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Buddhist Philosophy and the Concept of Enlightenment in Hermann Hesse's Siddhartha: A Philosophical and Literary Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha* is important among the 20th-century literary works, for it has been closely involved with Indian religious and philosophical traditions and it has depicted, on a personal level, someone's spiritual search. But, even though the work is closely connected to Buddhism, one can't say it's a simple reflection of Buddhist teaching. Through his work actually Hesse only picked some aspects of Buddhism and rephrased them, integrating them with other literary and existence ideas of the time. In a major work, Buddhist philosophy is studied as a source to see the enlightenment depicted in *Siddhartha* with suffering desire detachment selfhood knowledge from experiences, and release. The study uses not only Buddhist philosophical texts but also previous works on Hesse to demonstrate that the main aspect here of enlightenment is the experiential and the transforming process rather than merely a passive acceptance of an existing religious doctrine. On top of that, the study builds upon Le Hong Linh's idea that *Siddhartha*'s enlightenment was a final spiritual journey and it continues the discussion by exploring the differences between Hesse's presentation and the classical Buddhist views of release. Apart from that, the study also reflects on whether there is a difference between knowledge and wisdom, and how purely doctrinal learning was rejected and also what a river symbolizes in *Siddhartha*'s last development. The author sums up that Hesse's *Siddhartha* is a way of combining different traditions by changing Buddhist ideas into a modern literary language that deals with individuality, personal experience, oneness, and soul realization.

Keywords: Hermann Hesse; *Siddhartha*; Buddhism; Buddhist philosophy; enlightenment; Nirvāṇa; spiritual journey; comparative literature; cross-cultural philosophy

1. Introduction

The 1922 original publication of Hermann Hesse's novel, *Siddhartha* in German, attracted a wide reading and research interest of the public and scholars, mainly due to the book's engagement with Indian religious traditions, spiritual searching, and the problem of a human's finding his or her genuine self. The protagonist, a young Brahmin named Siddhartha, is deeply disappointed with his family's religious traditions and embarks in a long quest for the truth. On his way he is subjected to severe ascetic exercises and learns from the Gotama, the Buddha, has the taste of life enjoyment, goes through the stages of spiritual crisis, and eventually, after the meeting with the river, reaches a transformation of his spirit. Because of this, the story illustrates the idea of the realization of the self not a philosophical abstraction, but one experienced in day-to-day life activities.

The connection between the *Siddhartha* and Buddhism remains complicated. Hesse uses Buddhist terms images moral ideas, and narrative elements, while at the same time, the novel is not just another story of Buddhist dogmas through a person's life. There are discrepancies between the ideas in *Siddhartha* and Buddhist doctrine; this point has been made by various scholars who have examined the matter. (Kim, 2016), for example, states that while the novel features many Buddhist characteristics, the author's final notion of enlightenment incorporates also different elements like union and realization of self through which Hesse's novel diverges from an accurate depiction of Buddhist thought. About this, a close comparative study is necessary rather than a straightforward identification of the novel with Buddhism to get to know the full spiritual aspect of it.

The depth of Hesse's understanding of East's philosophy is probably the most important factor behind the complexity of the novel. A scholarly work in the volume, *A Companion to the Works of Hermann Hesse*, highlights the depth Hesse's involvement was in the study of the Upanishads Buddhism Confucianism, and the Tao and considers the novel a part of his wider efforts to engage with the Oriental spiritual traditions from the position of a foreigner. So, if we are to understand the significance of the intercultural context for the plot development the book must be perceived as something more than a merely Buddhist novel or the like and rather regarded as a work that is a literary manifestation of intercultural engagement that is the result of Indian philosophical thoughts becoming filtered through Western artistic sensibility.

In a way, the multicultural aspect comes to the foreground most clearly when it comes to the issue of enlightenment. In the teachings of Buddhism, enlightenment should not mean the merely learning or the gaining of knowledge. It is rather the moment of change using realization or understanding that one's existence itself is the key element in the whole thing and So one must get free from the chains of ignorance, attachment, and suffering which

are, per Buddhism, the causes of human suffering. Hesse's version though portrays enlightenment by showing the personal development, inner change and growth of the protagonist Siddhartha and, of course, how different life experiences helped him realize the essence for himself and the world around him.

Le Hong Linh's previous book, *Journey to Enlightenment in Hermann Hesse's Siddhartha* (Linh, 2019b), is a very useful source in this area. Based on (Linh, 2019b), Hesse presents genuine enlightenment as something that one acquires through a pilgrimage and highlights how Siddhartha attempts to find a spiritual fulfillment that goes beyond the traditional social constraints. This view is very important and valuable as it turns our attention away from seeing enlightenment in doctrinal terms as a place of destination and instead, sees it as journey, the change or transformation process.

This paper follows on the former line of reasoning but takes the analysis further to be more explicitly philosophical. Instead of concentrating on how Siddhartha goes to enlightenment only, it will address a larger issue; What sort of enlightenment that Hesse offers through the character of Siddhartha and to what extent such portrayal of Siddhartha as a spiritual character aligns with Buddhist philosophical concept of liberation? This aspect of understanding the portrayal of Siddhartha is quite critical because the character of Siddhartha in Hesse meets Buddha yet declines following him. The narrator, Because of this, is able to create a nice balance and, at the same time, show the two sides; that is the reverence of the protagonist Siddhartha for Buddha and yet his claim that ultimately the truth has to be a personal experience.

This point is linked and even very important to the idea or definition of wisdom versus knowledge. As (Linh, 2019b), this distinction is not only Hesse's key idea but spiritual development is also the main concern of Linh's study. He points out that wisdom is not just something that can be passed from one person to another like a possession or property. So the character of Siddhartha is not a complete stranger to seeking knowledge. It is that the protagonist questions whether really deep wisdom can be obtained just by getting an educational lesson or teaching. What I just said point also bridges this paper and Linh's discussion on Nirvâna/Nibbâna. In his *Analyze Nirvâna Like the State of Eternal*, (Linh, 2019a) states that Nibbâna/Nirvâna is, in essence, the Buddhist ultimate goal and at the same time he argues that only a very deep contemplative insight that one cannot be gained through just book knowledge or rational thought alone can lead a person to such realization. But instead, one has to overcome craving and transcend conditioned existence which is the basic characteristic of human life that we are all in. This philosophical angle offers a good support for a reading of Hesse's position that without a genuine life experience, spiritual understanding is just not possible.

It is This way suggested, the paper argues, that Hesse's idea of enlightenment can best be understood for experience, transformation, and insight as the three interwoven aspects. First, Siddhartha has to actually live through various different kinds of existence or states of being. Second, the gradual transformation of the protagonist's attitude toward love, suffering, and attachment and selfhood is caused by these various life experiences. Third, enlightenment in the end is seen as a profound insight which cannot be simply reduced to an abstract knowledge or a mere fact. Come on, the fact is that such close reading is needed for a better understanding of the novel. The reason is that the author's depiction of enlightenment is not a direct reproduction of the concepts found in the scriptures of the religion, which means if you just look for the words of Buddhist scriptures in the novel you will not find them, you will instead discover a kind of a reinterpretation of the Buddhist concepts with an emphasis on the individual experience, existential reflection, and personal intuition.

These four questions are So the basis for our investigation:

1. How do the basic Buddhist philosophical ideas come through the portrayal of the Buddhist concepts in Hesse's "Siddhartha"?
2. How is enlightenment through the character of Siddhartha described in Hesse?
3. In how many ways does Hesse present enlightenment as either parallel to or as an interpretation different from the Buddhist notions of the attainment of liberation?
4. In what ways does Hesse bring about the changes of Buddhist philosophical thoughts in a Western literary and existential context?

Main point of the article is that Hesse, contrary to what may be thought, does not just reproduce the Buddhist philosophy in "Siddhartha". Instead of merely copying it, he creates a new representation using his Western literary background which is, at the same time, about the individual experiences, a person's journey of self-transformation and spiritual realization.

