

Siddhartha



INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF HERMAN HESSE

Hesse was brought up in a missionary family and his father's teaching influenced him greatly. But he did not take easily to religion and his young life was fraught with depression. He gave up his education and started working in bookshops and started writing, influenced by German philosophers, Greek mythology, and the texts of Eastern religions that his father was interested in. He published his novel *Peter Camenzind* in 1903 and became popular in Germany. During World War I, he participated against the anti-semitic movement that was persecuting artists in Europe. His works were translated into English and came to America in the 1960s, when pacifism and spirituality were big themes in popular culture, and *Siddhartha* gained world-wide fame.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The First World War, The Second World War and the counter-culture liberations of 1960's America all affected the journey of Hesse's works into the canon of literature, as did his own personal biography, influenced in childhood by evangelical religion, stories and spirituality from the Eastern world, and mental illness.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Hesse's other famous works, *Steppenwolf* and *The Glass Bead Game*, also explore the themes of seeking and spiritual enlightenment. Hesse himself read widely and especially the theology and philosophy of writers like Nietzsche, who is said to be a big influence on his work.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *Siddhartha*
- **When Written:** 1919-1921
- **Where Written:** Switzerland
- **When Published:** 1922
- **Genre:** Spiritual, Bildungsroman
- **Setting:** India, in the time of the Buddha
- **Climax:** Siddhartha reaches enlightenment by listening to the river and understanding the oneness of the world
- **Antagonist:** The illusions of the material world and the search for enlightenment antagonize the characters but in the end, Siddhartha realizes that he must love everything, even those things that seem like illusion and suffering

- **Point of View:** Third person narrator, omniscient, but usually following Siddhartha's thoughts

EXTRA CREDIT

What's in the name: In Sanskrit, the name Siddhartha means 'one who has accomplished a goal', combining 'siddha' which means "accomplished" and 'artha' which means "goal". Gotama means 'best cow', and Kamala means 'pale red'.

Siddhartha reincarnated: The film *Zachariah* is based on *Siddhartha*, but reworks the action of Hesse's novel into a surreal Western. The characters provide the message of spiritualism and pacifism in the guise of inept criminals and musicians.



PLOT SUMMARY

Siddhartha is born and raised in ancient India by Brahmins, learning spiritual practices of meditation and thought. He excels at everything. He is accompanied through childhood by his friend Govinda, who loves Siddhartha dearly, as does everyone else. But Siddhartha is ill at ease. He does not think he can learn anything more from the Brahmin teaching and so decides to begin a pilgrimage with the samanas, a group of wandering ascetics. His father very reluctantly lets him go but Govinda follows.

Siddhartha and Govinda learn the life of the samanas, fasting and suffering. Siddhartha sometimes doubts whether they are really approaching any higher knowledge. Then, one day, a rumor reaches them that the Sublime Buddha, Gautama, is among them. Siddhartha is dubious of teaching, but agrees to hear the Buddha's sermon, so the pair journey with many others to Gautama's grove. Here, they spot the man himself, impeccably calm and with **a perfect smile**. They know he has reached enlightenment. Govinda decides to take refuge in the teaching. This is the first decision he has made for his own path. But Siddhartha tells Gautama that he does not think accepting teaching from another is the way to find one's own deliverance.

Siddhartha goes into the forest and has an awakening, **seeing all the river's colors as if for the first time**. He wants to learn from the world of 'things'. He stays with a kind ferryman, then he goes to town and notices a beautiful courtesan, Kamala, and requests that she teach him in the art of love. She will only teach him if he brings her rich gifts, so she refers him to a merchant, Kamaswami, who takes him into service. Here he becomes a rich man, gambling and trading. Years pass and Siddhartha's spirit sickens. He feels detached from the material world but also caught in its cycle. He has a dream in which

Kamala's songbird dies and with it, all Siddhartha's hope. He leaves the town, and **goes back to the river**. Later we find out that Kamala is pregnant with his child.

Siddhartha, wishing to die, edges close to the river. But instead, the word 'om' comes to him from the river, and he falls into a deep sleep. When he wakes, there is a samana waiting with him, whom he recognizes as Govinda, his childhood friend. He tries to explain to Govinda that he has become many different people, but he is still searching. Siddhartha muses on his life, where his sadness has come from, and how the 'om' saved him. He seeks out the ferryman, who had attained **peace by the river**. The ferryman agrees to let Siddhartha stay and work with him. He advises that Siddhartha listens to the river as he does. Siddhartha begins to find enlightening visions and voices in the water.

One day, it is rumored that Gautama is dying. Kamala, now a pilgrim too, comes towards the river with her son, young Siddhartha. The boy is sulky and wishes to rest, and it is then that a black snake bites the resting Kamala. Vasudeva hears the cries and brings her to the hut and she sees Siddhartha. Kamala dies, and now Siddhartha must be guardian to his son. But young Siddhartha doesn't know his father and is used to very rich things in town, not the simple life of a ferryman. He makes life very hard for Siddhartha. Vasudeva, seeing how painfully Siddhartha loves his son, advises that he should let the boy go to the town, because he does not belong here. Siddhartha can't face letting him go, but soon he has little choice, the boy runs away and it is obvious that he doesn't want the ferrymen to follow him.

Siddhartha **learns the secrets of the river** with Vasudeva by his side and eventually his wounds at the loss of his son start to heal. He understands the unity that Gautama taught, through the river. He sees that the river is the same at its source as in the waterfall and in the rain, that time doesn't really exist. The world is like this river, eternal and whole. Now that Siddhartha can really listen to the river too, Vasudeva is ready to go 'into the oneness', and he leaves the river with Siddhartha and disappears into the forest.

In the town, the monks of Gautama live in Kamala's old grove, and Govinda hears about a wise ferryman. He still seeks enlightenment and goes to the river. He doesn't recognize Siddhartha when he sees him, and asks for a taste of the ferryman's wisdom. Siddhartha says he has changed many times, that he was once that sleeper by the river that Govinda protected, but that despite change, everything is part of a whole, always in the present moment. Each sinner is also a Buddha. One must agree with it all, and love everything easily. This is what Siddhartha has learned. Govinda sees that his old friend has become one of the enlightened ones and that **his smile radiates** like a saint's.



CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Siddhartha – is the protagonist, searching for enlightenment. He starts out as the most talented Brahmin's son, and loved by all, but he is discontented and doesn't trust in the teaching. He wishes to join a group of wandering, homeless samanas, in an ascetic life of fasting and thinking, and this begins his journey as a pilgrim, searching for his own brand of enlightenment and spiritual wisdom. With each stage of his journey, he goes through trials and doubts himself. He learns to dismiss physical needs with the samanas and then to indulge in them in the material life of the merchants, and through these two extremes, he comes back to the river and the spiritual home of the ferryman, where he gains the most important piece of knowledge of his life – **the world is a river**, always beginning, always ending, always whole. This wholeness tells Siddhartha of his own story, and teaches him to love even his hardest trials and his own ego. As Siddhartha reaches his ultimate wisdom, his son enters his life and provides him with a legacy and a knowledge of blind love. Siddhartha, finally understanding his life's journey and the nature of the world, reaches **the serene smile of enlightenment**. He shows that contentment will only be found by taking one's own path through life.

Govinda – is Siddhartha's childhood friend, who grows up admiring Siddhartha's high calling and wants to follow him on his journey, which he believes will lead to sainthood. Govinda's own path seems to always follow in the footsteps of others. When he leaves Siddhartha's shadow, it is to start following Gautama instead. He always wears an expression of seeking, and even when he is an old man, he seeks knowledge from Siddhartha the ferryman.

Siddhartha's father – is a wise Brahmin and tries to teach his talented son, but Siddhartha soon outgrows the Brahmin teaching and needs to follow his own path. His father is reluctant to let him go, but when he sees how stubborn Siddhartha is, he sends him away, in the knowledge that Siddhartha can return if he does not find the truth he seeks. When Siddhartha reaches the final stages of his wisdom, it is through realizing the cycle he is part of, and how his love and sacrifice for young Siddhartha is the same love and sacrifice that his father showed him in his youth.

Gautama – is the venerable Buddha, who has achieved enlightenment. While Siddhartha is a samana, Gautama arrives in the forest and is followed by many pilgrims seeking teaching. His voice and calm, **smiling manner** deeply affect Siddhartha and Govinda. But while Govinda decides to seek refuge in the Buddha's teaching, Siddhartha tells Gautama that he seeks something that can't be taught. Gautama is gracious to Siddhartha but warns him of the dangers of knowledge-seeking. We see by the end that Gautama also followed his own

path, that is how he achieved the height of wisdom.

Kamala – is a courtesan, who is treated as a queen by the town and spotted by Siddhartha as she travels by sedan into a pleasure grove. Her smile shows him that she has the potential to love him and show him great things. She represents a new goal for Siddhartha that persuades him to give up his ascetic life and learn the art of love, which he does very well, and the pair share a deep kinship despite their different backgrounds. Kamala is also very spiritual and after Siddhartha leaves the town, Kamala converts to the teaching of the Buddha and gives her pleasure grove to the monks. She dies in the hut of the ferryman. Before Siddhartha departs, though, he and Kamala conceive a son. The gifts she has given to Siddhartha become clear and symbolized by this son, young Siddhartha, who provides Siddhartha with a legacy and a vision of his life's cycle.

Kamaswami – is the rich merchant whom Siddhartha works for when he comes into town. He teaches Siddhartha how to trade and gamble, but he is frustrated when Siddhartha's wisdom and lack of interest in profits detract from the deals he wants to make. He is an anxious man, prone to anger, and is a symbol of the greed and tiredness of the unspiritual town.

Vasudeva – is a ferryman who teaches Siddhartha the importance of listening. The first night that he hosts Siddhartha, he listens perfectly to his story and shows him how to listen **to the voice of the river**. This provokes Siddhartha's understanding of natural things and the word of oneness 'om'. Vasudeva never seems to lose faith or suffer the same griefs as Siddhartha, but he also lives alone and we sense that his wisdom has come from having loved his wife, and been through the trials that Siddhartha is now facing. We learn how close Vasudeva is to enlightenment, even though he is not a thinker or a preacher, when he leaves Siddhartha at the end, to join 'the oneness'.

Young Siddhartha – is the son of Siddhartha and Kamala, conceived in the pleasure grove of the town where Siddhartha has learned the art of love. Young Siddhartha, when he first meets his father, has been nurtured by the rich ways of the town and so, when his mother dies, feels imprisoned by his new guardian in the simple life of the riverside hut. Young Siddhartha provokes the final transformation of Siddhartha—by refusing to stay with his father, he teaches Siddhartha to understand the blind love that the child people feel and to see how he is a part of the cycle, and how his departure from his father mirrors that of Young Siddhartha from him.

Young woman – A young woman whom Siddhartha encounters as he walks to the town. As he asks her directions, Siddhartha finds himself lusting after her. His inner voice calls out to him to stop, though not before he strokes her face, which is the first time he has touched a woman. His interest in the young woman can be seen as a sign of (or even cause of) Siddhartha's interest in love, and soon after departing from the young woman

Siddhartha sees Kamala in the town.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Siddhartha's mother – A minor character in the novel, Siddhartha's mother takes joy in her son's great intellectual gifts.



THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.



THE PATH TO SPIRITUAL ENLIGHTENMENT

In the town where Siddhartha was born, Brahmins and sages and young practitioners of the Brahma way of life are all trying to find the path to enlightenment. Siddhartha is raised listening to the guidance of the Brahmin teachers, but he concludes, based on the fact that none of Brahmin's have themselves achieved enlightenment, that this path does not seem to lead to the celestial heights that he aims for. In search of enlightenment, Siddhartha embraces numerous different lifestyles. First, the ascetic philosophy of the samanas, who denounce physical needs. Then he meets the Buddha, who it seems should offer him the knowledge that he seeks, since he is himself enlightened.

But as with the Brahmin's and samanas, Siddhartha finds the seeking of enlightenment through the teachings of others to be impossible. He believes he needs experience, rather than teaching. He goes to the town and follows the path of the child people, who are governed by money, lust, love, and other worldly desires. The anxiety he finds in the town leads him to the river, where he meets a ferryman, a humble servant of the river. When he finds such enlightenment in the ferryman, he too starts to listen to **the river**, and begins to understand the flows and unity of life.

Siddhartha's path to enlightenment combines learning from others and from the natural world, with a dose of stubborn disobedience and experiencing the world for himself. In contrast, Govinda follows a path that leaves him always in the shadow of another, first Siddhartha then the Buddha. Govinda seeks teaching, and huddles in the teachings of others like it was a refuge from the world. Govinda's path of constant dependence on others highlights the independence of Siddhartha's journey, and Govinda's failure to achieve enlightenment in comparison to Siddhartha's success shows that it is the untraveled path, the personal path, that leads to deliverance. Perhaps what had really set Siddhartha apart was

not his unusual skill for contemplation, but for his ability to choose his own path.

Through his son, Siddhartha comes to understand the human attachments of the child people he had mocked in his town life. He also comes to understand the suffering and devotion of his own father. So, in making his own sacrifice and sending his son away, Siddhartha becomes connected to the earth—to love and connection, which he had earlier tried to eliminate from himself—in a way he hadn't before. This poses an interesting possibility for the path to enlightenment – that it is only when Siddhartha continues a familial legacy, and the cycle returns to the paternal bond, that he gains that **Buddhistic smile**, making spiritual enlightenment much more of a human, earthly image rather than a lofty divine ideal.



NATURE AND THE SPIRIT

Siddhartha's environment, from his birth to his enlightenment, plays an important role in guiding and inspiring his spiritual journey. Nature provides the physical and spiritual sustenance while he is a samana. And when he is suicidal from his excursion into the world of wealth and anxiety, it is the **river** that saves him, and which becomes not just a metaphor for the idea of enlightenment but the source of Siddhartha's revelation. Being all places at once, the river shows that time is an illusion and that all things are natural and never-ending. This recognition of nature is a big step towards Siddhartha's spirit being raised towards enlightenment.

Just as **the river** brings together the possibility of Siddhartha 'snuffing himself out' with his own reflection and the holy word 'om', nature brings together birth and death and spiritual enlightenment, and in so doing shows the oneness of the world. When Siddhartha is describing his sadness, he likens it to the death of a bird, his inner voice. Nature is both within and without Siddhartha, and when he realizes this, death seems not to be the end that he thought it was.

Nature also brings together the unity of Siddhartha's experiences. His eventual philosophy relates to all the trials he has put himself through, from a samana to a merchant. On one hand, ascetism showed him the denial of physical needs, which is an attempt to overcome the natural world. On the other is the materialism of business and sex, which Siddhartha found in the town, centers on the other extreme: what you can get from and enjoy from the natural world. Finally, Siddhartha's ultimate philosophy, like the vision of the stone's many incarnations, involves learning from the natural world and realizing its fundamental unity.



DIRECTION AND INDIRECTION

Part of the teaching of the Buddha is that deliverance comes from rising above the cycles and

circles of a worldly life. Throughout the novel, cyclic experiences are viewed negatively. The cycles are connected with the spiritless, sinful lives of the people in the town, whereas the samanas and the Buddha intend to live their lives towards enlightenment and Nirvana, aiming for higher places with every action.

Though Siddhartha appreciates Buddha's teaching, he doesn't understand how to leave the unending cycles behind. So rather than choose a direct path that would have him follow the lead of one who has attained enlightenment, such as the Buddha, Siddhartha chooses a path that might be described as moving along ground level, seeking through the natural paths and waters, through the streets of the town, to achieve his own progression. In this way, the novel is full of contradicting directions of flow and influence. The path upward is elusive and the path along is repetitive and cyclical. Perhaps it is direction itself that is hindering Siddhartha from finding his way?

