

## **Siddhartha: A Modern Man of Ancient India**

**Rasib Mehmood**

*Air University, Islamabad, Pakistan.*

**Shaheen Khan**

*Higher Education Commission, Islamabad, Pakistan.*

### **ABSTRACT**

This research paper is an attempt to study “Man’s” search to understand his existence in this universe and his final destination to reach enlightenment. The world is very complex for human beings to know fully as it is articulated through language. Western philosophy and history show that man has created so many realities and senses through languages. Therefore, each reality seems so expressive and convincing at its own yet it conflicts with other realities. The novel Siddhartha by Hermann Hesse demonstrates various angles of different realities created through individual experiences and language. He also presents the deconstruction of those ideologies through individual experience and language which once constructed. In novel Siddhartha, there is construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of various truths on the one hand and constant beliefs on the other hand which signifies the journey of East and West respectively. Moreover Siddhartha’s journey towards enlightenment is Man’s journey from materialism towards spiritualism. Human beings have become the masters of realities and systems but even though they are unable to reach the final reality, because they want to describe natural things through language which is manmade. Moreover, West has reached to Postmodernism whereas most of the Eastern countries are living in medieval ages. This research explores the ideological differences between East and West which seem true in their own sense but are quite opposite from each other. A comparative analysis will be conducted on Hesse’s fictional account Siddhartha to investigate how Buddha posed as a spiritual sign for the East and how he positions and emerges as a modern figure for the West.

**Key Words:** Siddhartha, Eastern Philosophy, Western Philosophy, Hermann Hesse, Existence

### **Introduction**

Siddhartha (1922) is a fictional representation of historical and religious accounts of Buddha’s life. The historical and religious representation reflect the Eastern perspective while fictional account shows the Western view of Gautama’s life (Hesse, 1922). Hesse has presented "natural" intelligent man who showed rebellious attitude and constructed the realities of life through his own struggle and experiences. Quite contradictory, Eastern history portrays that Buddha was “chosen one” who had supernatural powers. He taught “piety” and abstinence as virtues to overcome the suffering of humanity. To some extent the novel is also representation of the novelist’s own experiences and views of life (Armstrong,

1999). The readers and critics are happy that a German novelist looked it appropriate as Eastern Tale. The in-depth implication of such type of appropriation goes ahead. This research project deals with the nature of appropriation of Buddha's life and its implications for Sub-continental's socio-cultural transformation.

“So I shall never understand why, suddenly, bewilderingly, I was certain that everything I had imagined to be truth was false. False. Only the magic and dreams are true-all the rest's a lie. Let it go. Here is the secret. Here (Rhys, 1966, p.3).”

India is "medieval" on account of its ancient belief systems (Hesse, 1972). It is the convictions of the Indian individuals in the miracles, in supernatural and in social chain which makes it medieval and ancient, but there are some spiritualists and the astute men of the East who definitely attracted the Western minds (Hassan, 2002). Buddha is one of such personalities who got attention of Western scholars across the world. He is a symbol of modernity of ancient India. Indian stories portray the spiritual version of Buddha's life instead of the modern one (Armstrong, 1999). But West concentrates on modern elements of Gautama's life.

Buddha symbolizes the enlightened man who passed through different experiences to reach at enlightenment. He is one of edified men of old India who looked and discovered truth of life. Such men progressed toward becoming prophets and holy people, masters and gurus – respected by wonder and adoration, as well as relatively revered by the insensible numb-skulls. Indian individuals' oral accounts of such awesome masters tend to cover their identities into a secret by a powerful emanation. Buddha's life has much attraction for the scholars across the world. Gautama's own particular way of life and constant search for truth decimated old convictions arrangement of India. Buddha is adored as pioneer of Buddhism. That is the reason that Catherine Bennet alludes to the "Buddhist custom." This alludes not what Gautama was, nor what he may has truly said or done – It is about what others trust him to be, and how he is spoken to and depicted by his adherents, lovers and admirers (Weher, 1916). Hermann Hesse has portrayed a very innovative and modern picture of Gautama's life which were inspirational for the critics, theorists and scholars. It has reshaped the life of Buddha. The novelist has gotten this idea of appropriation from the sacred and historical narrations of East.