2. Literature Review and Research Gap

2.1 Le Hong Linh's Interpretation of the Spiritual Journey

This paper, Le Hong Linh's *The Path to Awakening in Hesse's Siddhartha* (2019b), is highly relevant to our current work as the paper highlights that enlightenment occupies the central concern of Hesse's novel. A major point of Linh's paper (Linh, 2019b) is that Hesse portrays true enlightenment, not just as religious knowledge that one can be told but as something that can be arrived at only after one has traversed a particular path.

This explanation is essential to get an accurate understanding of the novel 's overall structure. The character of the narrator never goes directly from ignorance to enlightenment. Rather, he goes through quite many and often opposite stages: he studies under a Brahman teacher, becomes an ascetic, talks to Gotama, has a period of sensual love, is in trade and commerce, is even despondent at one point and later goes back to his contemplative life through the river. Each of these phases is an important part of the process by which his understanding of life evolves. So Linh's (Linh, 2019b) reading implies that the differences in Siddhartha's lifestyle and thought may well be a series of steps and stages within an overall experiential learning process and not

to be regarded merely as narrative defects. The main character of the novel has to be the discoverer to him of both sides - of the extremes of asceticism vs. worldly enjoyment. That's when his understanding of being becomes deeper and comprehensive.

This thesis is even more crucial to the present study as it differentiates between religious knowledge and mystical understanding. Siddhartha meets Gotama and Vasudeva who are both great knowledge holders but their spiritual knowledge does not transfer itself to Siddhartha simply. The insight that Siddhartha reaches must be his own and not the product of another man's teaching. We have taken Linh's line of reasoning (Linh, 2019b) further here by posing a question whether in emphasizing the need for personal experience of the things of the world, as is the case in 'Siddhartha', Hesse is aligning with, changing or breaking away from the conventional ideas of the Buddhist path to freedom. Since Hesse's Siddhartha meets up with Buddha in person and Though rejects him, the matter is of some consequence.

2.2 Knowledge, Wisdom, and Experiential Realization

The separation between knowledge and wisdom makes up one of the most significant philosophical aspects of Hesse's work. Throughout their journey, Siddhartha comes to realize that simply knowing things does not guarantee an understanding of your true self. Even before the story starts, he is already a man of great intellect but is unfulfilled because his teacher-taught knowledge does not solve his questions about life and death.

(Linh, 2019b) highlights this aspect by taking enlightenment as a personal spiritual realization through the process of the character's inner development.

Because of this Linh's 2019a discussion of Nirvāṇa will be helpful to clarify the situation. (Linh, 2019a) says that one should not achieve Nirvāṇa solely by learning and reasoning. Besides, even though Linh's (Linh, 2019b) paper deals more directly with the concept of Nirvāṇa than *The Journey to Ix* to Hesse's novel, the contrast can still be used to help explain how Siddhartha turned his back on purely conceptual knowledge.

But, such a contrast must still be handled with great sensitivity. One must keep in mind that just because enlightenment is not simply intellectual knowledge, it does not imply that Buddhist tradition disapproves of doctrine learning ethical discipline, meditation, or methodical thinking. Of course Buddhist traditions have evolved highly refined philosophical and practical systems where the understanding derived from ideas and the direct experiential insight are both regarded as very important tools. The strength of Hesse's novel is that it presents this issue in a literary form.

2.3 Buddhist Philosophy and Hesse's Reconstruction

In addition, another scholarly discourse states that although Siddhartha draws upon Buddhist ideas, it does not in any sense of the word reproduce Buddhist doctrines literally. On one side, Kim (2016) points out that the author has woven important Buddhist elements in the novel; meanwhile However he has created an idea of unity and self-realization that conflicts with Buddhist teachings on the subject of the self.

It is precisely this conflict that makes the issue of non-self so important in examining anattā teaching, which is a cornerstone of Buddhism. Although Siddhartha's path initially seems a kind of shedding of the ego and attachment to things, the novel also portrays a development of the individual towards self-actualization. That way, one cannot reduce Hesse's idea of enlightenment entirely to Buddhist teachings.

On top of that, another contemporary research by Ghimire (2025) In the same way contends that Hesse reworks the Buddhism teachings for a different audience, mainly Western, in that the emphasis is placed on personal experience, existential reflection, and intuition. Baskota and Bhattarai (2023) that presents the skeptical view on Hesse's Siddhartha depiction of Buddhist enlightenment is equally valuable. In their interpretation, the authors show that besides Siddhartha's spiritual journey there have been many differences against traditional Buddhist paths about sensuality, ego, and meditation practices.

There being disagreement among these scholars implies the best way is not only to label the novel as purely Buddhist and yet not even dismiss Buddhist aspects as merely surface level. What they suggest is that the book should be read as a re-imagination of major Buddhist philosophical concepts across different cultures.

2.4 Le Hong Linh's Broader Buddhist Scholarship

Linh's other scholarly productions also add another set of ideas to be examined in the present research. For instance, she (2019c) talks in her book *Theravada Buddhism in Vietnam* about the transmission and the development of Buddhism in Vietnam, including the initial importance of Lua Lau and later differentiation of Buddhist traditions in Vietnam, respectively. This work Still does not really deal with Hesse's Siddhartha on a deeper level, yet it is very much in line with Linh as a researcher who is always interested in the historical and philosophical aspects of Buddhism.

Even more relevant for us today is a (Linh & Nguyen, 2026) work on the Philosophical Symbolism of Three Major Life Events of the Buddha: Birth, Enlightenment, and Final Nirvana. (Linh & Nguyen, 2026) discuss enlightenment and Nirvāṇa through Buddhist concepts such as anicca, anattā, dukkha and Nirvāṇa. Their paper serves as one possible philosophical system of this study in that it presents enlightenment as part of a set of philosophically-related Buddhist concepts instead of just an isolated spiritual experience.

So, the relationship between the author of these works can simply be said that her work is a gradual development in her research: (1) the (Linh, 2019b) study on Hesse, the author talks about the journey to enlightenment, (2) in the (Linh, 2019a) paper on Nirvāṇa, the nature of liberation is discussed, and (3) the 2026 co-authored study deals with the philosophical symbolism of liberation and attainment. The present article combines these elements and puts them compared to Hesse's portrayal of enlightenment within one literary work.

2.5 Research Gap

In spite of the many scholarly discussions on Siddhartha looking at Buddhism, there are still some areas where research could be further developed.

FIRST, some papers mainly aim at pinpointing the Buddhist aspects of the literary work and do not make an adequate difference between Buddhism as a religion and Hesse's literary version of Buddhism.

SECOND, Hesse being a very existentialistic and individualistic philosopher, there are papers, on one hand, that are stressing more or less his non-Buddhist philosophy and less his Buddhist concepts.

THIRD, there aren't many papers, even less so of good quality, that take a look at how Hesse's view on realization of individual spirituality clashes with Buddhism teachings on non-self-desire suffering, and freedom,

To narrow this area of research, the current paper combines literary analysis and comparative Buddhist philosophy. Instead of merely identifying whether the book depicts a "Buddhist" character, it focuses on analyzing the ways by which Buddhist principles are re-interpreted within a Western literary and existential context. This study is a continuation of Linh's (Linh, 2019b) earlier one, as well. While Linh's earlier paper mainly focuses on the way Siddhartha reaches enlightenment, the present study focuses on the meaning of the enlightenment Siddhartha gets and That's why shifts from the question of how Siddhartha travels to enlightenment to the more profound question on what Siddhartha's enlightenment really means.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Five Core Buddhist Concepts

Buddhism revolves around five interconnected topics: dukkha, taṇhā anicca anattā, and Nirvāṇa. Here is a brief definition of each. A thorough understanding of dukkha will help one realize why Siddhartha was not content with his normal life.

Taṇhā is the term for craving and attachment; That means, it gives the reason why Siddhartha is so attached. Anicca means that everything changes and so Hesse makes Siddhartha's story into a tale of constant motion which shows how change is all around us. Anattā refers to Really even though Siddhartha may seem to be the same person as before, a change in the personality of one can also be a change in the way one's self is defined.

We need to be aware of In reality those five concepts were developed over time, That means we have to consider them together. They represent a coherent system of ideas focusing on the origins and cessation of suffering, change and transformation of human mind, etc.