When he allows himself **to live by the river**, without following or seeking a particular path, his lack of direction makes sense, and mimics the river itself. The river seems to be flowing one way, another, falling over a cliff as a waterfall, halted and meandering, unchanged by time, never beginning or ending. It is the vision of this wholeness that brings light to Siddhartha's thinking and purpose to his life's wandering. Enlightenment had been associated with height and a journey upwards, but Siddhartha's searching shows that enlightenment is not ascending above the rest of the world but rather recognizing one's equality with it. And, fittingly, the novel ends with Siddhartha face to face with his childhood friend, not above but together with the world.



TRUTH AND ILLUSION

Enlightenment, sought by all the spiritual characters in the book, is not just a feeling of peace with the world, but a kind of wisdom, an absolute knowledge and acceptance of the way things are. But this truth eludes most of those who seek for it. Some search within the teachings of other wiser people, like Govinda. But such devotees are always in the shadow of someone else's enlightenment, and never seem to reach their own.

Real truth turns out to be found at moments of connection and realization with the natural world. At each critical moment of his journey, Siddhartha finds some piece of truth. The nature of the self, comprised of his ancestors, his father, the many faces of human kind, appears like a vision before him. The connectedness of all things also occurs to him as pure and true, like the image of the stone being at once soil, animal, and all its incarnations.

This finding of truth also means avoiding illusion. Many things are labeled as illusion and tricks in Siddhartha's world: love, wealth, and desire, and especially thoughts and opinions.

Siddhartha tells Govinda at the end of the book not to take the explanations of his philosophy literally but to try to understand them with his own experience, because explanations are made of words, and there is always some foolishness and embarrassment that comes of trying to explain something through words. The real truth comes not from seeking knowledge or avoiding illusion but accepting both things. When looking at natural forms, and realizing the unity of the world, Siddhartha knows that there can be no trickery about anything he sees.



SATISFACTION AND DISSATISFACTION

The novel begins with a description of all Siddhartha's good fortune, but despite all that sets him apart, he is dissatisfied, believing that he has learned all that his elders have within them to teach him. It is this hunger to use his potential completely and know absolute truth that drives each stage of his pilgrimage, and the dissatisfaction he finds at every turn that encourages him to move on. The book seems to be saying that dissatisfaction can be a good thing, a guiding light towards the next step in our journey.

And yet, dissatisfaction in and of itself does not produce enlightenment. Certainly the Buddha and Vasudeva are not characterized by their dissatisfaction with the world. And Siddhartha himself, when he finally gains enlightenment, experiences the opposite of dissatisfaction—he experiences a profound acceptance of and satisfaction with everything. Dissatisfaction, then, might be described not as a negative feeling with the world but rather a sense that there is greater potential ahead and a desire to reach that greater potential.



SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



THE SMILE

The Buddha has a serene smile when Siddhartha first sees him, and this smile is symbolic of the man's perfection, his childlike love for the world and his tranquility, and becomes a symbol of the ideal state of enlightenment that all the novel's characters are searching for. As Siddhartha's measure of spiritual wisdom changes and matures, thanks to the natural world, he sees the smile again on Vasudeva's face, showing that enlightenment can come with listening and living and isn't reserved for philosophers. In the final chapter, faced with his past and present and at ease with everything, Siddhartha smiles with this perfect smile and shows Govinda that he has reached his goal.



THE RIVER

It is when Siddhartha first visits the river that he realizes the spiritual power of natural things and this begins his own special journey into understanding the material world and the connections between all things. Each time he comes back to the river, it marks a new stage in his enlightenment. The first time he comes back, it is with great unease from living a rich life in town, and he desires to drown himself, but the river responds, sending him the word 'om' and showing him his own reflection. He seeks the ferryman, who shows him the power of listening. The ferryman has learned his wisdom from the river and it speaks to him in many voices. As Siddhartha learns to hear these voices and sees the visions of the river, he comes closer to contentment and greater natural wisdom. Eventually, after he has grieved to see his son refuse to live a ferryman's life with him, Siddhartha learns the nature of eternity and wholeness from the river.



QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Penguin Classics edition of *Siddhartha* published in 1999.

Part 1, Chapter 1 Quotes

●● He had begun to sense that his venerable father and his other teachers, that the wise Brahmins, had already imparted to him the bulk and the best of their knowledge, that they had already poured their fullness into his waiting vessel, and the vessel was not full, his mind was not contented...

Related Characters: Siddhartha, Siddhartha's father

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 5

Explanation and Analysis

As a Brahmin's son, Siddhartha has been raised in an atmosphere of people seeking enlightenment in wisdom passed down through the community. Siddhartha has been a model student – he is very good at meditation, he is a quick learner, and he has an aura of success and charisma that makes him much admired. However, while his community assumes that he will be successful in the traditional ways they have defined for him, Siddhartha instinctively knows that the life that he has been born into is not enough.

Though he, like his community, seeks enlightenment, he is suspicious that he can attain enlightenment through received wisdom from elders who, frankly, seem not to have

achieved enlightenment themselves. Siddhartha feels that he has already learned from them what they are able to offer, and to remain in his community would not continue to move him towards enlightenment. This is a first instance of the dissatisfaction that will propel Siddhartha throughout the book. This dissatisfaction is presented in the novel not as a negative emotion, but as an indication and result of Siddhartha's intuition about experiences that are not contributing to enlightenment. This quote also marks the beginning of Siddhartha's skepticism towards received wisdom, and initiates his journey to gain experiential knowledge from the world.

Part 1, Chapter 2 Quotes

☞ Siddhartha had a goal, a single one: to become empty – empty of thirst, empty of desire, empty of dreams, empty of joy and sorrow.

Related Characters: Siddhartha

Related Themes:     

Page Number: 13

Explanation and Analysis

Siddhartha, driven by his dissatisfaction with his Brahmin life, joins the Samanas, an ascetic and nomadic sect that renounces material possessions. He is attracted to the extremity of the Samana lifestyle – they wander naked, fasting and renouncing the self. To Siddhartha, this signifies a devotion to enlightenment that the Brahmins, who are comfortable with their possessions, seem to lack.

In addition, Siddhartha is attracted to the experiential nature of Samana wisdom. Instead of just hearing about enlightenment, Siddhartha wants to be asked to make sacrifices for it and to experience heightened states brought on by asceticism. His goal in joining the Samanas, as he states it to himself here, is to empty himself. He is rejecting the self, hoping to purge himself of "self," in order to experience enlightenment. His subsequent time with the Samanas will be colored by this goal, and it will lead him to valuable lessons, though just as he rejected the Brahmin's ideas about the best way to achieve enlightenment he will ultimately come to believe that the Samanas beliefs and methods are similarly lacking.

☞ "I do not desire to walk on water," said Siddhartha. "Let old samanas content themselves with such tricks."

Related Characters: Siddhartha (speaker), Govinda

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 23

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Siddhartha, now disillusioned with the Samanas, has decided to leave them. In order to go, he must inform the leader of his intent to leave, and the leader is furious about it until Siddhartha hypnotizes him and he acquiesces. The hypnosis proves that Siddhartha has learned a lot from the Samanas and, much like he could have been successful within the traditional path of the Brahmins, he could have become a powerful Samana.

Siddhartha distrusts this kind of straightforward path to success and enlightenment, though – to be able to overpower the Samana leader so quickly shows Siddhartha that maybe he has learned enough from the Samanas and he might be able to push his gifts further in different circumstances. In this exchange, Govinda tells Siddhartha that he could be a great Samana and learn to walk on water, and Siddhartha informs him that this is besides the point. He doesn't want to learn powerful tricks, he wants enlightenment, and he doesn't think the Samanas can get him there. This is one of many examples of Siddhartha distrusting anything that seems too easy and straightforward. He seems to think that enlightenment must come from challenging oneself even if that means rejecting received wisdom.

Part 1, Chapter 3 Quotes

☞ On all paths of the glorious grove, monks in yellow cloaks were walking; they sat here and there under the trees, absorbed in contemplation or in spiritual conversation; the shady gardens looked like a city, filled with people swarming like bees.

Related Characters: Gautama

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 26

Explanation and Analysis

As with each new stage of Siddhartha's journey, the grove where he and Govinda go to find Gautama seems to promise that it will be a truer path to enlightenment than the last path they tried. Gautama is important and

compelling enough to have attracted many monks, who make pilgrimages to the grove and devote their lives to following Gautama's teachings. It's an impressive sight to see all these people, and Siddhartha and Govinda are hopeful that this will be the right set of teachings for them, even though they have not yet seen Gautama.

It's important to note that, in the grove, nature seems to be celebrated; the monks are not in conflict with the natural world, but they seem part of it, like bees in a garden. With the Samanas, Siddhartha struggled with the disjunction between nature and his body – he would open himself to nature, but he would always return to the self and body he had tried to reject. The imagery Hesse uses here sets up the possibility that Gautama and his followers might present a more nuanced solution than the Samanas to the problem of disjunction between body and nature.

“I have never seen anyone gaze and smile like that, sit and stride like that, he thought. Truly, I wish I could gaze and smile, sit and stride like that, so free, so venerable, so concealed, so open, so childlike and mysterious.”

Related Characters: Siddhartha (speaker), Gautama

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 34

Explanation and Analysis

This passage describes Siddhartha's and Govinda's first sighting of Gautama, in which they simply see him walking and immediately know by his presence who he is. Here, Hesse drives home the point that enlightenment has a kind of unspoken radiance. This seems to corroborate Siddhartha's suspicion of the teachings of those who lacked this radiance. Gautama is clearly the most special spiritual being Siddhartha and Govinda have yet encountered and they are inspired by him.

It is significant that Hesse focuses on Gautama's smile, because it is pursuit of that smile – a symbol of achieved enlightenment – that Siddhartha will seek for the remainder of the book. In Gautama's smile enlightenment is, in a sense, made concrete in a way that is surprising – enlightenment is not teachings or practices as much as it is a presence that is open and happy and even childlike. This smile gestures towards the unity between the body and the world that Siddhartha seeks, though he does not yet know how to

attain it.

Part 1, Chapter 4 Quotes

“He looked around as if seeing the world for the first time. Beautiful was the world, colorful was the world, bizarre and enigmatic was the world! There was blue, there was yellow, there was green. Sky flowed and river, forest jutted and mountain: everything beautiful, everything enigmatic and magical. And in the midst of it he, Siddhartha, the awakening man, was on the way to himself.”

Related Characters: Siddhartha

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 37

Explanation and Analysis

By this point, Siddhartha has met Gautama and seen in him a model for the kind of enlightenment he wants to attain. However, Siddhartha has an intuition that he will not be able to attain enlightenment by following teachings, even teachings of someone who has achieved what Siddhartha wants most. Because of this, Siddhartha leaves Gautama to make his own path.

In making this choice, Siddhartha indicates that he has realized that he cannot attain enlightenment without knowing himself, and he doesn't yet know himself at all because in following the Brahmins and Samanas he was too busy trying to reject the self and empty himself to the world. Once he accepts this realization, the world seems to bloom before him; he begins to see nature in all its splendor, examining the different colors and textures and forms instead of ignoring them for the sake of "spirituality." Now he experiences a new kind of spirituality, one in which he realizes the importance of not overlooking individual parts of the world simply because he is seeking unity.

Part 2, Chapter 5 Quotes

“He is like Govinda,” he thought, smiling. “All the people I meet on my path are like Govinda. All are thankful, although they themselves have the right to be thanked. All are subservient, all want to be friends, like to obey, think little. People are children.”

Related Characters: Siddhartha (speaker), Govinda

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 46-47

Explanation and Analysis

Siddhartha has an ambivalent relationship to the adjective "childlike." On the one hand, Gautama's smile – which represents enlightenment – is described as childlike, and it is a childlike presence and openness that embodies enlightenment. On the other hand, Siddhartha still condescends to the townspeople for being "childlike" in that they do not seem as willing or able to think for themselves as Siddhartha is.

The townspeople, like Govinda, want to be told what to do and want to fixate on manageable concerns rather than exploring and pushing themselves, which has been Siddhartha's path. Siddhartha here is somewhat misguided; he has to learn that living in a society like this one can be simultaneously petty and profound. From these townspeople, Siddhartha will learn important lessons about human relationships, and he will also learn of his susceptibility to the same kinds of spiritual traps they fall into. So this condescension is an indicator that there's a lesson here for Siddhartha that will bring him closer to enlightenment through hardship, beauty, and opening his mind.

☞ “Why should I fear a samana, a foolish samana from the forest, who comes from the jackals and does not yet know what a woman is?”

Related Characters: Kamala (speaker), Siddhartha

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 51

Explanation and Analysis

Siddhartha has lived a life devoted, in a sense, to intellect – his spiritual pursuits have been generally concerned with philosophy rather than the body and the world around him. From Kamala, Siddhartha needs to learn the spiritual nature of the body. It is in this passage that we learn that Kamala will be an apt teacher, since her attitude to Siddhartha indicates that, like Guatama, she is self-possessed enough to not be taken in by Siddhartha's charisma as so many others are.

Kamala has a power that comes from her relationship to her

body. When Siddhartha wonders if he can claim her body by force, she essentially tells him that if he did he would find nothing worth taking since her power is hers to give. This sets up the next challenge for Siddhartha, consistent with his others. Siddhartha seeks situations in which he can absorb the wisdom of someone who is powerful in a way that he is weak – he finds this power in Kamala.

☞ “I can think. I can wait. I can fast.”

Related Characters: Siddhartha (speaker), Siddhartha

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 52

Explanation and Analysis

This quote comes in a conversation between Siddhartha and Kamala about how he will compensate her for her teachings. He does not know how to bring her what she demands, and she suggests that he use his skills to make money and then asks what those skills are. He enumerates thinking, waiting, and fasting – these skills point to the extent to which his life has been lived in service of philosophy and spirituality rather than practical concerns.

Kamala is not put off by the impracticality of these skills; in fact, she seems to think it is interesting and rare that this is what Siddhartha does. It's clear, though, that Siddhartha's skills estrange him from society (he has no way to make money, and no reason to be entwined with the townspeople) and he needs to become more connected to people as part of his journey to enlightenment. On a practical level, he needs to develop new skills to be able to pay Kamala for her teaching. On a more abstract level, Siddhartha needs to learn about the daily lives of the townspeople so that his experiential knowledge of what regular people do can allow him to respect them.

Part 2, Chapter 6 Quotes

☞ Siddhartha replied: “Stop scolding, dear friend! Scolding has never achieved anything. If there has been a loss, then let me bear the burden. I am very content with this trip. I have met all sorts of people, a Brahmin has become my friend, children have ridden on my lap, farmers have shown me their fields. No one took me for a merchant.”

Related Characters: Siddhartha (speaker), Siddhartha,

Kamaswami

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 61

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Siddhartha has just returned from a trip to a rice plantation. Though he found that the rice had already been sold to another merchant, Siddhartha decided to stay anyway and mingle with the people who lived there.

Kamaswami scolds him for not prioritizing business and coming home immediately, but Siddhartha brushes him off. This passage shows the differences between Siddhartha's values and Kamaswami's values; Kamaswami thinks that business is of paramount importance, while Siddhartha is willing to take business losses without complaint in exchange for having good experiences with other people. Siddhartha is seeking experiences, while Kamaswami is seeking money.

This passage is important because something Siddhartha needed to learn from living in town with Kamaswami and being with Kamala was the importance of human relationships, and this is the first time that Siddhartha has expressed the value of making friends with others. This passage shows that Siddhartha is gaining the experience he needs from living in the town, and it has not yet begun to corrupt him.

