

THE QUEST FOR ENLIGHTENMENT: AN ECO PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY OF SIDDHARTHA BY HERMANN

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Abstract- This research aims at finding out the relationship between natural world and human beings, that is, as seen in how nature plays a helpful role in attaining enlightenment in Siddhartha's life. To present this interaction, I will apply the ecopsychological theory; which is the mixture of eco criticism and psychology. The journey of Siddhartha is the conflict of his inner and outer desires. He suffered from the lust, greed, anger and the natural human desires. Siddhartha's journey is from innocence to knowledge and then to wisdom. Siddhartha is an example of Freud's theoretical points in analyzing a person's psychology. In the process of finding his goal of enlightenment, we will see how he will solve the hurdles that came into his way, or how he himself is a hurdle. Siddhartha's arrogant attitude towards others will lead him to the path of bad deeds. Siddhartha is denying the importance of teachers which is his id that he is the only superior beings who knows everything.

Key words: Eco-criticism, quest, Knowledge, wisdom, spirituality, human desires

1. INTRODUCTION

Eco-criticism is a theory in which relationship of human beings with the environment is studied with view to considering how both are related to each other and what the relationship of the environment is with literature. William Ruecker is the first person who used this term in 1978 in his essay 'Literature and Ecology: An experiment in eco-criticism and ecological concepts to the study of literature'. Eco-psychology is about the relationship of the human mind's process with that of environment; that is, how human psyche is related to the environment through eco-logical and psychological principles. Psychoanalysis is the theory pioneered by Sigmund Freud in the nineteenth century. This theory examines the conflicts of characters, dreams, desires and symbols. It also shows how a character's behaviour is in a conflict with his inner desires.

Hermann Hesse was born on 1877, Nobel laureate for literature (1946) Hermann Hesse, the Nobel laureate for literature (1946), was born in 1877. He was a German Swiss poet, novelist and painter whose best known works are Stephen Wolf, Siddhartha, Glass Bead Game. He was exposed to Indian culture, theology and philosophy by his parents from his childhood.

Siddhartha is a spiritual journey of an Indian man named Siddhartha, during the time of Budha. "Siddhartha" means "to attain goal" and "victorious". Siddhartha had tried to attain enlightenment by putting himself in different situations along with his friend Govinda. Siddhartha was the son of Brahmin but was not satisfied with the offerings of the rituals as a Brahmin, so he decided to leave his family and wander about to get spirituality. Hence, he went to the forest to live with samans he learned new knowledge with them but still he was thirsty for more knowledge. He left samanas and listened to the sermons of Buddha, but still Siddhartha was not satisfied with his teachings. Govinda accepted the teachings of Buddha and joined his companions to learn the lessons for the rest of his life.

Siddhartha is with the view that, through teachings, only knowledge can be gained; but, to get wisdom, experience is the crucial part of it. Siddhartha has lived both the life of the good and of bad to show that, to attain one's goal there is need to have experience of both sides.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

To find out the quest for enlightenment of Siddhartha along with the healing power of the environment and nature, I have decided to apply eco-psychology. It is to find out the relationship of human beings with the natural world. I will apply two critics, namely Lawrence Buell and Cheryl Glotfelty in The Eco-criticism Reader remarks in Literary Ecology that eco-criticism is the study of physical environment and literature. Lawrence Buell in the Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and literary Imagination explains Eco-criticism as environmental based study of literature and social sciences and theories which worked under this practice.

To define the process of human psyche of the characters, I will take Sigmund Freud's theory of repressed desires and the id, ego, and super ego. Freud argued that the undiscovered desires become our repressed desires which appear in our dreams.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

The theme of enlightenment and the thirst for knowledge is widely used. Siddhartha is also about searching for the enlightenment and this book fascinates the people who are in search of the truth of life. Huge Jack man (2007) after reading this book (Siddhartha) said that this book was given to him because he was related to the drama school and he was with the view that acting was the way to find out who you were and about the reality of life and this book, Siddhartha, puts questions on what is true not for his father or society but for himself. He was confident that he was on the right path. Siddhartha's quest is a reminder for us that we always have to find our own truth.