From this perspective, the role of the river takes a more central place. While the river is always changing, it's still the very same river. As Hesse has the river represent change, also at the same time, he has the river show the idea of interconnectedness and unity. The river is used as a vehicle for the gradual transition of Siddhartha beyond dualistic views like those of pleasure and pain, success and failure, youth and old age, life and death.

Because of this, rather than just questioning about whether the river is a symbol of Buddhism, it is better formulated as what Hesse does as using the river for making his literary definition of enlightenment and comparing his literary understanding with Buddhist teachings on enlightenment.

What has been revealed by the analysis is that enlightenment is the combination of knowing from experience, recognizing and accepting that all things are changeable, reducing one's attachment, shifting one's egocentric view, and coming to realize the interbeing of all things. It is true that we cannot equate Hesse's literary version with Buddhist teachings as different forms of art are to be interpreted within the unique vision of the artists in question.

4. Buddhist Philosophical Foundations in Siddhartha

4.1 Dukkha and the Beginning of Spiritual Inquiry

One of the most profound philosophical elements in Hermann Hesse's Siddhartha is the dissatisfaction of the main character at traditional methods of gaining knowledge, religion, and living life. At the start of the book, Siddhartha shows great intellectual and religious knowledge, but he is not happy inside. His longing after something more offers the grounds of his spiritual journey.

If we look at this discontent through a Buddhist prism, it could be considered as dukkha. Although dukkha is sometimes translated as "suffering", the truth is that this notion embraces a wide array of meanings that go beyond satisfactoriness to also describe impermanence instability etc. So, per the First Noble Truth, it is dukkha that characterizes the conditioned existence whereas the Second Noble Truth links suffering with craving (taṇhā) and attachment.

Instead of depicting dukkha as a doctrine that was explicitly taught to Siddhartha, Hesse has made its transformation into a deep existential experience. Siddhartha is dissatisfied Mainly at the intellectual-religious level: he has studied the scriptures, does the rituals, is admired by his people but none of it has led him to inner truth that he was searching for. So, his discontent drives him to leave home. In Linh's (Linh, 2019b) literary analysis, this departure from the conventional is the first step toward Siddhartha's final enlightenment and the reason why her study emphasizes his journey.

(Linh, 2019b) focuses her study on the point that Siddhartha has to break away from his father's teachings by making a spiritual journey. If we analyze the situation further, (Linh, 2019b) reveals that Siddhartha's journey has no connection with place. Rather, the journey is a way of getting away from books and scriptures - i.e. moving towards experience, which is the core in her analysis.

Siddhartha's unrest with the existing religious structures leads him to be the first stage of self-transformation. Even though he is unable to define his longing at first, he feels intuitively that religious teachings of his time could not settle the matter of his soul. Because of this, the idea of dukkha within the story is one of a crisis that is more concerned with knowledge: it turns out that merely possessing truth is not the same as actually knowing it or being able to demonstrate it through practice. This situation turns out to be one of the most important issues in the plot. A chance encounter with a wise man Siddhartha, who is impressed and respects the wisdom of the wise man of whom, he is but, he will not decide to become a disciple.

This moment is very symbolic for the whole theme since this is Hesse's way of distinguishing between the two forms of knowledge. So, the idea of suffering is changed in the story from a theological matter into a literary work. It does not matter to us whether one can get rid of it or not; rather, Truth is suffering leads to enlightenment can be our motivation.

4.2 *Taṇhā, Desire, and the Problem of Attachment*

The Buddhist idea of *taṇhā* is generally translated as craving or thirst and is considered as another important way of understanding how Siddhartha matures. Craving in Buddhism is intimately connected to Truth is the suffering goes on and on. There are different levels that craving can take like craving for sensual pleasure, for existence or for non-existence. Hesse presents to her readers such forms of craving via the story of Siddhartha who alternates between spiritual and worldly life. At first he tries to get rid of desire by the way of asceticism. He goes to live with the Samanas and tries to rise above the body and the ordinary state of consciousness. But this step of his life development is going to be a disappointment to him eventually.

Then, meeting Kamala, he becomes aware of the pleasure of the senses meanwhile his friendship with Kamaswami makes it easier or rather forces him to get attached to the material world, social life and all these little things as wealth business social status, etc. The change that is going to be very meaningful is that Hesse deliberately decides not to make a point of depicting enlightenment as just a rejection of an ordinary life. It is Siddhartha who, after having been attached, is able to perceive the limits of his attachment and only then will he have the opportunity to be free. So his conversion was based in practice rather than pure theory.

During the period of Siddhartha being materially wealthy, one of the points that it illustrates is the idea that desire does not have to be evident or very clearly expressed. Sometimes wealth reputation sensual pleasure, and success in society may become subtle forms of attachment that people even are not aware that they are attached to. Him having these things at the beginning, he feels that he is free. Though, when the day came that he realized that he had been entangled mentally with the world from which he had once tried to escape.

This change of course fits the broader Buddhist point of view that even when you are attached to physical things is not the only way to be attached. One can be attached to identity ambition intellectual success, religious role, or the yearning to be enlightened, among others. This is the point where Hesse brings the idea of a paradox. The desire to get enlightenment could turn into a new kind of attachment. There was the yearning for the particular state of awareness at the beginning of Siddhartha's pursuit of spirituality. His complete inner change would not even require the presence of one more such type of yearning.

So, the story slowly changes from the problem, "how do I get to enlightenment?" to a more profound one that is, when the "I want" gets freed then, "Where does that freeing leave me?" The river's symbolic representation is greatly affected by this shift.

4.3 *Anicca, Change, and the Transformation of Siddhartha*

Buddhism's notion of *anicca*, or impermanence, offers a pivotal interpretative tool for understanding Hesse's depiction of human life. Buddhist teachings tell us that things that depend on other things for their existence, i.e. conditioned (*sankhata*) things, have a nature that they are born, grow up, and eventually pass away. In other words, whatever is conditioned does not stay the same forever.

Siddhartha's story mirrors this concept by undergoing several major life changes. First, he is a disciple of the Brahmins, then the Samanas; next, he becomes a follower of the Gotama teaching, a lover, a businessman and finally a contemplative (ferryman). His life changes at every stage and so, it shows that it is impossible to pin point a single Siddhartha through a fixed identity at any one time in life.

Anicca is clearly brought out when Siddhartha's life in the city is no longer fulfilling to him. Initially, he seems to be getting quite a lot from the things of this world, money, pleasures and his status in society, but all of these begin to make him unhappy when he gets really close. Through this, Hesse explains the idea that worldly pleasures are not reliable or satisfying long-lasting things.

All the same, the principle also holds true for the religious part of the Self. For instance, he can never be just "the ascetic," "the Brahmin," or even "the wise man." Every time that one form is reached, it becomes insufficient.

The whole idea is that it is possible now for the book to go beyond the idea of a simple contrast between worldly life and spiritual life. The world and the spirit both are impermanent aspects of a human life. And when the spiritually inclined person clutches an identity of "spiritual guide," he still is involved in attachment.

Discussion by (Linh, 2019a) on Buddhist philosophy and *Nirvāṇa* is helpful here because the point is made clear that the liberation through overcoming thirst (*chanda*) and dependence (*attā*) on condition is about letting go rather than gaining any kind of identity. So from that point of view, what Siddhartha needs here is not to exchange one identity for another, but gradually to disentangle himself from the notion of fixed identities.

4.4 Anattā and the Problem of Selfhood

Anattā is one of the hardest Buddhist ideas for a Western reader to interpret when applied to Hesse's Siddhartha. This is perhaps one reason the novel's reception has been so divided. Some argue that Hesse is a Buddhist and others that he was not. Yet one thing that is clear from the novel itself is that Hesse wanted to convey in an accessible and understandable way his understanding of the Buddhist concepts of suffering and non-self. As Buddhist tradition, anattā (Pali for 'non-self') means a self without any underlying substance or essence. This concept was introduced by the Buddha to counter people's attachment to their identity for ego. That ego people say is only a bundle of physical and mental processes, both of which are constantly changing.

