

# Existentialist's Traits in Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha*: An Ontological Inquiry

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The paper aims at seeking existentialist's traits in the lead character of Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha* by explicating the fundamental tenets of existentialism. Indubitably, Hesse's portrayal of *Siddhartha* is highly influenced by Buddhist philosophy, therefore the paper will take a recourse to some concepts of Buddhist philosophy to establish the existentialist's traits in *Siddhartha*. However, the paper does neither claim of any influence of existentialism on Hermann Hesse nor it establishes any impact of Buddhism on existentialism.

The socio-cultural upbringing of beings puts burden on them with multiple meanings of the world which they struggle throughout their entire life. The movement of existentialism questions the existence of human beings in terms of 'bad faith'<sup>1</sup> and 'authenticity'; denying the pre-given knowledge of objects and accepting every object as a new object of inquiry without any meaning being attached to them. With respect to this, existentialism accepts human facticity and denies modernistic and scientific methods where "self" does not appear as an active subject. Despite being at the center, the self recognizes the world as a historically pre-given truth. The central point is to emphasize on the human subject which, like Heidegger, does not refer to acquire the meaning of worldly objects as what is given to be. Rather, it creates meaning while engaging with experiential world that is required to lead an authentic life.

The Buddhist view on objects, as *Siddhartha* presents in Hermann Hesse's novel, that every object change at each moment entails that the nature of the objects is not fixed. Thus, the possibility to know about them in entirety is far from our reach. The unknown object cannot be the object of desire for any human being as to become an object of desire, it must present in human cognizance. The *knowledge of undesirable objects* depends upon the better understanding of the objects that helps us to escape from the deadly circle of birth and death. The human beings do not hold some fixed set of properties, as Heidegger maintains. Unlike objects, beings have the set of possibilities through which one can overcome the 'bad faith'. Thus, the self can be discerned differently in each episode of life.

However, the problem arises – is *Siddhartha* as the ascetic wanderer in the first episode of life, different from the *Siddhartha* who is a wealthy man, enjoying all the pleasures of beautiful world in the second episode? Can such beings live in episodes? As Galen Strawson argues, in "Against Narrativity" that the past can be present, in the present itself and it does not remain in the self as past. Similarly, in future, there lies the possibility of a self which itself cannot be realised in present. However, the imagination of these possibilities can sincerely shape the one's present; to acquire the imagined future, one needs to act in a particular way. So, every moment of episodic self is both aware of past as well as future. Therefore, there is a possibility for the enquirer to achieve liberation by living in moments/episodes which in itself is the whole. Does *Siddhartha* explore such possibility?

Keeping all these significant points, the paper, firstly, shows how Siddhartha lives an authentic life by taking a sojourn to discern the world. However, it does not suggest that to lead an authentic life taking a sojourn is a necessary condition. Siddhartha realized that he is not isolated from the world<sup>2</sup> rather he is the one existing in the world along with other beings. The paper also sheds light on living an authentic life with others. Secondly, it will explicate the very first condition to embark in such a sojourn. The condition where objects in the world at the first sight appear "absurd". This is also a stage of breaking peace with both, life and mind, and reinvestigating the world becomes a necessity for such beings. Conclusively, the paper argues Siddhartha is such a being.

In order to achieve the objectives of the paper, it deals with the different concepts of existentialisms and Buddhism to place the character of Siddhartha better in the theoretical complexities of existentialist's tradition. In order to do this, a brief analysis of the notion of object is presented where both the traditions decry the deterministic character of objects. Understanding the fundamental reality may cause a distress in the mind of an inquirer to look for something real – something that explains the complexities of reality. Siddhartha is no exception in this sense and feels the same agony about the world and decides to take a sojourn by himself to understand the reality.

