

Siddhartha achieving  
brahmin leader and  
grew up following the



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Siddhartha Achieving enlightenment is to attain a greater meaning and appreciation about life or a situation. Many hope to achieve enlightenment throughout their lives.

But, the definition of what enlightenment is can differ from person to person. Enlightenment is a destination that can be found in many ways, such as through the things of this earth, or it could be found through spiritual beliefs. Enlightenment is discovering something greater than the "self". In the story of Siddhartha, by Hermann Hesse, he tells a story about the adventures of a man and his path to finding enlightenment. Siddhartha, the main character in the novel, searches for enlightenment and the true meaning of the "self" in many religious groups and holy teachers, but soon discovers that he can not be taught enlightenment. Throughout his journey he endures many obstacles and phases. The stages of discontentment, searching, and enlightenment were the three main highlights of his odyssey. During the first stage of achieving enlightenment, Siddhartha sets out to find a deeper meaning of the "self".

" Siddhartha was a son of Brahmin leader and grew up following the practice. But, Siddhartha soon began " to feel the seeds of discontent within him" (Hesse 5). Siddhartha felt that there was more to life that he was not experiencing and he felt benighted. Siddhartha sets out to leave his father's house, because he feels that he has learned all that he could possibly learn from the Brahmin practice and it still did not lead him to the happiness he hoped to seek. " He had begun to suspect that his worthy father and his other teachers , the wise Brahmins, had already passed on to him the bulk and best of their wisdom,."(5) The Brahmins were content with the

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minimalist state of their lives. They did not have anything to work towards that was greater than the “ self” Siddhartha realizes that he must seek out and find a different practice that will lead him to enlightenment. His discontentment concerning the ultimate failure of finding nirvana through the Brahmin practices, sparks the long journey of him finding enlightenment.

He separates himself from the Brahmin practice to become a Samana in hopes of finding enlightenment, but in doing so has a fallout with his father. As a Samana, he strives to lose “ the self’ and find enlightenment. The stage of searching in Siddhartha’s journey includes places where he believes that he will find enlightenment , but he ultimately does not. Siddhartha decides to part take in the practice of the Samanas. Through the practice of the Samanas he excludes himself from things of the world, and practices the modification of sin to reach his goal of enlightenment.

“ He slipped out of himself in a thousand different forms. He was animal, carcass, stone, wood, water, and each time he reawakened” (15). Although the Samana practice was holy and taught many valuable lessons, the goal of enlightenment was not achieved through this practice. The Samana practice believed the only way to reach enlightenment was to reject the body and physical aspirations, and Siddhartha recognizes that this will not help him achieve faithful enlightenment. The continuous actions such as meditation, had no meaning and did not help towards the goal of enlightenment.

The Samana actions were just a brief abscond from reality and the actual “ self”. After the Samanas, Siddhartha became disappointed in the teachings instructed by others. Siddhartha attempts to follow the ways of buddhism,

but quickly discovers it was not the right path for him. Siddhartha explains, “The teachings of the enlightened Buddha embrace much, they teach much how to live righteously, how to avoid evil. But there is one thing that this clear, worthy instruction does not contain; it does not contain the secret of what the Illustrious One himself experienced he alone among hundreds of thousands” (34).

Although the practice of Buddhism has many faithful followers and teaches valuable lessons, there is still a successful story of one reaching and experiencing enlightenment yet to be heard. It is during this time Siddhartha comes to the realization that he can not be taught to achieve enlightenment, one must experience it for themselves. Buddhism provides the necessary information to seek enlightenment, but it is ultimately up to the person themselves to accomplish the goal. Siddhartha travels to a small town where he meets people like Kamala and Kamaswami, who teach him love and the importance of material and worldly things. Siddhartha soon realizes that he has given into worldly attributes and that it has derailed him from achieving nirvana. “Slowly, like moisture entering the dying tree trunk, slowly filling and rotting it, so did the world and inertia creep into Siddhartha’s soul; it slowly filled his soul, made it heavy, made it tired, sent it to sleep”(39). Although Siddhartha was successful and wealthy he lost sight of his spiritual goal of reaching enlightenment.

It was simple for Siddhartha to give into the earthly element of his life because he was able to physically see and endure the successes and comfort of material things, which led him to become progressively distracted from reaching his spiritual goal. He decides to leave the small town to find himself

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again and accomplish his goal of achieving nirvana. As he leaves the town, he finds himself near the river where he meets a ferryman ( Vasudeva), The ferryman will technically be Siddhartha's last teacher. The ferryman teaches Siddhartha to listen and learn from the river. By listening to the river Siddhartha finds peace, unity, and beauty in all things. When Siddhartha becomes awakened he realizes the importance of life and finds the deeper meaning of the " self".

He recognizes that enlightenment can not be taught, it can only be found through personal experiences. The river is basically a reflection of his life and teaches him to learn from himself. He gains peace and love for himself. He now sees the holistic perspective of his journey and begins to look at the world differently. After all the experiences, teachers and states of mind Siddhartha has finally reached enlightenment.