Siddhartha is in search of knowledge. For that purpose, he followed many people to attain spirituality but he was not satisfied with the teachings. Ralf Freedman in Hermann Hesse, *Pilgrim of Crisis: A Biography* said that Siddhartha does not learn true wisdom from any teacher or any conventional methods of teaching but from a river and from an old fool who smiles all the time and was secretly a saint.

This novel is about the philosophy of the Indian culture and about the Indian religion which has a great impact on the life of Siddhartha. Paul Edward ((1967) observes that in Hinduism, the Hindus life has four stages; first, he is a student; second, a family man; third, he begins to leave his family ties to become a Vanapratha and then he becomes a sannyasin, devoting himself to the spiritual quest.

Siddhartha shows the influence of Indian thoughts. Henry and Gerland Mary expressed the same views: "In Siddhartha, Hesses gives poetic expression to Indian philosophy" (Henry, 1976:381). That is why the whole book has symbolic meanings which give the book its final outlook.

From the early childhood, Siddhartha was in search for the higher values of life. This is true that "things exist in their essence even before they are materially realized and named" (Desai, 1995:ix). Siddhartha's struggles for these values shows his quest for enlightenment.

The theme of enlightenment has been presented by many writers with different subjects. Joseph Conrad in *Heart of Darkness* has used this theme to show the ill treatment of European people towards Africa. The main character, Marlow, is a man of good nature who gets enlightenment from Kurtz whose life was full of cruelties and with lust for more power and money he became blind to what he is doing with the people. His last words, "The Horror! The Horror!" gives enlightenment to Marlow although he heard a lot about cruelties but he did not lose a chance of enlightenment. He took a lesson that a life full of injustice is not more than horror. Marlow's journey towards his inner station is actually a journey of self discovery.

4. ANALYSIS

An Eco-psychological analysis would encompass how the inner and outer desires, spirituality and search for wholeness highlight the intersecting phenomena. Siddhartha is in a conflict to get the better way of spending life for that purpose. He is moving around and searching a place where he can get his goals. He is with the view that not only good side of life will teach him the truth of life but also the experience of bad will help him in attaining the meaning of life. He is in a situation of tension with what he is doing as a Brahmin.

"Siddhartha had one single goal to become empty, to become empty of thirst, desire, dreams, pleasure and sorrow –to let the self die. No longer to be self, to experience the peace of emptied heart, to experience pure thought-that was his goal". (p:11).

Through these lines, we can see that how Siddhartha is longing for emptiness and his struggles for high values of life itself is a symbol of quest. He is searching for the harmony of life with that of nature and environment. He tries to get knowledge from teachers and also looks towards external sources for finding the meaning of life. In that process, Siddhartha made many mistakes.

"He killed his senses, he killed his memory, and he slipped out of his self in a thousand different forms. He was animal, carcass, stone, wood, water, and each time he reawakened. The sun and moon shone, he was again self, swung into the life cycle, felt thirst, conquered thirst, felt new thirst".

(P:12).

Siddhartha is trying to deny himself through many other ways like nature but his satisfaction is high. While living with Samanas, Siddhartha learned a lot of things: he learned the path of self-denial through pain, through suffering and bearing that pain, and also by living hungry and thirsty all days. He washed all the images in his mind and emptied his mind for meditation. After all this efforts he came back into himself again at the end.

Siddhartha meet Buddha the Illustrious One. He tells Siddhartha about how he has got enlightenment and now how he is reaching the people by his religious sermons. Siddhartha listen to him carefully but his problem is still the same, that of how one can get knowledge or enlightenment by having experience of one's own self.

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When Siddhartha rejects all teachings and becomes all alone on his way, he realizes that he is a man now. *He realized that something had left him, like the old skin that a snake sheds (P: 30).*

He leaves the desire to learn something from others as from teachers; he left the last teacher Buddha although he was the wisest man. Now Siddhartha is having a new journey of discovering his self. He realizes that the reason why he is unable to get his goals is the only thing he states:

‘I was afraid of myself, I was fleeing from myself. I was seeking Brahmin, Atman, I wished to destroy myself, to get away from my self, in order to find in the unknown innermost, the nucleus of all things, Atman, life, the divine, the Absolute. But by doing so, I lost myself on the way. (P: 31).

