

Quest for The Meaning of Life in Hermann Hesse's Select Works

Dr. Divyasree C¹

¹PhD in English from Kanchi Mamunivar Government Institute for Postgraduate Studies and Research,
(Affiliated to Pondicherry University),
Puducherry- 605 008

Abstract

Hermann Hesse is a German Swiss poet and novelist. It is a notable fact that he was also a painter. He was born in Black Forest region of Germany. His also wrote short stories and was an essayist. He won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1946, and even visited India tried to understand Indian Mysticism. This paper studies some of the author's critically acclaimed works.

Keywords: Hermann Hesse, Siddhartha, Demien: The Story of Boyhood.

I. INTRODUCTION

Hermann Hesse is a German Swiss poet and novelist. It is a notable fact that he was also a painter. He was born in Black Forest region of Germany. His also wrote short stories and was an essayist. He won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1946, and even visited India tried to understand Indian Mysticism. He suffered from depression, while at a seminary. He had Swiss and German citizenship. His famous works are *The Glass Bead Game*, *Siddhartha*, *Demien* and *Steppenwolf*. He was also a winner of the Goethe Prize.

II. SIDDHARTHA

Siddhartha was published in 1922. It is a novel by Hesse. It explores self-discovery and the spiritual journey of protagonist. This is Hesse's ninth novel. The novel gained critical acclaim in the 1960s. It comes under the genre of philosophical fiction. Philosophical fiction refers to fiction with contents that are deeply permeated with philosophy. Such fiction tries to explain the multiple aspects of the human condition. The nature of human action, the motivation of human beings and the purpose of life are explored in philosophical fiction. The novel was initially published in Germany.

The name, Siddhartha is derived from the Sanskrit Language. It is a notable fact that the Buddha's name, prior to his renunciation, was Siddhartha Gautama. He was once the Prince of Kapilvastu. The Samanas in the novel refer to the ascetics. Gotama in the novel refers to the Buddha. The setting of the novel is ancient India and Nepal. Siddhartha leaves his home to attain spiritual enlightenment. He tells people to love the world in its complete form and talk about how nature is a self sustaining cycle.

III. DEMIEN

Demien: The Story of Boyhood is a Bildungsroman. A bildungsroman is a coming-of-age story that charts the growth and development of a character from childhood to adulthood. It was first published in 1923. The protagonist is Emil Sinclair. Two types of worlds are described in the novel. The first world is the world of illusion. The first world is related to the concept of Maya. Maya is a concept from Hinduism, and the term translates to 'illusion' or 'magic,' and has multiple interpretations in Indian Philosophy. The second world is the world of spiritual truth. The novel contains a total of eight chapters.

At the beginning of the novel, Emil is confused about life and rebels against his parents. Max Demien is his childhood friend. Demien aids Emil on his quest for self-realization. Pistorius is a rector at a local Church and teaches Emil about spiritual guidance. The presence of opposing forces in the world i.e., duality is constantly reiterated in the novel. Spiritual enlightenment is a significant theme as Emil rebels against superficial ideals.

REFERENCES

Hesse, Hermannn. *Demian*. Createspace, 2015.

---. *Siddhartha*. Translated by Hilda Rosner, Pushkin Press, 2023.