Secondly, suffering emerges from such situation of disappointments. Buddhism states that in the most fundamental level, all human beings are born with suffering. However, most of the times, they are not aware because of their ignorance. Though existentialists do not use 'suffering', but their acceptance of pain, mental agony, psychological distress, existential crisis, sense of void and hollowness establishes the ground for suffering. The basic tenets of both the traditions prepare ground for Hesse's *Siddhartha* to lead an authentic life. However, it leaves us with certain important questions for us to inquire – What makes Siddhartha to fed up with the earlier understanding of the world, which eventually lead him to take up the sojourn to understand the world? What was going on in his head when he explains the absurdity of the world to his friend? Was the suffering or agony unbearable to Siddhartha, and satisfying queries was the last resort to lessen suffering? Did he find the truest 'self' which he is looking for? With reference to such questions, the paper further evaluates the significance of object and subject and puts Siddhartha in an inquiry full of existentialist's traits.

### **Understanding the Shattering Concepts of World**

The intelligibility of the world in any human being lies in the meaning of the concepts of the world. Meaning(s) of any object itself guides us to understand the reality of the object. But, how does an object acquire the meaning(s)? The whole tussle between the object to have a meaning and the *meaning* to associate with the objects are resolved by human subjects, as it is the humans who give meaning to the objects based on the use and benefits of the objects. However, what if, human subject himself has lost his sense of intelligibility – to determine himself, to discern his own major characteristics, and struggles even to find slightest clue for the meaning. Agitation of not seeing the *object* as object but fleeting random atoms striving to become a meaningful object, drives human subjects to find the hidden secrets of the unintelligible world. This agitation makes a reflective subject to suspect his illustrious father, his educated and liberated teachers and others who are considered as *nirvāṇa-attained* persons<sup>3</sup>. Before the mind can cast any doubt, the mental status of the situation where things appear stranger becomes the most radical and crucial *state*. It is the state when human beings turn the gaze towards themselves

and feel their existence. This existent situation where they face and encounter more transparent, simple and bare objects constantly reminds them the crisis of their existence.

In this particular situation of absurdity, which the existentialists call the most revolutionary state, human subjects struggle and negotiate not only with their own existence, but with the prior existent void and meaningless object. The negotiation is not only for an authentic being but also for the common human beings who has the potentiality to actualize the possibilities. Such a being not only strive to make an intelligible world out of unintelligible reality, but also shatters the slightest pre-given concepts. This is not an effort to prove the existence of the subject but it is an existential effort to scramble the underpinnings and at the same time, making his own intelligible world – a world from the first-person perspective. Thus, Siddhartha believes that he has gained all the knowledge that a teacher teaches and no more teaching can help him to look beyond. This is something he needs to find by himself. As he states,

*“I no longer want to kill and dissect myself just to find a secret behind the ruins. Neither Yoga-Veda shall teach me anymore, no Atharva-Veda, nor the ascetics, nor any kind of teachings. I want to learn from myself, want to be my student, and want to get to know myself, the secret of Siddhartha”<sup>4</sup>.*

The protagonist of the novel believes that one cannot teach one’s experiences. Knowledge attained through experiences seems difficult to frame in words. Such first-person experiential thoughts become difficult for Siddhartha to convey in the similar way as one has experienced. However, in the later part of the novel when Siddhartha himself has become aware of such thoughts, Siddhartha explains it in a conversation with Govinda.

*“I’ve had thoughts, yes, and insight, again and again. Sometimes, for an hour or for an entire day, I have felt knowledge in me, as one would feel life in one’s heart. There have been many thoughts, but it would be hard for me to convey them to you. Look, my dear Govinda, this is one of my thoughts, which I have found: wisdom cannot be passed on. Wisdom which a wise man tries to pass on to someone always sounds like foolishness.”<sup>5</sup>*

Therefore, teachings are good to form a conglomerate which follows a set of rules, to develop a listening skill, to gain knowledge of whatever is expressed by a teacher through words. But wisdom, to which Siddhartha is looking for, is to be attained only by one’s experience; when one puts himself in the place of finding something instead of seeking. Such experience may help one to turn towards the inner self, the authentic one.