Now he is smiling as a complete man who knows what to do with his life. He has resolved the issue of self-denial that, until he will deny himself, he cannot attain enlightenment. To love other things we have to love ourselves first. His perspective of seeing the world has changed now; everything is looking beautiful and strange.

Siddhartha has made up his mind towards the pleasures of the world around him. He thought that he was deaf of all these things since his phase of asceticism. This is his entire mind’s journey towards his goals. Through Freud’s theory of repressed desires, we can see that it was Siddhartha’s repressed desire to deny his *self* and to attain spirituality. According to Freud, every human being has some desires which they cannot fulfill, so these desires become repressive desires and go to the sub-consciousness level. The main focus of Freud’s theory is on dream, because psychology asserts that cannot do due to societal fear expressed in our dreams. As in Siddhartha, we see dreams are used to reflect Siddhartha’s desires.

During the night as he slept in a ferryman’s straw hut, Siddhartha had a dream that Govinda stood before him, in the yellow robe of the ascetic. Govinda looked sad and asked him, “why did you leave me?” thereupon he embraced Govinda, put his arm around him, and as he drew him to his breast and kissed him, he was Govinda no longer, but a woman and out of the woman’s gown emerged a full breast, and Siddhartha lay there and drank; sweet and strong tasted the milk from this breast. (P:40)

This is how dreams are used to represent the desires of Siddhartha rather the undiscovered desires of him before that he was leading a life as a religious man in forests far away from these pleasures and now he has decided to enjoy his life. Siddhartha’s desire to have a relationship with women is also the indication that women and nature are both inter-related aspects in eco-criticism as it is said that women are more sensitive towards nature. He wants to satisfy his thirst of enlightenment in the lap of nature. He then asked a ferryman to take him to the river.

Siddhartha moved forward to a town where he met a women, she made a gesture, such as a women makes when she invites a man to that kind of enjoyment. Siddhartha felt his blood kindle, and as he recognized his dream again at that moment, he stooped a little towards the woman and kissed the brown tip of her breast. (P: 41).

Siddhartha’s id is insisting on him to do whatever he wanted to do. *“Siddhartha also felt a longing and the stir of sex in him; but as he had never yet touched a woman, he hesitated a moment, although his hands were ready to seize her. (P: 42).* Id is the stage where there is no check and balance of what is right or what is wrong which is then stopped by ego the conscious stage. *“At that moment he heard his inward voice and the voice said “No”.” (P :42).*

Before that, Siddhartha was running in forests to stay away from his *self* and his desires but, after spending years and getting no result, Siddhartha leaves everything and enters into a new stage where he can get a clearer vision of life. He meets Kamala. From her, he learned the art of love which taught him the lesson that to love one’s own self is the first step to achieve any wisdom and enlightenment. Siddhartha becomes materialistic to get the love of Kamala. He earns money and becomes a rich man. He enjoys close relationship with Kamala. Kamala knows that Siddhartha is inside not satisfied yet. She says to Siddhartha,

“You are the best lover that I have had, you have learned my art very well, Siddhartha. Some day, when I am older, I will have a child by you. And yet, my dear, you have remained a Samana. You do not really love me –you love nobody. Is that not true?” “May be,” said Siddhartha wearily. “I’m like you. You cannot love either, otherwise how can you practice love as an art?” (p:59).

Siddhartha is unable to love as Kamala observes in his careless behavior. We see Siddhartha’s life in three stages. He is always in motion in a dissatisfied state of mind. He left his parents and his home for the sake of more knowledge and he was not successful in getting harmony with his conflict of desires. He observed and practiced many religions, which was still a fruitless effort.

