

**The Subsistence of Self-realisation and Deconstruction: Paradox
Counterculture Movement in the Work of Hermann Hesse's
*Siddhartha***

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Abstract

Siddhartha was written by German Philosopher, Hermann Hesse. The novel is based on the life sequences of Buddha. Siddhartha is the Protagonist in the novel whose life underwent on deconstructive circumstances. Siddhartha searched for self-realization for attaining salvation in his entire life. He did never get where he searched for, but he had gained it at the quiet contradictory event. He did never catch awakening from whom he expects, but from completely converse person. With regard to the 'seed message' of *Siddhartha*, Leary and Metzner infer that we can think of seed, we can reference a seed, be guided to seed, but cannot know a seed through language, even though through language we learn *about* the seed. They thereby pick up on the rift between learning and knowledge prevalent in *Siddhartha*. In so doing, they point in particular to the role of language in shaping this rift, for language, the tool used to teach and learn that a seed exists in the first place, cannot be used to know the seed. This tension with the efficacy of paradox language is highlighted in the very last chapter of *Siddhartha*.

Keywords: Hermann Hesse, *Siddhartha*, Counter-culture, Deconstruction, Contradictions, Self-realization, and Paradox.

Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha* (1922), is published in the German language. He is a German poet, essayist, short story writers, novelist and painter. His other notable works are *The Glass Bead Game* (1943), *Steppenwolf* (1927), *Narcissus and Goldmund* (1930) and *Demian* (1919). Most of his works are translated into English. *Siddhartha* is translated into English by Hilda Rosner in 1954. The word 'Siddhartha' itself possesses the resemblance of deconstruction in its meaning. 'Siddha' means 'achieved' and 'artha' means 'to search for'. The search and reaching of goal stand in the single medium of Siddhartha's life. Siddhartha has searched the path of spiritual wisdom to attain the roots of salvation. He has achieved after a long journey of Sansara instead of getting from spirituality.

Siddhartha is a Brahmin son. He is mastered over most of the spiritual practices that are following by the Brahmins. Though he has learned everything from Vedas and Upanishads, his heart has the thirst to find the ways of salvation. So, he has started his spiritual journey from this point. He has learned many arts from Samanas' way of practices. But he is not satisfied. So, he has entered into

Sansara worldly pleasures. In a certain stage, he has realized that his tenderness and all the spiritual practices and skills have flown from him because of his deviated habitual of Sansara. Finally, he finds out the divinity within himself whereas, he has searched for all the external things.

The term 'Deconstruction' is coined by French Thinker Jacques Derrida. Deconstruction means that two extremes stand in a single medium, whereas, they meet the critical point can be called as deconstruction. M.H. Abrams mentions it as 'Binary Oppositions'. He further says, Among deconstructive literary critics, one such demonstration is to take the standard hierarchical opposition of literature /criticism, to invert it so as to make criticism primary and literature secondary, and then to represent, as an undecidable set of oppositions, the assertions that criticism is a species of literature and that literature is a species of criticism (p 79).

The text can never be predictable under the analysis of deconstruction. There might be the occurrence of chaos to justify it. Derrida speaks of not just only the differences but two extremes. His actual embellishment is to go through a text not only in literary aspect and also in critical views of philosophical, traditional and conventions. Derrida composes the philosophy with criticism. Kathleen Wheeler states Derrida, denied determinacy, immediacy, and fullness to the intention of speech acts through the concept of 'inerrability'. Which means 'inerrability', any speech act is repeatable and meaningful within another context. The term 'repeatability' detaches speech acts from immediate intentions postulated in the present moment. Iterability alters what is said, showing that we mean something other than what we mean, or say something other than what we say. Derrida called this 'spacing' or articulation (p 54). According to the argument of Kathleen, Derrida denies the definiteness of the text from a single perspective. Words might be the same but the meaning differs constantly. This is what Derrida mentioned as 'inerrability'. There is no need to be the same thing to happen what is pre-planned. The circumstances might be changed in a specific point that is the mid-point of two extremes.