“While the India of his own time remained an uninspiring enigma for him, Hesse constructed his own mysterious Orient out of his literary imagination. This imaginary India, which forms the timeless mytho-poetic world of Siddhartha, owes its genesis in part to Hesse's study of the sacred books of the East - the Vedas, Upanishads, the Bhagvat Gita, the Theravada Buddhist Suttas. Passages from the Upanishads, in particular are quoted in the novel (Hesse, 1972, 53).”

### *Siddhartha: A Modern Man of Ancient India*

Hesse is not intrigued in Buddhist custom, nor in Subcontinent as at that point was – but into what Gautama's identity and belief as depicted in writings of exceptionally genuine. The writer is most interested in thinking process in Buddha's mind.

The centrality of the idea shows that Hesse's portrayal of Gautama seems pulverize confidence in "supernatural" component that encompasses Gautama in Eastern tales and stories (Keene, 2002). Would anyone be able to reach the determination that Siddhartha legitimizes the religious vision – which is as yet a puzzle for the uninformed? Furthermore, in which manner modernize the Buddha story? Or on the other hand was he found "modernity" in colonial India?

This is the manner by which he found his very own impression of life and worries in Buddha (Hesse, 1976). He, in this manner, concentrated on various selves of identity in which his analytical thinking, questioning, reasoning and experience of the existing world are in charge of knowledge he accomplished (Hesse 1922). In accordance with Western savvy people's way to deal with Gautama's life they approach impartially and frequently downplay his own particular insistence that there is measurement of reality which reason alone can't grasp. Hesse is surely one such novelist who isn't occupied with learning increased through "revelation". This may bring up the issue on the off chance that he is keen on Buddhism as an objective set of beliefs, an ordinary man achieves comparable truth as did Christ through "revelation". Be that as it may, this exchange is taken up later. It should get the job done here to state that Hesse has introduced Siddhartha absolutely as a levelheaded man of involvement and his illumination an aftereffect of multi-dimensional encounters of life and this is mostly on the grounds that he relates to him and has adjusted his character in the light of his own encounters (Hesse. 1927).

Hesse has not only appropriated the incidents from religious and historical accounts of Gautama's life but he saw his own reflection in Buddha's life history. The novelist is of the view that the character Siddhartha is reflection of many individuals. This is the reason of adaptation, modification and appropriation of Siddhartha's life. Hesse's worry is with the mind of Siddhartha as opposed to certainties considered through additional normal means or heavenly offices. Hesse's Siddhartha is a renegade. He leaves home with little idea of how abused his folks and family will be after him. He wanders in wilderness for a long time and connects with numerous gatherings of individuals.

There is sufficient proof to trust that the fundamental subject of the novel "*Siddhartha*" is "mind and change" "which keeps running all through the novel. Everything occurs inside Siddhartha's mind. In this way, when Hesse presents Siddhartha in first section of the content by demonstrating he is sad even though his family loves him and has elevated standard over him, it might well be that he was depicting his own particular identity and internal uneasiness:

"Siddhartha had begun to feel the seeds of discontent within him. He had begun to feel that the love of his father and mother, and also the love of his friend

Govinda, would not always make him happy, give him peace, satisfy and suffice him. He has begun to suspect that his father and his other teachers, the wise Brahmins, had already passed on to him the bulk and best of their wisdom, that they already poured the sum total of their knowledge into his waiting vessel; and the vessel was not full, his intellect was not satisfied, his soul was not at peace, his heart was not still (Hesse, 1922, p.5).”

