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# Enlightenment and Self-realisation through the Voices of the River: An Eco-theological Rereading of *Siddhartha*

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### Abstract

Converging the theme of self-realisation, *Siddhartha*, a novella, explores into life story of a young Brahmin boy who abandons his sumptuous life and commences a journey in pursuit of the understanding of reality. He has recognised the incongruities between what he feels it as real and what he has been taught. His goal is to find the quietude that, he expects, will empower him to defeat fear and to experience with equanimity the contrasts of life. Siddhartha has felt the awareness of life with his experiences from his amble from home to Samanas; from Samanas to Gotama; from Gotama to Kamala; and to the river and ferryman. He has undergone both extremities difficulties and the luxuries of life in his journey. He has gone to the lap of the river, which has changed him from an ordinary man to a man of understanding. His experiences are equally valuable, though. Wealth, sensuality, and the attentions of a lovely courtesan have not given him complete satisfaction. He feels sad with the conditions of life, and he has chosen to live near the river, where he learns simply to listen and to be patient. This study stipulates how the river has empowered him to understand a spirit of love and how he has learnt to accept human essence that is separate from others. Further, it uses eco-theology as the theoretical tool of analysis and examines how Siddhartha grasps the wholeness of life and achieves a state of bliss and highest

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wisdom through the voices of the river, and how his realisation of reality and the voices of the river get united into “OM”, the state of enlightenment.

*Keywords:* Consciousness; corporeal; enlightenment; incorporeal; self-realization

## Introduction

Hermann Hesse, a German novelist, found varying stories of the life of Buddha while visiting the different villages of India. Compiling them, he has given a shape of a novel to those stories entitled *Siddhartha*, “a fictitious biography” (Butler 117), and published in the German language in 1922. The novel revolves around the theme of the search for self-realisation by a young Brahmin boy, Siddhartha. He has recognised the need of learning the essence of life and move away from home. He could have left the home without giving any notice to family members, but as part of the Hindu culture, he asks permission from his father, though he spends hours getting it from his father. He abandons his comfortable life with his intention to wander, thinking that wandering will certainly give him the knowledge of the world. Slowly, he finds a rooted ambiguity between reality and what he has been taught. He intends to identify the cause of this ambiguity. His main purpose of leaving the home and family is to find the serenity so that it will enable him to defeat fear in life; the fear of pleasure and pain, the fear of success and defeat, the fear of loss and gain, the fear of you and me and so on, however, “the unity or oneness he sought may have been nothing more than the resolution of the conflicts developing within his own personality” (Shaw 204). Further, he intends to experience self-control over the contrasts of life, including joy and sorrow, life and death. He travels from place to place and meets several people. His travel and experience have given him a sense of self-realisation by the end of the novel.

The novel has raised many questions on the philosophy of human sorrows, fear and experiences. Primarily, it focuses on the life events of Buddha, but in a distinct narrative form. The narrative includes major events of his life symbolically. This paper does not look into every other detail of his journey and his verdict, but explores how the river has brought transformation in him, especially in his understanding. It examines how the central character, Siddhartha, has achieved a sense of

enlightenment through his experiences with special focus on the mythical river symbol and the theory of eco-theology. This study identifies that the river in *Siddhartha* is not only a place where Siddhartha learns important lessons. It is a living and sacred being, and shows that Siddhartha's spiritual growth is closely connected to his respect for nature and his understanding of all life as interdependent.

The novella, *Siddhartha* has revealed numerous aspects of the life of Siddhartha. It has explored the philosophy varying concerns of human life: the search for happiness, queries on reality, and fretfulness, anxiety and fear in life. Siddhartha has realised the truth of life through his journey from an ordinary young boy to a man of understanding. The studies on *Siddhartha* by now have examined the philosophy of life as a journey from different perspectives, but this research has identified the river as the symbol of consciousness in Siddhartha. How the voices of the river have given him the insight of his in-depth understanding and the sense of enlightenment is the central problem of this study.

This paper tries to address the following research questions: How have the voices of the river empowered Siddhartha to the state of the wholeness of life and the bliss and highest wisdom in life? And how his realisation of reality and the voices of the river get united into "OM", the state of enlightenment? As a qualitative research work, this paper analyses the novel *Siddhartha* from an eco-theological perspective. The central focus of the analysis is the role of the river in making the central character feel changed. The main method of research in this paper is textual analysis using eco-theology as a tool, with special focus on the power of the river in Siddhartha's mind, and how he has listened to the voices of the river and has found the essence of human life. He has respected and supposed the river as a powerful agent; however, he has not mentioned the river as a divine agent directly.

### **River Myths and Symbols: From Divine to Earthly**

Hindu cultural practices are purely eco-cultural. From birth to death, one who lives the life of a Hindu lives with nature culturally. From naming to death functions, one has to follow nature not just as the means of life, but also as the means of knowledge and understanding. Nature provides the place to live, things to eat and the motivation to keep active. Among them, the earth is the first

nature that provides everything else one after another. “The Earth with its resources such as air, water, and soil sustains us and other forms of life” (Baindur 01). Moreover, earth, water, river, air, fire, sky, sun, are only the agents that Hindus prepare their culture to worship on. No religious function begins in the absence of fire. No function is complete without offering *Argha* to the sun. Similarly, “Water is sacred because all life depends on it: it is the source of survival and energy, the medium of self-purification (Krishna 117), and no religious function is performed without being physically and mentally purified by taking a bath in Gangas (Rivers). Rivers, therefore, are crucial for purification culturally in Hinduism.

