



Revealing The Meaning of Pilgrim's Journey for Searching Salvation in Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha*

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Abstract

This study is the analysis of the character Siddhartha's pilgrimage journey in the novel entitled *Siddhartha*. There are three objectives of this study. The first is to describe the conflict between human's worldly desires and his spiritual quest in Hermann Hesse's novel, *Siddhartha*. The second is to explain how Siddhartha's conflict between his worldly affairs and spiritual journey in view of Gadamer's hermeneutics. And, the third is to explain how Siddhartha's worldly and spiritual duality as a revelation of human's conflict in general. The analysis and the description of the data are provided to find the conclusion. The analysis of this study is using Gadamer's Hermeneutics theory. The study shows that the main character Siddhartha is searching for salvation through the ordeal life. He learned many teachings from Hinduism, being ascetic Samana, learned Buddha's teachings, being worldly slave as the courtesan adherent, and finally he finds salvation from the river. In his journey to find salvation, Siddhartha is difficult to find teachings can satisfy him. He got the internal conflict between his worldly and spiritual quest when he became courtesan's adherent. However, all the inner conflicts that Siddhartha felt have big roles and led him to make the next decision in his life. In the end of Siddhartha's journey, finally he found salvation. The river has succeeded to change Siddhartha by its voice and "listen" became the key why he gets salvation in his life. Besides, there is the fact that *Siddhartha*'s story modelled itself on the journey of Siddhartha Gautama the Buddha. Hesse's *Siddhartha* was written based on the author's travel experience in India. The conflict that Hesse portrayed in that story mostly faced by people. In the novel, Hesse characterized Siddhartha as an individual who later found his life wisdom in an act of listening to the voices of nature. Listening means everything for Siddhartha.

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INTRODUCTION

Pilgrimage is a meaningful journey to a sacred place. It provides the opportunity to step out of the non-stop business of our lives, to seek a time of quietude and reflection. It gives us the chance to 'walk through' those issues that we have on our minds, whatever they might be. Pilgrimage can also be a highly sociable activity, allowing us to enjoy the company of others we meet on the road. It gives us a chance re-energize mentally, physically and spiritually. It allows us to reconnect with our cultural heritage and the natural world—as well as to refresh our faith or seek spiritual direction. (Why Pilgrimage. Online at www.pilgrimswaycanterbury.org/why-pilgrimage/)

Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha* tells about Siddhartha's journey for searching salvation through many teachings. In this novel, Siddhartha has learned many teachings for searching salvation in his life since he was a son of Brahmin (Hindu), being Samana, learned Buddha's teachings, being courtesan's adherent, and finally, he learned from the river.

The roots word of hermeneutics lies in the Greek verb *hermeneuein*, generally translated "to interpret," and the noun *hermeneia* or interpretation. An exploration of the origin of these two words and of the three basic directions of meaning they carried in ancient usage sheds surprising light on the nature of interpretation in theology and literature (Palmer, 1969: 12). According to Palmer (1969: 14), the first basic direction of the meaning of *hermeneuein* is "to express," "to assert," or "to say." This is related to the "announcing" function of Hermes.

Hermeneutics is broadly defined as the interpretation of texts and symbols. The writer tries to reveal the meaning of pilgrim's journey that Hesse wanted to tell in the novel especially in view of Gadamer's hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is a study of interpretation. Good hermeneutics means good interpretation and vice versa. Interpretation can change based on era,

culture, and education. From hermeneutic research, we can see what makes one interpretation better than another and how we can argue about that in a scientific way. In hermeneutics, we not only study interpretation, but we also emphasize the importance of interpretation. Thus, with this research, hopefully, the writer can reveal the meaning of pilgrim's journey in *Siddhartha* through Gadamer's hermeneutics perspective. There are five things to note if we want to see the basic thought of Gadamer's Hermeneutics theory, those are historicity of understanding; prejudice; effective-historical consciousness (fusion of horizons); application; and the structure of questions and answers (conversation) (Darmaji, 2013).

Based on the theoretical framework above, the problem proposed that there is another meaning we can find and "something" in the story we can relate in our society by interpreting them using hermeneutics theory especially in view of Gadamer's hermeneutics.

