

AWAKENING AS NARATED IN HERMANN HESSE'S NOVELS

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ABSTRACT

Literature, issuing from a sense of wonderment about life and the world, involves a keen interest in major questions about human experiences and their patterns in the world. Therefore, a philosophical analysis of literature develops a reflective concern for life and makes suggestions for life-problems. It requires a careful and systematic reading of work of arts and a critical, logical examination of the arguments they put forth. It offers a chance to create and adopt seminal beliefs about human development, life and the world. Hermann Hesse, 'a writer of man's interior' (Freedman, 1920, p.11) presents his heroes undertake self exploration within themselves and into the world they live. Their life-course charts a particular pattern of human development.

Keywords: Literature, Philosophy and Discussions.

INTRODUCTION:

Herman Hesse, who considered his role as a thinker "to leap and caper, to dream of what had never been thought of" is now numbered among the leading thinkers of the 20th century. "A complex, subtle and allusive writer", as New York Times Book Review describes him, he is of equal shoulders to Thomas Mann and his contemporaries. 'The garden dwarf among the Nobel Prize winners', as Volker Michels (1977, p.5) describes him, Hesse with his 'Search for Self' in mostly all his works, added crowning glory with his sincere efforts in the world of literature and philosophy.

Hesse is very well – known in fashioning his own inner experiences into a personal myth or metaphor enacted in and through language. His subjective fictions give account of life in its all colours with rich experiences of the world. There is no single sphere of life which had not been talked about by Hesse. His search for 'self – knowledge' may linger in readers' mind and spirit life long. His heroes, like an existential man, searching for meaning in the meaningless world, refuse to be average men who consolidate the existing form of a race, a species and a way of life

but choose their own way. Hesse is a lover, observer and participant of life who has enriched, varied and diversified fields of knowledge by exploring his first handed experiences with the depth of his scholarship. The Saturday review of New York Times has observed, “No other German writer has spoken out about life as passionately as Hesse . . . An existential intensity and a depth of understanding that are rare in contemporary fiction”. This makes him an existential thinker.

No other virtue but ‘self will’ is avowed by Hesse in his novels. For him self will is the only virtue that takes no account of obedience to laws. ‘A self willed man obeys a different law – the law in himself, his own will’ (Stelzig, 1988, p.44). This is the cornerstone of Hesse’s philosophy of awakening. Hesse puts his heroes in innumerable experiences and lets their awakenings take place. Presented here is a schematic analysis of how his heroes undergo the process of awakening. The focus of the present study were the following works written by Hermann Hesse.

- Siddhartha (1922) : Describes an inner journey of a traditional Brahmin boy from discontent in religious rituals to freedom from all the bondages. He ultimately lives in harmony with the self and the given reality. (Total no. of pages : 152)
- Demian (1919) : Describes the protagonist’s quest to find what his life is, and is going to be. It depicts his endeavour in seeking mentorship. Accompanied and prompted by his mysterious classmate Max Demian, he descends from and revolts against the superficial ideals of the world, and rests has awakening into a realization of self. (Total no. of pages : 158)
- Steppenwolf (1924) : Depicts the duality of human nature through the character of Harry Haller, who feels battle within him between his two selves : a man and a wolf. Longing for a wolfless life, he learns to switch over to affective side from intellectuality and learns to reconcile the thousand selves of his personality. (Total no. of pages : 253)
- Narcissus and Goldmund (1930) : Is a story of a young man, Goldmund, who wanders around aimlessly throughout medieval Germany after leaving catholic monastery school in search of ‘the meaning of life.’ Goldmund is learning important things by plunging

into experiences. The ways of learning about life employed by an artist contrasts with that of a thinker, Narcissus (Total no. of pages : 312)

- Glass Bead Game (1943) : Describes a journey of a boy, who rises to the highest post 'Magister Ludi', in a pedagogic province called Castalia to the real world to serve the larger culture. He understands the essence of history which helps him to be free from the bondages of that rule – driven system. (Total no. of pages : 520).

THE PROCESS OF AWAKENING:

Two patterns of awakening is noticed in Hesse's heroes: (a) awakening caused by breaking. (b) awakening caused by entering into relations. Siddhartha follows the first pattern. He passes through three awakenings. (a) after leaving shramanas and listening to Gotama. (b) after leaving Samsara and (c) after letting go his son. The first two are the indicators of his transcendence from one stage of life to another while the final awakening brings about harmony and stability in him. Goldmund follows the second pattern of awakening. His four awakenings happen (a) after witnessing human birth, (b) after departing from Lydia, his true love (c) after seeing the statue of Madonna (d) experiencing death from close quarters during plague. Awakening also strikes Sinclair when he (a) encounters Demian for the first time and (b) meets Eva. He follows second pattern of awakening. Harry, too, follows the same pattern. His awakenings take place when (a) he meets Hermine at Black Eagle, a restaurant and (b) experiences thousand selves of his personality in the Magic Theatre. Awakening in Knecht's case is the consequence of parting. To all of them awakening is a brief opening of their eyes and there occurs a diversion in course of life. Awakening provides them a space to pass through / to transcend a stage of their life. It is just a spark in which an individual witnesses his illuminated self. Therefore he is able to move into the centre of his own individuality. This spark is preceded and followed by a number of inner movements. They are as follows

