Siddhartha Essay, Research Paper

In Herman Hess s, Siddhartha, Siddhartha s constant growth and spiritual evolution is elucidated through the symbolism of the snake, the bird and the river.

As a snake sheds it s skin in order to continue its physical growth, Siddhartha sheds the skins of his past: he realized that something had left him, like the old skin a snake sheds/ Something was no longer with him, something that had accompanied him right through his youth and was a part of him (37). In this way Siddhartha leaves his childhood companion, Govinda, and follows the teachings of the Illustrious one. Siddhartha then journeys on alone and feels vulnerable as his past reveals his lost soul, I was afraid, I was fleeing from myself (38). Siddhartha eagerly gathers himself and ventures on to explore alternative religions. He no longer relies on his past, his Samana upbringing and heritage, Immediately he moved on again and began to walk quickly and impatiently, no longer homeward, no longer to his father, no longer looking backwards (42). Once Siddhartha is rid of his past, he continues the lifelong journey of samasarah, in which he eventually discovers himself.

Subsequently, he ventures out into the world and explores his senses in a desperate attempt to investigate his spiritual needs. He greets love openly and rests satisfied by the splendors his lover Kamalah. Siddhartha s contentment is terminated as he is presented with a controversial dream. He dreams that Kamala s beloved bird is found dead: The bird, which usually sang in the morning, became mute and as this surprised him, he went up to the cage and looked inside/ The little bird was dead (82). Siddhartha s freedom from religion and promiscuous behaviors cease along with the birds death, he felt horror and death in his heart/ He sat and felt himself dying, withering, finishing (82). He recognizes the materialistic things including love itself, were insufficient: Then Siddhartha knew that the game was finished, that he could play it no longer he smiled wearily, shook his head and said goodbye to all these things (84). Siddhartha s perpetual search for security and internal happiness ventures on.

Siddhartha is constantly flowing down the river of life, Certainly I have learned that from the river too; everything comes back/ You, too, Samana, will come back (49). He sees that life is never stagnant. It is constantly changing, ebbing and flowing. It takes a lifetime to satisfy Siddhartha s hunger for religious fulfillment. Siddhartha is found relating to the river: A chilly emptiness in the water reflected the terrible emptiness in his soul (88). As Siddhartha reflects upon his life, he notices his constant change in perspective: It seemed to him as if the river had something special to tell him, something which he did not know, something which still awaited him/ Siddhartha had wanted to drown himself in this river; the old, the tired, despairing Siddhartha was today drowned in it/ The new Siddhartha felt a deep love for this flowing water and decided that he would not leave it again so quickly (100). Siddhartha grasps onto the river and forms a bond with its tranquility and lack of timely existence. He identifies with the river and emulates its constant change. Just as the rivers water s are easily replenished, so too Siddhartha is rejuvenated after years of wrongdoing.

Siddhartha s transformations, the shedding of his false skin, the explorations of the bird and the merging with the eternal stream exemplified by the symbolism of the snake, the bird and the river form the foundation of Siddhartha. It was throughout turmoil and experience that Siddhartha achieved his state of nirvana. His constant change evolved him into the product of a religious, well-formed man.