Distinctive inquiries and disarrays emerge in the brain of Siddhartha about socio-cultural structures and substances built by his forefathers. Also, he was at that point satisfied by conventional insight, learning and thirst for more information. He seems eager to recognize what life is all about. So his inquiries regarding social discontent are joined with a hunger for learning. This anxiety is not just of individual's, yet of the writer's own as well. Thus the character is pitiful, despondent and anxious like Hesse. Consequently, In Siddhartha this bothering brings forth doubt of the tenets and control made by society for him. He started to make inquiries from others, and not fulfilled by the appropriate responses started to think his own contemplations:

“Was Atman then not within him? Was not then the source within his own heart? One must find the source within one's own self, one must possess it. Everything else was seeking-a detour, error (Hesse, 1922,p.3).”

Consistently, he endeavored to attempt customary knowledge of his general public first. Thus he swings to Samanas under whose direction he hones poise as venture to survive and to execute his craving just to dispose of anguish. For, the Samanas, the masters and instructors and the voyagers of the profound way had shown that the base of inconvenience was "desire" and on the off chance that one defeated it the way to torment would close. Siddhartha needed to attempt method for Samanas. “Siddhartha had one single goal- to become empty, to become empty of thirst, desire, dreams, pleasure and sorrow- to let the self die (Hesse, 1922).”

This is additionally the old customary method for every single Christian holy person. Hesse saw numerous resemblances between his own life story and the life of Gautama Buddha. He is of the view that Buddha is more than an individual can expect. Buddhism is a path which leads to salvation. Hesse's inquiry was what occurs on the procedure find the self (Hesse, 1922)?

Siddhartha to in habit of eating much because he wanted to kill the desire just to get rid of suffering. He begins begging like different Samanas. After a long affair of Samana's life for a long time, he achieves the conclusion that self and desire are as yet alive. He sees the distinction between his scrutinizing minds and states the force of hunger for learning to his companion Govinda:

“I suffer thirst, Govinda, and on this long Samana path my thirst has not grown less. I have always thirsted for knowledge; I have always been full of

### *Siddhartha: A Modern Man of Ancient India*

questions. Year after year I have questioned the Brahmins; year after year I have questioned the Holy Vedas (Hesse, 1922, p.11).”

Siddhartha's thirst for knowledge and learning from new experiences makes him a modern man of ancient India. He seems unable to kill his desire of learning. His learning is totally based upon his own experiences. He chooses substitute ways and makes an open assertion against custom. He even brings up issues about the Brahmins and furthermore other sacred customs and exercises. He has a very little faith on the words come from teachers and preachers.

“You have spoken well, Govinda, you have remembered well, but you must also remember what else I told you- that I have become distrustful of teaching and learning and that I have little faith in words that come to us from teachers (Hesse, 1922, p.13).”

Buddha appears to Siddhartha as a learned individual deeply of his mortal. He felt that Buddha's illumination is aftereffect of his experience and he wishes to end up like Buddha through his own experiences. On other hand Siddhartha's companion Govinda turns into Buddha's supporter. Siddhartha makes diverse inquiry to Buddha.

“But according to your teachings, this unity and logical consequences of all things is broken in one place. Through a small gap there streams into the world of unity something strange, some thing new, something that was not there ... (Hesse, 1922, p.17).”

Siddhartha leaves Gautama and his friend, and pushes toward arousing and distinctive inquiries emerge in the mind of Siddhartha. His relationship with Hesse is completed now. He turns into a modern man, since he has left the old medieval method for the mission. At that point he begins to seek out the circumstances and end results behind everything. This approach is logical and Western. He begins thinking how the Buddha got Enlightenment and furthermore figures how he can end up like Buddha. This is an inquiry concerning learning, yet additionally a mission about self and reality of life. He at long last additionally perceives that every one of the substances and personalities are formation of individuals and he trusts the self changes and develops with the progression of time. He lands at this conclusion by watching changes inside himself:

“I am no longer what I was; I am no longer an ascetic, no longer a priest, no longer a Brahmin. What then shall I do at home with my father? Study? Offer sacrifices? All this is over for me now (Hesse, 1922, p.21).”