●● At times he heard, deep in his breast, a soft and dying voice that admonished softly, lamented softly, barely audible. Then for an hour he was aware that he was leading a strange life, that he was doing all sorts of things that were merely a game, that he was cheerful, granted, and sometimes felt joy, but that a real life was flowing past him and not touching him.

Related Characters: Siddhartha

Related Themes:     

Page Number: 63

Explanation and Analysis

For a long time, Siddhartha has lived with Kamaswami among the "child people" in town and has felt separate from them because of his past. For a while, this separation seemed true – Siddhartha had different, more spiritual concerns from the townspeople and was not moved by their material concerns. However, after a long time of living this life as though it were a game, Siddhartha begins to

understand that it is *not* a game – that whether or not he fully believes in what he's doing, it is actually the life he's living.

The inner voice that has guided him his whole life is faint now; he can barely hear it when it tells him that he has strayed from the real life he was meant for. The inner voice is nearly synonymous with Siddhartha's dissatisfaction, and it is generally dissatisfaction that is his best guide for when his life is not matching up with his potential. However, it seems that the petty materialism of his life as a merchant has dulled his sense of dissatisfaction dangerously, making him believe he is satisfied with something less than what he truly wants. This passage is important for the way it suggests how material comfort can blind one to the possibilities of a more fulfilling life, and because it definitively confirms that something is deeply wrong with Siddhartha's life, but Siddhartha is, at this point, unable to do anything about it. This is an important conflict for him to endure.

●● Like a veil, like a thin mist, weariness descended on Siddhartha, slowly, a bit denser each day, a bit dimmer each month, a bit heavier each year. A new garment grows old with time, loses its lovely color with time, gets stains, gets wrinkles, frays out at the hems, starts showing awkward, threadbare areas.

Related Characters: Siddhartha

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 69

Explanation and Analysis

For a long time as he has lived in the town and pursued a merchant life of material possessions, Siddhartha has been aware of the stifling of his inner voice that has, throughout his life before moving to the town, guided him from experience to experience. At this point in the book, he is struggling because he has been lulled into a comfortable but unfulfilling life, and the longer he ignores his dissatisfaction, the less likely he is to actually pull himself out of this life and find one that will allow him to achieve his potential and be true to his spiritual values.

Until this experience in the town, Siddhartha's inner voice has guided him has been an unerring guide. It has guided him to follow his own thoughts and needs in contrast to simply following the behavior and ideas of those around him, such as the Brahmins or Samanas. By contrast, this passage after his longtime spent in business in the town

presents Siddhartha as having a true *internal* conflict, in which his inner voices is battling his own impulses that push him to just relax and enjoy his material comfort, and he seems to be losing. Hesse describes Siddhartha's vitality and vibrancy as a coat that fades and wears thin with each passing month. We get the strong sense that Siddhartha must break out of this life in order to get back his vitality, but it's not clear anymore that he will be able to do so.

Part 2, Chapter 8 Quotes

☞☞ With a twisted face he stared into the water, saw his face reflected, and he spat at it. In deep fatigue, he loosened his arm from the tree trunk and turned slightly in order to plunge in a sheer drop, to go under at last. Closing his eyes, he leaned toward death.

Related Characters: Siddhartha

Related Themes:    

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 78

Explanation and Analysis

At this point in the book, Siddhartha has definitively realized his mistake; he stayed too long in the town and allowed his inner voice to fall silent. By living for the desires of the child people while knowing that their desires were not spiritually sufficient, Siddhartha feels that he has become even worse than the child people, since they, at least, seem happy. As a result of this realization, he abandons his possessions and flees the town, but worries that this action is not enough since his voice has not come back to him and without it he has nothing to push him forward and no reason to live.

This sense is amplified by his proximity to the river, which is always moving forward and changing and adapting to the riverbed in which it runs. Siddhartha longs to be more like the river, but he fears that he has betrayed himself to the extent that his self no longer exists as it once did. The thought of this brings him to consider suicide – he hangs over the river ready to plunge himself in. He does not yet recognize that the frustration he is feeling with his missing inner voice is *itself* dissatisfaction, is *itself* the inner voice. Though his despair feels like his true condition at that moment, it is actually an indication that he is breaking out of the false satisfaction with his merchant life. Siddhartha is finally seeking out the life he is meant for, even though it is deeply painful.

☞☞ “Where,” he asked his heart, “where do you get this merriment? Does it come from that long, fine sleep, that did me so much good? Or from the word ‘om’ that I uttered? Or was it that I ran away, that my flight is completed, that I am finally free again and standing under the sky like a child?”

Related Characters: Siddhartha (speaker), Siddhartha

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 86

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Siddhartha has just awakened from his restorative nap by the river. He had been close to drowning himself in despair over the inner voice he thought he had lost, but when he leaned over the river, he heard the word "om" and was reminded of the spiritual purpose of his life. He then fell asleep, and, upon waking, felt born anew. This moment restores Siddhartha to nature, much like his experience in the grove with Gautama did after he left the Samanas.

In a sense, the novel is structured around Siddhartha straying from nature to learn more about one facet of human experience, then devoting himself too much to that facet (like fasting with the Samanas, or pursuing wealth as a merchant), and then needing to be restored to the natural world again. These restorations drive home the point that a life of intellect, theology, or human compassion must be unified with nature, not at odds with it. By now it should be obvious that in order to attain enlightenment Siddhartha must devote himself as much to the natural world as to anything else.

Part 2, Chapter 9 Quotes

☞☞ He learned incessantly from the river. Above all, it taught him how to listen, to listen with a silent heart, with a waiting, open soul, without passion, without desire, without judgment, without opinion.

Related Characters: Siddhartha

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 93

Explanation and Analysis

Siddhartha, at this point, has apprenticed himself to the

ferryman, Vasudeva. The ferryman is not an official spiritual leader, but Siddhartha senses that he has important spiritual knowledge and wisdom that Siddhartha needs. Importantly, instead of trying to get this knowledge from the ferryman, Siddhartha tries to get it by learning from the river itself, which is how the ferryman came to his own spirituality. This is another instance of the importance of experiential knowledge (gained from the river) rather than received wisdom (the knowledge of the river relayed by the ferryman).

Here, Siddhartha finally seems to have found a kind of unity with nature, embodied in his seeking human wisdom in the natural world. The river, because it is a feature of nature, proves a much better teacher than any human being could be because it is never dogmatic. The river never teaches a single "right way," instead it inspires contemplation within the individual who seeks after enlightenment. In this sense, nature is the best teacher for someone like Siddhartha because all it can do is challenge and push him to learn and think for himself – it can't lead him astray.

Part 2, Chapter 10 Quotes

“Can I part with him?” he asked softly, embarrassed. “Give me more time, dear friend! Look, I am fighting for him, I am wooing his heart, I want to capture it with love and friendly patience. Let the river speak to him too someday; he too is called.”

Related Characters: Siddhartha (speaker), Siddhartha, Vasudeva, Young Siddhartha

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 104

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Siddhartha debates the ferryman about how to handle his young son who has come to live with them. The son grew up in the town with Kamala, and has many of the values from the town that Siddhartha and the ferryman reject. The ferryman, who has learned from the river to let things be as they are, gently prods Siddhartha to allow the boy to go back to the town like he wants, but Siddhartha wants more time with the boy, rationalizing that this time could instill better values in his son. Obviously, this echoes the beginning of the book in which Siddhartha wants to abandon his own father's way of life and his father attempts

to prevent him from going before finally relenting to Siddhartha's stubborn insistence.

In a sense, then, Siddhartha's experience with his son marks a cyclical reunification with one of the early trials of Siddhartha's journey to enlightenment, only this time it is inverted. Instead of breaking out from his father's way of life, Siddhartha has to now recognize the importance of allowing his son to take his own path, even if it is counter to the one Siddhartha wants for him. Furthermore, Siddhartha cannot himself instill wisdom in his son; as his own journey has taught him, knowledge has to be earned experientially. There is nothing Siddhartha can tell his son that would be as valuable as allowing him to make his own mistakes and discoveries.

●● He felt deep love in his heart for the runaway. It was like a wound; and he also felt that the wound was not for wallowing, that it must become a blossom and shine.

Related Characters: Siddhartha, Young Siddhartha

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 111

Explanation and Analysis

Siddhartha does not relent and allow his son to make his own path, so his son defies him and runs away, humiliating his father in the process by stealing the ferryman's boat and money. While he and the ferryman search for his son (at the ferryman's insistence this is only to get the boat back), Siddhartha finds himself in Kamala's grove and he remembers every step of his own journey. This memory forces him to acknowledge that he cannot change his son – only his son's experiences and choices can do that. As Siddhartha learned from the river, all he can do is wait for his son's journey to play out as it will.

This realization is another step on Siddhartha's own path to enlightenment. He has never experienced the kind of love before that he feels for his son, and it made him vulnerable to the possessiveness and warped behavior that he judged in the child people. After having had this experience with his son, he can now accept the child people, and by letting his son go, he is gaining all the benefits of giving love and transcending its limitations. This is what Siddhartha means when he describes the wound of his son as one that would become a blossom. It is only this heartbreak with his son that can allow him to attain enlightenment.

Part 2, Chapter 11 Quotes

☞ Radiant was Vasudeva's smile, it hovered, luminous, over all the wrinkles in his old face just as the om hovered over all the voices of the river. Bright shone his smile when he looked at his friend, and bright now glowed the very same smile on Siddhartha's face.

Related Characters: Vasudeva, Siddhartha

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols:  

Page Number: 119

Explanation and Analysis

Though Siddhartha has accepted that his son is gone and he cannot change him, he still feels bitterness and hurt. He is jealous of people who have loving father-son relationships, and wonders if the child people were wiser than he was all along for prioritizing their loved ones. Siddhartha is mostly happy and at peace, but the wound from his son is the only thing bothering him. Finally, after a climactic moment of feeling the river laughing at him for his silliness about his son, Siddhartha, at Vasudeva's urging, looks into the river and demands more than he ever has.

The river gives him a vision of unity, in which all voices are one, all times are one, all emotions are one, and he is one with all of it. Looking back up from the river, Siddhartha finally has the smile – symbolizing enlightenment – that Gautama and Vasudeva have. That Siddhartha attains this enlightenment as an old person – Hesse is careful to point out the wrinkles in his face – is important. The path to enlightenment was long and arduous and there are no shortcuts. Siddhartha had to earn every bit of wisdom through experience and through listening to himself rather than others. Finally, it's important that this final knowledge comes from the river, which symbolizes the unity into which Siddhartha has entered.

☞ “I am going into the forest, I am going into the oneness,” said Vasudeva, radiant.

Related Characters: Vasudeva (speaker), Vasudeva

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 120

Explanation and Analysis

After Siddhartha experiences his vision unity when looking in the river, Vasudeva reveals that his role in Siddhartha's life is complete. He has pointed Siddhartha to the wisdom of the river, and Siddhartha has successfully learned from it. The two no longer need one another, and Vasudeva decides to go to the forest. This parting is not sad or even ambivalent – both men have learned that, like the river, they cannot control others and they cannot control fate. Further, they know that things seem to come and go, but in reality everything is part of the same unity. Because of this understanding, Vasudeva's leaving does not feel like a parting, but rather a moment of spiritual radiance.

However, the fact Vasudeva seems to have been liberated by having passed his own knowledge to Siddhartha points to one last thing that Siddhartha needs to do. To be implicated in the chain of spiritual enlightenment, he must do what he can to steer someone else into the kinds of experiences that provide enlightenment.

Part 2, Chapter 12 Quotes

☞ “I have found a thought, Govinda, that you will again take as a joke or as folly, but it is my best thought. This is it: The opposite of every truth is just as true!”

Related Characters: Siddhartha (speaker), Siddhartha, Govinda

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 124

Explanation and Analysis

As Vasudeva's parting foreshadowed the necessity of those who have achieved enlightenment to teach others, Govinda comes to seek out the wise ferryman (who is now Siddhartha), just as Siddhartha once sought out Vasudeva. Govinda has been following Gautama's teachings, but has not yet achieved enlightenment and is still seeking it.

Govinda, as he always has, is looking for a shortcut to enlightenment through hearing the wisdom learned by others. Siddhartha knows that the experiential truths he has learned cannot be communicated in words, so he tells Govinda this, saying that every truth is two-sided, and that speaking the truth would eliminate one of the sides. Siddhartha has learned from the river that all things are true at once because all things are the same – life is unity, it only has the illusion of being broken into discrete parts and truths because of time. He tries to steer Govinda into an

understanding that Govinda's search for a single truth will always leave him empty handed because it is contrary to the nature of the universe. Instead of seeking something, Govinda must open himself to everything.

●● He no longer saw his friend Siddhartha's face; instead he saw other faces, many, a long row, a streaming river of faces, hundreds, thousands, which all came and faded and yet seemed all to be there at once, which kept changing and being renewed, and yet which all were Siddhartha.

Related Characters: Siddhartha, Govinda

Related Themes:    

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 130

Explanation and Analysis

Govinda is about to leave the river just as confused and anxious as before. He is impressed by Siddhartha's presence, but finds his words confusing and unhelpful. Before he goes, Siddhartha kisses his friend and in this moment Govinda has a vision. It is significant that it is an act, not an explanation, that pushes Govinda into challenging his ideas about the world. It is also significant that Govinda has a vision of the river that is similar to the one Siddhartha had; he sees a river of faces that are different but still all one. In this vision he sees good and evil and many other supposed opposites unified in the river, and the unity he sees is visualized by the smile Siddhartha wears.

Siddhartha, like Vasudeva, has now helped someone else take steps towards finding unity. Like Vasudeva, this has occurred in the form of a natural vision that conjured the same peaceful smile that the enlightened wear. Govinda's vision indicates that Siddhartha has become truly enlightened.



SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

PART ONE, CHAPTER 1 – THE BRAHMIN'S SON

Siddhartha is brought up in a beautiful riverside home, the son of a Brahmin, and lives a spiritual life with his friend Govinda, performing holy offerings and conversing with the sages, the wise men, learning their philosophies. Siddhartha has already attained a high level of skill at all these things, and can meditate very well. He speaks the word 'om' already, a word that encompasses the whole universe and promotes clarity. His gifts bring joy to his mother and father, and his good breeding also attracts the attention of the girls in the town.

But Siddhartha's most loyal love comes from Govinda, who admires all of his qualities and his high calling in life. Govinda knows that Siddhartha will be an important man, no trickster or follower like a lot of spiritual leaders - he will one day become a god. And Govinda aims to follow Siddhartha's path and be his shadow.

But despite all the love that he sees in the hearts of others, Siddhartha does not bring happiness to himself. He goes about his daily offerings and meditations with a restless mind, full of dreams and thoughts and Siddhartha begins to believe that the love and knowledge of those around him, even of his teachers, will not sustain him. He feels that he is a vessel and even with the whole of the Brahmins knowledge poured into it, it is not full.

Siddhartha begins to question the offerings and the gods that he has been taught to accept blindly. He questions the act of sacrifice. Who are they sacrificing to? And what and where is Atman, what they call god and the true self? If the Brahmins, who were supposed to know everything, could not show him the right path to these answers, then perhaps there were other paths.

The narrator begins by describing Siddhartha's surroundings and life as a kind of ultimate existence, full of love and good fortune. He is set apart immediately as our protagonist, and we wonder what it is that has made him rise so much ahead of his peers in spiritual practices. Since, this is the very beginning of the story, and everything seems so perfect, we wonder where conflict will emerge.



The trust that Govinda has in Siddhartha's high calling means that Siddhartha's gifts are clear to see. It seems like they are already decided, and Govinda's willingness to spend his life as a follower of another shows that his are somewhat predetermined too.