Siddhartha wants to learn the art of reaching God. So he has moved from his family life and joined with Samanas. There he has learned all the arts with the equivalence of his Guru in Samanas. He also raises the question against his Guru why he had not attained salvation even though mastery over all kind of practices. His questioning tendency is good, but it leads him towards the deviation of wisdom. Though his questions show Siddhartha as a wise man, that leads him towards the worldly pleasure. He could never remain within his border. He has no complete belief in anything. He keeps on moving from one to another. After departing from Samanas, he has entered into Sansara – sensual life. His actual journey is to find the way for salvation but instead of moving forward with the spiritual path, he has glided into sensual enjoyments.

The sensual enjoyments are not only happiness, love, and comfort, but also sad, fear, hatred, discomfort, etc. There is a traditional saying, that one man could never reach the salvation if he belonged to Sansara. But Siddhartha finds the path to attain salvation through comes across the experiences of Sansara. Freudian psychoanalytical theory says that the suppressed emotions of the mind may be accelerated to cure the conscious troubles. By applying this, Siddhartha has accelerated his suppressed emotions within himself. So, each and every men has common sensual explorations.

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After such a critical point, it turns into its reversal, whereas, deconstruction occurs. Spirituality insists that to attain the state of emptiness occurs after the experiences of sensual pleasure. So, each and every circumstance of the worldly pleasures has to be experienced. Then the life will automatically create its deconstruction after the reach of its critical point. The combined experiences of, good and bad, bliss and stress, fortune and misfortune, are standing in the medium of Siddhartha's life in various circumstances. After experiencing all these emotions, Siddhartha turns his vision into himself instead of the external experiences. He feels the satisfaction when he starts to experience his inner-self. It is his self-realization. The self-realization leads a human being towards the way for reaching salvation. The awakening happens, when he enchants the "Om" after seeing the images of his life in the river stream. It is an inducing factor of suppressed memories.

Siddhartha emphasized it to Govinda, as in the words of Rosner, "I am telling you what I have discovered. Knowledge can be communicated, but not wisdom. One can find it, be fortified by it, do wonders through it, but one cannot communicate and teach it [...], in every truth the opposite is equally true." (Sid p 43) When the illustrious Buddha taught about the world, he had to divide it into Sansara and Nirvana, into illusion and truth, into suffering and salvation. One cannot do otherwise; there is no other method for those who teach. But the world itself, being in and around us, is never one-sided. Never is a man or a deed wholly Sansara or wholly Nirvana; never is a man wholly a saint or a sinner (p 114). The study comes to understand the two extremes of Sansara and Nirvana stand in the single medium of human life. Knowledge is what we are learning from the experiences. Wisdom is an internal awakening. The knowledge can be taught. All the spiritual practices are followed for gaining the knowledge, which is communicated by the various teachers in Siddhartha's life. But wisdom comes only when the mind thinks about the experiences and derives its own definition from them.

In the 60s counterculture's fixation on Hermann Hesse's work led to a parallel scholarly fixation on its global reception and impact. It is as if the then immensely popular public response to Hesse's work, the scholarship that dealt with its global reception and the subsequent institutionalization were orchestrated to amplify Hans Robert Jaub's contemporary ideas on reception theory. His argument here is to expand literary analysis beyond the narrow historical moment of textual production in favour of engaging the inclusive present of textual reproduction. According to Jaub, for the future of literary analysis, a text should be seen as a continual, nonlinear, non-singular evolutionary event with respect to its socially formative function. A text thereby takes into account both its position in a particular, narrow, historical context as well as its talismanic merit with an unknowable potential for personal and social restructuring. In so doing, Jaub brings the reader actually readers into focus. The audience no longer occupies a passive role. Readers are active participants who duly challenge "the prejudices of historical objectivism" and help replace "the traditional approach to literature ... an aesthetics of reception and impact" (Jauss p 9).