### **Eternal Recurrence: Birth-Death Spiral**

Would it be ironic not to consider human being as finite and time as finite? The association of these two facts entails a possibility where beings, objects and other species find their selves in the same position again and again. The implicit circularity running in each of our lives will push you to re-arrive in a same position. The clear clue one finds in the novel regarding this when Siddhartha meets the ferryman, he says “this too, I have learned from the river: everything is coming back! You too, Samana, will come back.”<sup>6</sup> Nietzsche also finds this idea in his reading of Heinrich Heine.

*For time is infinite, but the things in time, the concrete bodies are finite. Now, however long a time may pass, according to eternal laws governing the combination of the eternal play of repetition, all configuration that have previously existed on the earth must yet meet, attract, repulse, kiss and corrupt each other again.... And thus, it will happen one day that man will be born again, like me, and a woman will be born, just like Mary.<sup>7</sup>*

Further, it is the human beings who not only give meaning to objects, but they also assign meaning to the beginningless and endless time by dividing it into past, present and future. Thus, the past repeats itself in the form of future and it goes on to infinity. The excerpt does not only show the deep agitation for re-living the same things, but also to live it without any purpose and true meaning. Nietzsche further writes in his book titled as *The Will to Power*, "Duration 'in vain' without end or aim is the most paralyzing idea"<sup>8</sup>. The endless struggle to live and experience things constantly has also been delineated well by Albert Camus in his book, *The Myth of Sisyphus*. A man who is bound to roll a stone up by the top of the mountain and is destined to fail – each time he thinks he is about to succeed the stone falls back to the ground. The man has no other choice but to restart it again. The existentialist defines this situation as inescapable which is an integral part of human existence. In the next few pages, Nietzsche explains it again,

What, if some day or night a demon were to steal after you to into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: "this life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and every sigh and every unutterably small or great in your life will have return to you, all in the same succession and sequence – even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, even this moment and myself. The eternal; hourglass of existence is turned upside and down again and again, and you with it speck of dust, would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth or curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: "you are a God and I have never heard anything more divine"? If this thought gained possession of you, it would change you as you are, or perhaps crush you<sup>9</sup>.

To explore the possibilities of bringing joy and happiness through the inescapable conundrums of life are the central objectives of the existentialists. Although they do not deny the possibilities of the opposite, but despite these possibilities, human beings must conquer this psychological burden through art and the revaluation(s) of values. However, does the situation of things in the world have any analogical effects on human subjects, i.e. to sense the complicated circle of birth-death? Does it not show that the human beings, too, are stuck in the spiral nature of Birth and Death?

Straightforwardly the answer comes to the question – 'Yes'. The possibility of re-experiencing the same events entails the possibility of the same phenomenon for consciousness as well. With the common understanding of the temporal succession, the human consciousness must have to come back in the world, after running through a whole circle. The assumption is based on Birth-Death spiral. The search of Siddhartha in Hesse's explicates the Buddhist's notion of *bhāvacakra*. Their twelve links of causal wheel explain a dark and an inescapable web where Siddhartha is stuck and finds no exit. Another interpretation made by C. D. Sharma points out a different understanding. He writes, "it does not end with the death, but death is only a beginning of a new life"<sup>10</sup>. This is also known as *samsāracakra*.

Siddhartha constantly engages with the intricacies of worldly life and his portrayal in the novel by Hesse points him as a constant negator of the world – looking beyond to what is given. Siddhartha never finds satisfaction with the given meanings of the worldly objects and the death of the given meaning, for him, would be a new beginning for a fresh inquiry. Therefore, he leaves behind everything, even the closest and honorable, in search of true meaning by keeping himself at the center. Initially, he isolated himself from the world by calling it 'absurd'. However, after meeting Buddha, he ponders that

the teachings of the world and *nirvāna* provided by the exalted one is not something what he is looking for. He ponders much on such issues and figures out that the true self is the ultimate end which he is striving for. Considering attachment is the root cause of suffering, he emphasizes much on finding rather than seeking by existing along with others in this world. These others are appeared so unreal to Siddhartha for a longer period of time. Hesse further places Siddhartha to say,

“When someone seeks,” said Siddhartha, “then it easily happens that his eyes see only the thing that he seeks, and he is able to find nothing, to take in nothing because he always thinks only about the thing he is seeking, because he has one goal, because he is obsessed with his goal. Seeking means: having a goal. But finding means being free, being open, having no goal.”<sup>11</sup>

How can one have taught such a finding? One needs to find it by their own because of its inexpressibleness. Even if one tries, such finding will turn into a desire along with others which one seeks. Thus, it is important that we all entice to ‘finding’ rather than ‘seeking’.