Despite all his gifts, dissatisfaction plagues Siddhartha, more so than his peers. A connection is established here between a high calling and discontentment, and suggests that Siddhartha of all people must seek harder or further afield for his fulfillment. This section corresponds to the first noble truth laid out in the story of the Buddha, describing the arrival of dissatisfaction.



The Gods and Beings that are taught in the Brahma teaching appear as just names to Siddhartha, who has never experienced their meaning. The search for physical locations and definitions of these concepts invites a deeper understanding. Knowledge can never be wisdom until it is experienced.



Siddhartha knows, from insightful, inspiring verses written by Brahmins that they are in possession of true knowledge, but this knowledge seems to only exist in theory – no Brahmin seems to be living the life that they preach. He thinks about his father, a wise, venerable man, but even he does not live with peace in his heart. Everyone is seeking and thirsting. Atman is elusive to everybody. He thinks of a verse that says that one should “enter the celestial world” every day, but Siddhartha knows that he and the Brahmins never quite touch this ideal state.

Siddhartha meditates with Govinda and recites a verse about the soul being an arrow and the ‘om’ a bow. Siddhartha meditates deeply and does not awaken when the time of contemplation ends. He remembers a group of samanas, nomadic ascetics, that had wandered through the town once. Their naked, silent wandering tells Siddhartha of their deep devotion and he announces to Govinda that he will become one of them.

Govinda, realizing that this is the moment when Siddhartha’s path will separate from his, worriedly asks him whether his father will allow the decision. Siddhartha becomes aware of Govinda’s fear, but tells him they should not waste words about it. Siddhartha goes to his father, the Brahmin, and asks that he may leave his house the very next day and become a samana. His father is silent for a long time, then he admits that he is hurt by Siddhartha’s words, but does not believe in speaking angrily, so tells his son not to speak to him of the matter again. He leaves his son without another word.

Siddhartha’s father is troubled and restless that night and gets out of bed, but sees Siddhartha out of the window, standing motionless. Every hour, the Brahmin gets up and sees his son in the same position. He is filled with sadness. As the night comes to an end, he asks Siddhartha why he waits, but Siddhartha tells his father that he already knows the answer, and tells him that he will wait for as long as it takes. When his father questions his obedience, Siddhartha says he always has and always will do as his father wishes.

Standing for so many hours has made Siddhartha’s body shake, but his resolve is strong and the Brahmin knows that his son is no longer his to hold on to. He tells Siddhartha to go and join the samanas, and to come back if he does not find the truth he is after. Weak from the night’s protest, Siddhartha bids farewell to his mother and leaves the town. He is pleased when his shadow, Govinda, catches up with him, devoted enough to follow him into his new life as a wanderer.

Words and thoughts had seemed to lead to higher knowledge, but now the path that had always been presented to Siddhartha, that had promised to lead to his enlightenment, seems dim and even a dead end. The celestial world sounds like a heightened state of awareness, above worldly concerns, but if theories and philosophies are not approaching these heights, perhaps one has to experience the world in a different, more physical way.



The nakedness and silence of the ascetics attracts Siddhartha because it seems to offer the shedding of the Brahmin wordiness, and also the wandering nature of the samana path attracts his wandering spirit. It seems to be the nomadic side of the samanas that draws him in rather than their philosophy.



The attachments of friendship and paternal love threaten to keep Siddhartha tied to the path of his ancestors and peers. Despite his talent and will setting him apart, Siddhartha must get permission and must confide in his loyal friend. The bonds of love can be restrictive. Siddhartha’s gifts have meant that he has received a lot of admiration and attachment, but it seems to be his destiny to go into the next stage alone.



The bond of fatherhood and care for his son’s spirit creates a stalemate in the Brahmin’s heart. Siddhartha’s display seems like both the willfulness of a child in a temper and a show of strength and will of a future sage. It is interesting how close these two identities come throughout the course of Siddhartha’s story.



The moment that Siddhartha finds opposition in his childhood home, where he has always been treated with love and admiration, he begins to show more of himself, more determination and strength. It is as if he needed to find struggle, in order to show what he is capable of, which is already a defiance of physical pain that a samana would be proud of.



PART ONE, CHAPTER 2 – AMONG THE SAMANAS

That evening, Siddhartha and Govinda approach the samanas and are accepted to join them. They give away their clothes and wear loin cloths instead. This begins a life of fasting and abstinence from the world. The sight of worldly people and possessions and property become a sham to Siddhartha. It all tortures him. His one goal is now to become empty of all desire, all worldliness, and, in doing this, extinguish the 'self' in order for his true essence to awaken.

Through the dry and rainy seasons, Siddhartha suffers the pain of burning and freezing, and sores from walking, but he withstands everything, until the pains fade. He learns to control his breath, to slow it right down until he is hardly breathing. He learns the art of unselfing meditation, loosing his soul from memories and senses. He feels like he embodies the creatures around him, the heron and even the dead jackal, through the whole life cycle. He transforms, from creature to plant to weather to self again. No matter how totally he seems to leave himself, he always returns, and feels himself in an inescapable cycle.

Siddhartha asks Govinda, who has been living this painful samana life along with him, whether he thinks they have made progress. Govinda thinks Siddhartha is learning quickly and will become a great samana, even a saint, but Siddhartha himself is not so sure. He thinks he could have learned just as much among criminals in the red light district or an ox driver! Govinda thinks this is a joke. How could the same selflessness be learned there? But Siddhartha tells him that the abandonment of the self that he has learned as a samana does not differ that much from the abandonment of an ox driver having an ale after a hard day's work. The drinker's escape is momentary though, thinks Govinda, and surely the ascension that they are learning to achieve is more profound. Siddhartha is cynical.

On another occasion, Siddhartha questions if they are really approaching higher knowledge or whether they are going round in circles themselves. He makes the point that the eldest samana teacher has not yet reached Nirvana. They don't seem to be getting any closer to their goal. Siddhartha, slightly mockingly, tells Govinda that he has decided to leave the samana path, because he doesn't trust that learning from even the wisest samanas is any better than learning from a monkey or some such creature. He isn't even sure that there is any value in learning at all.

A lot of the samana way of life is about extinguishing and diminishing the outside world, which is a surprising twist, since from the outside, the samanas, with their near nakedness and wandering, seemed to offer more of a natural life than the one Siddhartha experienced in his childhood Brahmin home.



Siddhartha is overtaken by physical phenomena. The heat and the cold impose themselves on his body, but through thought he banishes all of his human responses and overcomes them. But instead of becoming one with nature, as we later learn is possible, Siddhartha seems to be trying to extinguish himself, to eliminate the impact of nature on him. Each time he comes back to his own body, it seems like a failure, not like a positive reconnection with his spirit.



In both the life of the samanas and the philosophy of contemplation and speaking the om that they learned from the Brahmins, Siddhartha and Govinda have grown up with the notion that enlightenment is a high ideal and that there is a distinct direction upwards that leads to this level of greatness. But Siddhartha's comparison of the wizened samana to a drunk or an ox driver shows that he is beginning to realize the diversity of paths that can lead to similar heights. The picture of enlightenment gets a little blurry here.



It is clear that, since childhood, the young pilgrims have been set on a track of seeking knowledge. When it seems that even the end of that track and the very highest authorities in the hierarchy of spiritual knowledge are no more enlightened than the young men are, the Brahma and samana methods of teaching and learning and ruminating come to seem misguided.



Govinda doesn't understand how Siddhartha could say such things. It terrifies him to doubt everything he has valued as holy. What would be left without this holiness? he thinks. He recites a verse about how holy bliss cannot be uttered in words. Siddhartha thinks deeply about the problem but it does not appear clearly to him.

The difference opens up between Govinda, who still believes his lessons blindly, and Siddhartha, who can no longer trust in the words of hymns. Though Siddhartha's path seems less clear, his will and doubt are leading him towards his own path while Govinda follows the paths of others.



After three years leading the samana life, a rumor reaches Siddhartha and Govinda of a Sublime teacher, called Gautama, the Buddha, who had also wandered through the land as an ascetic, and whose legend has all the Brahmins enthralled. Many believe that the Buddha can heal the sick. Some have even heard that he had encountered the devil, and won.

The rumors of this religious leader are so extreme that it doesn't seem like Gautama could have had such humble beginnings as a wandering ascetic. Reputation puts the Buddha above all, in a kind of non-human realm of his own.



In a corrupt world, sick with plague, the news of this sage sounds wonderful. People all over India are struck with a new feeling of hope. And this hope comes to the samanas in the forest too. But the rumors are colored equally with doubt. Siddhartha distrusts the idea of teaching, but Govinda wishes more than anything to hear the Sublime One speak. Siddhartha expresses his surprise at the change in Govinda, who he had always expected would live as a samana for the rest of his days. Siddhartha is mocking, but he agrees to hear the teaching. Though he does not believe that Gautama will reveal anything new to them, he tries to go ahead with an open mind.

The world surrounding Siddhartha is suffering from the same loss of spiritual wellbeing as he is. Spiritual sickness spreads through the land, as if it is contagious. The Buddha's teaching has arrived to them and presents a duality for Siddhartha, whether one should follow wisdom in another or find it within oneself – which is the truer goal?



Siddhartha tells the eldest samana that he and Govinda plan to leave and the samana is furious. Govinda is embarrassed to have upset their elder, but Siddhartha proposes showing the samana one of the skills he has learnt, and proceeds to hypnotize him, making him speechless and benevolent. As Siddhartha and Govinda go their way, Govinda praises his friend for having picked up such an impressive spell. Siddhartha does not wish to perform miracles though. That kind of trickery belongs in the samana's world.

Siddhartha shows real, physical skills and is able to outdo an elder samana. He shows that his doubts are reasonable – if he can overpower someone who has been learning and philosophizing for many years, then there must be something that he has, something beyond the skills of a samana.



PART ONE, CHAPTER 3 – GAUTAMA

In a town called Savathi, Gautama and his disciples are worshipped. He is given a grove called Jetavana. When Siddhartha and Govinda arrive in the town, they ask their host where to find the Buddha and she directs them to Jetavana, where hundreds of people go to hear the teaching. The woman tells them that she has seen the Buddha walking through the streets with his alms bowl, silently, filling it with donations quickly.

The power of the Buddha's name transforms an ordinary grove and region to a very special place of pilgrimage and everything in the grove seems touched by his presence. But Gautama doesn't seem like a god. It is possible to see him, he needs to beg to eat like the other monks, and teaches with his own voice. The duality of the Buddha's human form and enlightened spirit has interesting implications for Siddhartha's own journey.



Excited, Govinda wants to hear more but Siddhartha pushes them on to the grove, which they soon realize with their own eyes to be a destination for herds of pilgrims, who fill the contours of the beautiful grove. Siddhartha and Govinda camp among them. In the morning, the place is full of yellow-robed monks.

Like the Buddha, these monks go into the town to beg. This is where Siddhartha first sees the Buddha and points him out to Govinda. He looks much the same as the other monks but they both know instinctively that he is the Sublime One. As they follow and watch him, they notice his calm, silent, slow way – a kind of perfect peace, not imitating or desiring anything. Siddhartha reflects on how doubtful he'd been that the Buddha could teach him anything. Now they are in sight of him, Siddhartha believes deeply in the Buddha's knowledge of truth. His whole being is Truth, thinks Siddhartha.

Siddhartha and Govinda plan not to eat anything that day. They observe the Buddha taking a tiny morsel of a meal and withdraw to the mango trees. That evening they hear his teaching. It is wise beyond compare, telling calmly of suffering and guiding them to ascend suffering by following the teaching. His voice is light and powerful, a natural phenomenon.

After the teaching, like many others, Govinda asks to be accepted into the Buddha's fellowship. He is accepted and goes to Siddhartha to ask why he hasn't also committed to the teaching. Siddhartha tells Govinda, with honest pleasure, that he is proud of him for choosing his own path for the first time, and tells him to follow it. Govinda asks again why Siddhartha won't also seek refuge but Siddhartha doesn't really reply. Govinda starts to weep. He is sad to be leaving everything he has known. Siddhartha reminds him that by seeking refuge he has renounced his previous life, including his friendships. Tomorrow they must part.

That night, Govinda continues to question Siddhartha about the fault he sees in the teaching. Siddhartha reassures him that of course the teaching is good. In the morning Govinda joins the other novice monks to get his robes and begin his new life. Siddhartha, walking through the grove, sees Gautama walking too and takes the opportunity to ask permission to speak to him. He tells the Buddha that unlike his friend, he has decided to continue his pilgrimage alone.

Words and ideas dominate Govinda's and Siddhartha's experience of the Buddha so far, but Siddhartha is impatient with these shallow things. He seeks real experience – the description that follows of the colors of the pilgrim camps and natural beauty suggest that even if he doesn't get a real experience of the Buddha, he'll certainly experience the phenomenon of the Buddha's following.



The sight of the Buddha inspires Siddhartha and Govinda. Even without hearing a word of his teaching and with no other evidence that he is the deity himself, the serenity of Buddha's appearance assures them of his holiness. This shows how natural and radiant real Truth is. It's a little like the description of Siddhartha that we heard in the first chapter, and how his appearance and natural charisma seemed to match his gifts.



Even though it is the teaching that has drawn these hordes of pilgrims, the real power of the Buddha seems to lie elsewhere, in his manner and physical qualities. Siddhartha's criticism of the samana elders had been that they were not living their own philosophies, but Gautama is the physical embodiment of his own teachings of serenity and goodness.



Govinda is so impressed with the Buddha's teaching that he is convinced he will find no higher knowledge with which to seek refuge, but his attachment to Siddhartha is still so strong that he assumes their paths will remain united. Even though it seems that Govinda is finally choosing his own path, it is still Siddhartha that must make the final break, and persuade Govinda that it is time for them to part. Siddhartha does not want to seek "refuge" in anyone else's teaching.



Even though it is Govinda that is especially touched by the Buddha's teaching, it is Siddhartha who has the guts to go up to Gautama and speak to him. While he is still reverent, their conversation is more man-to-man than follower-to-teacher, and is a sign of Siddhartha's inner confidence and high calling.



The Buddha accepts this, but Siddhartha wishes to say something else. He expresses his extreme admiration for what the Buddha has taught about the world's connectedness and unity but the idea of deliverance above this chain of living things disconcerts him. The Buddha responds kindly. He praises Siddhartha for his contemplation, but warns him of the dangers of too much knowledge-seeking. The problem of opinions and words has no place in his teaching, he says. Siddhartha reaffirms his absolute respect for Gautama and his faith that he has achieved enlightenment, but he believes that it has been attained by Gautama's own path, not that of a certain teaching. This is why Siddhartha himself will continue his pilgrimage alone.

The Buddha wishes the best for Siddhartha but he questions his plan. He asks Siddhartha to contemplate whether the hundreds of monks who have taken refuge in his teaching would be better off without this life. Siddhartha does not claim to know the answer. He can only judge and guide his own path. But he questions whether the disciples absorb the teaching too much, absorb it as a kind of ego and a delusion.

The Buddha's **peaceful smile is unwavering**. He warns Siddhartha to be careful of his own cleverness. Then he goes smiling away. Siddhartha recognizes the holiness of that smile and wishes he could attain the same level of connection to his core self. He will never bow down to any other, knowing that Gautama is the Sublime One. He considers that this man has taken away his friend and shadow, but also that he has given him something very valuable, the chance to be himself.

PART ONE, CHAPTER 4 – AWAKENING

As he leaves the Buddha and Govinda, Siddhartha feels that he is leaving his old life. He muses deeply in this feeling, as if it is water. In musing deeply, Siddhartha finds causes and begins to understand his sensations. He likens the shedding of his young life to the shedding of a skin by a snake. Now having left the wisest teacher of all, the Buddha, Siddhartha is leaving the world of teaching.