Worldwide, scholars heeded this call to advance the study of literature through the examination of current reading. The immense and rather sudden global popularity of Hesse's work in the 60s served as a prime model for Jaub's enterprise. Instead of looking at Hesse's work in terms of

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the years he was writing them, scholars began to look at Hesse's work primarily in terms of its Counterculture reception.

The paradox of the Counterculture movement, as it were, is in these lines as they traverse the historical moment. This quote from Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha* carries a message. The bane of knowledge is the desire for it, that desire which is here and often elsewhere synonymised with learning. *Siddhartha* is a story that follows the trajectory of a boy reaching the limits of learning, the limits of knowledge-seeking, along with its manifold paths. Some paths he treads longer than others and each is rejected by or rejects him: scholarship, religion, philosophy, business, love, family, and asceticism. Some scholarship appropriately assesses this rejection as a critique of these various cultural things, but all too often this scholarship ignores the rejection/critique of learned spiritualism, too. It is not just the State that is being contended with in Hesse's stories, but everything that requires education. In defining 'the American Youth Movement' and its gripe against the State, Egon Schwarz once argued the sameness of Hesse's so-called 'grievances' and those of the 'American radicals'

In his analysis, Schwarz circumvents the critique of the spiritual; but in *Siddhartha*, even lessons in spirituality, including the freely chosen ones, are put to question. For instance, the Atman that Siddhartha explains as the only knowledge in essence, the spiritual experience of the self cannot be taught, learned or transmitted. While Siddhartha admits at times to have been taught, he also insists that what he has been taught is of no special value. Toward the end of the story, Siddhartha tells his old friend Govinda that what he had learned from the Buddha, for example, is no more or less special than what he is currently learning from the rock next to him. So in matters of spirituality as in matters of the State, one can be taught how to know by anyone or anything, that is, one can learn from anyone or anything, but such learning does not impart knowledge. Moreover, if one nonetheless feels knowledge gained, wisdom will remain elusive.

At this late stage of the story, after Siddhartha has already repudiated at length the possibility of transferring knowledge, it may seem contradictory that he flippantly speaks of knowledge as transferable and so distinct from wisdom. This very flippancy, however, is significant because it demonstrates Siddhartha's distrust of words and his customary conflation of knowledge, wisdom and spiritual enlightenment. The focus, here, is thus on the impossible process of transfer from one to another of that which occurs through self-discovery and personal experience. This is the acclaim of the highly individualistic path. In sum, but in no simple way, this text asserts a rejection of learning of guidance, of teaching and of being taught, and of training in all its aspects and for all its goals, including knowledge, wisdom, and spiritual enlightenment.

However, is not this assertion of the rejection of learning a lesson? Does not *Siddhartha* teach individualism? Considering the historical moment of the Counterculture, this text, which rejects learning, became itself a guide to a movement. Since this is a *Bildungsroman* that not only rejects *Bildung*, but rejects itself, as *Roman*, should not *Siddhartha*, too, have been rejected by the Counterculture? If the first paradox occurs within the text (the paradox of learning knowledge or

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gaining wisdom), a second paradox crystallizes when the very individualism that this text paradoxically teaches binds its readers together into a movement. *Siddhartha* became known as a Bible of the Counterculture, hailed holier than the New Testament. Narrated in deceptively simple, hypnotic prose, this story seems to call its readers to follow Siddhartha's path, invite readers to transform into devotees. As the Buddha's namesake, the title of the story alone suggests such an invitation. But *Siddhartha* is far more involutes. In fact, it does not invite followers; it sends them away, as in the case of Siddhartha's childhood friend Govinda intent on following Siddhartha's brazen footsteps.