He at last chooses to leave his devout lifestyle and come back to life, a choice long in readiness. This is a declaration of person's will of which instructors and followers of " the spiritual way " will never endorse or prescribe. Siddhartha's dismissal of the spiritual methods of his lords and custom makes him not just a

person of an extraordinary quality and insight, yet in addition a revolutionary who will hazard hellfire yet declare his will. In the event that renegades turn holy people at last, the eastern story is quiet about the insubordination and talks just about the sainthood. He is never a dissident or an erudite person. In Govinda's character, Hesse has considered a perfect supporter of the way. His character is made precisely for this reason – to strike the contrast amongst him and Siddhartha.

Eastern representation of Buddha's life depends more on Gautama's lessons about approach to reduce "suffering." Hesse discusses Siddhartha, who has passion for knowledge of self. This is his worry as an intelligent person, and as a Westerner. He anticipates through Siddhartha the view that instructors' information of the other worldly way is superfluous for the searchers since learning of the 'self' exists in the human spirit. Unless an individual will read his/her mind, nothing will be uncovered about human spirit or brain. Therefore, Siddhartha comes back to life and Nature so as to peruse/learn – by methods for encounter, by methods for thought and feeling as opposed to refusal and deliberate enduring.

In any case, he finds out about existence still in a segregated way. He is not able to be tainted by cash, covetousness or aspiration. In the second piece of the writing which portrays the material excursion of Siddhartha, the novelists claim for Siddhartha, rather in energy: "Siddhartha learned something new on every step of his path, for the world was transformed and he was enthralled (Hesse. 1922, p.17)."

Siddhartha, anyway is unassuming in his experiences with Kamla who reveals to him that he should look perfect and spotless and must have cash to assume upon the liability of affection; he gains from Kamala the utilization of his insight and prior parsimonious lifestyle; he informs her concerning his life with Samana's and furthermore the life of Brahmin which he has encountered:

"You have observed well, you have seen everything, you have seen Siddhartha, the Brahmin's son, who left his home in order to become a Samana, and who was Samana for three years. Now, however, I have left that path and have come to this town, and the first person I met before I reached the town was you (Hesse, 1922, p.26)."

Siddhartha is innocent in common undertakings regardless of a sharp personality. Kamla is benevolent yet in addition insightful and fast to discover approaches to acquire cash. In the wake of hearing Siddhartha's story Kamala encourages him to use each one of those tricks which he already learned. "My friend, many people want to know that. You must do what you have learned and obtain money, clothes and shoes for it. A poor man cannot obtain money otherwise."

The character Siddhartha gives himself a chance to be guided by Kamla in the soul of a sharp student and follower in light of the fact that the information of desire and love is indicating him something about his spirit. Thus to Kamla's

### *Siddhartha: A Modern Man of Ancient India*

insidious inquiry: “Where would you be if Kamala did not help you?” Siddhartha answers:

“My dear Kamala,” said Siddhartha, when I came to you in your grove I made the first step. It was my intention to learn about love from the most beautiful woman. From the moment I made that resolution I also knew that I would execute it. I knew that you would help me; I knew it from first glance at the entrance to the grove (Hesse, 1922, p.29).”

And to Kamala’s query “And if I had not wanted?” his reply is:

“But you did want. Listen, Kamala, when you throw a stone into the water, it finds the quickest way to the bottom of the water. It is the same when Siddhartha has an aim, a goal. Siddhartha does nothing; he waits, he thinks, he fasts, but he goes through the affair of the world like the stone through water, without doing anything without bestirring himself; he is drawn and let himself fall. He is drawn by his goal, for he does not allow anything to enter his mind which opposes his goal. That is what Siddhartha learned from Samanas. It is what fools call magic and what they think is caused by demons. Everyone can perform magic everyone can reach his goal, if he can think, wait and fast (Hesse, 1922, p.30).”