Contrary to the teaching of non-self, Hesse's novel tells the story of an individual protagonist named Siddhartha. And, the novel is presented as a journey of personal transformation through the experience of an individual person and his self-discovery. This gives rise to a problem in philosophy. Siddhartha becomes gradually detached from his ego and starts to see the whole world as interconnected.

On the other side of the spectrum, the novel keeps asserting that Siddhartha must find truth himself. This kind of conflict between the two elements has already been pointed out in various studies of Hesse's relationship with Buddhism. Kim (2016), for instance, states that, although the idea of unity and self-realization is crucial to the novel, its characters do not reflect Buddhist notions of anattā or non-self. It has to be said though that she is referring to the characters rather than the concepts in the narrative.

At the heart of the matter lies the difference between self-discovery and self-essentialism. The idea that the discovery of one's spiritual self is the end result of any journey that the self takes to reach self-awareness is a common one in literature but is it really so? Or should one rather view it as a gradual transformation of one's relation to the idea of self? Let us examine this idea about the development of the character of Siddhartha. In the young Siddhartha, he is intensely aware of his separation from others and the world around him and also has a clear, strong idea of who he is. This is a time of great spiritual fervor when he is not only looking for a deep spiritual life but also is a leader in the community. But, there is a stage where Siddhartha comes to know very little about himself other than what he has been told by his parents. At this time, he is so attached to his father's words that he is unable to even talk to the people at home except with the permission of the father. Eventually he becomes so immersed into his materialistic ways that he hardly even recognizes his past selves. Only when these outer identities lose their hold on him that can he see the real self behind them and realize that it is only that self which gives rise to all others.

4.5 From Ego to Interconnectedness

Siddhartha's early spiritual search is marked by a strong sense of his own individuality. He keeps detaching from his teachers' teachings, traditional religions and social expectations. Such independence, at a beginning, was the only way to get him to question inherited beliefs. But he also finds out that independence itself, if not watched closely, is another form of ego.

Because of this, the story tells us of a quite delicate development: rejecting the father's identity; asserting oneself; suffering because you're so alone; acknowledging In reality we're all connected. That point is depicted via his relationship with the river. For a change Siddhartha views individual lives not as separate entities but as parts of life that manifest themselves through larger processes.

This theme is something important in the definition of what makes up enlightenment according the novel. Enlightenment cannot be understood as merely the strengthening of one's individual self. It also, and possibly more importantly, refers to a change where the self and the world become less separated as two absolute things. At this stage, Hesse's concept of a work does closely approximate but in essence still differentiate from the ideas of Buddhism philosophy.

The anattā teaching of Buddha-philosophy doesn't support the idea of an individual self-becoming some bigger cosmic Self. In contrast, it attacks the idea of there being first of all a self, which is enduring and a free-standing. So instead of being a doctrinal equivalent of anattā, Hesse's language of unity and totality in his literary work must be understood as a reinterpretation of, which is a very important factor in understanding the argument of this study.

4.6 Nirvāṇa and the Meaning of Enlightenment

We can see the idea of enlightened realization as culminating point of Siddhartha's journey. But, Hesse skillfully refrains from depicting enlightenment as a clearly articulated intellectual proposition.

Throughout his journey Siddhartha keeps running into individuals who have knowledge of different kinds. His father holds religious knowledge. The Samanas are the ones with physical self-purification and restraint discipline. They have no material possessions and live a life dedicated to religious study and meditation. Gotama has a deep, profound spiritual wisdom. Kamala is someone who has a complete knowledge about love and pleasure. Kamaswami owns a commercial knowledge. Vasudeva, the boatman, has acquired wisdom through experience.

Yet knowledge alone does not help and none of them can really give a copy of themselves. It is here that Linh's (Linh, 2019b) discussion on a type of experiential, spiritual achieving enlightenment gets really useful. Per this view, enlightenment is about a kind of awareness in reality which we can call an individual's spiritual awakening or enlightenment, which goes beyond just collecting facts. It has to result from one's own self-actualization, not be merely the result of another individual.

By using this term (Linh, 2019a) to analyze nirāṇa he also pointed out that purely academic or rational understanding can't lead to realization. In other words, the philosophical problem is turned into a narrative form by Hesse a lot. The story of Siddhartha teaches that before one can come to an understanding, one has already lived the experiences.

4.7 The Failure of Extreme Paths

One of the most notable structural aspects of the novel is Siddhartha's journey through extremes.

At the beginning of the novel we see how Siddhartha abandons this world and how hard on himself he is. The next big change in his life comes when he becomes absorbed with sensual pleasures, riches and the luxuries of life. As neither extreme leaves him full of the satisfaction he seeks,

This way the structure echoes the Buddhist doctrine of the Middle Way. Really, the Buddha too condemned indulgent pleasure and harsh self-punishment. His teaching was that one must walk the Middle Path not leaning too far towards one or the other.

Even so, Hesse's way of presenting the concept is different from the Buddhist one. Siddhartha does not reach the Middle Way merely by learning doctrines; in fact, he gets quite a similar realization through the experience of being himself.

The point here is that the novel is always on the side of those truths that are gained by experience instead of those that are only given by others. The contradiction is that to see how limits the extremes are, one has to live through them.

4.8 The River and Enlightenment

Ultimately, the river is transformed into the main symbol of Siddhartha's spiritual awakening. Siddhartha starts to listen to the river and this makes him realize that the co-existence of apparently contradictory realities exists: joy and suffering; birth and death; youth and old age; success and failure; desire and renunciation; individuality and unity are the components.

From now on, he will see these opposed situations as interwoven elements of life. Thereafter, the river will reflect the evolution of his mind. Before his spiritual metamorphosis, he thought along the lines of one thing being distinct from another: spiritual and physical, holy and worldly, teacher and student, self and world, success and failure.

The absolute nature of these distinctions is gone after the metamorphosis. There's no loss to this of course. It remains a fact that conventional differences between things can still be valid from a common-sense level perspective. It's just that Siddhartha no longer regards them as ultimate truths. This is the major philosophical point about rivers that is presented here.

5. The Buddha, the Middle Way, and Experiential Knowledge

5.1 The Encounter Between Siddhartha and Gotama

The encounter of Siddhartha and Gotama, on one hand, can be called one of the most philosophically significant events in Hesse's novel. Gotama embodies not only the possibility of enlightenment, but also that of the complete achievement in that direction.

He is the example of a pathfinder who has finished his own path. Siddhartha gets to understand this very quickly. Yet, the knowledge of who Gotama is does not make Siddhartha a devoted follower.

Rather, Siddhartha finds out one central difference between the teacher Buddha and his searching. Gotama knows how to show the way, but Siddhartha feels a person's own direct experience of the Buddha's spiritual attainment cannot just be handed over. That means, in their relation, we have a most interesting case: The Buddha being a guide in Siddhartha's spiritual unfoldment because Siddhartha in the end decides not to follow him.

Gotama is both a teacher and a limit setter. For one thing, he reveals what a state of perfect knowledge might be, on the other side, he drives the confrontation of Siddhartha with the problem of imitation limitation. Because of this, the author differentiates literarily between following an enlightened being and awakening one's self.

It is this difference that allows the interpretation of the novel's concept of individuality. Siddhartha does not take issue with the Buddha being right. Instead, he sees it as his duty to his search for understanding to go it alone.

5.2 Govinda and Siddhartha: Two Responses to Religious Authority

The friendship between Siddhartha and Govinda is meaningful as it illustrates the way one can react to authoritative religious figures through two quite different modes of behavior. Govinda, one of Gotama's followers, follows the spiritual tradition, whereas Siddhartha decides to seek spirituality in his own way.

Both characters represent opposite views on religious authority: Govinda stands for belief, discipleship, and traditional teachings, whereas Siddhartha stands for personal insights, questions, and discoveries. There is no clear right/wrong side in Hesse's story.

He merely uses the opposing character traits to illustrate various ways of getting close to spiritual truth through the novel.

5.3 The Middle Way and Siddhartha's Experience of Extremes

The Buddhist Middle Way is just one of several important points of comparison.