This shows Siddhartha’s understanding of the objects which truly have no implicit meaning and assigning a new meaning becomes a primary aim for him to achieve. The world stands nothing for him as existentialists like Sartre imagines. Sartre argues that consciousness is nothingness; not a thing. He explains consciousness in terms of consciousness of something. It is through the consciousness that the world appears as nothing. Thus, it is one’s sole responsibility to act like an authentic being to exist and live the life to the fullest. Sartre, further, argues that “existentialism is nothing else but an attempt to draw the full conclusions from a consistently atheistic position”<sup>12</sup>. The reason to follow a path of atheism is that the concept of God is contradictory for him as it merges the being-in-itself and being-for-itself, which ultimately leads to an inauthentic life. In the same line, Siddhartha, too choose to drop all the suggestions and inquire from the scratch without even a slightest assistance from others. Although, Siddhartha’s way of overcoming the complicated situations is a bit different in terms of escaping it or negotiating with. However, through these underpinnings, Siddhartha’s beginning point as inquirer or being in a sojourn of an inquest to know the human existence brings him close to the basic foundations of existentialism.

### **Suffering: ‘In the Womb of Existence’**

Tragic situations of human existence since its beginning always lie in between the awareness of void world in general and hollow objects in particular. Existence of human beings in between these situations struggles to reach on a better understanding of the world. The whole struggle to justify or to know this meaningless world shows the collective fight against the suffering. The very first moment when a human being is born, this *struggle* is labeled to her to fight against suffering throughout her whole life. The existentialist philosophers accept this suffering in its basic level attached to the very existence of human beings. Her existence itself is a potential seed of suffering. Witness this through these lines,

“. . . what was the best and most desirable thing of all for humankind. . . [the] best of all things is something entirely outside your grasp: not to born, not to be, to be nothing. But the second-thing for you- is to die soon<sup>13</sup>.

Compliment Hesse’s imagination of Siddhartha by placing him in a technological advanced world. Imagine he is stuck in the deep and dense forest and could not know,

despite the technological assets, how to come out of the intricated forest. If, for one moment, he also forgets that he is even lost in the forest and does not know how to use the ready-to-hand things, how miserable it would be for him? Every moment in the deep hollow thoroughfare of forests, he senses endlessness: an open possibility towards nothingness. Every step to stroll over these ways would be nothing but a waste of energy. The agitation of struggling with existent environment in meaningless forest is a suffering that Siddhartha pleasantly venture to. This agitation, if based on shattered concepts of objects, Siddhartha ponders, exists in the womb of the existence of human beings.

There are the moments in the book when Siddhartha recalls Buddha's wise words. Buddha himself sees the suffering with its primal root in the human conditions. That is explicitly stated in Buddhist motto, *sarvam duḥkha*. He argues that human life is full of misery and pain. Even if a human being somehow gets happiness by the means of creating *his* own meanings of the world, it would always be subject for consideration of losing it at some other time. Indirectly, it would lead us towards another level of sufferings. Every moment towards the miserable journey of our aimless life is nothing but a heavy step towards the inescapable circle of suffering. So, Siddhartha thinks, suffering is a common experience in human existence which exists in the very first moment of the entrance into this world.

