

Hermann hesses novel siddhartha - argumentative essay

[Life](#), [Childhood](#)



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Introduction

Siddhartha is a novel written by Hermann Hesse. It deals with Siddhartha's (a boy) journey in search of knowledge. The word Siddhartha is a combination of two Sanskrit words: Siddha ("achieved") and artha ("meaning or wealth"). Siddhartha in whole means "the one who has found meaning/wealth..."

Siddhartha sets out, with his friend Govinda, to search for knowledge. He leaves asceticism and goes to a down-to-earth life and back to asceticism again in his effort to attain enlightenment and experience.

Hermann uses experience here to refer to the sum of the conscious happenings/events as experienced by a person in life. It represents one's participation, learning and, ultimately, acquisition of knowledge.

Understanding involves perceiving, comprehending and gradually internalizing. Hesse shows that experience is the best way of understanding the reality and acquiring the requisite enlightenment for life.

Hesse shows that the individual events are meaningless when considered independently because each every action that Siddhartha undertakes adds up to the sum of these events; thus experience.

But Hesse does not do this by direct means of language use. He employs features of literature to champion his ideas. One example is symbolism. This paper will look in the symbolism of 'the river'.

Significance of the River

Siddhartha severally comes across rivers throughout his journey. The river becomes an important representation of his life. Each time Siddhartha comes across a river, it represents the end of one chapter of his life and entry into what he has never experienced before. This importance of the river is seen in the interaction that Siddhartha has with it, the experiences he gets by the river and a lot of other things he learns and understands just by listening to it.

When Siddhartha admits he does not have money for the voyage, the ferryman kindly says that his (Siddhartha's) friendship is enough and takes him to town. Later, Siddhartha returns to the river. Vasuveda, the ferryman accepts Siddhartha's request to be his apprentice. Through Vasuveda, Siddhartha starts to learn the wisdom of the river. Soon, he starts to acquire the man's demeanor, expressing satisfaction and peace with the daily routine.

It is during his years working in the ferry that Siddhartha meets Kamala. She, alongside Vasuveda and her son (with Siddhartha), leave to be with the dying Buddha. As she is passing near a river, she gets bitten by a snake. Vasuveda takes her to Siddhartha, but she dies. While Siddhartha stays with his son near the river, the boy does not see and accept Siddhartha as the father and finally runs away. His love for the ferry dies with his son's departure.

On a brighter side, the loss of his son enables Siddhartha to identify, more than ever, with the ordinary people. One day as he leaves to look for his son, he stops on his tracks because he hears the river laughing at him. Looking

into the river he sees his own father, whom he had run away from. He turns around and abandons his search. He tells Vasudeva about his pains. Vasudeva guides him to the river and implores him to listen closely and deeply. Initially, he only hears sorrowful voices. But soon, other voices of joy join in and finally, all these voices merge in a mighty sound of "Om". Now Siddhartha hears and recognizes the harmony and unity of these voices. Soon, his pain begins to fade away. Vasudeva, seeing that his friend has achieved redemption, leaves for the woods where he dies, becoming a part of the unity that he has helped Siddhartha see. Shortly after Vasudeva's departure, Siddhartha reunites with Govinda. Siddhartha goes into a speech about knowledge and wisdom. When Govinda can't comprehend what he is saying, he asks Govinda to kiss him on the forehead. In the process, Govinda sees a stream of different faces in lieu of Siddhartha's. He is then overwhelmed with this manifestation of timelessness and unity. He falls on the ground, shedding uncontrollably.

Conclusion

Siddhartha experiences every notable part of his life by, at and in the river. He gets his lifetime job here; through it he learns the spirit of contentment with one's self and what is; he meets his wife and gets his son here and experiences the real meaning of loss, both to death and departure; he finds peace in the river; and through the river, he reunites with his past in Govinda.

As we have seen, the river becomes the symbol that unifies the experiences of Siddhartha. In relation to this, we see the paradoxical place of the river. It

is what separates the mind experiences from the experiences of the spirit, as well as the physical experiences of the body and those of the senses. Yet, it is the unifying factor between the spiritual and physical experiences in the sense that the soul's experiences are found and manifested at the banks of the river (physical); it unifies the two extremes of life. While it initially served as the division, it ultimately blesses Siddhartha with the knowledge of the transcendence of time and space/worlds: physical and spiritual.

Work cited

Hesse, H., Siddhartha. New York: New Directions publishers. 1951