Buddha's path is said in the Buddhist tradition to eschew the two poles of extreme indulgence in sensation and extreme self-infliction of punishment. Through the Middle Way one attains the desired goal without suffering.

On Siddhartha's path he first takes the road to asceticism only to later embrace the world as a place sensual pleasure and material wealth are to be found. Only afterwards will he begin to have feelings of dissatisfaction with both paths.

In essence, one could interpret the structure as a literary dramatization of the pitfalls of the extremes. Still, Hesse introduces his Buddhist setup in a quite significant fashion through the character. It's only when Siddhartha goes through the extremes of life that he finally finds the moderation.

That means, the transition from asceticism to pleasure to contemplation of life represents an experiential dialectical process.

Asceticism shows Siddhartha that mere destruction of the physical self does not lead to spiritual wisdom. Pleasure shows him that pleasure and money cannot provide happiness. Despair shows him that in both paths, the result ends in dissatisfaction.

Through the experience, the river opens a new door. This is not the way of rejecting or giving into it. But one of being present, conscious, and aware, and actively participating in life.

Such an interpretation is what makes Hesse's novel a work of art and his interpretation unique. In the Middle Way shown in the movie Siddhartha, it is not much of a moral rule that you should follow, it is much more about how the mind actually feels when it has gone through and overcome such an experience.

5.4 Desire, Suffering, and the Transformation of Consciousness

The relationship between Siddhartha and Desire undergoes profound changes throughout the novel.

In the beginning, he tries to get rid of desire by refusing to take part the ordinary life. Later on Yet he throws himself completely to the sensual and materialistic pleasure. In both cases Yet he was never able to overcome his deep-rooted problem. That is why, Siddhartha's ultimate transformation is not based on rejecting every aspect that reminds him of desire. Rather, he manages to build a totally new relation with desire.

This new way of relating has deep philosophical implications. Buddhist philosophy identifies craving as a major contributing factor to suffering. Hesse's narrative through Siddhartha's struggle with attachment supports this Buddhist principle.

Siddhartha's attachment to wealth pleasures social status, and gambling makes his consciousness get divided into many fragments. And the spiritual confidence he had earlier also starts disappearing.

That's why, his crisis is not just a matter of morality but also one of existence. In a way, he has lost the coherent meaning and purpose in his life. That means, it is the river encounter that really triggers a turning point for him as it enables him to let go of the attachment to the identity that he has built up generally.

One thing here the river stands for is a transition from possession to participation. Previously, Siddhartha used to search for things which he can gain or possess: knowledge wealth pleasure status spiritual attainment. Eventually, he learns how he can listen to the river or, in fact, to himself. So, the shift from grabbing to listening is one of the most revealing aspects of this change in Siddhartha.

6. Vasudeva, the River, and the Pedagogy of Silence

6.1 Vasudeva as a Teacher of Silence

Vasudeva's role in Siddhartha's final development is a unique one.

Whereas other masters explain the philosophic system at length, the river teacher Vasudeva merely listens and observes. He is Siddhartha's conduit and guides him towards the river. Contrary to the usual transmission of doctrine, Vasudeva's method is based purely on presence; he never explains things to Siddhartha.

One of Hesse's most significant literary distinctions, knowledge versus wisdom, is clearly exemplified here. The teacher merely points out the direction but does not pour into the student's head all the facts. He is only a medium, through which the student can see or hear for himself.

This is why the river remains to the very end the real educator of Siddhartha for whom Vasudeva has only a supportive function. Because of this, it means that the attainment of enlightenment is depicted in the novel not as the acquisition of a final answer in words but rather as the change in perception through which new insights can be revealed.

6.2 The River as a Philosophical Symbol

The river is a synthesis or rather the combination of the main philosophical themes discussed in this study.

To begin with, river is a symbol of evanescence. The river keeps on flowing. The water is ever changing. So, it becomes an image of change or *aniticha* concept.

Next, the river depicts oneness. Although its surface water keeps changing, as a single entity, it persists as one river. This reflects Hesse's focus on connectedness.

In addition, the river portrays temporal. The river seems to have past, present and future all together. After that, the river is a symbol of non-attachment. The river does not hang on or owns anything permanently. Everything just flows.

Besides that, the river listens. One understands the river only when one listens attentively. Understanding of the river cannot be through controlling concepts.

And, the river reflects Siddhartha's transformation of his relationship with the river from the first act which was a means of avoiding reality and a source of contemplation, in his second act, to realizing, or gaining enlightenment or wisdom.

That means, besides being scenery, the river is the backbone, the major philosophical structure of the novel *Through the river*, Hesse manages to make the abstract philosophical notions come to life as literary experience.

6.3 The River and the Transformation of Consciousness

When Siddhartha listens to the river, he becomes conscious of the simultaneous presence of seemingly opposite aspects of life: happiness and pain, life and death, the young and the aged, accomplishment and defeat, longing and asceticism, uniqueness and wholeness. On reflection, Siddhartha does not consider these contradictory elements to be complete opposites but rather aspects of life which are mutually dependent.

So, the river symbolizes a change of the mind and soul. Before his transformation, Siddhartha was pursuing his search for wisdom by drawing sharp boundaries between opposite things: things spiritual vs one's material, the sacred vs the mundane, a teacher vs a student, the self vs the world, the successful one vs the one who fails. Following his transformation of consciousness, such distinctions no longer appear to Siddhartha as being of a fixed nature.

This is a profound transformation. What it means is not that all distinctions have disappeared at the everyday level. It is Siddhartha who stops seeing those opposites as separate and unchangeable realities in a final sense.

7. Comparative Analysis: Hesse's Enlightenment and Buddhist Nirvāṇa

7.1 Conceptualizing Enlightenment: Doctrine and Experience

The concept of enlightenment lies at the heart of Buddhist philosophy and Hermann Hesse's "Siddhartha" too, but the two systems differ in their understanding of enlightenment from a philosophical standpoint. In Buddhist context, enlightenment is the ultimate knowledge of the nature of conditioned existence and the extinction of ignorance and thirst. In Hesse's masterpiece, then again, enlightenment is mainly portrayed as the result of a person's existential exploration. Grasping the fundamental difference mentioned above is the key to figuring out Buddhism and "Siddhartha". Hesse has no intention to present Siddhartha as a character who first takes in the Buddhist teaching and then gets enlightenment through a straightforward way. On the contrary, Siddhartha keeps coming into contact with the established system of learning and finds its limitations because when no direct experience is added on these systems they fail to provide enlightenment.

Siddhartha's visit to Gotama and the subsequent dialogue with the Buddha is really important about that. Siddhartha is fully aware, after all, of the great spiritual awareness in the Buddha's person, he sees the truth and logic of what Gotama's teaching stands for, but he still resolves not to become one of Gotama's followers. His choice is definitely not one of refusing the Buddha's wisdom. Instead, he firmly believes and expresses that the enlightenment attained by one person cannot be simply appropriated by another. This division between the truth that is taught and the truth that is learned through experience is revealed as one of the major ideas in the philosophy of the book.

(Linh, 2019b), citing this dimension of direct experience as the essence of the protagonist's transformation from ordinary life to enlightenment, the protagonist has to get rid of all the knowledge passed down from previous generations of religion and start a completely new spiritual trip. This paper builds upon her point of view by saying that through Siddhartha's choosing not to continue as a disciple, Hesse presents a dramatic form of a philosophical issue that is wider: is the attainment of enlightenment through understanding and sharing or does it have to be personally and totally realized? Hesse's narrator says clearly Still that it cannot be achieved by just following teachings; it needs direct experience.

Naturally, this doesn't mean at all that this contradicts with Buddhist ideas which also themselves make a clear distinction between an intellectual grasping of a teaching and an authentic penetration of a truth. That said, Hesse goes much further and emphasizes this point by making personal experience the main element in Siddhartha through a structural narrative device.

Because of this, the enlightenment of "Siddhartha" should be seen as a gradual transformation from merely intellectual knowledge into existential wisdom.

7.2 *Anattā and the Problem of Individual Enlightenment*

The link between anattā and Hesse's individualistic idea of enlightenment must be given very close scrutiny. Buddhism's anattā concept is quite different from that of the Western "I". Buddhism doesn't say that the person must uncover an ultimate, deeper self.