Despite the actions and solutions given to overcome sufferings and negotiating with this world in *Siddhartha* are different in a sense than existentialists' solutions. But Siddhartha's first encounter with the human existence places him as an existentialist; giving up everything to embark in a new journey by himself only. When he first encounters his existence, he develops a feeling of alienation. The agitation to know oneself deepens in him. Siddhartha ponders,

"Truly, nothing in this world has kept my thoughts thus busy, as this my very own self, this mystery of me being alive, of me being one and being separated and isolated from all others, of me being Siddhartha! And there is nothing in this world I know less about than about me, about Siddhartha."<sup>14</sup>

He further writes, "That I know nothing about myself, that Siddhartha has remained thus alien and unknown to me, stems from one cause, a single cause: I was afraid of myself. I was fleeing from myself."<sup>15</sup> He feels the same agitation, same mental states and human psyche when he deals with a meaningless situation. Although another interpretation<sup>16</sup> of Siddhartha's journey to overcome the suffering presents the similar approaches to the solutions given by Existentialism. However, for the time being, even if we take the narrow interpretation of *Siddhartha*, it comes very close with existentialists in terms of acceptance of suffering with the existence of human beings.

### Significance of Object

The last section dealing with suffering shows that how objects seem very significant to discern the miserable life of human beings. Objects always are in the center of any enquiry. To know the objects in its entirety is the sole task of every inquirer. The knowledge of the objects can be possible only by engaging with it directly and earnestly. If a person somehow is unable to recognize the reality, he receives suffering. Siddhartha delineates the non-sincerity in the following lines:

"A long time ago, oh venerable one, many years ago, you have once before been at this river and have found a sleeping man by the river and sat down with him to guard his sleep. But, oh Govinda, you did not recognize the sleeping man.

Astonished, as if he had been the object of a magic spell. The monk looked into the ferryman's eyes"<sup>17</sup>

Existentialism tries to show that the meaning or the concepts attached to the objects must be looked with a skeptic eye. One should reject them in the beginning of one's enquiry. As in the novel, the journey of Siddhartha starts with negating everything he engaged with. When this world becomes meaningless, every step towards making it meaningful will be subject's own effort – the first step towards an authentic life. The direct engagement of the subject with the object gives meaning to the objects that would be a result of the complete understanding of the subject. Although the subject of the inquiry is at the center here and always assigns meaning to the objects, however, the object cannot be left aside. For, it is *the object* through which the subject was provoked to know about it. Object too, is significant as it presents itself in a very precise and straightforward manner, but at the same time it hides something deep that provokes human subjects to go beyond what is explicit.

Siddhartha invokes another notion of Buddhism that states the inquirer engages with the objects in the form of appearances. However, the reality is not what it looks like, but is hidden in the appearances. The characters of the objects are to change in the very other moment. In this case, too the closer analysis of any objects describes the ontological status of the world in terms of flux – the reality is always in a process. Subject must inquire what is given and must go beyond this. He should not take the appearances of objects in its finality but should always strive to move beyond the appearances to discern the real nature of the world.

This discussion demonstrates that the subject plays an important role. However, subject is always conscious of an object. Thus, the object cannot be taken out from the inquiry. In the novel, *Siddhartha*, Hesse gives importance to the subject who will give/determine the meaning of object through his own enquiry.

### **Beyond the Appearances of the Objects: "An Interpretation of Momentariness"**

Siddhartha through his existential experiences finds the consensus with Heraclitus notion of flux, that is, "every object changes in *temporal* succession". Temporal succession explains the changes in objects in each moment. The particular attributes and qualities of objects, as Buddha calls it *svalakṣaṇa* (changing every moment). For instance, a particular object A has certain properties in time T. A reflective being finds different characteristics, changed and merged with other properties, by his own certain experiences and evaluates A as different in another moment t'. The properties in an object A in T and the properties of A in t' are not same because of its assimilation in other properties. So, can one say that the *same* object has the same identity at different times? A at t', is still identical with A at T? The paper argues "no", they are not the same. The means to determine the object are through their properties. Now, imagine this same condition with t<sup>n</sup> times. The object loses its identity in its disguise form of appearances. Its own essence, the basic traits and properties have been changed through which a subject can ever know about the object. For, the time is not finite and being present in time, these objects exist in their appearances prior to our existence with its changing nature. Therefore, they cannot be defined completely. They always remain a mystery in its own appearances. Granting that the world is full of objects placed in a certain spatial form but in its changing nature. The world is still full of beautiful roses and stones, which I feel hesitated to say the same rose

and stone at another point. However, the notion behind the appearances of stone and roses are not the same. They are just a part of aesthetic entertainment. In the scramble and shatter world of experience, a human subject finds himself to solve the puzzle of his life by devising his own world of notions, tenets and concepts. To explicate this, Siddhartha says in the conversation with Buddha,