METHODS

This study is designed as qualitative descriptive research applying hermeneutics theory by Hans-Georg Gadamer. The material object of this study is Hermann Hesse's novel entitled *Siddhartha*. Its formal object is to describe the conflict between human's worldly desires and his spiritual quest, to explain how Siddhartha's conflict between his worldly affairs and spiritual journey in view of Gadamer's hermeneutics, and also to explain how Siddhartha's worldly and spiritual quest duality as a revelation of human's conflict in general. The data analysis is taken by some procedures: (1) collecting data and describing the conflict between human's worldly desires and his spiritual quest (2) revealing the meaning of pilgrim's journey by explaining Siddhartha's conflict between his worldly affairs and spiritual journey in view of Gadamer's hermeneutics (3)

explaining how Siddhartha's worldly and spiritual quest duality as a revelation of human's conflict in general.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this research, the researcher discuss the conflict between human's worldly desires and his spiritual quest. As we know that in the novel *Siddhartha* there is a human's journey to find salvation through some ordeals in life. Thus, in those ways, the character Siddhartha has a conflict within his own self between the worldly desires and the spiritual pilgrimage he does as an individual living in the mundane world.

The Conflict between Human's Worldly Desires and His Spiritual Quest in Hermann Hesse's Novel, Siddhartha

One day, Siddhartha was really upset about his life. He thought that he could not remain like this anymore; he could not continue his worldly life because it squandered his time. He felt a deep sadness. He gazed thoughtfully at his life that he stood alone and felt vacant like a castaway on the shore.

Awakening from this dream, he was overwhelmed by a feeling of great sadness. It seemed to him that he had spent his life in a worthless and senseless manner; he retained nothing vital, nothing in any way precious or worthwhile. He stood alone, like a shipwrecked man on the shore. (Hesse 1973: 66)

In view of Gadamer's hermeneutics theory especially viewed by the concept of historicity of understanding, the narrator tried to show Siddhartha's regret for himself by showing his despair feeling of Siddhartha to all of his journeys he has been through so far. Siddhartha who already enjoyed all of his worldly life, his heart was suddenly shaken by the feelings of sadness that made him think twice to continue his worldly life.

Siddhartha is still thinking about his life. He gathers his thought, his mind, and all the journey he has been through. He looked back on

how he was at the beginning and wonders when he ever felt happiness and true bliss.

“... Gradually, he collected his thoughts and mentally went through the whole of his life, from the earliest day which he could remember. **When had he really been happy?**” (Hesse 1973: 66)

From the quotation above, we can see that Siddhartha was questioning to himself when he had been really happy. Viewed of Gadamer's hermeneutics theory especially the structure of question and answer, the question in the quotation above means that the narrator means to talk to the interpreter (the reader/the writer of this research). Of course, the interpreter should be able to answer that question, but in fact from all Siddhartha's journeys to find salvation so far, he did not yet find the real happiness. Maybe when he first met Kamala, he felt so happy, but that happiness was just temporary, not the real happiness he really wanted. Thus, he thought and questioned himself because he forgot how to feel happy.

From the discussion of the inner conflicts above, we can see that the conflicts are the key how Siddhartha will live this life. As the resolution of the conflicts, Siddhartha left all his worldly life that gave him temporary happiness and then continued his journey to find the real happiness (salvation). All the inner conflicts that Siddhartha felt have big roles and led him to make the next decision in his life.

Siddhartha's Conflict between His Worldly Affairs and Spiritual Journey in View of Gadamer's Hermeneutics

This research tries to reveal another meaning of pilgrim's journey by explaining Siddhartha's conflict between worldly affairs and his spiritual journey in view of Gadamer's hermeneutics. There are five things to note if we want to see the basic thought of Gadamer's Hermeneutics theory, those are historicity of understanding; prejudice; effective-historical consciousness (fusion of horizons); application;

and the structure of questions and answers (conversation) (Darmaji, 2013).