Siddhartha asks himself what he had found lacking in teaching, and he decides that it is the nature of the ego that can't be taught. He had wanted to overcome his ego, but had not been able to. He longs to uncover the secret of himself. He thinks and thinks, and it occurs to him that he does not know who the real Siddhartha is because he has been afraid of himself. He had been searching for Atman and Nirvana, but had lost himself in the process.

The connection between Siddhartha and the Buddha is mutually warm and respectful but there is a distance that both men are aware of. Gautama, having reached enlightenment, seems above the concerns that consume Siddhartha. His holy, distant presence is so content that troubles like these don't really seem to touch him. But Siddhartha makes a good point – if the key to achieving enlightenment is ascending the world of cycles and circles, what did Gautama do to break his own cycle, and is Siddhartha following the same holy path?



The difference is very manifest between the Buddha's way and Siddhartha's way. Though the Buddha's path seems clear, and his thousands of followers trust completely in it, Siddhartha is able to look past it and focus only on his own.



Gautama's smile seems to come from his very essence. It is not put on or maintained by effort. It is a constant symbol of the enlightened state, so that no doubt can touch it. The fact that this essence makes Siddhartha feel more connected to his own essence unites the two characters.



Siddhartha finds himself doing some deep thinking as he crosses this threshold from following the teachings of others to his own path. His thinking is of a different quality than before, it is deeper and occurs naturally, without his mind striving, giving the feeling that he has already begun a transformation.



During his upbringing and his various teachings, Siddhartha has been taught to look beyond himself, to overlook pain, to look to holy heights for answers but he realizes now that he must look within himself for answers to even the holiest questions.



Siddhartha suddenly feels awakened. He is filled with purpose. He declares that he will no longer submit to teachings, but he will learn from himself and be his own pupil. In this revelation, the world appears new to Siddhartha. **The colors of the river** and the forest seem to him pure in a way that they never seemed under the Brahma teaching, which scorns diversity and only seeks unity. Now he sees meaning and truth in all these natural things. He compares them to the symbols in a manuscript, which must be appreciated and read in order to find the meaning of the whole.

Again Siddhartha pauses. He realizes that, though he had intended on leaving the samana life and going back to his father's house, he no longer belongs there. For the first time he feels really homeless. All other kinds of men seemed to be connected to a group, a class of other men, but he was truly alone. Siddhartha feels this realization as the last of his rebirth, and goes on his journey, focused on finding his own path.

PART TWO, CHAPTER 5 – KAMALA

Now Siddhartha sees the beauty of the natural world all around him. It had always been there but its image had been labeled as a deception, a kind of veil, before. Without seeking reality, the world becomes simple and beautiful as if seen by a child. Siddhartha's days pass quickly like this, each sight of a monkey or fish delighting him. He feels that he is finally present in the world, that he belongs to and becomes it.

Along this path, Siddhartha remembers everything about his journey so far, and every word he spoke to the Buddha about his dissatisfaction, about the unteachable thing. The unteachable is now his aim. He now knows that he is Atman, the essential self. The self is neither thoughts nor the body, but a whole summation of everything. Everything has to be listened to. He must listen to his own inner voice. That is how, he thinks, Gautama had gained his enlightenment too.

Siddhartha sleeps along the way in a ferryman's hut by the river and has a dream about Govinda. In the dream, Govinda is in the ascetic's yellow robe and is sad that Siddhartha has left him. Siddhartha embraces Govinda, but as he touches him, Govinda becomes a woman, and Siddhartha lies on the woman's breast and drinks her milk, which tastes of every natural thing and puts Siddhartha into a daze.

Recognition of himself and his essence is an important step for Siddhartha's onward motion. It is his inner life that, when opened up and acknowledged, allows him to see the full beauty of the world around him. Though it still seems like a collection of pieces, various and diverse, Siddhartha senses that this diversity is just as important as the unity of the world, and we get the feeling that Siddhartha need only figure out this puzzle to find his goal.



The lives of the samanas and the Brahmins and the monks do not appeal to Siddhartha because they don't allow him to follow his own path. This is the end of an important era for Siddhartha, acknowledging the loneliness of the path to enlightenment, but having gained all he can from organized spiritual society.



There are two timelines overlapping in Siddhartha's story – one, his natural life, beginning as the son of a Brahmin, and another, the journey to enlightenment, which needed a birth of its own. Even though he had been among nature before, even living naked in the forest as an ascetic, it is only now that the actual forms of nature appear to his senses and suggests that the physical world is going to be very manifest in the next stage of the journey.



Siddhartha realizes that the qualities he admired and trusted in Gautama are the qualities of self, not the words of his teaching. His comparison to the Buddha shows us that he is considering himself with the same importance. It had seemed that the way to climb to holy heights had been to neglect the body and ignore the demands of the self, but now Siddhartha listens to his own voice.



Govinda and the yellow robes of the pilgrims symbolize everything that was keeping Siddhartha attached to the world of teaching. Though Govinda showed him love as a follower, it is a different kind of connection that is going to power the next stage of Siddhartha's enlightenment, a connection at once childlike and romantic.



The next day, Siddhartha gets a ride with the ferryman across the river and the ferryman tells him about **his love for the river**, how he listens to it and learns from it. Siddhartha thanks him and apologizes that he hasn't got any gift to thank him with. The ferryman understands, and thinks that Siddhartha will one day repay him. He believes that everything comes around again, just like the river. Siddhartha leaves the ferryman, grateful for his friendship. The ferryman reminds him of Govinda, simple and obedient, like a child.

Next Siddhartha comes to a village, where a group of children run shyly from him. And outside the village, he encounters a young woman, washing laundry at a brook. The pair smiles at each other. Siddhartha politely asks her how to get to town. She comes over, young and healthy looking, and they get to talking, about the samana way of life. Both of them start lusting for each other. Siddhartha longs to touch her but he has never touched a woman before. His inner voice calls out to him to stop. The girl now appears to him like an animal, and he strokes her face as you might a deer, and moves on.

Siddhartha approaches the town, longing to be around people. He sees a trail of men and women following a sedan, in which is seated a beautiful woman with a clever, delicate face, a mouth bright like a fig, and jewels on her wrists. This beauty makes Siddhartha laugh with joy. The trail is going into a pleasure grove, and as it goes, he meets the eyes of this woman. He wants to follow her into the grove at once, but remembers how he still appears as a homeless beggar to them. Instead, he goes into the town and learns the name of the woman. She is Kamala, a courtesan. Siddhartha has a new goal.

In the town, Siddhartha sleeps in the streets and on the riverbank. He befriends a barber, and has his hair and beard cut, then washes in the river. That day, he goes to Kamala's sedan again, and asks one of the servants to tell Kamala that he wishes to speak to her. He is led to her. She has remembered him from the previous day. Siddhartha explains that he had been a samana and he has never spoken to a woman without lowering his eyes before. He thanks her for her beauty, and he asks her if she will be his teacher and guide him in the art of love.

Kamala laughs. She has never had a samana come to her before, though she has received many sons of Brahmins. Siddhartha says that he learns quickly and has gone through many trials. Kamala tells him that he needs to be well dressed, perfumed, and bring her gifts to earn her attention. Siddhartha expected as much. He agrees to the condition, saying that he will agree to anything uttered by those fig-colored lips.

Again we see the evidence of Siddhartha's immediate effect on people – somehow his high calling is obvious, since the ferryman can sense that he will be rewarded for his kindness one day. The ferryman is a new kind of being in the story, calm, unseeking but not a deep thinker or on the path to holy wisdom.



As Siddhartha approaches the civilizations of village and town, he becomes increasingly aware of the human connections and urges that he had repressed as a samana. The children and young woman appear as if to greet his rebirth. They represent the natural journey of life, into manhood and procreation, but as Siddhartha's physical urges are stirred, he resists actual contact. The woman's transformation in Siddhartha's eyes shows his growing connection to physical, animal pleasure and romantic love.



It is interesting that Siddhartha's inner voice stopped him from touching the young deerlike woman by the brook, but is very drawn to the decorated beauty of Kamala, whose person combines aspects of pure nature like the fig and aspects of wealth and reputation like her sedan and jewels. She is a new kind of deity for Siddhartha, and her goddess-like appearance (she is actually named after a Hindu goddess of love) suggests she will be an important learning experience in Siddhartha's emotional exploration.



A courtesan seems like a far cry from the sages that Siddhartha has been taught to follow, but the changes he makes, cutting his hair and asking permission to speak to Kamala, mirror the changes that a monk makes going into the refuge of the Buddha's fellowship. Though Siddhartha is now following his own path, he is still searching for guidance and making changes.



Kamala is presented as a figure of love and nature but also a figure of business. Her demand for gifts tells us that she is used to the transactions of love but Siddhartha's affection seems to be more sensual, drawn by the youthful color of Kamala's lips, which symbolizes the vitality of nature, and lust.



Siddhartha next asks Kamala why she is not afraid of a rough samana entering her house. She says she cannot be afraid of a foolish man who does not know about women. But, surely a samana could overpower her and take advantage of her, thinks Siddhartha. But this is not how Kamala sees her body. She compares it to the “piety and profundity” of the samana, which can’t be taken by force, but is owned by the samana. Siddhartha knows she is right and promises that he will take no sweetness from her lips by force.

Siddhartha also promises to come back with the rich clothes that Kamala requested, but doesn’t know how to obtain them. Kamala suggests using his skills and receiving money for them and asks what his skills are. Siddhartha says he can think, wait, and fast. Those are his three skills. Then he remembers he can also write poetry, and creates one on the spot about Kamala, about how sacrificing to her is lovelier than sacrificing to the gods. Kamala is impressed and agrees to give Siddhartha a kiss for his skill. The kiss is long and expert, and gives Siddhartha the image of thousands more kisses awaiting him.

Siddhartha praises Kamala for her kissing and she explains that her knowledge of love has gotten her many riches and nice things. But how will Siddhartha manage to afford these gifts with only thoughts and poetry? Siddhartha begins to explain that he knows hymns and has read scriptures, and at this Kamala interrupts. She is surprised and pleased that Siddhartha can write. Most can’t, she says. Kamala’s maid disturbs them to let Kamala know she has a visitor. Kamala tells Siddhartha to leave immediately but to see her again tomorrow, and gives him a white cloak. When he is safely outside the grove and back in the town, Siddhartha goes to an inn and begs for a piece of rice cake. He is proud when he imagines not begging for food anymore. Life in the town seems simple and easy, like Kamala’s kissing lesson, a world away from the samana hardships.

The next day, Siddhartha visits Kamala in her town house and she informs him that things are already looking up for him. She tells him he has been invited to visit the merchant, Kamaswami. She tells him not to be too modest, and if Kamaswami likes him, he will invite him into his service. Kamala wants to know how Siddhartha has all these doors opening for him already, and Siddhartha reminds her that his skills of waiting and thinking and fasting have served him well - samanas can learn very quickly.

For the first time, the strength of the samana skills is equaled by the strength of nature and the power of Kamala’s body and beauty. She asserts authority, not with philosophy but with a mindset of owning her body and being aware of herself. She does not look up to Siddhartha but looks downward, as if he is the child person.



Siddhartha has spent his love life in pursuit of lofty goals and absolute knowledge, but now in Kamala’s presence he must number his skills and finds that they don’t quite add up to this new currency of riches and business skills in the town. This culture shock is confused by Kamala’s beauty and godliness. She seems at once holy and worldly.



Kamala’s world and the childlike society of love and business are fuelled by currencies of all kinds. Each gift of a kiss must be exchanged for something else, and each skill is valuable for what it can achieve in town – everything exists in a system of trade. But this doesn’t really suit Siddhartha’s skills. His waiting and fasting and thinking are very personal skills that he has acquired and used for his own path to enlightenment but can’t really be translated into monetary value. Even writing and poetry are essentially connected to Siddhartha’s own personal voice and cannot easily be given impersonally.



As we have come to expect from Siddhartha, he has affected the town without seeming to try. Lack of intention, natural charisma, and the radiance of his good breeding and talent mean that even in an unknown culture, Siddhartha finds himself welcomed and accepted.



Kamala reminds Siddhartha that he has her to thank for his good fortune too. Siddhartha replies that he entered the pleasure grove knowing that she would help him. He describes what happens when he makes a goal – through waiting and fasting, he goes quietly towards his goal, and lets nothing in that would disturb his clear path to the goal. This is why he knew that he would be friends with Kamala when he saw her smile at him the first day in the grove. Kamala is enchanted by Siddhartha's voice. She suggests that the real power might lay in Siddhartha's charms, and the effect his glance has on a woman. Siddhartha is humbly glad at this idea and grateful for it.

Siddhartha is admiring and authoritative at the same time. He gives the impression that he knows and senses everything before it happens, making him sound like some kind of higher power or otherworldly being. Kamala tries to figure out Siddhartha's charms and put them down to his appearance but the novel suggests that, much like Gautama, he emits a natural sublime quality that everyone around him picks up on.



PART TWO, CHAPTER 6 – AMONG THE CHILD PEOPLE

The next day, Siddhartha meets Kamaswami in his big house. Kamaswami asks Siddhartha why he has left scholarship and philosophy for service. Has he fallen on hard times? Siddhartha says that he has never experienced hard times, because he has been living as a samana, and when hardship is voluntary, it is not real hardship. They debate about whose property Siddhartha has been living on without any of his own. Kamaswami wonders what Siddhartha can offer, if he has no property. Siddhartha replies that he can give what he has, which is fasting, thinking and waiting.

The difference between Kamaswami and Siddhartha is extreme, even though they banter and exchange logic like a pair of philosophers or businessmen, we can tell that their ambitions are opposite. Siddhartha's argument aims for clarity and peacefulness and Kamaswami's discussion of property is tied to actual possessions and their value.



This doesn't seem like much to Kamaswami, but Siddhartha explains that from fasting, he has learned to laugh at and rise above hunger. This makes more sense to Kamaswami. He tests Siddhartha's reading and writing skills. Siddhartha writes Kamaswami a message – "Writing is good, thinking is better. Cleverness is good, patience is better." The merchant is impressed and invites Siddhartha into his home, and showers him with rich things. Siddhartha remembers Kamala's words and treats the merchant as a peer and does not submit to him or take the riches too seriously.

Kamaswami is in a position to test and approve of Siddhartha, a position of authority. But Siddhartha's wit shows him to be the real leader, and we see the potential for the merchant to learn a lot from Siddhartha's wisdom. Siddhartha has been told to treat Kamaswami as a peer, but the lesson that he writes in Kamaswami's writing test is unashamedly condescending.



Soon Siddhartha is helping the merchant with his transactions, but he is focused on his pursuit of love with Kamala, and visits her every day, now able to present her with the gifts she requested. She teaches him how to make love, give and receive pleasure and be patient with a woman, and this becomes the purpose of his life, not the business activity of Kamaswami's house.

Siddhartha is really fitting in to town life, but though he is going through the motions in business, his approach to love is not like a regular townsman – he treats Kamala like a goddess and takes his lessons very seriously, as if love is the new Buddha.



Though Siddhartha is a peer in Kamaswami's house and seems to have a lucky touch with business transactions, the merchant senses that Siddhartha is not putting his all into business and is never bothered by losses. The merchant's friend advises him to test Siddhartha by making him deal with his own wages. But Siddhartha remains indifferent to profit or loss.

Siddhartha has become one of the merchants and now handles money and transactions, but remains distant, even when his own personal funds are at stake, showing that there is something of the samana ascetic still pulling Siddhartha away from a life of pleasure.