(1) A Ring from Within

The process of awakening starts when a person listens to the ring of his inner voice. This ring is nothing but a judgement a conscience made over the life lived. A person becomes

alert to the mistakes he has committed. He becomes responsive to himself. (Siddhartha listening to the bird, Goldmund dreaming of his mother image). Normally the ring is heard after a long slumber in the abyss of routinized life. The instances may be parting from a person or a place or meeting a person.

(2) Self Abuse

This is a state in which a person reflects on the self than on the situation. A person experiences the worthlessness of his previous engagements. The contradiction between a sense of inner emptiness and a sense of goal orientation raises a series of questions: 'What have I made of my life?' "I was a fool to behave like this." Strife with oneself many a times generates death wish in the person. (Siddhartha, Harry thinks of committing suicide).

(3) Recalling / Reflecting

The self on making gets disturbed on realizing his follies, but tries to forget the wasteful and endeavours to reshape itself. Reflection is an ontological tool used by Hesse to make his heroes develop better understanding. In this state, a person analyses his errors and mistakes. It is important to note that in this phase, a person does not think that he should not have done what he did. [Siddhartha, Goldmund, Sinclair thinking about their past, Siddhartha watching images of the past in the water). Reflection imparts realization that it was a good thing to have experiences, and they have contributed to fresh learning.

(4) Discarding Possessions

Like a snake, shedding off the skin, a person in a process of awakening casts off all possessions: knowledge, understanding and learning from previous experiences. Unlearning of what is learnt creates space for future learning. Such a renunciation frees an individual from bondage of the past experiences and prepares him to start life afresh. (Siddhartha leaves Samsara, Harry and Knecht discards intellectual scholarship, Sinclair leaves worldly possessions).

(5) Determining to Rely on the Self

In this process of awakening, when a person discards everything, he does not have any plan for his future. He does not discard the past for better future. He just decides that whatever life offers will be accepted by him. he determines to rely on the self only and to avoid taking help from others. In this phase a person becomes his own source, his own guide. No memories from the past or no future imagination brings fear to him. he gains confidence and decides to face the reality.

(6) Induction of a Dreamless Sleep

A dreamless sleep stands for disconnection with the past as well as a state of desirelessness. In the process of awakening, a person, after discarding everything enjoys a dreamless sleep which symbolizes that he is calm from within and no feelings disturb him. (Siddhartha enjoys a dreamless sleep after crossing the river).

(7) Waking up with Innocent / Pristine Eyes

This phase of awakening stands for the new birth of a person. Becoming a new born child, a person becomes clear headed and receptive. With a new outlook he looks at himself and the world.

(8) Re-establishing Fresh Contact with Nature and the Self

Beginning life anew requires a person re-establish fresh contact with the surrounding he is in and with the self. He observes the nature from close quarters, enters into dialogue with the nature and the self. Nature has something to tell him. With new zeal, his transformed self becomes ready for the new learnings.

(9) Starting Wandering Again

Wandering stands for aimlessness. When a person starts life anew, he doesn't choose to become a part of a designed life. He prefers to step onto unpredictable path to life. (Siddhartha, Goldmund wander after gaining confidence) During this phase he keeps on reflecting on the changed status of the self. He reflects on feelings, talks to the self and nature.

(10) Entering into New Experiences with Confidence

The process of awakening ends with a person's plunging into new experiences with confidence. He is charged with an entirely different sort of reality so tremendously that he dives to prove himself in the world and acquire further learning. When final awakening takes place, a person has nothing left to get free from. So he just lives in the present. Plunging into experience with confidence prepares one for the further learning and further awakening.

The concept of awakening may be considered as a backbone of educative process professed by Hesse. He has figured out major and minor awakenings in his heroes so meticulously and with conviction that Hesse can be labeled as a 'philosopher of awakening.'

For Hesse, education is the ontological empowerment acquired through a series of learning – unlearning. Awakening is a crucial event in unlearning. When one ventures along the course of experiential living, he goes on clearing the rungs of self-attainment. Unlearning creates space for further learning. Awakening possibilitates such transcendence.

Awakening advocates introspective learning. It demands onto-psychological involvement of an individual. Leaving something which had been so precious may be painful in the beginning. It may induce self abuse but ultimately it leads also to a new birth.

Awakening as an educative process reinforces an individual reestablish himself in a new / fresh contacts with the self and others. The magnitude of awakenings taking place as a learners' educative process, may be small or large but it proceeds until the final unlearning. Awakening requires forgetting the past and beginning life anew. A mentor's support is required to guard the Individual from sleeping into the abyss of self-hatred, depression and ontological-reflection.



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