Siddhartha's willingness to learn, to think and to reach at determinations about self is a logical enquiry – a modern way to deal with life. Siddhartha's dismissal of expert is one noteworthy exercise Hesse attempts to commute home through Siddhartha. This is the initial move towards his excursion of the spirit, psyche or self.

The subsequent stage is to perceive and comprehend the nearness of comparative 'self,' or 'selves' in others. Self winds up numerous selves since Siddhartha sees an adjustment in his own self, and comes to understand that he isn't one – he changes with age, time and encounter, and comparable changes happen – and he keeps on finding selves emerging inside him which he ascribed to others. He starts to comprehend that a self is an accumulation of numerous selves which constantly changes and changes past selves – this makes another comprehension and sensitivity in a man who gets a handle on this reality. This thusly produces a lowliness and comprehension – which streams outside to grasp all type of life and selves in this universe in light of the fact that aggregately they represent the "SELF" that more noteworthy truth past.

The advanced logical perspective of human “self” being a gathering of many “selves” which might be conflicting with each other is a topic which Hesse continuously created in his books through thoughtfulness, perception,

investigation and experience of his own life. He found in Siddhartha his very own representation life – young insubordination, journey for the real world and vision of unity or solidarity behind assorted variety.

### **Hesse's Whole Philosophy for Postmodern reader is based upon the Interpretation of the Life of Gautama Buddha**

Siddhartha was in long readiness, be that as it may, principal novel *Peter Camenzind*, the most clearly personal of his books. It revolves around a town kid who visits city and learns workmanship and specialty yet never leaves his otherworldly mission started by adoration. *Demien* is additionally a comparative self-disclosure in which the focal character learn through experience how a similar self be great or awful in various circumstances and that these are not supreme terms. The benefit of one man can be the 'terrible' of the other. Siddhartha is yet another illustration for a similar voyage towards "solidarity" as a matter of fact of distinction. It is composed to show reality: "*Your soul is the whole world.*"

Be that as it may, this entire world seems to us in separated structures and forms: This has been displayed in initial part of *Steppenwolf*:

"So Harry Haller, the Steppenwolf, had his psychedelic session, discovered instead one reality, infinite realities within the brain. He is admitted into the select group of those who have passed through the verbal curtain into other modes of consciousness. He has joined the elite brotherhood of the illuminati (Hesse, 1927, p.31)."

Hesse has passed on an all inclusive topic and he has additionally attempted to tackle a general issue where he says that all the learning and illumination which we have gotten, is the consequence of our own chasing and comprehension through our own faculties. We have gained nothing from educators, this information depends on our comprehension and we can't pass on this in language which we learn through our own particular encounters. It leads toward the general flexibility in light of the fact that each body has his own specific manner of reasoning and translation.

In any case, one noteworthy disarray of the self which is construction of our own experience, it shows that how we are different from others. Siddhartha opposed his dad, yet when he turned into a father himself and his own particular confronted him to impugn his power; he responded similarly as had his own dad in the mystery corner of his heart. Thus fathers and pioneers or instructors are not swap for self-learning. Such conduct has suggestions for colonizer and colonial people – the two people and the countries.

"However, many things which he had learned from the Samana, which he had learned from Gotama, from his father, from the Brahmins, he still retained for a long time: a moderate life, pleasure in thinking, hour of meditation, secret knowledge of self, of the



### *Siddhartha: A Modern Man of Ancient India*

eternal self, that was neither body nor consciousness (Hesse, 1922, 45).”

The novelist has infused his own experiences and thoughts in character of Buddha. Buddha's life history is reflection of Hermann Hesse's own experience of life. Both of these have great resemblance with each other.