Siddhartha goes to make a transaction at a rice plantation, but misses the opportunity and spends the trip getting to know the rice workers and the local area. When Kamaswami scolds him for losing money, Siddhartha claims to have not wasted anything, that his experiences with the people at the rice fields have been very valuable. Kamaswami says that he should have been traveling on business, but Siddhartha insists he will always travel for pleasure, and with the pleasure he had with the community there, he will feel the rewards long after, and be invited back. He tells the merchant that he can send him away at any time, if he is unsatisfied but until then they should not waste their time with angry words.

Siddhartha continues to confuse and anger Kamaswami. He refuses to eat Kamaswami's bread, never sympathizes with Kamaswami's frustration over business, and when Kamaswami reminds him that he is dependent on the merchant for everything he has learned in business, Siddhartha belittles him, saying that Kamaswami has only taught him prices and interest rates and Kamaswami has more to learn from *him*.

As much as Kamaswami is dissatisfied by Siddhartha, Siddhartha also does not find any joy in business. He loves the lives of the people they transact with, but he feels separated from them by his past and his samana knowledge. He sees the people as childlike and watches them suffer from things that would hardly touch a samana.

Siddhartha invites every kind of company into the house, treating rich tradesmen and poor peddlers exactly the same. He listens to Kamaswami's worries, but treats the whole thing like a game, sympathizing and cheating and trading just the right amount to keep ahead of this game. Soon, the game has become his life, just as the teachings of Brahma had become it. Every so often a sad inner voice calls to him, and he realizes how he is playing a game and real life seems to be passing him or existing elsewhere. When he hears this voice, he wishes that he might participate wholeheartedly in the childlike pursuits of the town's people.

But Siddhartha keeps learning the art of love from Kamala, and her friendship warms him. She seems more akin to him than Govinda. Siddhartha one day tries to explain this kinship to Kamala. He tells her that she has an essential self much like he does. It is not about cleverness, he insists, it is about an inner sanctuary. Some people are like falling leaves and some are like stars with fixed paths, like the great Gautama. Kamala senses that Siddhartha is thinking of the samana life again.

Siddhartha's almost willful disobedience of Kamaswami's instructions presents him with greater value in the experiences he gains than the monetary profit. Natural things, human connections, and learning about the world are vastly more vital to Siddhartha than they are to Kamaswami, and Siddhartha's comments after missing the rice plantation business deal shows how important they are in the path to spiritual enlightenment. His distance from Kamaswami and lack of shame show how far above the concerns of business Siddhartha is, and are reminiscent of the Buddha's distanced serenity earlier.



Two kinds of knowledge clash in Siddhartha and Kamaswami's relationship. Siddhartha obviously still believes in higher knowledge, wisdom gained from life's experience, whereas the merchant's profit-driven knowledge reduces real things like fish and other produce to sums.



Though Siddhartha wanted to escape from the suppression of physical nourishment that the samana's promote, he finds the opposite situation equally frustrating. Between the two perspectives of how to relate to the natural world, Siddhartha's sense of self is much less clear.



The sound of Siddhartha's inner voice, which had been so clear and full of life, guiding him on his path, now is sad and weak, showing that the merchant life is draining his spirit and leaving him in a worse off position than he was following the teachings of the ascetics. He seems to be following the transactions of business less than wholeheartedly but even though it is described as a game, the rules and rituals of business affect him deeply. Before he came to town he had been treating life as a serious thing; now it is just a game.



Sometimes it takes seeing the virtues of others for Siddhartha to see them in himself again. Just as the experience of the Buddha's qualities inspired him to follow his own path to enlightenment, his friendship with Kamala brings out his individuality again and his holy path is illuminated.



They play love games – fighting and tricking each other in a battle-like display. Kamala admits that Siddhartha is the best lover she has known and that she wishes to have his child one day. But she knows that he remains something of a samana and does not love like other men do. Siddhartha thinks that may be true, but that she is the same way. It is only the child people that love completely.

Another stage of Siddhartha's journey is coming to fruition. Just as he mastered the samana skills of fasting and thinking, Siddhartha soon becomes the best lover that Kamala has had. Part of his special talent is for love, as well as for contemplation and the traditional holy pursuits, showing that love is an important factor in Siddhartha's goal.



PART TWO, CHAPTER 7 – SAMSARA

Siddhartha had lived a worldly life for a while and had learned about things like lust and power. He had a material life similar to Kamaswami's, a house and his own servants, but he never entered this life fully. As the years passed, he received visitors, asking for advice and money, but the only real connection he made was with Kamala. He reflected on the feeling he'd had after he left Govinda with the monks, of delight at realizing his own voice, and it seemed like a dim memory.

Siddhartha's voice has been hidden beneath all the sounds and sights of the business world, so that he has been living for the sake of others and ignoring his own ego, which had before been so clear to him. These pleasures and riches are like illusions, things he sees and feels but which aren't entirely real to him, and in living a life dedicated to the pursuit of such illusions he loses his connection to himself.



Some things that he learned from the Brahmins and Gautama and the samanas have stayed with Siddhartha but others have as good as disappeared. His thinking has slowed but his senses have awakened. He has learned how to play the gambling games of the town, how to eat delicacies, but he still feels like an outsider, and still watches with scornful eyes. But as the time has gone on, his scorn has become less outright, and he starts to take on characteristics of the 'child people'.

Siddhartha's character had seemed so clear at the beginning of the book, when we see him described in superlative terms, the most handsome, the most talented, most reflective. But through this possession-based life, Siddhartha's qualities have shown to be mutable. Sensuality and contemplation jostle for room in Siddhartha's mind and show that he is not so definite a character as he seemed.



As Siddhartha grows more anxious, he envies the child people, because they still have something that he lacks, a sense of the importance of their own lives and of their worldly pursuits. Siddhartha feels ill at ease with this life. He stays in bed, feels lazy, loses patience with Kamaswami, and though he still wears the spiritual expression of the samanas slightly, his face has begun to wrinkle and turn sickly. Weariness like a mist settles over Siddhartha. His life has grown old. Most importantly to Siddhartha, the inner voice that had been awakened, is now quiet.

Though Siddhartha has looked with scorn at the child people, it is he that is the most dangerously under the spell of the town. The other residents seem not to sicken so much, or their sickness is more well-hidden or more innate. Either way, it is Siddhartha who embodies the sin and sickliness of the place, because he sees it for what it is. It is as if it's the knowledge of the illusion that gets to him, rather than the business lifestyle itself.



The vices of the town have captured Siddhartha, and now the need for property and money keeps him in a cycle that seems unending. Siddhartha has a particular weakness for throwing dice. He gambles more and more often, and gets addicted to the euphoria of winning, and wagers higher and higher stakes. With each loss, he plots with greater seriousness how to get back his money. And through the escalation of this habit, Siddhartha's way with people changes, he is no longer patient with beggars and the poor. It is a vicious cycle.

One night, Siddhartha spends the evening with Kamala and she asks all about the Buddha and wishes one day to take refuge in his teaching. Then Siddhartha and Kamala make love, in the battling, teasing way that Kamala has taught him, and it occurs to Siddhartha how close lust is to death. Lying with Kamala afterwards, he also notices that she is becoming old, there is a fear in her face that wasn't there before, a fear of death perhaps. After this, Siddhartha spends the night dancing and drinking, but is not joyful. Everything is too bright, too sweet. He feels gluttonous and disgusted with his own life.

That night, when Siddhartha falls asleep for a moment, he has a dream, in which Kamala's pet song bird turns suddenly mute. When Siddhartha goes over to the bird in the dream, the bird is dead on the cage floor and as he picks it up and throws it away, he feels like he is throwing away all value and goodness. When he wakes up he feels a deep sadness. He goes out to his own pleasure garden and sits with these terrible thoughts.

Siddhartha replays the path of his life and thinks about his moments of genuine happiness. These moments all involve him hearing the inner voice calling him forward on his own path. When he was a boy listening to the Brahma teaching, and going from the Buddha into the unknown. But he hasn't heard that voice for some time. He had been living for the goals and desires of the child people, but these goals and desires were not his own, he had been playing a game, over and over again. But now he knows the game is over.

Siddhartha feels something die within him. He sits contemplating in the grove, and considers how he has left Govinda and Gautama in order to own things like this grove and sees that it was wrong to do so. He says goodbye to these possessions. Then he feels hunger, but says goodbye to this too. He leaves the town. For a while, Kamaswami searches for him, but Kamala has expected his departure. She knows that he still has samana in him. She is glad to have had their final, intense moment together. Later, she finds out that she is pregnant with Siddhartha's child.

Each game and trade is a cycle in itself. Each roll of the dice even represents a cycle. All these cycles add up and add up until they create a machine of cogs that keeps Siddhartha trapped. This game-like state is driven by short-term excitement and profit, and the brevity of these achievements starts to deeply affect qualities that we thought were essential to Siddhartha, like his generosity and patience.



Being with Kamala had at first seemed like such a departure from life in the forest and life as a monk, but as Siddhartha gets closer and closer to this woman and they become equals in love, he begins to notice all the details that align her with the paths he has already traveled. She, too, will face death. Even love is not safe from the cycles of life.



The songbird is a symbol of both the natural world and the voice, important factors in Siddhartha's path to enlightenment. Without nature and voice, Siddhartha cannot see the beauty and wisdom that he saw in his moments of awakening in conversation with the river.



Siddhartha's voice is the constant that reminds him when he is on the right path. It is his own voice, own ego, own essence that he looks for. It is of a different quality than the words and thoughts that he had distrusted, it is a more ephemeral, sensual concept.



Siddhartha's experience in the town comes to an end, For the first time he doubts his own choices and finds that his path has been wrong. But Kamala, who he has admitted is a kindred spirit to him, sees beyond Siddhartha's unease and seems to understand that his path has not been wrong but has continued as she expected and as his whole path so far has been leading.



PART TWO, CHAPTER 8 – BY THE RIVER

Siddhartha wanders into the forest knowing that he can never go back, and feeling that the songbird inside him has died. He is full of the disgusting greed and excess of the town. He longs for something to happen to him, to be dead. He longs to stop awakening. He believes that it is barely possible for him to continue living with such deep sin inside him. He reaches the river, which had seemed like a symbol of hope before, but now it speaks of destinations, and Siddhartha cannot imagine his next destination. He can only think of death.

Siddhartha leans on the branch of a tree and **watches the flow of the water** and wishes to become part of it. He feels that he is at the end, that there is nothing left but to end himself and give his body to the crocodiles and creatures of the river. He sees his reflection and spits at it. He lowers himself closer to the surface, closer to death. But he hears something. A word, a sound, comes to him, from deep in his soul. It is the 'om', the perfect word. He suddenly realizes how close to death he had come and how miserable he was, and remembers the holiness he had forgotten.

After this moment of realization, Siddhartha falls into a deep sleep by the river. As he awakens, he feels that years have passed, and he sees the full beauty of the water and the heavens again. He struggles to remember his life up to this point, everything seeming so far away. But he remembers how the word 'om' had come and saved him, and he utters it again now. He feels transformed by this wonderful sleep.

Then Siddhartha notices a yellow-robed man sitting near him. At first, he thinks the man is a stranger but then he recognizes him as Govinda. Govinda has aged, like Siddhartha has, but still wears the expression of devotion that he always had. He is delighted to find Siddhartha awake, but he does not recognize him. Govinda introduces himself as a disciple of Gautama and explains that when he saw a man sleeping, where snakes and other dangerous creatures go by, he wanted to wake him up. Seeing how deep the sleep was, Govinda decided to stay and watch over him instead.

Siddhartha is so determined to find the path to enlightenment, and so bred for holiness and meant for this high calling, that when he feels this part of him disappear, it is as if life is over. The life of the child people is not the right kind of life for him, and as it seems like he has come to a dead end on his path, even the world around him feels futile and insufficient.



Having lived the exhausting life of a merchant and been taken in by the games of business and wealth, Siddhartha feels an essential separation from the natural form that had once inspired him. The word 'om' that he had spoken so deliberately as a young man and as a seeker of knowledge now comes to him as the water does, naturally and easily, showing that the oneness and wisdom that he seeks is part of natural life, not his own intellect.



At times, the natural world, and even his own body, act beyond Siddhartha's control and restore him. We see in the hypnotic and restorative power of the river and holy word combined how nature and unity are the key to Siddhartha's spiritual survival.



Govinda seems to instinctively care for Siddhartha and continues to be his shadow. There is something in Siddhartha's spirit that attracts this care but also something in Govinda's character that is still so devoted and loyal. Govinda's and Siddhartha's unchanging bond despite having become old men away from each other suggests the timelessness and fatedness of their paths.



Siddhartha thanks Govinda and, as they part, calls him by his name. Siddhartha explains how he knows him and Govinda is very pleased to see his old friend Siddhartha, and very surprised that he did not recognize him straight away. Siddhartha thanks him for being the sentry to his sleep. He asks Govinda where he is traveling. Govinda replies that he is always on the move, going nowhere in particular, such is a monk's life. Siddhartha says he too is always on the move. Govinda believes that he is on a pilgrimage, but is confused as to why he looks like a townsman, with perfumed hair and rich clothes.

His old friend Govinda, just as he began as a shadow, still shows true devotion to his old master, as if he has a special sense for his wellbeing. Even though both men have changed and their paths no longer align, it seems that Govinda's path has been made to intersect Siddhartha's just at key moments.



Siddhartha reminds Govinda that the world is ephemeral. Outward identities are passed through as one passes the stages of life. Siddhartha has been a rich man and a samana but now he doesn't know how to describe himself. The formations of the ephemeral world he is trying to explain are swift. Still puzzled, Govinda says goodbye to Siddhartha and Siddhartha watches him go, fondly. After that long sleep and hearing the 'om' again, Siddhartha is full of love.

There is an ease to Siddhartha's explanations of life that makes him the natural authority, above Govinda. While Govinda, even as a grown man, is as full of questions as he ever was, Siddhartha seems to have progressed, and his peaceful explanations reflect his peaceful nature.



Siddhartha is suddenly very hungry, and laughs at the memory of reciting his three skills to Kamala, waiting, fasting and thinking. Those skills have left him now. He traded them in for quick childlike passions and became a child person. He finds thinking hard too, but forces himself to ponder on how he had started life with nothing and now he is standing here with nothing again. He has gone downhill, he thinks, but he is not sad, he laughs, and is happy to compare himself with the river, going cheerfully downhill. He remembers that he almost drowned in the same **river**, but the memory is dim like a dream.

The cycles of awakening and unease that the stages of Siddhartha's path have brought him become clear now. But in their clarity, they do not seem inescapable as they once seemed. It is as if recognizing the cycles is an important step to overcoming them. The beloved river is an example of a good cycle, because it is always regenerating and always inspiring. Perhaps just like the river, Siddhartha can keep his voice clear throughout any cycle.



Siddhartha goes through the twists and turns of his life, from a Brahmin's son to a rich man and each awakening in between. He describes the rich man stage as having to forget and unlearn what he had learned. Like this, he reflects, he has become a child again. Even though he had to go through such distress and spend so many years unlearning, he still feels deeply that it was right. He needed to go right to the bottom to be able to rise again. Joyfully he accepts where he has been and is excited to go wherever his path will lead him next.

The path of an enlightened one is not necessarily a linear path, and a life isn't necessarily a linear, chronological experience. Siddhartha has been transformed from one version of himself into another. He has cheated time, and lost it too. But the awareness of his own indirection seems to make his goal clearer.



Siddhartha muses on where this happiness has come from, whether from the word 'om' or the sky, or somewhere else. He marvels how he has come from such a loathsome place, where everything smelled of perfume and he despised his own behavior. And he congratulates himself now on turning his self-hatred around and following the inner song bird again. He reflects that as a child, he had known that those kinds of worldly pleasures were not good, but he had not experienced it until now.