"It has come to you in the course of your own search, on your own path, through thoughts, through meditation, through realization, through enlightenment."<sup>18</sup>

The venerability in this kind of effort leads a man to find his own meaning. The endeavour to go beyond what is given to you, your facticity, to create new meanings shows the first fundamental criteria through which any human subject must be defined. However, the same condition in which a Buddha's follower was found where he feels everything is meaningless, is defined by the existentialist as a state of "absurdity"<sup>19</sup>. In its literary guise, the absurdity is tied to an experience of radical contingency in which the *world*, us, and the universe as a whole reveal themselves as lacking intrinsic meaning or purpose.<sup>20</sup> The portrayal of Siddhartha, here too, shares intrinsic constituents of existentialism. Sense the absurdity of the reality in the following passage

"I have had to experience so much stupidity, so many vices, so much error, so much nausea, disillusionment and sorrow, just in order to become a child again and again and begin anew. I had to experience despair, I had to sink to the greatest mental depths, to thoughts of suicide, in order to experience grace."<sup>21</sup>

### **The Notion of 'Being': The "I" in its Possibilities**

The volatile understanding of 'Being' is the consequence of Heidegger's inquiry of "how I am". An inquiry of 'what I am' tries to give a static answer or more concretely, gives a static ontological answer which treats human beings mere as objects. To avoid such enquiry and focusing more on Heideggerian notion of Being, Siddhartha primarily focuses on the understanding where human beings is not only what he is 'already-in' but what he is not. Sartre also argues in his essay "Existentialism is a Humanism" that "man is nothing else but what he makes out of himself"<sup>22</sup>. This implies that human beings cannot be captivated in spatio-temporal framework. They are themselves decider of what they will be through the determination of their will<sup>23</sup>. Siddhartha's portrayal in the novel depicts exactly what existentialists proposes.

Siddhartha also reaches to the conclusion through his inquiry that consciousness is volatile in nature. As the objects outside in the world are just a mere unification of some attributes in a particular moment and is subject to change in the next moment. Similarly, this consciousness too, is subject to change in the next moment. It would be an injustice to take an account of it in terms of her association of attributes, modes and qualities in its earlier moments. Her essence is not prior to her existence in the sense that it is always subjected to change. It has already been delineated that whatever is subject to change in terms of his attributes and qualities, cannot be entirely defined in its true sense. Therefore, its essence cannot be captivated in words of experience. It will always be what it is not yet. Hence, consciousness is not mere a recognition of what was it and what it is, but what it can/will be. Siddhartha when become aware of the truest self by reflecting on himself, he tells his friend, Govinda,

"The opposite of every truth is just as true. That's like this: any truth can only be expressed and put into words when it is one-sided. Everything is one sided which can be thought

with thoughts and said with words, it's all one sided, all just one half, all lacks completeness, roundness, oneness."<sup>24</sup>

Whatever truth is known through words about the world is not complete. The whole which is undivided cannot be framed in words and Siddhartha believes that 'the world itself, that exists around us and inside of us, is never one-sided.' The *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa* together makes the whole. Although they both appear as different, but, as we have already seen, the reality lies behind the appearances. It is like Sartre's paradox of human existence when he says that "I-am-not-what-I-am and I-am-what-I-am-not".<sup>25</sup> So, everything which is out there in the world contains everything in terms of possibilities. Existentialists believe that the human subject is the center of their lived world just like Siddhartha is portrayed in the center of his world in the novel.