The name Siddhartha, which translated from the Sanskrit means "one who has achieved the goal," in the context of this story tells us that Siddhartha has already and always reached his goal, that the trials he faces are not lessons in any teleological sense but are a mere unfolding of his own knowledge which is always present. This Siddhartha comes in stark contrast to the other historical Siddhartha Gautama the Buddha (who does make an appearance in this story) who was a sage and who set out to teach the Middle Path to liberation. Despite the individualistic nature of the path taken by Siddhartha in Hesse's story, it became for a generation of *Eigensinnigen* a model to emulate not unlike the Buddha's (Matussek p 125). Siddhartha's path awakened a craving for spiritual enlightenment that could be satiated through the teachings of individualism. As Siddhartha's *Eigensinn*, or self-will, taught its followers how to chart an obstinate, revolutionary path against authority, it also, in effect, took a paradoxical collective turn Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha* (1922), is published in the German language. He is a German poet, essayist, short story writers, novelist and painter. His other notable works are *The Glass Bead Game* (1943), *Steppenwolf* (1927), *Narcissus and Goldmund* (1930) and *Demian* (1919). Most of his works are translated into English. Siddhartha is translated into English by Hilda Rosner in 1954. The word 'Siddhartha' itself possesses the resemblance of deconstruction in its meaning. 'Siddha' means 'achieved' and 'artha' means 'to search for'. The search and reaching of goal stand in the single medium of Siddhartha's life. Siddhartha has searched the path of spiritual wisdom to attain the roots of salvation. He has achieved after a long journey of Sansara instead of getting from spirituality.

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Discussion

The term 'Deconstruction' is coined by French Thinker Jacques Derrida. Deconstruction means that two extremes stand in a single medium, whereas, they meet the critical point can be called as deconstruction. M.H. Abrams mentions it as 'Binary Oppositions'. He further says, Among deconstructive literary critics, one such demonstration is to take the standard hierarchical opposition

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of literature /criticism, to invert it so as to make criticism primary and literature secondary, and then to represent, as an undecidable set of oppositions, the assertions that criticism is a species of literature and that literature is a species of criticism (79).

The text can never be predictable under the analyzation of deconstruction. There might be the occurrence of chaos to justify it. Derrida speaks of not just only the differences but two extremes. His actual embellishment is to go through a text not only in literary aspect and also in critical views of philosophical, traditional and conventions. Derrida composes the philosophy with criticism. Kathleen Wheeler states Derrida denied determinacy, immediacy, and fullness to the intention of speech acts through the concept of “iterability”. According to “iterability”, any speech act is repeatable and meaningful within another context. ... “Repeatability” detaches speech acts from immediate intentions postulated in the present moment. Iterability alters what is said, showing that we mean something other than what we mean, or say something other than what we say. Derrida called this “spacing” or articulation (54

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The sensual enjoyments are not only happiness, love, comfort, etc., but also sad, fear, hatred, discomfort, etc. There is a traditional saying, that one man could never reach the salvation if he belonged to Sansara. But Siddhartha finds the path to attain salvation through comes across the experiences of Sansara. Freudian psychoanalytical theory says that the suppressed emotions of the mind may be accelerated to cure the conscious troubles. By applying this, Siddhartha has accelerated his suppressed emotions within himself. So each and every men has common sensual explorations. After such a critical point, it turns into its reversal, whereas, deconstruction occurs. Spirituality insists that to attain the state of emptiness occurs after the experiences of sensual pleasure. So each and every circumstance of the worldly pleasures has to be experienced. Then the life will automatically create its deconstruction after the reach of its critical point. The combined experiences of, good and bad, bliss and stress, fortune and misfortune, are standing in the medium of Siddhartha’s life in various circumstances. After experiencing all these emotions, Siddhartha turns his vision into himself instead of the external experiences. He feels the satisfaction when he starts to experience his inner self. It is his self-realization. The self-realization leads a human being towards the way for reaching salvation. The awakening happens, when he enchants the “Om” after seeing the images of his life in the river stream. It is an inducing factor of suppressed memories. Siddhartha emphasized it to Govinda, as in the words of Rosner,

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We come to understand the two extremes of Sansara and Nirvana stand in the single medium of human life. Knowledge is what we are learning from the experiences. Wisdom is an internal awakening. The knowledge can be taught. All the spiritual practices are followed for gaining the knowledge, which is communicated by the various teachers in Siddhartha’s life. But wisdom comes only when the mind thinks about the experiences and derives its own definition from them.