The power of nature is extreme, able to wash away not just the perfume and material signs of the town, but also its anxiety and sin. Looking at where Siddhartha started, as a child, aware of the shallowness of worldly pleasures, it doesn't look like he has progressed very far along his path to enlightenment, but the difference between knowing something intellectually and actually experiencing it is great, and Siddhartha has progressed in wisdom from his experience.



Siddhartha keeps pondering and wonders, if it is not the song bird that died, what part of him died today so that he no longer wanted to kill himself? He decides it is the ego, with which he has been warring all this time, that has died and allowed him to see the world as a child does. He understands now why he always fought with his ego. He had been surrounded by too much knowledge, too much seeking, and his pride was built within this holy knowledge because he was so talented.

Siddhartha struggles to figure out the various parts of himself. He is made of human parts, and feels human emotions and temptations, but he is also made of these eternal things, the holy word and the voice, which connect him to the river and the world. His ego, his essence, then, is a tricky animal, found in all of these parts of himself. It's understandable that it is difficult to define and satisfy the ego.



Siddhartha knows that he had been right, he couldn't have been taught any more. He had to go into the world to learn what he has learnt about his own ego. He had to grasp and desire until he was sick so that the grasper and desirer in him could die. And now he has awoken from sleep a new Siddhartha. Now he greets the voice of the river and his hungry stomach with a smile. He feels a deep love for the water and believes it still has something to give him.

The confrontation of nature again restores Siddhartha's spirit. His path has been a series of gorging and purging, having too much of one thing and seeking another. But despite its twists and turns, the path is good. Everything has been necessary and has provided Siddhartha with a wisdom that is individual to hi and his experience.



PART TWO, CHAPTER 9 – THE FERRYMAN

Siddhartha knows he wants to stay by the river, and resolves to find the ferryman who had showed him kindness before. He thinks this is the way to start his new life. He watches **the crystal movement of the water** and the voice within him is strong and loving. He knows that the man who has grasped the secrets of the river must know many other things. One of these secrets is the water's constancy – it is always running but never runs out. Siddhartha does not fully understand this secret but knows that it is special.

There is a direct connection it seems between the movement of the river, and the voice in Siddhartha. This voice always shows us the state of his spirit. If it is clear, Siddhartha is going in the right direction, if it is weak, there is something wrong. But the river encourages his voice in a new way, showing that every direction is right, and its colors and sensations wash away Siddhartha's doubt.



Siddhartha suffers greatly with hunger but he carries on and gets to the river and sees the old ferryman standing in his boat. The ferryman agrees to ferry Siddhartha across and as they go, Siddhartha compliments him on the river life he has chosen. The ferryman thinks it must be nothing to a man in such fine clothes.

Siddhartha's desires plague him but his desire to escape from the riches and delusions of the town is greater, and pushes him on. The ferryman is just the right person to greet Siddhartha's struggling identity, because he seems so at peace with who he is.



Siddhartha does not wish any longer to be judged for these clothes. He offers them to the ferryman in exchange for his apron. He also asks if he can be the ferryman's assistant and learn how to row the ferry. Now the ferryman recognizes Siddhartha as the samana from years ago. He introduces himself as Vasudeva and asks Siddhartha to share his hut again and tell him the story of how he came to be a finely dressed man.

Siddhartha is again uncomfortable in his clothes. He had appeared in the town dressed as a homeless beggar, and now as a finely dressed man he is out of place with the ferryman, who he wishes to learn from and not belittle. The repetitive shedding of Siddhartha's skin is a natural process, which seems to be leading him towards the source of his inner voice.



Siddhartha watches Vasudeva row with admiration for his calm strength and focus. He remembers the fondness he had felt for the ferryman when they'd first met. When they reach the hut, Vasudeva offers Siddhartha plenty of bread and mangoes and Siddhartha eats with gusto. Then as the light disappears, the pair settles by a tree and Siddhartha begins the long story of his life.

Vasudeva presents Siddhartha with everything he needs at this moment. He is almost a father to Siddhartha. Besides food and shelter, Vasudeva's skills of ferrying, quietness, peace, and comforting, all provide for Siddhartha's spirit in a way that his previous teachers never did.



Vasudeva listens carefully. Listening is the ferryman's great virtue. Siddhartha feels that Vasudeva is absorbing all that he is telling him, without judgment, and when he comes to the most recent chapter of his story, about finding the 'om' by the river, the ferryman listens so carefully that he closes his eyes. Vasudeva is very pleased to learn that he **the river** has spoken to Siddhartha as it has to him. He invites Siddhartha to stay with him, and sleep on the pallet that his late wife used to sleep on.

Listening is a skill we have not heard before. We know well about Siddhartha's abilities to wait and fast, and think, and now his abilities to gamble and make love, but listening presents itself now as the holiest, most honest of virtues. It connects the essence of Vasudeva to the essence of the river, and promises Siddhartha that he too could become one with nature.



Siddhartha accepts and praises Vasudeva for his ability to listen, hoping to learn it from him one day, but Vasudeva says he will only learn it from the river itself. He tells Siddhartha that he has already learned how the water moves downward, and he will learn something else from it too, but he won't explain what that other thing will be. Vasudeva reminds Siddhartha that he is no sage, that he has a ferryman's knowledge and that for some people the river is not a hindrance but a source of the deepest knowledge. After this, the pair goes to sleep.

So far, Siddhartha's gifts have been attributed to his own essence and his own holiness, but Vasudeva's attribution of his ability to listen to the river, shows that a person is not just an essence and a set of gifts, he is connected to the world and part of the world's forms. There is something secret and important about the wisdom that Vasudeva has that seems meant for Siddhartha too.



Siddhartha lives with Vasudeva and learns all the skills of ferrying and fixing the boat. But he learns most from **the river**, about how to listen with an open heart. Vasudeva is a man of few words, but when Siddhartha asks him about the secret of time, which he has learned from the river, he knows exactly what Siddhartha means and is excited to share it. The river has taught Siddhartha that the source occurs at the same moment as the end, and there is no separation, and he learns to see his own life this way, from his birth to his death, all one whole. They are both very happy in this knowledge.

The river takes on human and godlike figures in Siddhartha's life. He was always taught to revere elders and those that had achieved greater wisdom and enlightenment, but the river, eternal, always there, ancient, is the most venerable figure he has found and provides him with a new kind of inspiration for his onward journey.



On another occasion, Siddhartha asks the ferryman if it is true that **the river** is all voices, each woman, man and creature. Vasudeva says that it is true and that the voice is the holy word 'om'. With these lessons, Siddhartha becomes more and more like the ferryman, joyful and smiling. The pair sits like brothers beside the river and even sometimes, as they listen to the river, have the same thoughts, as if the river is speaking to them at once.

Siddhartha and Vasudeva speak about the truths of the river as if they are knowable and definable, like the proverbs of the Buddha's teaching or the verses that Siddhartha used to recite. The river is both a kind of wisdom and a wise man.



The travelers that crossed the river felt this special spirit emanating from the ferrymen and often found themselves opening up to them, telling their life stories. After a while, people come to **the river** just to see the ferrymen, because word has spread that they are sages or wizards, but when they meet them, they find two friendly old men, quiet and strange, and wonder how the rumor started.

Years pass, uncounted, until one day, hoards of monks and pilgrims start arriving at the river, and tell the ferrymen that they are going to see Gautama, the Buddha, who is mortally ill and will soon die his final human death and pass into glory. Siddhartha reflects on the great voice of this teacher, and remembers him fondly. He remembers his young self, dubious of teaching, trying to separate himself. Now he knows that though he had needed to separate himself from teaching, he no longer believes in separations. He knows that he is connected to everything.

Amongst the hoards is Kamala, who is also on a pilgrimage to visit the dying Buddha. Since knowing Siddhartha, Kamala has given up the life of a courtesan to be a supporter of the monks and a pilgrim herself. She brings Siddhartha's son, named after his father, with her. He follows his mother in a sulk, not understanding why he has to tag along. He demands rest stops every so often.

On one of these rest stops, as Kamala is resting her eyes, a black snake attacks and bites her. They try to go on towards the river but Kamala collapses. Young Siddhartha is distraught. Luckily, Vasudeva hears Kamala's cry and comes to her and carries her to the hut. Siddhartha sees the boy first, and a strange feeling rises inside him, then he recognizes the mother and knows that the boy must be his son.

Siddhartha and Vasudeva try to look after Kamala, giving her a healing potion, but she is already in a bad way. When she wakes, she sees the familiar face of Siddhartha over her and then remembers her son and worries for him. Siddhartha assures her that he is looked after. Kamala tells Siddhartha that he has grown old but that he still looks like the young samana she first knew, and has the eyes of her young son. She asks if he recognizes her and her son. Then, tired and troubled, she closes her eyes again.

The reputation that crosses the region about the ferrymen mirrors that of the Buddha earlier. News of the humble lives of Siddhartha and Vasudeva travels even without the following of monks or the sermons and spiritual teaching that created Gautama's reputation.



The end of the cycle of Gautama's life brings Siddhartha's contemplation on the cycles of his own life. There is a deep connection in the narrative between Gautama and Siddhartha, and at this stage of Siddhartha's realizations and awakenings, Gautama's departure seems to be making way for a new saint.



The spiritual society surrounding Siddhartha carries and flows, one person affecting another in a very natural way. Kamala's pilgrimage has been stirred by meeting Siddhartha, and her son comes along in the same motion. It is as if the whole set of characters are on the same collective pilgrimage.



The collection of events that occur by the river tie together in such a perfect way that it seems like fate for Siddhartha's lover and son to arrive with him at this moment. The collision of the town setting and the river setting creates a collision of everything Siddhartha has learned, and suggests that some kind of culmination, confrontation, or blending of the two is imminent.



When Siddhartha came into the town, Kamala was the face that greeted him and led him into a new world and offered him the next stage of his journey. Now, the roles have reversed and it is Siddhartha who can offer Kamala her next stage. His peacefulness and guardianship over her completes the circle.



Young Siddhartha is afraid for his mother and Siddhartha tries to comfort his son. He remembers a prayer he learned from the Brahmins and sings it. His son calms down and sleeps. Siddhartha and Vasudeva know that Kamala is dying. She awakes again in great pain. She tells Siddhartha that he looks both the same and different, that his eyes have changed. She sees that he has attained peace. She tells him of her hope to travel to the Buddha and look into his eye, but, as Siddhartha tells her that she will find peace too, she knows that she has found it in her old lover's eyes and it is just as good as Gautama. Unable to speak, she gazes at Siddhartha until her body gives out.

Siddhartha watches Kamala's pale face, now old and without the color of the fig that he once saw. He lets the sight take him over, and sees his own figure stretched out and pale. He has a deep feeling of the eternity of life. Vasudeva prepares food for him, but he doesn't eat. He spends the night sitting outside the hut, every so often listening for his son.

Early in the morning, Vasudeva comes out and Siddhartha tells him that he has been reflecting, listening to the river tells him about oneness. Vasudeva sees that Siddhartha has been touched by sorrow but that it has not entered his heart. Siddhartha cannot be sad when his life has been enriched by finding his son. Vasudeva tells him that his son is welcome to stay with them, but now they must build Kamala a pyre in the same way that Vasudeva had built one for his wife when she passed.

PART TWO, CHAPTER 10 – THE SON

Young Siddhartha, full of grief, attends his mother's funeral. He lives in the ferryman's hut but will not eat. Siddhartha respects his grieving. He finds that the boy is spoiled, and used to rich things and the attention of his mother. The boy does not know Siddhartha and will find it hard to cope with such minimal conditions, so Siddhartha is patient and cares for him. But though at first, Siddhartha felt so enriched by the thought of knowing his son, as time goes on, the boy's mischievous ways and surly attitude toward Siddhartha drains him of that initial joy. But still Siddhartha loves him and suffers through it. He and Vasudeva divide the work between the river and the hut so that Siddhartha can stay with his son.

In Kamala's dying state, she desires the serenity of the Buddha's teaching that she has come to admire and seek refuge in. But without this hope, holy comfort comes in the form of Siddhartha. Love and wisdom together form a pleasing, peaceful vision when she looks at him. We see now how close to the Buddha's state of enlightenment Siddhartha has become.



Siddhartha's human qualities and connections appear suddenly before him. His body and Kamala's body have aged, and they have created a new life. These bonds draw Siddhartha into deep reflection.



The connection between Vasudeva's and Siddhartha's paths is very clear now. Vasudeva has gone through grief just as Siddhartha is going through it, and has grown to be at peace with his solitude. The river soothes Siddhartha and makes him realize the gift of his son.



Siddhartha has faced challenges throughout his life, but the arrival of his son and his son's grief overtakes his mind and heart like nothing else so far. The familial bond seems to have an effect that no other bond has, not even the bond he had with Govinda or with his revered elders like Vasudeva and Gautama. It is the paternal bond that makes Siddhartha excuse the boy's worldly sullen attitude that, in contrast, Siddhartha had greeted with such scorn when he first encountered it in the town.



But, as time goes on, Siddhartha, expecting his son to come round and learn to love him, is disappointed. Young Siddhartha is defiant and rude. One day, Vasudeva approaches Siddhartha about it. It saddens him to see his friend so misused. He sees that the boy is used to the city and did not leave it willfully, like Siddhartha did. Vasudeva has asked the river about it and the river has laughed at them. He urges Siddhartha to listen to **the river** too.

Siddhartha doesn't feel ready to part with his son. He asks for more time. He believes that he can woo his son and that eventually, young Siddhartha will hear the river too. Vasudeva agrees that certainly the boy is destined for something, but they do not know what path he will take yet. His stubborn heart will have to suffer much and do much sin, Vasudeva expects. He says that while Siddhartha does not punish or beat the boy, he forces him with his love and affection, and keeps him prisoner with two old men that are not of the same world as he.

Siddhartha is saddened and ashamed but when Vasudeva suggests that the boy should be brought back to the town, Siddhartha is reluctant to part with him. He is worried that his son will succumb to the town's pleasures. The ferryman smiles and tells Siddhartha to trust in **the river**. What can one do to save someone from the world, what can one teach him? He reminds Siddhartha that he himself ran from teaching and found awakening by the river, following his own path. He assures Siddhartha that all the love in the world will not save someone from their destiny.

Vasudeva had never spoken so much at once. Siddhartha thinks restlessly about it. He knows Vasudeva is right, but his love is stronger than this knowledge and he is terrified of losing the boy – he has never loved anyone so painfully and happily at once, and he cannot let his son go. He gets on with life again, silently bearing his son's defiance while Vasudeva looks on patiently.

Looking at his boy's face, Siddhartha remembers what Kamala once said to him. She told him that he couldn't love, and he himself agreed that he was separate from the child people. But now he knows the love of the child people and can suffer for someone else and be stupid for someone else, and though he had mocked it before, he respects the feeling now and feels richer for it. He feels that it is a very human, childlike feeling but that it is right. Pleasure, pain and folly all have their place.

The river's laughter shows that the wisdom of the river is far ahead of Siddhartha at this point, looking on his heartache and knowing the way out of it. It provides hope that the anxiety that consumes him now may just be an illusion and will turn into something that leads to growth. The river's laugh is interestingly similar to the smile of the Buddha, an even purer symbol of joy.



Siddhartha has learned about the natural flow and unity of the river and its timelessness, but now, affected deeply by the love that he has for his son, he is not embodying the spirit of the river in his actions. He is forcing the boy and keeping him off course. The words he uses like "woo" show that he wishes to tempt and pull his son's loyalty from the town to the riverside, which is very much against the natural philosophy that he believes in deep down.



Siddhartha has been so clear in his impulses to leave teaching and follow his own path, but now, puzzled by love, he does not appreciate the same need in his son. He does not trust his son with the delusions of the town. We are reminded of the defiance of Siddhartha when faced with his own father's possessive paternal love.