If Hinduism is seen just as a pure religion, it becomes inequitable because it sets a pattern of life. In this sense, it is a civilisation. This civilisation stems from Vedic tradition, and it begins “with the worship of nature gods and reverent hymns to the earth, a large part of the belief system of these earliest thinkers was deeply influenced by close observation and contact with nature” (Baindur 05). Based on this Vedic cultural practice of worshipping nature, respecting and preserving nature becomes one major aspect of life. Being accompanied by nature and its phenomenal elements, nature itself is a civilisation for the Hindus. Elements of nature representatively reflect the power and essence of life. Vedic hymns present water with feminine identity as ‘waters’ and “they are goddesses and flow into the sea. Waters are related to the ocean and other landforms as mothers or wives; it is very clear that the nourishing fertility of water makes it easy to imagine the waters thus” (68). Water means to function for purity, both physical and psychological. “The use of water in rituals was prevalent, and even symbolic sanctification, consecrations and the everyday rituals were done by offering water” (Baindur 68). Water, in this context, is not merely a divine image, but also an essential element of life.

The water image is further extended as rivers in cultural texts like the Vedas and in cultural practices. Water flows for purification, self and others. The flowing makes itself purified, and it purifies the earth and other forms of nature while flowing. The places, along which holy water flows, are rivers. Rivers, therefore overtone with other aspects of nature too: “the mountains were sanctified by their

association as the source of rivers and lakes, and the homes of the gods themselves. Many pilgrimage sites are found on riverbanks; sites where two or even three rivers converge are considered particularly sacred" (Krishna 117). This association and interconnection are the sources of nature purification; one element of nature purifies another at a time. The word "river" evokes positive emotions and associations of things pure, clean, and calm. For this cause, self-purification of nature is vital in the totality of the ecological system.

*Chhandajnyopanishad* (I, 1. 2) examines the interlink between the natural elements and water, and how water performs the function of purifying other natural elements, "The essence of all living organisms is the earth. The essence of the earth is water. The essence of water is plants" (Joshi, Bimali and Trivedi 104). This mythical concept of essential connection of water with other forms of nature is properly addressed in the modern principle of ecocriticism as well: "the word 'river' evokes positive emotions and associations of things pure, clean, and calm" (Mihov and Hristov 04). The origin and development of human civilisation are closely related to rivers, "the link between water and life is found even in descriptions where water is called the essence of the Earth that makes up the beings (Baindur 68), and therefore life and water/rivers have connections.

Imaginations of rivers are further transformed into the collective form of Saraswati in the Vedas. And rivers are personalised with individual names and feminine identity for cultural purposes, "interpretations give the sources of the waters – particularly the rivers – personalities and unique names" (68). Vedic symbolic association of Saraswati regards rivers as a feminine deity and the goddess of knowledge. In one sense, the river Saraswati, reflected as Ganga in later Puranic myths, represents consciousness with divine essence and purifies everyone who comes into contact with her (as Saraswati) on earth. Hence, rivers have mythical implications to life as the source of purification, both physical and mental. Physical purification has to do with the material purification of the body, whereas mental purification has to do with spirituality and consciousness. The divine image of the river is identified with Saraswati or Ganga and the earthly image is identified with

individual rivers similar to the one depicted in the novel *Siddhartha*. The role of the river, in either position, is the transformation from impurity to purity and from physical to spiritual.

In the Vedic tradition, rivers are seen as sacred forces that purify, guide, and connect human life with the divine. Texts like the *Rig Veda* describe rivers as living goddesses whose flowing waters carry both physical nourishment and spiritual power. This idea of the river as a source of wisdom and liberation forms a strong symbolic background for Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha*. Although the novel is shaped by Buddhist themes, it also reflects this older Vedic understanding of rivers as teachers that reveal deeper truths. When Siddhartha listens to the river, he follows a path that joins these traditions: he learns through direct experience, as in Buddhism, but the river itself acts as a sacred presence. It echoes the belief that nature can express the divine. In this way, the novel creates a bridge between river symbolism, the river's voice and Buddhist ideas of self-realisation. It allows the river to stand at the centre of both the physical journey and the spiritual awakening.

### **River in *Siddhartha*: Sanctifying the Corporal and Incorporeal**

The river has generated a special image in Siddhartha's understanding. After the separation from Govinda and after he has begun a separate quest even ahead from the teachings of Gautama, Siddhartha has embarked on his journey to nowhere. Nowhere in the sense that he has no particular place to visit, but he has only one destination to achieve self-realisation. He has come across a river (the name of the river is not given in the text), and he has met a ferryman. He has felt a different sensation from the river for the first time in life, "never before he had like a water so well as this one, never before had he perceived the voice and the parable of the moving water thus strongly and beautifully" (Hesse 74). It seems as if the river has given him something special: "river to represent life itself – a totality where all individual moments merge. The river becomes an image of unity that holds both the physical world and the spiritual dimension together" (Freedman 23). He realises that the river wants to tell him something meaningful, that he "felt a deep love for this rushing water, and decided for himself, not to leave it very soon" (74). The

river reveals a deep oneness of all existence. Siddhartha sees that the physical and the spiritual are not separate.