“Siddhartha wandered into the forest, already far from the town, and knew only one thing\_ he could not go back, that the life he had lived for many years was past, tasted and drained to a degree of nausea. The songbird was dead; its death, which he had dreamt about, was the bird in his own heart (Hesse, 1922, p.41).”

Subsequently there is sufficient of the universe of soul that Hesse has kept up in Siddhartha. He has related to this journey. He has insisted the presence of the universe of soul that mind is equipped for considering, encountering and getting a handle on. Anyway he has kept away from superstition, and pointless purge 'custom' that takes us no place. He is occupied with religion – any religion, Chinese, Indian, European, correctly on the grounds that he is enthusiastic for the universe of (human? General?) Spirit, soul and psyche. He trusted that body is an appearance of the soul and it is an obligation to contemplate over this reality. Hesse has great attraction for Hinduism and Buddhism.

“The problem that most troubles and offends Westerners when he becomes interested in Hinduism, is the fact that to the Indian, God can be transcendent and imminent, is actually the heart of Hindu religion. For the Indian who is remarkably gifted in religious feeling as well as in abstract thought, no such problem exists; from the beginning it is assumed as certain that all human knowledge and power of thought can cope only with the lower world, the human world, that the divine on the other hand, must be approached simply through surrender, devotion, meditation, awe. And so Hinduism ..... shelters peacefully and in paradisiacal gaiety the most monstrous opposites, the most contradictory formulations, the most opposed dogmas ..... (Hesse, 1976, p.7).”

This is the mentality to “monstrous opposites” or the “contradictory formulations” which captivates the writer. From East he explores most enlightening and modern idea. Especially he found this notion from Indian religions. He is among those scholars who were drawn towards East for its insight encapsulated in the character of Buddha. He was not interested in medieval character of Buddha, but he was also keen towards the modern perspective of Buddha's life.

## **Conclusion**

Hesse has established a different reality through presenting the life and thinking of Buddha quite contradictory from the Eastern religious and historical accounts. The above discussion presents that Buddha reached to enlightenment through the rational way. He reached to the Nirvan (Enlightenment) through the process of construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of various realities and experiences. The writer presented the Siddhartha as a rebel, rebel against the already existing social norms and traditions. According to West the rebely of Siddhartha led him toward enlightenment but East declared it predetermined destiny. Through the rational thinking and interpretation West reached at postmodernism while most of the Eastern countries are standing at the shore or ancient Sea. Western development and imperialism are results of their rational thinking and experience where Eastern medieval thinking led them into medieval ages. The colonization/imperialism is result of difference of thinking and experience. It is also indirect answer of questions of Postcolonial writers.

## **References**

- Armstrong, K. (1999) *Buddha* . USA: The New York Times Bestseller.2  
Hassan,R. (2002). *The Unchosen* .New York: Writers Club Press.2  
Hesse, H. (1922). Siddhartha, trans. *Hilda Rosner*. *New Delhi: Rupa and Co.*2, 4, 5, 6,7,8,9,11,12  
Hesse, H. (1972). *The journey to the east*. India: Panther.2, 3  
Hesse, H. (1976). *My Belief* .Triad Panther.3,12  
Hesse,H.(1927). *Steppenwolf* .Penguin Books.4, 10,  
Humphreys,C. (1949). *Buddhism* .A Pelican Book .  
Keene,M. (2002). *World Religions* . Westminster John Knox Press.3  
Rhys, J. (1966), *Wide Sargasso Sea* .US: Penguin Books.2  
Trainor,K. (2001), *Buddhism* . Oxford University Press.  
Weber, M. (1956). *The Religion of India: The Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism*. USA: Free Press. 2

## **Biographical Note**

**Rasib Mehmood** is a PhD Scholar at Air University, Islamabad, Pakistan.  
**Dr. Shaheen Khan** is working as Advisor at Higher Education Commission, Islamabad, Pakistan.