It was Timothy Leary and Ralph Metzner’s praise of Hermann Hesse ‘the Poet of the Interior Journey’ in *The Psychedelic Review* that sped up *Siddhartha*’s rise to fame and that helped give an emphatically individualized self-will a paradoxical sense of community. They claim that “most readers miss the message of Hesse. Entranced by the pretty dance of plot and theme, they overlook the seed message... the seed, the electrical message, the code is in the core” (Ralph p 169). Dutifully, Leary and Metzner do not reveal the core, do not unpack the seed, but recapitulate scenes from Hesse’s stories to inform of the seed’s existence. It is impossible to unpack the seed for one another; such a seed is as distinct as each reader is from the next. But they insist that such a seed exists in Hesse’s work, and that it exists for each reader. They write: “But always Hesse reminds us stay close to the internal core. ... The [internal] flame is of course always there, within and without, surrounding us, keeping us alive. Our only task is to keep tuned.” (Hesse p181)

In their highly spiritual, laudatory rendering of *Siddhartha*, Leary and Metzner descriptively engage the ineffable nature of the internal core, thereby establishing a core for each reader, though they do not have access to the nature of each core. Each reader of Hesse has access only to his/her own core, which lies at the nexus of Hesse’s text and the reader. In their essay, Leary and Metzner establish a kind of spiritual collective experience of reading Hesse, crafting camaraderie among the radically individual. While each path of reading Hesse is distinct, each with a distinct reader and distinct core, their collective experience is built upon their readership: individuals reading Hesse together, seeking an internal core together. Readers of Hesse are at once free to discover themselves and the world in whichever ways they see fit and find solace in belonging to a group of *Eigensinnigen*, more commonly known as the Counterculture.

Siddhartha consistently refutes the very teachings it espouses; it rails against any form of learning. In the last chapter, Govinda implores Siddhartha to share his path with him, so that Govinda, too, may traverse the path to spiritual enlightenment as Siddhartha seemingly has. Siddhartha, however, warns Govinda that no teaching is teachable, resting his case on the inefficacies of language. Siddhartha even warns against his own attempts at teaching language’s failures, because language is required to do so. Siddhartha explains that language breaks the world into oppositional frameworks. He is in a way, speaking with a Heideggerian vocabulary: as language discloses something, it conceals something else. Language can never reveal the whole picture. Siddhartha tells Govinda, “Everything is one-sided that can be thought in thoughts and said with

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words, everything one-sided, everything half, everything is lacking wholeness, roundness, oneness” (Hesse p 132) This is the only way to go about it; there is no other way for a person who would teach. Siddhartha’s distressed explanation of language’s failure is at once the exoneration thereof. There is no way other than through language through some semblance of signs to teach or tell anyone anything. Language thus becomes the metonym for teaching, which, as with all else, Siddhartha rejects. He uses it nevertheless to communicate with Govinda.

Though late in the story and though via the perspective of a supporting character, this experience of inner conflict is the climax, the major turning point which leads to Siddhartha’s final disappearance into formlessness, likened here to the enlightened state of the Buddha. Govinda begs Siddhartha for just one more word, one more lesson in his search for ultimate knowledge: “Grant me just one word more, O Revered One; give me something that I can grasp, that I can comprehend! Give me something to take with me when we part. My path is often difficult, Siddhartha, often dark” (p124). In response, seeing “eternal not-finding” ‘ewiges Nichtfinden’ in Govinda’s eyes, Siddhartha asks Govinda to kiss him on his forehead. “‘Bend down to me,’ he whispered softly in Govinda’s ear. ‘Bend down here to me! Yes, like that, closer! Even closer! Kiss me on the forehead, Govinda!’” (p 124). What follows is remarkable, not merely for the hierophanic description, but for the explicit continued presence of ‘words’ in Govinda’s experience of Siddhartha’s formlessness, of his being without words.