The story began with Siddhartha's confusion to Hinduism teachings. Siddhartha is doubt about his father who is a Brahmin. Siddhartha is wondering about Hinduism teaching that requires to do rituals to cleanse ourselves including his father the person who lives in a good life, fine and noble thought in his head is suppose. If the rituals are used to purify ourselves, then why the holy man like his father, a Brahmin who has no sin should do the purification everyday? or that is the clue that even though his father is a Brahmin, however he still lacked of peace in his heart, thus he does the rituals everyday until he reached the peace and salvation in his life.

. . . His father was worthy of admiration; his manner was quiet and noble. He lived a good life., his words were wise; fine and noble thoughts dwelt in his head – but even he knew so much, did he live in bliss, was he at peace? Was he not also a seeker, insatiable? Did he not go continually to the holy springs with an insatiable thirst, to the sacrifices, to books, to the Brahmin's discourses? Why must he, the blameless one, wash away his sins and endeavor to cleanse himself anew each day? Was Atman then not within him? Was not then the source within his own heart? One must find the source within one's own Self, one must possess it. Everything else was seeking – a detour, error. (Hesse, 1973: 6)

The quotation above suggests that Siddhartha was not sure to follow his father's footsteps. Although he knows that his father is a wise man; fine and noble thoughts dwelt in his head, he still sees that his father lacks a true spiritual, so he had not yet achieved what he had been looking for. That is why, Siddhartha does not want to follow his father's footsteps.

From the quotation above, we can see that Siddhartha is wondering whether his father has reached the Atman in himself or not. Viewed of Gadamer's hermeneutics theory especially the structure of question and answer, Siddhartha's questions about his father means that the narrator tried to talk to the interpreter (the reader/the

writer of this research). Of course, the interpreter should be able to answer that question. If we read more to the quotation above, there is no sign that shows if Siddhartha's father has reached the Atman or not. Siddhartha's father only did the ritual that was recommended by Hinduism teachings. From that, we can assume that actually Siddhartha's father also does not know the real meaning of Atman (the goal of Hinduism teaching) itself. He does not know the feeling achieve the Atman oin his self. Thus, he did the self purification everyday until the time that actually he does not know when. That is the reason Siddhartha doubts what his father doing. Based on the conversation between Siddhartha and his friend, Govinda Siddhartha explained

“There is, my friend, only a knowledge – that is everywhere, that is Atman, that is in me and you and in every creature, and I am beginning to believe that this knowledgge has no worse enemy than the man of knowledge, than learning” (Hesse, 1973: 16).

Thus, from the definition of Atman according to Siddhartha, he was wondering if his father does not understand yet the Atman in his self.

Siddhartha believes that there is no learning he can accept, Siddhartha sees the Buddha's spirituality is manifest in his behavior rather than in his teachings.

Siddhartha did not reply. **He was not very curious about the teachings. He did not think they would teach him anything new.** He, as well as Govinda, had heard the substance of the Buddha's teachings, if only from second-and third-hand reports. **But he looked attentively at Gotama's head, at his shoulders, at his feet, at his still, downward-hanging hand, and it seemed to him that in every joint of every finger of his hand there was knowledge; they spoke, breathed, radiated truth.** This man, this Buddha, was truly a holy man to his fingertips. Never had Siddhartha esteemed a man so much, never had he loved a man so much. (Hesse, 1973: 23-24)

The quotation above suggests that the Buddha's behavior symbolizes peacefulness Siddhartha has never seen before. Viewed of

Gadamer's hermeneutics theory, especially the effective-historical consciousness which is the awareness of hermeneutics situation that we want to understand, Gadamer termed the 'horizon' which can be interpreted as the range of views that includes anything that can be seen from a particular point of view (Gadamer 1975: 269). Thus, with this concept the writer tries to fuse the horizon between the author of the novel (Hermann Hesse) with the interpreter as the writer of this research. "The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from the particular vantage point" (Gadamer:1975).

Siddhartha is a novel by Hermann Hesse which first published in 1922 with Germanic language then excessively translated into many other languages. The "Siddhartha" was set in India during the time of the Buddha. *Siddhartha* was written based on the author's travel experience in India. Hesse ever spent a few months in India and fortunately India was a country in which his parents and grandparents ever worked as missionaries.