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Siddhartha was arrogant towards his teachers and other around him. He rejected Buddha because he said that he can only get knowledge but not wisdom from his teachings. It is not a completely right approach: one has to seek teachings from the teachers in order to get clear vision of wisdom through practice and self experience. This thought of Siddhartha was an obstacle on his way to achieving his goal. In his youth Siddhartha did not care for his father when, for his own satisfaction, he left them without understanding their pain. When he himself became a father and his own son did the same things with him, at that moment, he realized the pain of his father, and one more obstacle from his way to be whole has vanished with his realizing others' emotions and sentiments.

Siddhartha got his enlightenment with Ferryman on the bank of river. He observed deeply and tried to listen that the river has many voices. It has something to tell him, it has the secret of life. River will get rid of Siddhartha from the ambivalence in his mind of good and bad, of love and hate at the same time. He listened to water which was not only water – it was having the voice of life, of existence, and of self. “When we sit silent for a long time, we started to listen to the voice of silence. It becomes like water without shape and form.” This silence can be listened to only after hours of wading inside it. Then comes a stage when things become clear after long meditations. We cannot have the spiritual fulfillment until one's ego emerges with the unity of all things.

Siddhartha realizes the same feelings when he learned the silence of the river. He then said that “The river is everywhere at the same time, at the source and at the mouth, in the ocean and in the shadow of the future (P: 87).

Siddhartha left all the pleasures of materialistic life and came to the forest to think about the time he has wasted by following his desires to become rich to learn love and to gain worldly happiness. He sat under the coconut tree and lean towards the earth. He saw green water there; he wished to let himself be submerged in the water. The Satan inside himself tore him into pieces. He heard a word from somewhere in the water “Om” which means “the perfect one”. He pronounced inwardly and bent his head to the roots of the tree and went to deep sleep.

Within Siddhartha there slowly grew and ripened the knowledge of what wisdom really was and the goal of his long seeking. It was nothing but a preparation of the soul, a capacity, a secret art of thinking, feeling and breathing thoughts of unity at every moment of life. This thought matured in him slowly, and it was reflected in Vasudeva's childlike face: harmony, knowledge of the eternal perfection of the world and unity. (P:106,7).

Finally, Siddhartha got the purpose of his wanderings in search of enlightenment through the experiences of harsh realities of life. We also face same things in our lives that have become mechanical. We have no time to think about ourselves or the purpose of our creation. The special quality of *Siddhartha* is that it leads us towards nature. After reading this novel, one can think about the mechanical routines which are taking us away from the center point. This world is full of the things which make us negligent and even arrogant towards others. We considered others as inferior; that is our ignorance because we do not know the struggles of others to meet the needs of this life, which demands a lot more than what we have. After seeing the other sides of life, what we do for our survival is the thing which matters. Siddhartha for himself chose the path of self discovery through his surroundings as environment and nature. He left his home, his loved ones and his *self* to get his goal to achieve his destination; that is, to free him from all the commitments and attachments which were the hurdles of his way in achieving enlightenment. He followed his selected path which leads towards the forests to pay sacrifices and to offer rituals but his struggles were not giving him satisfaction. Then, he diverted his attention towards worldly pleasures. He had a close relationship with Kamala and had a son from her. His son betrayed him as he betrayed his own father once. He felt the pain of losing blood relations after experiencing it by himself and realized the pain of his father. He turned himself again towards nature then, which gave him the satisfaction and the selfless body

CONCLUSION

To conclude, it can be said that it is the power of nature which helps Siddhartha to gain his wholeness. Siddhartha felt solace in the lap of nature by meditating on natural happenings around him. The presence of trees and greenery helped him to meditate for long periods to understand his desire to free himself from the worldly possessions and relations which were not letting him do his best. Freud's theory of repression and the id, the ego and the super ego helps us to go deep down in Siddhartha's mind to understand his feelings about what he was suffering and, through the eco-critical theory, we see how environment helped him in getting spirituality. Eco criticism explains one's relationship with the environment. In the modern times of alienation, loneliness, war, despair and depression, only environment can help us with its consoling nature. Earth provides everything to fulfill our needs but it cannot fulfill a person's greed. Siddhartha found the voice of silence in the river. He wanted to become one with nature and he

learned it from a river that belongs to nobody. A river does not remain the same at any point; it changes with every passing moment and, here, Siddhartha learned how to become united with nature.

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