Govinda kisses Siddhartha, there is a transfer of knowledge described like no other in the entire story. Considering the motif of the impossibility of teaching knowledge or wisdom, this transfer of knowledge is unorthodox. It is, in fact, less a transfer than a revelation. Using a framework borrowed from Mircea Eliade’s *The Sacred and the Profane*, knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment had been, through their elusiveness, ineffability, and desirability, in many respects consecrated, whereas learning and words belonged to the realm of the profane. In the moment of bowing to and kissing Siddhartha’s forehead, Govinda is witness to hierophany, a manifestation of the sacred (Eliade p 12). At this hierophanic moment, one might expect “words” to retreat into the background or even to vanish altogether, for they have been the very bane of Govinda’s search for (not to mention Siddhartha’s own search for an experience of) knowledge and wisdom. But words remain. The paragraph that introduces Govinda’s experience of Siddhartha’s formlessness shows the necessity of paradox for hierophany. In the hierophanic moment, words are at once meaningless and meaningful because they are no longer just words signaling polemical concepts, indescribable experiences, or impossible objects; words are imbued with cosmic sacrality and signal all at once, simultaneously manifesting that which they reveal and conceal. In this moment of knowledge revelation, words do not disappear but are integrated into an entirety of the experience.

We may now be able to assemble an answer to the question posed earlier: Since this is a *Bildungsroman* that not only rejects *Bildung*, but rejects itself, as *Roman*, should not *Siddhartha*, too, have been rejected by the Counterculture? Just as Govinda was consistently drawn to Siddhartha’s words and teachings, despite producing an inner conflict, so too many readers of *Siddhartha* have been drawn to learning from this story and its disavowal of being able to teach anything, *because it*

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produced a conflict. Govinda's conflict arose through the paradox of understanding Siddhartha as both wise and foolish, and the mounting tension of this conflict opened up access to Govinda's hierophanic moment, co-inhabited by both the profane and the sacred. Because any reader of this story, unlike Govinda within the story, must ascertain Siddhartha's formlessness through the descriptive words formed via Govinda's perspective, the hierophany experienced by Govinda, which is Siddhartha's enlightenment, is still available to readers only through words. In order to reach Siddhartha's state of consciousness and/or Govinda's witnessing thereof, a reader must come to terms with (that is, embrace) the paradox of language, especially with regard to one "seed message" of *Siddhartha*: words can be used to inform about concepts of enlightenment, wisdom, or ultimate knowledge, but do not give us access to them.

Nothing is pure in this world. No men can attain Nirvana only by the following spirituality without come across the experiences of Sansara. These binary oppositions stand in the single medium of human life. People should aware of their inner-self. It gives wisdom. All other practices and rituals are just ensuring the knowledge of spirituality, not the platform to attain Salvation. The self-realization, people can find their own way to reach God, along with all the sensual experiences. Siddhartha embodies the paradox. At the end of his journey, he is at the beginning; in old age, he is in youth. He has learned nothing, except he has learned that he has learned nothing. In *Siddhartha*, language is used to show its own as well as learning's point of critical failure. *Siddhartha*, a guidebook, was used in an analogously paradoxical way to reject guidance. The Eigensinnigen of the Counterculture found in *Siddhartha* reasons to band together and endure because this story helped explain that the questions of language and of learning remained unsolved in their paradoxical quality. The Eigensinnigen of the Counterculture could thereby assert their own, new ways of thinking and of organizing as solutions to this mystery.

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