

During siddhartha's
time



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

When you want to achieve a goal, there are often obstacles that can prevent you from reaching the level of expectation you have for yourself. However, a setback doesn't mean you won't ever reach your goal. In fact, you often learn a lot from your setbacks that can help you in the future.

In Hermann Hesse's allegorical novel of spiritual self-discovery, *Siddhartha*, the author's depiction of the Om and its ability to guide someone through their setbacks is portrayed through Siddhartha's turning point, when he experiences the cleansing effects of the Om at the river. During Siddhartha's time with the wealthy merchant, Kamaswami, his riches turn him greedy and unhappy.

He turns to gambling and binge-drinking to temporarily satisfy him but his high stakes and love for the fear that comes with them drives him to hate himself and grow restless. One night in particular, after he had spent the night with dancing girls and drinking wine, Siddhartha is disgusted with himself and wishes he could rid himself of his pointless life. When he falls asleep that night, he has a vivid dream. In his dream, [Kamala's] little bird was dead, and lay rigid on the floor of the cage. He took it out, ...and threw it away, out into the lane; and, at the same moment, he received a terrible fright, and his heart ached as if he had cast away everything valuable and good from himself together with that dead bird. (44) Siddhartha interprets the dream as a symbol of the death of all that was good in his soul.

Siddhartha realizes that his soul is empty and his life is meaningless.

It dawns upon him that he has fallen into samsara, the cyclical pattern of living, suffering, and dying. He leaves the city in despair and heads to the

river. In a state of hopelessness, Siddhartha nearly commits suicide. His eyes closed, he was dropping to his death. Just then, from remote regions of his soul, from past periods of his tired life, a sound ran through his mind like a flash. It was a word, a syllable, that he spoke to himself involuntarily in a slurred voice, ...the sacred om. (47) Siddhartha is stopped by the recognition of the " Om" from the river. The inner voice that told him to become a samana and to not follow the Buddha has been dormant but is finally awakened. After a deep sleep, Siddhartha is reborn and ready to set out on a new course. With a new outlook on his life, Siddhartha meets Vasudeva, the ferryman, and asks to stay in his hut to learn from the river. While Siddhartha stays with Vasudeva to find the Om at the river, Kamala passes away from a fatal snake bite, and his son is left with him. Siddhartha struggles to form a relationship with Young Siddhartha and looks to the Om to teach him patience. ' You put no pressure on him, you do not hit him, you give him no orders, because you know that softness is stronger than hardness, water is stronger than rock, love is stronger than physical force.' (64) When Siddhartha finds that he has a son, he is immediately overcome by the blind love a parent feels for their child.

As a result he dismisses his son's behavior as the result of Kamala's death. Siddhartha tries to win his son over through friendliness and patience and to show him how to live a good life. He tries to groom his son in his own image, but Young Siddhartha realizes it and resents Siddhartha for doing so. Even though Vasudeva reminds Siddhartha that everyone must follow their own voice to enlightenment, Siddhartha is blinded by love, and he ignores it. Eventually, Young Siddhartha leaves the hut in the middle of the night to go

back to the town and Siddhartha comes after him the next morning. He saw Kamaswami, he saw the servants, the banquets, the dice players, the musicians; he saw Kamala's songbird in its cage; he relived all this, he breathed the air of samsara; again he was old and tired, again he felt the disgust, again he felt the wish to obliterate himself, again he recovered, thanks to the sacred om Siddhartha realized that he could not help his son.

(68) As Siddhartha looks around the city, he has flashbacks of his life there. Through the om, Siddhartha acknowledges he must let his son go and that no amount of reasoning will convince him to stay.

The om reminds Siddhartha that no one can teach enlightenment, and that enlightenment must be found within. After his son leaves, Siddhartha dives into learning from the river and Vasudeva. He... Siddhartha listened it was all one, it was all interwoven and knotted together, interconnected in a thousand ways. And all of this together, all the voices, all the goals, all the longing, all the suffering, all the pleasure, all the good and evil, all of this together was the world the great song of a thousand voices consisted of a single word, which was om, the absolute. (73) Siddhartha ceases to struggle with his destiny, he ceases to suffer. His soul merges into the unity of the great perfection that is all of the voices in the world speaking together.

No longer knowing whether time existed, whether that vision had lasted a second or a hundred years; no longer knowing whether a Siddhartha, a Gotama, an I or a you existed; wounded in his inmost recesses as if by a divine arrow, the wound from which tastes sweet; enchanted and dissolved in his inmost being, Govinda stood there a little while longer, leaning over Siddhartha's quiet face, which had just been kissed, which had just been the

theatre of all formations, of all becoming, of all being. (81) Siddhartha's face is the epitome of enlightenment which, in the past, was known solely by Gotama. However, after Govinda's years of following the Sublime One, finally tasted the Nirvana that Siddhartha emanates. After Govinda experiences this great transcendence, he admits that the path and approach to Nirvana used by Siddhartha was indeed the key to reaching it.

This path that Siddhartha exemplified proved to be the more successful route, despite Govinda's attempts at believing he could reach Nirvana by alternative means. Govinda ultimately realized reaching enlightenment was not something that could be transferred to students by their teachers, but instead, had to come from within that individual. In Hermann Hesse's novel, Siddhartha, the author conveys through Siddhartha's experiences of trying to reach Om, that likewise, when any individual has a goal that they are trying to reach, it is a process. There can be setbacks while trying to achieve the goal and oftentimes we learn a great deal from those setbacks and obstacles that we encounter.