Young Siddhartha's hold on his father continues. We have never seen Siddhartha be so pushed and pulled in various directions before. The Buddha's warning about love being a consuming delusion has some sense behind it because Siddhartha can barely distinguish his own path from that of his son.



The episode with his son takes its place in Siddhartha's journey, and despite the pain he feels, again he feels the rightness of everything. This is a far cry from his life as a samana and as a merchant, where feelings and pain were so hateful to him. After each period of discontentment, is an awakening, but it is a cycle that seems to be leading somewhere.



Young Siddhartha goes on abusing his father, humiliating him and sulking. Nothing about Siddhartha can influence the boy. He is bored and feels so imprisoned by Siddhartha's kindness that he would almost prefer to be punished. One day, when Siddhartha asks his son to do a chore for him, young Siddhartha erupts in a fit of rage and refuses. He dares Siddhartha to hit him and says he hates him for trying to make him an imitation of himself. The boy runs away in the night, taking money and the ferryman's boat with him.

Siddhartha is anxious for the child's safety and begs that they make a raft and follow him. But Vasudeva responds that they will make a raft only to fetch the boat back and they must leave the boy. He will be able to look after himself better than Siddhartha is able to look after him. Vasudeva is sorry to see Siddhartha suffering, but he is sure that Siddhartha will soon laugh at all of this.

They build the raft and go over to the boat that has been abandoned. Vasudeva takes an axe with them, because he suspects that young Siddhartha may have destroyed their oar to make a point. Sure enough when they get to the boat, there is no oar left. He wants Siddhartha to realize that his son doesn't want to be followed. Siddhartha hurries to search for his son, but as he walks, he starts to think that maybe it is futile, and he stops worrying for the boy's safety, knowing deep down that his son will find his way home.

Siddhartha still wants to see his son. He arrives at the grove that used to belong to Kamala, and his eyes are filled with visions of the past, of himself as a young samana, of the proud way he had entered the world of love lessons and Kamaswami's riches, of the songbird and his desire for death. He feels it all anew. Now he knows that he cannot save his son or bring him back. His paternal love feels like a wound, and though Siddhartha feels like the wound will blossom like a flower, it hasn't blossomed yet and he feels empty and sad.

Siddhartha, as he had learned from **the river**, sits and waits and tries to listen to his inner voice. He speaks the 'om' silently for a long time outside the gates of the grove. Monks bring him fruit as he sits there, but he doesn't notice. Eventually he is brought out of the trance by Vasudeva standing above him, smiling cheerfully. They share the fruit and go quietly back to the riverside hut. They don't mention the boy. Soon Siddhartha falls asleep.

This is the first time we see the situation from young Siddhartha's point of view and see that his pain is separate from Siddhartha's. He picks up on his father's ethical contradiction – he has spent all his time trying to find his own path and not imitate or follow, but now he has forced his son to follow in his footsteps.



Vasudeva, as the wise elder in this situation, guides Siddhartha to make the right decision and let his son go. Ironically, it is the presence of his child that has made Siddhartha childlike again, desiring and seeking and needing guidance from the fatherly ferryman.



Just like Siddhartha, the boy is seeking his own path and must be left alone to follow it. The sight of young Siddhartha being so defiant and strong-willed in creating his own path shows us how far Siddhartha has come that he now has a duty to someone else's individual path, not just his own.



Going towards the town and the grove where he had been so jaded is like taking a step into the past for Siddhartha and we realize that he has learned all that he needed to from this place and must go back to the river in order to carry on his journey to enlightenment. We see clearly that, even though Siddhartha feels loss, that he knows he must follow his own path and his son might have quite a different path.



Siddhartha relives his cycle again. He tries to speak the 'om' as he did as a youth, and is approached by monks, but it is the river, and Vasudeva's silent smile, that saves him again, and again restorative sleep comes beyond his control.



PART TWO, CHAPTER 11 – OM

The wound brought on by the loss of his son hurts Siddhartha for a good while. He sees the families that cross the river in a different way now. He understands them and is envious. He now feels a sense of kinship with all the various travelers from the childlike world that pass by. Their desires no longer seemed silly to him, in fact they are now vital, even venerable. He begins to feel that the child people are equal to the thinkers, with only one thing, consciousness, separating them. And sometimes Siddhartha even doubts the importance of this consciousness and sees the child people as superior, with their blind devotion to their loved ones.

Siddhartha has gradually learned what real wisdom is and he is even more drawn to Vasudeva, as the embodiment of the oneness and the smile that real wisdom is all about. But the wound of his son still burns in him, and one day he longs to go to town and see his son. He takes the boat out, but all of a sudden he hears **the river** laughing at him. He peers into the water and sees his reflection and in it, the reflection of his own father. He remembers how they parted and realizes that his father had felt the same suffering, and the whole situation was a cycle. The river laughs. Siddhartha's wound is still not healing but hope glimmers in the distance.

Siddhartha goes back to the hut, wanting to open his heart to Vasudeva, the great listener. Vasudeva is old and slow now, but still wears his serene smile. Today, they talk of things they've never talked of before, the most embarrassing things, his envy, the wound of his son. Siddhartha feels the exquisite comfort of Vasudeva's listening, as if he is bathing the wound. Siddhartha feels that it is no longer Vasudeva, that the man has transformed into **the river** itself, and eternity itself.

Siddhartha stops thinking about his wound and the presence of Vasudeva fills him up. Vasudeva's transformation seems right and just. He realizes that he views Vasudeva as a god, but that it cannot last. He must say goodbye to the ferryman. When Siddhartha has finished his story, Vasudeva sits silently, radiating love for his friend. He suggests they listen to **the river** together.

Visions appear to Siddhartha as he watches, the faces of his lonely son and lonely father, and himself. The voice of the river is lamenting and determined. Vasudeva urges Siddhartha to keep listening and listen better. The images of his friends and family now merge and flow with **the river's** voice. The river runs towards an endless set of goals, attaining each one and pushing towards the next as its form changes. Now its voice is filled with thousands of voices.

Though Siddhartha had played the game of the child people when he lived in town in the service of the merchant, it is only after sharing his life with his flesh-and-blood son and giving so much of himself in sacrifice, that he truly understands and respects the love and desire that dominates the child people. Natural emotion and love become high qualities now that Siddhartha has experienced them enough to truly understand them.



Siddhartha, who was once devoted entirely to the pursuit of enlightenment, now shares his devotion between his role as a father and his role as the old sage that we have seen him become. But neither diminishes the other – in fact, the acknowledgement of the cycle of fatherhood and sonhood gives Siddhartha a greater scope to his wisdom. As the river always appears as a symbol of rightness and oneness, it does so again here, telling Siddhartha that his feelings are still going in the right direction.



Vasudeva's qualities have always had a light, serene quality, but now as the narrator describes his actions, they become more and more akin to the flow of water and with the water's healing properties. Vasudeva is the personification of what Siddhartha has learned from the river.



Note how many of the good, wise things in Siddhartha's journey, the truths, travel and spread in this natural way. The knowledge of the ferryman's goodness and the sensation of things coming to an end are just like this – they happen without intention or seeking.



All through the novel, Siddhartha has been struggling with how the diversity and the unity of the world fit together, but in moments of true awareness of the river and his path, it is clear that even the senses, which seem so distinct, are one and the same sense. Voices and visions are taken in at once, together.



Siddhartha listens and now he utterly absorbs everything. He listens perfectly. The voices are indistinguishable, angry, loving, dying, all the same. He sees the world as a **river**, the wholeness of the river is the wholeness of the world, and now the voice comes to him in a single word, 'om'. Siddhartha's face takes on the same radiance of Vasudeva's. He feels his wound blossoming and his ego becoming one with everything else.

Siddhartha's suffering has stopped. He knows divine, perfect knowledge. Vasudeva sees that Siddhartha has this knowledge thanks to **the river** and happily he tells Siddhartha that he has been waiting for this moment, and now he can say goodbye to his life as a ferryman. He tells Siddhartha that he is going into the forest and into the oneness. Siddhartha bows to his friend and watches him walk away, full of peace and light.

Voice, river, word and all of Siddhartha's memories come together in this description. Each sense is likened to another sense, so that Siddhartha's experience is at once diverse and unified, which is what he has been aiming for.



This perfection could only be achieved through the natural pursuit of experience and life and through the understanding of the natural world. The river is not just the source of this wisdom and perfection but also a kind of legacy. Now that understanding of the river has passed on to Siddhartha, Vasudeva has reached his own enlightenment.



PART TWO, CHAPTER 12 – GOVINDA

One day, Govinda is resting in the pleasure grove with the other monks and hears the rumor of the wise ferryman, and decides to visit him. He has been following the teaching but has not expelled seeking from his heart. He is ferried across by the old ferryman, and asks him if he is also a seeker of the right path. Siddhartha wonders why this old disciple still calls himself a seeker, but Govinda replies that he believes it is his destiny to seek.

Govinda asks Siddhartha for a word of advice. Siddhartha doesn't know what he can say to the Venerable One, but suggests that maybe he is seeking too hard. When one seeks too hard, one only sees the sought object, the goal, but finding is about being open and not focusing on one goal. Govinda doesn't quite understand, so Siddhartha gives the example of when Govinda didn't recognize him while he slept by the river. Govinda is astonished that he has again failed to recognize his old friend. Siddhartha tells him he has changed many times – it is his destiny to keep changing, he says – and he invites Govinda to stay with him in the hut.

Just like Gautama's reputation had somehow radiated across the land, now it is Siddhartha and Vasudeva who are a powerful source of wisdom. Real wisdom has a way of traveling without being taught, a kind of spirit or energy.



As Govinda has stayed the same, always seeking and always slightly anxious, Siddhartha's high calling has manifested itself as an ability to transform and follow a changing path. The openness that Siddhartha promotes is also a lack of direction and a willingness to be pulled along in many directions, to experience many things. The idea of wisdom and enlightenment itself has changed from a certain goal to a less definable state. It is not a set of knowledge. It is an accumulated understanding of experience.



In the morning, Govinda wishes to know one last thing before he goes, whether Siddhartha has any teaching, any bit of knowledge, that he looks to for guidance. Siddhartha reminds him that he distrusted teachers long ago. This hasn't changed but he has had many teachers, including a courtesan and a merchant, and Govinda. The most important of his teachers has been a ferryman, in whom Siddhartha has discovered perfection and holiness. Govinda thinks Siddhartha is joking. He pushes for Siddhartha to tell him some insight or thought that helps him live. Siddhartha says that he has had many thoughts, but he has learned that wisdom cannot be communicated. Knowledge can be uttered, but wisdom can only be learned through experience.

Siddhartha comes to his best thought. He tells Govinda that "the opposite of every truth is just as true." Only one-sided truths can be spoken, like when Gautama spoke of Nirvana and samsara, the two opposites. But the world itself is never one-sided. It only seems otherwise because time is perceived as reality, but actually there is no time. Govinda is confused. Siddhartha explains that each sinner is also a Brahmin and a Buddha, will sin and will reach Nirvana. And all of these stages are not on a linear path but occurring all at once. The world is perfect at every moment.

With good meditation, it is possible to remove time. This is why everything seems good and right to Siddhartha. He has learned to agree with the world in its totality. Siddhartha then uses a stone as a prop. He explains the stages of a stone, its various possible incarnations, ground into soil, then the soil fertilizing a plant, feeding an animal, and says he used to think of this as a cycle, but now he knows that the stone is an animal, is God, is everything, all at once. And this is why Siddhartha loves the stone now, in its stone-ness.

Unsatisfied by the pettiness of these words, Siddhartha stops there. He explains that he used the stone to show how he loves things, but could have chosen any other example, a tree, a flower. He does not love words. He suggests that it is words that keep Govinda from finding peace, that Nirvana is only the word Nivarna, nothing else. Govinda claims it is also a thought, but Siddhartha doesn't see much difference between words and thoughts. It is things that matter. Vasudeva showed this in his belief in the river. He became venerable without books. Govinda is concerned that these 'things' may just be images and not essential truths. Siddhartha is not troubled. If they are images, he is also an image.

Govinda believes so strongly that wisdom comes in the form of teachings, words and thoughts that can be communicated. Perhaps this is why he is still seeking as an old man and still feels like he is destined to seek forever, because he still relies on words. As we have found along Siddhartha's path, it is things and nature and life's experience that teaches. Siddhartha's is a different kind of insight and, as such, is difficult to convey to Govinda.



Siddhartha removes the notion of heaven and hell, goodness and sin, and all the other opposites that have dictated the rigidity of the perceived path to enlightenment. By doing this, the scope of the world and the ways and paths that one can use to ascend to spiritual wisdom become larger, almost unlimited. This makes the world seem a much freer place, which explains Siddhartha's serenity compared with Govinda's anxiety.



Anything and everything can be used as inspiration for Siddhartha now. In the first part of his journey, when he was learning from Brahma and the ascetics, the goal was a kind of essence or ultimate knowledge, but now every little thing is valuable and provides wisdom.



Siddhartha realizes, and we realize while reading, that this conversation is essentially useless. With each word that he utters, Siddhartha knows that words cannot describe adequately what he has learned, and even are a hindrance to Govinda's understanding. Words are a kind of unreality, a reduction of reality and experience. So, when Govinda worries about the difference between things and images, Siddhartha knows that both words denote the same thing, and the truth is unchangeable.



Siddhartha tells Govinda that he has come to see love as the most important thing now. Govinda reminds him that the Buddha taught benevolence and tolerance instead of love. Siddhartha sees this as a fight of words. There is no actual contradiction. He knows that he is one with Gautama, that they all are, and so trusts that they all feel the same kind of love. It is Gautama's actions and gestures that convince Siddhartha, not his words.

Govinda thanks Siddhartha for his thoughts. He doesn't understand but wishes him well. To himself, Govinda reflects that Siddhartha's style is so different from Gautama's. His thoughts sound strange. But his whole presence radiates peace and saintliness, just as Gautama's did. Govinda feels deep love for Siddhartha and bows to him.

Govinda wishes for one word that he can understand, to take with him when they part for the last time. Siddhartha **smiles still**. Govinda's face is full of angst and seeking. Siddhartha tells him to come close and kisses his forehead. As he touches Siddhartha, beyond his thoughts and concerns, a vision comes to him. He sees a river of faces, animals, murderers, lovers, transformed and reborn, never dying. Over them all is a kind of mask, keeping all the faces in one whole, and this mask is the smile that Siddhartha wears now. It is the exact smile of oneness that the Buddha used to wear. Time and existence seem to disappear at this moment and Govinda stands before Siddhartha, and he cries and bows low, feeling such deep love for this holy man.

Siddhartha's philosophy is that things are the only reality. Words are misleading, because they are only attached to things and they can create difference and opposition where there is none. Perhaps it is not really the Buddha's teaching that has earned him such a reputation but the natural effect of his physical presence.



Siddhartha's individual path to enlightenment comes into focus as a whole. He has not mimicked the path of any other yet his enlightenment is of the same quality as the Buddha's. This shows that enlightenment is enlightenment, no matter how it arrives.



Everything Siddhartha has gathered in wisdom about the unity of the world, the nature of wisdom and the importance of love and human connection and listening, comes together in this moment for Govinda to see. It is a physical, visual moment, showing the complete picture of life as it enlightens Siddhartha. Now, he wears the smile of the Buddha and we see that, just like Gautama, Siddhartha has followed his own path and has reached its pinnacle. It is also a moment of enlightenment and fulfillment for Govinda, as if he is still the shadow, but has become a saintly shadow just as he hoped to become as a boy. That Siddhartha communicates ultimately not with words but with a kiss, not with a teaching but with an experience and a connection, is further testament to his belief that enlightenment is not about following teachings, it is about learning from the experience of the world.





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