By contrast, in Hesse's novel, emphasis after emphasis is put on the importance of the individual. Siddhartha should not be guided to the true path by someone else but should find his own way in life. He should fail by his hand. He should get his understanding through his own efforts and gradually realize the spiritual truth.

At first, these two points of view seem to contradict each other.

But, with deeper study, the differences may become clear. Siddhartha's character doesn't undergo an increase of identity or individuality by his journey but instead a steady decrease of selfhood.

The identities associated to such social roles (Brahmin, ascetic, and merchant) were all dropped one by one. In the end also he had abandoned the identity of a seeker.

All this to say that at the end the self is not necessarily that of an ego which has metaphysically been established but rather that the self has changed or has a new relationship to the idea of 'self'. Bearing this mind, we might interpret the novel as a journey from identity to dissolution of fixed identities and then to one of connectedness.

This is the way Hesse's work gets close to Buddhism concept of non-attachment although they do not mean the same thing. Because of this it is necessary to know the difference clearly. The unity Hesse speaks of might point towards the notion of a spiritual unity which Buddhism normally does not substitute to the concept of a human being. So, Hesse should be viewed as being inspired by Buddhist philosophy without necessarily being strictly doctrinally Buddhist.

7.3 *Nirvāṇa: Liberation or Unity?*

Probably one of the most important questions that arise after reading the book Siddhartha revolves around the interpretation of Nirvāṇa.

Nirvāṇa, in Buddhism, is the state of being set free from the chain of causality which brings suffering. Nirvāṇa is not merely understood as perpetual bliss or being alive forever or even merging with some universal element.

In a piece (Linh, 2019a) wrote about the term, he shows how the realization of the ultimate object of the Buddha's teaching is different from mere conceptual understanding. Hesse is more metaphorical and artistic in his portrayal. Siddhartha's ultimate wisdom entails accepting ones' situation, having compassion, reconciling with others, feeling oneself with others, noticing impermanence, and overcoming opposites.

In a way, the river becomes a vehicle for conveying these different themes of life. Siddhartha finally gets the idea that life is not a series of different events where a person can only experience pleasure or pain. In reality, suffering and pain are just the other side of joy and pleasure. Birth and death are part of each other as well. The individual and the whole can't be separated.

This may sound very spiritual, but labeling it merely by the term "Nirvāṇa" without understanding Hesse's point of view, may be a mistake. A slightly academic but accurate way of stating the same idea is that Hesse in the book shows an imaginative interpretation of the state called liberation (moksha) which Buddhism believes a person can reach through the right way.

This difference makes the interpretation of the book stronger because if you think of every mention made by Hesse on Buddhism as proof that the novelist was accurately reproducing Buddhist doctrine, it is very easy to fall into interpretative fallacy.

7.4 *A Comparative Model of Enlightenment*

7.4 A Comparative Model of Enlightenment

This deeper comparative analysis reveals that Hesse's idea of enlightenment and Buddhist philosophical thinking are both similar and different in many significant ways. At the most basic level, what inspires spiritual inquiry in these two different ways is very similar. As Buddhist teaching, dukkha is the basic issue needing settlement that is identified as the suffering which arises constantly due to conditioned existence. In Hesse's narrative, this is symbolized by the inner unhappiness of Siddhartha which is shown as initially a dissatisfaction of rest with religious knowledge passed on from his parents and later a deep feeling of emptiness that follows worldly success. These two traditions then both acknowledge that human life is characterized by a deep discontent which cannot be relieved by ordinary means such as knowledge of the mind prestige pleasant experiences, or possession of goods.

Buddhist teaching, on the cause of the afflictive condition, points out that the main sources for the suffering are the craving and ignorance. Like that, Hesse's narration of the life of Siddhartha explains his struggles to his attachments and desires and narrowness of his understanding. Yet, a notable divergence occurs when two traditions deal with this insight. Buddhism is thorough in its analysis of the nature of craving and devises step-by-step ways

of overcoming it. On the contrary, Hesse's focus is Mainly on how attachment can be understood through direct experiences. In contrast with a mere cognitive understanding, Siddhartha must get in touch with desires. Siddhartha's life experiences in pleasures, wealth and worldly successes are neither portrayed just morally wrong deeds nor mistakes, rather they mark stages of his development that he must go through. It's only possible from within the state of being attached that one comprehends its limitations. So, he has firsthand experienced attachment from the inside. Besides that, there are many similarities and also differences for the way these two spiritual traditions transform a follower's state of consciousness. Buddhism proposes a methodic process consisting of moral training, meditation practice, and cultivating wisdom. Such gradual, comprehensive ways to one's transformation are what The Noble Eightfold Path is all about. In contrast, Hesse has presented the path of growth as an experiential process - i.e. the protagonist Siddhartha is meant to go through various aspects of life - penance, the joys of life, wealth, and ultimately despair, - before attaining enlightenment

The difference between them is not the absence of practice but rather in the literary preference for actual experience over systematic teaching. So, Siddhartha's journey is more like facing existential challenges that lead to transformation rather than studying a curriculum. His move from one life stage to the next comes about not because of compliance with a structured plan but because of his insight that such ways of living will not deliver satisfaction eventually.

With regard to the notion of knowledge, Buddhist thought delineates two forms, intellectual grasp and direct perception, and both play significant roles in the tradition. Right knowledge one cultivates through the mediums of books and introspection whereas direct perception one discovers oneself through meditative techniques accompanied by cleaning of the mind. Hesse makes this difference more glaring by depicting doctrinal knowledge as not enough if it is not turned from theory to practice. Siddhartha's decision to go without the company of a spiritual teacher clearly expresses the idea of this paper. He is not challenging the validity of the Buddha's teaching; in fact, he highly regards Gotama's realization and also sees the logic of his teaching. Despite that, Siddhartha says that one must experience the truth of it, not just hear or read about it. The concept of individual discovery here is a point in favour of the Buddhist philosophy since it too separates between one's mind getting a grip of understanding and one's heart experiencing it. At the same time, Hesse's depiction gives so much value to personal experience that one is led to think there must have been no teaching, and wisdom is to be gained through personal discovery by a seeker anew every time.

The concept of self or in other words, the question of who am I is probably the biggest philosophical problem which is revealed in the divergence between Hesse's worldview and the Buddhist teaching of no-self (anatman). Anattā being that the self is not fixed but impermanent, the teaching of Buddhism is a challenge to the idea of a lasting ego that brings with it the attachments to things and This way creates suffering based on being a person. But, Hesse's narrative is focused on the journey of a particular individual who is named Siddhartha. His character and his story are a kind of mirror through which we understand and interpret the story. We see his experiences and crises and ultimately his spiritual realization. This kind of storytelling may seem like it goes against the teaching of Buddha on non-self since after all, a story based in a single character seems to give the reader some attention which may be directed towards the development of a self.

The contradiction here can be understood by noting that a change and a re-interpretation of one's self take place in Siddhartha rather than a re-formation of his ego. That is, the story progresses on the path from holding onto an idea of self through a crisis to realizing the interconnectedness between self, environment, and others which one finds in the Buddhist philosophy after one reaches the fourth jhana or samadhi. Initially, in the novel, Siddhartha identifies strongly with his identity as a Brahmin, after which through the journey he comes to identify with the ideal figure of the Samani then becomes fully involved in the worldly pleasures of a merchant and a lover. Every identity is eventually discarded as it doesn't meet the expectations, the one that he is left with is not a more powerful self. His relationship to the idea of self as a fixed and permanent thing is entirely transformed into a way of being, where one does not identify oneself in certain fixed roles. Still, Hesse's language of union and the language of spiritual attainment add a twist to his idea, making it quite different from that of Hinduism. His stressing of being a part of one grand cosmic whole or one big interconnected system is the clue for there being something like a great spiritual totality, which Buddhist thought (with its anattā teaching) would probably disagree with very much. The phrases of "union" and "wholeness" that come in for a regular use in the novel reflect not only the Buddhist tradition of unity and interconnectedness but also Hesse's philosophical synthesis. It is not a direct representation so much as it is an interpretation or a projection of Hesse's own mind.

