Siddhartha And Buddhism Essay, Research Paper

Siddhartha Your gonna be a genius anyway (Phish, Mango Song)

Throughout the literary world true stories are turned into fiction. The story of Siddhartha, the Buddha is no different. Hermann Hesse s novel Siddhartha fictionalized one of the most influential persons the world has ever known. Hesse did a masterful job of separating core facts of the great Buddha s life from a great story. The Buddha had many core teachings that he felt necessary for all individuals to live by though in strong language the Buddha did warn his followers against mere book learning (Nh t Hanh 111). Again Hesse does a wonderful job on keeping the ideals of Buddha in mind by describing Siddhartha as the type to take from the teachings of others but acknowledge the fact that he must learn on his own. The novel presents through the life of Siddhartha and the core teachings of Buddhism. Ethical Conduct, wisdom, and mental discipline are the subdivisions of Buddhism s Noble Eightfold Path and their blue prints are laid in Hesse s novel (110).

Ethical conduct is based on love and compassion (112). Siddhartha also came to a life of love and compassion. Right speech, right action, and right livelihood are achieved through love and compassion (112). Right speech includes abstaining from numerous types of slanderous and essentially useless speech. Siddhartha presents this ideal through his reserved personality and kind nature. Siddhartha wrote to Kamaswami Cleverness is good, but patience is better, in few words Siddhartha was able to establish himself a reputation with Kamaswami (Hesse 65). Right action also demonstrates love and compassion in that without a course of action that is good and pure one cannot achieve good ethics. Siddhartha in many ways demonstrates this ideal. Siddhartha leads the life a businessman indulging himself in sensual pleasures but he reaches a point where these pleasures can no longer sustain his need to learn more. At this point Siddhartha knew that the game was finished, that he could play it no longer (84). Right livelihood encompasses the lifestyle one chooses to lead as it relates to others (Nh t Hanh 113). Though Siddhartha s son is very abusive to the giving nature of his father, Siddhartha is unable to discipline his son. The son rebels against the father, repeating more violently Siddhartha s gentler self-liberation from the paternal world effected a generation before, thus distancing himself and abusing his father s kind and gentle nature (Field 78).

Wisdom includes an understanding that there is no difference between all beings. If one can embrace all things then there are no limitations achieving right thought (Nh t Hanh 116). If we view things with dispassionate discernment, we will understand that selfish desire, hatred and violence cannot go together with true wisdom, meaning without barriers we are able to understand the beauty of all things. While crossing the river Siddhartha says to Govinda Never is a man or deed wholly Samasara or wholly Nirvana; never is a man wholly a saint or a sinner, demonstrating the equilibrium relating to all things or humans. To understand things as they are, enables one to achieve right understanding (116). Siddhartha spent the majority of his life toiling with right understanding. Eventually he came to a universal understanding that all things effect each other. [The stone,] within the continual change of mass to energy and back again, the stone could become other things, thus giving a purpose to an object that at first glance seems so insignificant (Casebeer 25). Understanding gives a sense of knowledge on an informational level as well an intellectual grasping of a subject (Nh t Hanh 116). Without understanding one cannot achieve the love and compassion cherished by te Buddhist religion.

Mental discipline presents one of the most cherished divisions of the Noble Eight-fold Path. Right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration, demonstrate the values of a truly dedicated Buddhist. Right effort describes putting everything you can put behind something if it can be done so morally and ethically right. Siddhartha gave his every moment to understanding his destiny and achieving his ultimate goal. Right mindfulness means to have the correct values and motives in life. Siddhartha achieves right mindfulness by his understanding the importance of everything good or bad, it is perfect at every moment; every sin already carries grace within it (Hesse 144). To achieve right concentration means to put your focus finding what must be found such as destiny, and setting aside that which does not matter. In order to understand right concentration one must be centered and have the ability to distinguish what is indulging and what is torturing. Siddhartha understood both, as a young boy he led the life of an ascetic. As an ascetic he had absolutely nothing, and walked around feeling as though he was above others. As he grew older he became a businessman and indulged himself in all sorts of sensual pleasures. To have right concentration means to be able to find a mid-point between these two extremes, thus conquering the Noble Eight-fold Path (Nh t Hanh 111).

That Noble Eight-fold Path proves to be a very difficult path in which to lead a life but it lies in a perfect balance between extremes. A child learns to stand and walk gradually and with difficulty, as it is with the Path, it must be a gradual process and will not be finished easily (118). Siddhartha did not achieve enlightenment without work. It took nearly his entire life to reach his destiny. Hesse masterfully describes Siddhartha s life around the core teachings of the Buddhist faith, and not only gives an explanation to Buddhist beliefs but creates an inspiring story at the same time.

Works Citied

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