"On September 6, 1911, Hermann Hesse boards the "Prinz Eitel Friedrich" in Genoa in the company of his friend, the painter Hans Sturzenegger, to travel to India, the country in which his grandparents, his father and his mother worked as missionaries.... The three-month itinerary touches the Indian subcontinent only peripherally. The ship does dock in Ceylon, where Hesse goes ashore, visits the sacred Buddhist shrines at Kandy, and climbs the highest mountain, yet the original plan to see the Malabar Coast comes to nothing.... In a 1919 letter, Hesse writes: "For many years, I have been convinced that the European spirit is on the wane, and is in need of a return to its Asian roots. I have admired Buddha for many years, and have been reading Indian literature since my earliest youth. Later, I became more familiar with Lao Tzu and the other Chinese philosophers. My journey to India was but a small addition to, and illustration of, these thoughts and studies." For

Hesse, the real fruits of this journey did not emerge until the publication of *Siddhartha* in 1973" (<https://www.hermann-hesse.de/en/biography/journey-india>)

Siddhartha's Worldly and Spiritual Duality as a Revelation of Human's Conflict in General

Siddhartha's journey for searching salvation through many teachings by the spiritual and worldly life is interesting to discuss. From the story, we can see that Siddhartha has a conflict within himself that he is confused with something he really wants to do to find salvation. Mostly humans are confused with what they really want. On the one hand, they want to enjoy the worldly life because they only live once; on the other hand, they need spiritual values that can pacify their heart and become close to God.

Their mind and heart tend to be split in two. They want to do something, but another part of them is screaming "NO WAY!". They believe in something, but they just cannot condone an action that the belief teaches. That situation is directly related to the real life of everyone. In the present era those values can serve as part of a life-giving process that not only refers to relationships with God but also a relationship with the environment. However, it even makes people confused about their life. They confused whether they should obey God rules or should reach the happiness in life. Thus, people have a conflict in their heart about that.

Like Siddhartha, every person has his own right to do something they want to do and what they want to experience. Thus, they should be capable to accept the reality about the circumstances occurring and never give up to make an action to face all the obstacles to make them move forward to a higher level.

According to Culliford, L (2011). in <https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/spiritual-wisdom-secular-times/2011-05/worldly-and-spiritual-values-humankind-may-depend>

Worldly and spiritual values appear to pull people in different directions. Take a look at each

in turn and this becomes clear. Worldly values primarily are concerned about basic human needs to survive and flourish: food, clothing, and shelter. This means not only to ensure that you can pay for what's required, but also to have something extra for luxuries and for security. The more anxious you are about life's risks and vicissitudes, the more you are likely to want to acquire and accumulate. It is a short step from this position to one fully embracing monetary values; giving them high, if not a top, priority. Everyone would like to be rich.

"Spirituality exists wherever we struggle with the issues of how our lives fit into the greater scheme of things. This is true when our questions never give way to specific answers or give rise to specific practices such as prayer or meditation. For some people, Spirituality is about participating in organized religion: going to church, synagogue, a mosque, and so on. For others, it's more personal—some people get in touch with their spiritual side through private prayer, yoga, meditation, quiet reflection, or even long walks or conversations. Living truthful and honest life. Sharing what they have with people, standing for justices etc" (Okpalaenwe, 2016).

Spirituality is the personal, subjective dimension of religion, particularly that which pertains to liberation or salvation. Basic to this understanding of Spirituality is the premise that we regard the human being and / or the rest of creation as composed not only of matter, but of something immaterial, something invisible, and something beyond our present knowledge. There is always more to what we can perceive with our senses and know with our reason. (Okpalaenwe, 2016).

In the story, Siddhartha is previously an ascetic Samana. He learned to live a simple/modest life, but after about three years being a Samana he decided to leave the Samana and continues his journey to find salvation. In the middle of his journey, he falls in love with a beautiful courtesan named Kamala who asks him to be a rich person. After his hardwork,

Siddhartha becomes a rich merchant. However, his heart still remains to be a Samana even though he has all the facilities to comfort his life. He does not enjoy what he has because all those facilities are opposite to his life when he was a Samana.

In real life, people often experience that feeling. When they have already mastered something and suddenly they perform to stop and try to learn something new, that will be really opposite to the thing they mastered before. It will take time to return to it. People need an adaptation when they learn something new that they never do before and that is really related to Siddhartha who tries to adapt himself to his new circumstance as a rich merchant.

