Herman Hesse’s Siddhartha Essay, Research Paper

Herman Hesse’s Siddhartha

In the book Siddhartha, by Herman Hesse, the main character Siddhartha

had many teachers along his quest for happiness. Throughout his life he

denounced teachers and their teachings. In his last meeting with his lifelong

friend, Govinda, he mentions five in which he was indebted : a beautiful

courtesan, a rich merchant, a dice player, a Buddhist monk, and Vasudeva.

The first of these teachers along his way was Kamala a beautiful courtesan.

Kamala taught him the wonderful pleasures of love and the importance of wealth

and riches in society . ?It [had] never been my experience that a Samana from

the woods should come to me and desire to learn from me. Never has a Samana

with long hair and an old torn loin cloth come to me. Many young men come to me,

including Brahmin’s sons but they come to me in fine clothes, in fine shoes;

there is scent in their hair and money in their purses. That is how these young

men come to me, O Samana.? These teachings in which Kamala placed upon him

helped him to seek out the riches and wealth that would supposedly bring him

happiness.

Another of the people who Siddhartha obtained knowledge from was the rich

merchant Kamaswami. Kamaswami taught Siddhartha the secrets of making money

and living the life of a rich man. While working for Kamaswami many of

Siddhartha’s values stayed intact but, slowly these values began to slip away.

In many ways Kamaswami taught Siddhartha the dark side of life.

As the days went on Siddhartha began hating himself more and more. He

viewed his riches as worthless, for they did not truly bring him happiness.

Slowly he began squandering his money playing dice. He won thousands and lost

thousands in order to reach the high he felt when he carelessly bet his money

away. This taught him the worthless value of money, for money only brought

more and more sadness.

Finally after rejecting this life of sin he vowed to leave the city and

never return. As he retreated into the forest he decided to go to the river.

At the river he found his friend Govinda, who had watched over Siddhartha while

he had slept. Govinda was now a Buddhist monk who searched for happiness. I

believe this showed Siddhartha that their two lives were still very similar.

They both still seeked happiness and they were both in transitory.

The final teacher along Siddhartha’s quest for happiness was Vasudeva, the

ferrymen. Vasudeva taught Siddhartha how to listen to people and the river

which in turn helped Siddhartha on the road to happiness. ?You will learn

it,but not from me. The river knows everything; one can learn everything from

it. You have already learned from the river that it is good to strive downwards,

to sink, to seek the depths. The rich and distinguished Siddhartha will become

a rower; Siddhartha the learned Brahmin will become a ferryman. You have also

learned this from the river. You will learn the other thing too.?

Throughout this book Siddhartha distrusts teachers, but in the end he

becomes one. Although he shy’s away from this classification, towards the end

he begins to share the knowledge he has gained throughout the many different

phases of his life.