseparable part of his life. Nothing is good or bad in this world as good is never good neither is bad always bad. He tells about the importance of his sensual and sinful life in the following words,

I have experienced on my body and on my soul that I needed sin very much, I needed lust, the desire for possessions, vanity, and needed the most shameful despair, in order to learn how to give up all resistance, in order to learn how to love the world, in order to stop comparing it to some world I wished... (159)

Thus, enlightenment comes not through some scholastic methods, neither through any self-denial and self mortification nor merely through one’s involvement in the worldly pleasures, but through the completeness of all these experiences which form various parts of a great and ultimately jubilant fellowship of all things connected in the cyclical unity of nature. It is inherent in one’s problematic life-narrative as seen in case of Siddhartha. Ralph Freedman has also traced this element of dialectic in the inner world of Siddhartha and has observed in this regard,



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All of the contrasting poles of his life were sharply etched: the restless departures and the search for stillness at home; the diversity of experience and the harmony of a unifying spirit; the security of religious dogma and the anxiety of freedom. (235)

Thus, the dialectic of being and becoming remains at work in the life of an individual and also in the fictional world of a writer as delineated through Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha*.

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