Siddhartha thanked him and accepted. He now lived in the merchant's house. Clothes and shoes were brought to him and a servant prepared him a bath daily. **Splendid meals were served twice a day, but Siddhartha only ate once a day, and neither ate meat nor drank wine.** (Hesse 1973: 53)

When Siddhartha was a Samana, he lives a modest life without any wealth. He has no clothes, no shoes, and no money. His life has changed drastically since he met Kamala. He works hard and learns how to be a merchant in order to gain wealth and a fine life as Kamala ordered. After his effort, he succeeded to become a rich merchant. He had everything he dreamt of. He had everything he had never had before. But after he lived that life for some time, he realized that the worldly life did not suit himself. Deep down inside he does not enjoy that life.

In this case, we can relate it to human's conflict in general. When people have a goal, they dream of something and they work very hard to reach that goal. However, when they have already succeeded to reach that goal, they realize that the goal is not the best thing for them. They feel that the goal does not suit them. This is human's nature that they are never satisfied with what they have. They will always feel deficient in what they get and it makes a conflict in their selves.

How I hated that world of riches, carousing and playing! How I hated myself for

remaining so long in that horrible world! How I hated myself, thwarted, poisoned and tortured myself, made myself old and ugly. . . (Hesse 1973: 77)

According to Gupta, K in <https://www.kapilguptamd.com/2018/02/08/human-s-live-perpetual-dissatisfaction/> Every minute of a human's life is spent chasing pleasure. Even the things that you do not find pleasurable, there is some pleasure that you gain from them in some way. Otherwise you simply would not do them. Somewhere within the domino effect of the action is a domino of pleasure. It may not be in the act of doing, but it exists somewhere downstream. What is wrong with chasing pleasure? There is nothing wrong with anything. Wrong and right is a socio-religious creation. A human that constantly chases pleasure must be one that is always dissatisfied. The same way that an animal that always chases food must be one that is always hungry. Chasing pleasure brings pleasure. But it does not bring satisfaction. In fact, it is precisely because it does not bring satisfaction that one must keep chasing it. For if it brought satisfaction, one would chase it once, receive it once, and be done with it. But pleasure does not have the ability to quench human thirst. A human is in search of satisfaction.

In the novel, Hesse characterized Siddhartha as an individual who later found his life wisdom in an act of listening to the voices of nature. Listening means everything for Siddhartha..

CONCLUSION

The inner conflicts in the novel emerge when Siddhartha starts to live mundanely. He learns many things that make him richer. However, his inner heart does not accept them thoroughly. The conflicts are the key how Siddhartha will live this life. As the resolution of the conflicts, Siddhartha left all his worldly life that gave him temporary happiness and then continued his journey to find the real happiness (salvation). All the inner conflicts that Siddhartha

felt have big roles and led him to make the next decision in his life.

In the end, by the river Siddhartha finds his salvation. The river has taught him to be a good listener. The river could change Siddhartha's perspective towards something and by the river Siddhartha becomes a holy man who can transmit his positive energy to others. The river has succeeded to change Siddhartha by its voice and "listen" became the key why he gets salvation in his life. Moreover, by analyzing more deeply, the researcher finds the fact that Siddhartha's story modelled itself on the journey of Siddhartha Gautama the Buddha. Hesse's Siddhartha was written based on the author's travel experience in India. Hesse's character as a religious person, his experience who ever lived in India, his learning of Buddha, and of Indian literature are reflected on Siddhartha and his pilgrimage to find salvation and enlightenment in his life.

After analyzing Siddhartha's worldly and spiritual quest duality as a revelation of human's conflict in general. Based on the discussion, we can see that Siddhartha's worldly and spiritual duality represents the human's conflict in general especially the confusedness about something people really want to do. The worldly orientation is often stronger than spiritual awareness. The situations that Siddhartha feels are related to ordinary people nowadays. The conflict that Hesse portrayed in that story mostly faced by people. In the novel, Hesse characterized Siddhartha as an individual who later found his life wisdom in an act of listening to the voices of nature. Listening means everything for Siddhartha.

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