In the context of the treatment of impermanence at least a remarkable convergence exists between the two viewpoints. On one hand, both the Buddhist philosophy and Hesse's novel view anicca as a primary characteristic of existence and, on the other, Siddhartha's life presents a picture of continual change. On this point, he first comes under the rule of the Brahmins; then he seeks to know God by becoming an ascetic, Next he experiences love, then he becomes a merchant and finally a ferryman, a series of transitions each time exposing the fragility of any rigid identity. There is nothing in his life that stays exactly the same for long. Here, the river works as a potent symbol for change and continuity simultaneously. One can say, the continuous flow of the river is ever the same yet at the same moment ever different, the river is a whole that has always been a river even with its waters never having been quite the same one moment to the other. This picture of water running is an echo of both Buddhist and Siddhartha's perspectives on impermanence, at the same time also pointing towards a possible vision that accepts continuity amidst change. The river instructs him that transformation and steadiness are not two things in opposition to each other but parts of a single reality. About the ultimate objective of being liberated from the cycle of suffering in the form of the world, one finds in both texts elements of convergence and disagreement that lead one from the point of departure to the destination which the paths though are not necessarily the same. Nirvāṇa in Buddhism is related to the stopping of the fires of passion, anger and ignorance, and is the end of suffering. The Buddhist Nirvāṇa means a complete extinction of greed, hatred and mental disturbance and, this way, the cessation of the cycle of rebirth and rebelling through desire. The enlightenment in Hesse's novel although they both address the issue of the cycle of suffering through desire yet there are more differences than overlaps.

He describes Hesse's enlightenment rather about awareness of the interdependence, acceptance of life in all its manifestations, and the harmonization of opposites. The idea behind Siddhartha's last realization is the ability to understand and appreciate the interwovenness and coexistence of joy and suffering,

success and failure, birth and death. This is a concept very close to the Buddhist idea that equanimity, the calmness after the realization of impermanence, and the interconnectedness of all things. Beyond this very common point of view, Hesse's metaphysical aspect of unity as well as reconciliation of opposites brings a dimension to the novel which is not at all present in the traditional Buddhist view of (Nirvāṇa). Promote worldly life more than ever through Hesse's depiction of enlightenment which is not the same as one who has gone beyond but a new form of being one with oneself, that is, one who sees the world, and the self, and one and the same. So, the purpose and benefit are obtained by a different means, not the ascetic renunciation of desire and attachment but the development of a new attitude. Also, the teacher figures in both traditions deserve a comparison. While Gomati and Vasudeva represent two styles of teaching, both of them are directing the student from the path to themselves.

On one hand, Gotama's teaching gives form and content to the student. But, he is the one to show the truth and also to live the truth by his own example. Vasudeva's teacher is a different case. He is a man of great silence and presence who will lead the student to the river with a simple gesture and trust in the student's capacity to understand. He doesn't give a definition but points the way, confident that the direct experience of the flowing water will bring what the mouth can never explain. Literally meaning that the Buddha was the one who explained the truth but the truth is something even greater than the explanation itself the Buddha who gave the first word. This idea is echoed by saying that teaching a student is only a part of guiding them. A true teacher is a person who gives a pointer to the mountain but not actually taking the student up the mountain. Both ways it is the truth (the enlightenment) which is the last word for the student. The teacher can just be there pointing but not the one doing the work. That means, in both texts the highest point of the teaching will be found not in the words the teacher says or even in the personality of the teacher at all but in the truth, wisdom which is personally discovered by the student only.

Such an analytical comparison proves that Hesse's Siddhartha works as an artistic philosophical reinterpretation of Buddhist notions for contemporary West European literature. Yet, despite Truth is the novel still carries within it an underpinning of Buddhist philosophical notions, it cannot be said to be merely a doctrinal statement. The author resorts to Buddhist terminology, metaphors, and plot patterns but, at the same time, he transforms them to reflect questions of individual, experience and spiritual attainment that are his own intellectual and cultural concerns. That means, a comparison of Hesse's notion of enlightenment and Buddhist Nirvāṇa reveals that these concepts are more like an interdependent conversation than direct equivalent in point of doctrine. The book is not at all an imitation piece or merely a reproduction of Buddhist doctrines, rather it gets involved, understands, and changes the teachings through the means of the literary narrative. This imaginative dialogue also is what philosophically distinguishes and artistically strengthens Siddhartha. The novel is asking us the possibility if we have translated Buddhist views by making them fit for use in a different cultural and literary milieu as well as it is showing us that philosophical concepts can be rejuvenated through the cultural contact and creative reinterpretation.

8. Discussion

8.1 Synthesis of Findings

The analysis shows that enlightenment in Siddhartha could never have been viewed by the character as a one-off revelation that makes perfect sense intellectually. It is in fact a long-term evolution process in which one has feelings of being fed up, tries various ways, falls short, gets too much attached, let's go suffers embraces the situation, and in the end, one's way of perceiving is completely changed. This point of view of ours is further elaboration to that made by the work of (Linh, 2019b) where the search for enlighten was discussed as the movement of the character. This work says that the search for enlightenment is important due to several reasons: Siddhartha changes his lifestyle and also each kind of lifestyle reveals that there was a different belief system for the location of truth.

Sidoncelly, he believes the truth can be gained if you just learn the old traditional ones. Then again, he comes in with an idea that one gets to know truth if one is very extreme and gives up on physical needs. After that, he goes after truth by indulging in pleasure and wealth. Finally, he realizes that it is not the case at all that truth can be found in any of the external systems. That ultimate insight is Because of this not about the discovery of some fresh doctrine.

In Siddhartha's way of thinking, it is his whole understanding of life that has been changed after experiencing that last stage. The river's power as a metaphor can explain why. The river is not telling Siddhartha a philosophical lesson.

Literally, the nature of the river changes what Siddhartha feels toward his world. There is an aspect in the Buddhist way of life called direct experience vs understanding through words, which is exactly the writing way of the author of the book, Hermann Hesse.

So, the enlightenment that Siddhartha reaches through Hesse's work shouldn't be simply understood as the Buddhist idea of Nirvāṇa. In other words, Hesse has written an original work based upon his knowledge and understanding of the Buddhist way of thinking without having to stick rigidly to Buddhist doctrine

8.2 Comparison with Previous Scholarship

The results of the work are not only a support to, but also a supplementation of, former publications dealing with the theme of Hesse's involvement with Buddhism. For (Linh, 2019b), firstly one can see this study's agreement with Linh's main point that metaphor related to the travel is most important in figuring out Siddhartha's attainment of Nirvana. Yet, this paper further develops Linh's viewpoint (Linh, 2019b) by changing the emphasis from the mere trail to the philosophical change happening through it. On Linh's (Linh, 2019b) ground one can read that "enlightenment is a journey", while our study suggests that "enlightenment is what transforms a person's relations to knowledge desire identity, impermanence and interdependence." So such a conceptual move is quite substantial.

Also for Kim (2016), our analysis agrees that Kim (2016) pointed out correctly the conflict between the Hesse's notion of oneness and self-consciousness and Buddhist teachings about self. Yet, this research offers a more sophisticated solution. Instead of taking for granted that there is a contradiction only, it is maintained here that the 'self' of Siddhartha is being gradually eroded through the journey. So, his ultimate understanding does not involve strengthening of the ego but rather breaking down of fixed identities. Such a view keeps the comparative value of anattā intact and meanwhile allows for recognition of an interconnectedness as a unique Hesse element. For Ghimire (2025), this paper agrees with his view that Hesse has adapted Buddhist doctrines for Western people by highlighting personal experience, existential contemplation and intuitive knowledge. This paper still adds another layer to Ghimire (2024) by calling the activity a philosophical reconstruction for Hesse's way to describe is more to be exact. The term "philosophical reconstruction" captures very well the interplay between Hesse's reception, reworking through transformation and literary realization of the Buddhist philosophy.