In this sense, Siddhartha's understanding of consciousness and Heidegger's concept of 'Being' come closer. They work like the artists who have same potentiality to experience the phenomena but takes different paths to express it. Both choose to define it in more pragmatic manner from their perspectives and open possibilities to start a subjective journey – a journey towards an authentic or liberated life in which the descriptions will be dependent upon the possibilities to explore.

These explanations, ultimately, tries to answer to overcome the inescapable suffering in which human subject is caught like a spider in his own web. He puts efforts to come out and in trying so makes a new trap for himself. On the one hand, to know the *depending* characters of objects is more than enough to unveil the illusion from the mind. On the other, to live with these void and meaningless objects and to make his own meaningful world, Siddhartha led an authentic life. As Heidegger delineates the death is the point where you can be fully defined as an authentic or unauthentic, it becomes so much important for Buddha because through this, this circle of birth-death can be ended. Although Buddha consider twelve causes of this *cakra* that is mainly based on ignorance. Objects are ever-changing and the knowledge of this reality will lead human beings towards its liberation. Existentialism would say that to give meaning to the objects by oneself and to live with those meanings will lead you to authentic life.

This whole examination of life in both schools starts with an unfortunate but a brute fact of 'suffering' where both accept its attachment to the very existence of human beings. Siddhartha primarily feels the seeds of suffering in his existence. He sees the objects of the world without essence, and they are just fleeting in the air without any meaning. Siddhartha tries to make sense of this strange fact of meaningless objects and by creating meanings, he leads an authentic life.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> This term is defined by Sartre, in his book *Being and Nothingness*. It refers to identify oneself based on the actions or profession that one performs, as the result of circumstances and deceives oneself by hiding the truth of having possibilities

<sup>2</sup> Here, 'world' does not refer to just the objective world, it also focusses on the relational world, the factual world, in which a being is connected with the people and the unchangeable facts with which one is born.

- <sup>3</sup> Siddhartha, the protagonist of the novel *Siddhartha*, senses the same feeling when he found the world unintelligible. This same kind of questioning is found in the first section entitles as "The Son of the *Brahmin*". p. 16
- <sup>4</sup> Hesse, Hermann. *Siddhartha*, p. 24
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 80
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 28
- <sup>7</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Gay science*, p. 16
- <sup>8</sup> Nietzsche. *The will to power*, p. 55
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 341
- <sup>10</sup> Sharma, C.D., *A Critical survey of Indian Philosophy*, p. 74
- <sup>11</sup> Hesse, Hermann, *Siddhartha*, p. 79
- <sup>12</sup> Sartre, "Existentialism is Humanism", p. 301
- <sup>13</sup> Nietzsche. *The Birth of Tragedy*, p. 22
- <sup>14</sup> Hesse, *Siddhartha*, p. 23
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid, pp. 23-24
- <sup>16</sup> Another interpretation goes like this – the cessation of the ignorance can prevent the Birth-death spiral. The ignorance is nothing but to conceive things as its permanent nature. If one understands that every object is nothing but a particular state of existence of an object in a particular time, then the problem will become very similar to other school. To know the real character of the objects and understands its true nature is a solution to the suffering.
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid, p. 79
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid., Pg., 21
- <sup>19</sup> This view of absurdity is first expounded by Soren Kierkegaard in the context of Christianity. For him, absurdity is limited to actions and choices of human beings. They emerge from human freedom and lack a foundation outside of themselves. This notion is further developed by Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre. In the literary field, it was first expressed in Sartre's novel *Nausea* and also explored by Albert Camus in his book *The Myth of Sisyphus*.
- <sup>20</sup> Michelman, Stephen. *The A to Z of Existentialism*, Pg., 28
- <sup>21</sup> Hesse, p. 55
- <sup>22</sup> Michelman, Stephen. *Existentialism*, p. 134
- <sup>23</sup> Nietzsche proposed a notion termed as "the will to power" where will works as a medium, through which man strives for what he wants to be. This plays a very important role in his philosophy to explain 'superman'.
- <sup>24</sup> Hesse, Hermann, *Siddhartha*, p. 81
- <sup>25</sup> Sartre, Jean-Paul, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 196

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