Lastly, for Baskota and Bhattarai (2023), we acknowledge their major differences, the Siddhartha's path and the traditional approaches to the path in Buddhism that they find. Despite that, instead of considering the latter a fault or a problem to be resolved, this investigation regards these discrepancies as sources of philosophical depth of the book. The imaginative distance of how Hesse pictures Buddhism from Buddhism itself is what makes Siddhartha a fine example of how cultural borders can be crossed in the exchange of philosophical ideas.

8.3 The Concept of Philosophical Reconstruction

The main point this article wants to make is trying to go beyond the very binary issue of whether or not Siddhartha is a "Buddhist novel". Lifting this matter, a notion of philosophical reconstruction is put forth by the paper. Based on such a perspective, the way Hesse is linked with Buddhism can be seen as through these three phases:

Phase 1: Reception - By reading and interacting intellectual Hesse comes in touch with Buddhist & Indian philosophical ideas.

Phase 2: Transformation - Here, the ideas are taken out of their doctrinal context for being reshaped by the Western literary imagination.

Phase 3: Literary realization - Here, philosophical concepts that remain abstract are turned into the very concrete of the journey of life with Siddhartha's relationships, experiences, and crisis, and Mostly the meeting with the river.

Secondly, this model allows the author creative freedom by acknowledging her/him as a reinterpreted of various philosophical traditions. Thirdly, this approach accepts the inevitable transformation and adaptation inherent in cultural transmission.

8.4 Implications for Cross-Cultural Transmission of Buddhist Thought

It is the study of Hesse that is mainly discussed here, but the results from this article are very relevant for other researchers. Siddhartha shows, among other things, how Buddhist notions travel between cultures.

One should also understand that once Buddhist philosophy is brought into a Western literary situation, it does not simply get replaced. Ideas get reworded, one person explains something to another person differently, another person simplifies it, there might be an entirely changed version of one idea, and also different symbols could be used for a philosophical concept, to which the person would be drawn through a Western philosophical lens.

It can be the case that the Western interpretation of Buddhist philosophy in question is different from what the Buddhist doctrine is. So, it is crucially advised that scholars clearly identify and distinguish the two sides of this issue.

This clarification is even more so relevant when it comes to the recent global conversations where terms like mindfulness meditation enlightenment karma, and Nirvanna are not just religious but become secularized concepts.

One of the earlier examples, as well as the most influential, of this cultural transfer is the Hesse's Siddhartha. That's why its importance goes way beyond the field of literary analysis. One of the illustrations that one can give is how a tradition of ideas is being retranslated through culture and simultaneously can take on fresh meanings.

By reading Siddhartha, readers learn of a way that through a new cultural structure one can re-construct an old tradition of philosophy not only on its original meaning but also a completely new one. Siddhartha stands at the crossroad of faith and transformation, Buddhism and Western existentialism, doctrine and experience, and the philosophical teaching and literary imagination. It was also through such a unique position that it has maintained its appeal and relevance.

9. Conclusion

9.1 Restatement of the Central Argument

Hermann Hesse's novel Siddhartha is not intended as a direct representation of Buddhist teachings nor is it merely an example of Westerners borrowing Buddhist imagery. The work is much more complicated; in fact, it reflects how a contemporary Western intellectual and literary mind can come to terms with and express Buddhist philosophical and spiritual ideas.

Through the development of his self-exploration and spiritual awakening, the narrator of the story gradually changes his view of spiritual leaders and religious guidance suffering desire, identity, and even enlightenment/knowledge itself. Besides being a source of philosophical and spiritual concepts, Buddhism is very closely tied to the themes of suffering (*dukkha*), desire (*taṇhā*), impermanence (*anicca*), no self (*anattā*) and liberation (*Nirvāṇa*), etc. Hesse's interpretation of the themes of Buddhism is very different. Still, through his narrative style, symbolism, and his use of existential experiences, he redefines all the major Buddhist concepts.

9.2 Summary of Key Findings

A thorough analysis reveals that on Siddhartha's road to enlightenment there were many turning points, one after the other revealing new stages of a long personal metamorphosis. His spiritual development starts when he leaves behind the learning environment of the Brahmins, joins a monastery of strict ascetics for a while, then meets Buddha, and becomes immersed in a sensual life of love and passion. After getting bored with material pleasures and facing failure and disappointment, Siddhartha finally finds inner peace and spiritual clarity through quiet meditation. That is, to some extent, spiritual knowledge arising out of daily life itself.

Several major Buddhist themes are woven into the narrative of the novel. *Dukkha* or suffering is shown here as Siddhartha's first disillusionment with the inherited wisdom of his fathers. *Taṇhā* or desire expresses itself in various forms throughout the story - Siddhartha becoming addicted to an ascetic life, to sensual experiences and to worldly successes. *Anicca* or impermanence is demonstrated in the ever-changing aspects of Siddhartha's life. *Anattā* or no-self is depicted through the gradual erasure of Siddhartha's ego identity. *Nirvana* represents the final goal, the liberation Siddhartha is seeking in his life journey.

Still, these ideas are not just repeated unchanged. Hesse adapts and modifies them so that they will be comprehended within a literary system that emphasizes personal experience, questioning of existence, oneness, and self-discovery through spirituality, which are all Western features.

9.3 The River as the Culminating Symbol

The central metaphor of this transformation is the river. With the help of the river, Hesse is able to depict such opposed ideas as impermanence and continuity; individuality and mutual relationship; suffering and endurance; moving and being still as if they were part of only the larger whole. The river as the flowing movement stands for impermanence

the fact of its continuing existence stands for mutual relation; and the silence of it stands for a kind of knowing which cannot be explained using concepts. Thanks to the river, Hesse turns deep thoughts inspired by Buddhism into the experience of awakening, through the medium of literature.

As the river is the symbol that Hesse uses to show that enlightenment is not a state of being which you get at a certain time and keep forever, but rather an entirely new way of seeing things which comes as the result of your transformation. So the river here stands for the way the mind no longer sees opposites like pleasure or pain as absolute and distinct realities but rather perceives them as different levels within a continuum.

9.4 Contributions and Implications

In addition to building on Linh's (Linh, 2019b) view of Siddhartha's enlightenment as a way of realizing higher truths through spiritual experiences, this paper is pointing out the hidden meaning that is behind that journey of a seeker, namely a transformation in the seeker's attitude towards truth itself. Siddhartha reaches the point where he realizes that wisdom is not simply a possession, something you can take or a matter of authority and dictate to oneself. It has to be lived through personal experience.

In fact, Hesse's image of the attainment of enlightenment is not necessarily the same as *Nirvāṇa*. He stresses the point of unity, the spiritual individuality as well as realization that brings to mind some philosophical ideas that are different, from what is considered as orthodox or fundamental Buddhism. So, to put it in other words, the two concepts are more like being in a creative philosophical conversation with each other rather than in agreement on the doctrinal level. This paper will help deepen the understanding of religious concepts when they are adopted and adapted in different intellectual and cultural systems, that means it offers an interdisciplinary discussion in the fields of comparative literature, Buddhist studies, and cross-cultural philosophy.

9.5 Final Reflection: The Paradox of Intercultural Philosophy

The main theme of Hesse's novel is the paradox of intercultural philosophy: with cultural translation a philosophical tradition can change a lot, and yet not completely get detached from its original conceptual basis. This is a central issue in intercultural philosophy. Hesse's novel is still useful, exactly because it is situated in fidelity and transformation, Buddhism and Western existentialism, dogma and experience, philosophical teaching and literary imagination.

It represents quite a paradox of philosophical tradition being transformed through cross-cultural translation without getting lost entirely from the source conceptual setups. The book can also be viewed as a very successful instance of Buddhist philosophical ideas penetrating Western literary discourse: not only being faithfully translated, but also interpreted, adopted, symbolized, and re-imagined in the process.

The novel shows that the spread of philosophical thought around the world is not simply a mechanism of copying but a dynamic thing of creative reinterpretation.

And That means, Siddhartha is still able to stimulate thoughts of readers and scholars on the challenges and potential of cross-cultural philosophical dialogue and to encourage them to ponder the essence of the search for wisdom across different cultures, languages, and forms of artistic expressions.

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