He begins to hear the voice of the river. It is the voice of water for which he thinks that water talks as the mode of awakening, “which was newly awaking” (75) in him. He wants to stay in the river, near it; to learn from it; and to listen to it. He feels that “he who would understand this water and its secrets, so it seemed to him, would also understand many other things, many secrets, all secrets” (75). By this time, Siddhartha has developed an ultimate realisation that the real understanding of the world will only be possible by being close to the river-water and the sound it produces.

As the central factor of the world’s different civilisations, both in the East and the West, rivers “have served for millennia as transportation routes; sources of food, water and powers; as sinks for waste products, and as objects of artistic and metaphysical interests” (Johnson, Richardson and Naimo 134). Likewise, Siddhartha has travelled many places and has understood that “this water ran and ran, incessantly it ran, and was nevertheless always there, was always at all times the same and yet new in every moment! (Hesse 75). Water runs; it runs, and again runs and therefore it becomes unadulterated and sanctified. Mihov and Hristov have seen the power of purity in water/river through constant moving, “You cannot step twice into the same river” – next time the river will not be the same. This maxim of the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus probably describes most precisely the dynamic nature of rivers” (Mihov and Hristov 12). Running water of the river, therefore, can sanctify the earth and is sanctified itself due to its millennia-long incessant movement, and therefore it captures its ability to generate the civilisation.

The civilisation based on rivers or water, like the Indus civilisation, epitomises rivers’ ecologically valuable mode of life for which modern eco-theory defines as eco-civilisation. It primarily focuses on how ecology determines the culture and behaviour of people. This theory seeks to observe nature’s both physical and metaphysical benefits to human beings. This principle of looking into the corporeal and incorporeal connectivity of nature to humans and spirituality is eco-theology, which “seeks to uncover the theological basis for a proper relationship between God, humanity and the

cosmos” (Deane-Drummond XI). Modern ecological study receives nature as the source of corporeal benefit, especially for the betterment of the material aspect of life; however, nature’s purity for nature itself is a recent prominent aspect of deep ecological theory. Coalescing ecology and theology as a single term and concept, eco-theology presumes nature as the prime source of intangible and spiritual understanding. It seeks to see the connection between humanity, nature and the divine at a time. It provides the principle to see some sense of incorporeal realisation in nature. In this sense, corporal nature can transform intangible realisation.

River, as one essential phenomenon of nature, therefore transforms the physical into metaphysical realisation in eco-theological insight. The same transformation takes place in Siddhartha when he visits the river and the ferryman twice. In addition to being a physical river, for him, its water is not only inherently pure but also powerfully purifying, “spiritually cleansing, purging one of lifetimes of karmic and other religious impurities (Nelson 667). This is the moment he has found himself sanctified with the magnitude of the river. He has realized that river is everywhere, physically and metaphysically, “the river is everywhere at once, at the source and at the mouth, at the waterfall, at the ferry, at the rapids, in the sea, in the mountains, everywhere at once, and that there is only the present time for it, not the shadow of the past, not the shadow of the future?” (Hesse 79). It is his sense of change taken place within him. He had seen and visited the river in his life many times, but this was the first time he had ever felt a change in his thinking because of the river. He listens to the voice of “OM” from the river, which has made him really sanctified. Listening “OM” in the river’s voice is the first step of his transformation from worldly understanding to the ultimate realisation. He has decided to listen to the same voice, the voice of the reality of nature.

### **River’s Voices and Siddhartha’s Consolidation within ‘OM’**

Siddhartha, the central character of the novel *Siddhartha*, was born in a Hindu Brahmin family. He has received a Hindu cultural upbringing. He has undergone the civility of venerating nature and its parts, such as earth, tree, animals, sun and river, as his family and religious culture. Hindu culture, in a great sense, is a civilisation,

especially a river civilisation, begun from the Vedic knowledge transmitted as Indus culture, “The people of Indus Valley Civilisation seem preoccupied with the Vedic knowledge” (Roy 39). And, “it turned out to be the third major early culture of humankind after Egypt and Mesopotamia” (Staal 46). The earliest cultural and philosophical text founding Hinduism, the *Rig Veda* firstly tells that water is the first thing ever found at the time of origin, “There was complete darkness earlier, and all that existed was Salila” (RV. 10.129.3) (Roy 63). Roy further elaborates that “Āpaḥ were indeed Salila earlier. Now Āpaḥ and Salila both mean water” (64). In this sense, worldly existence, both physical and metaphysical, is watery existence. Being brought up with this culture, Siddhartha has followed the river (of which the name is not given) as the driving force in his journey to spirituality and understanding.

Vasudeva, a ferryman and Siddhartha’s company during his final level journey, shares his lifelong experience with the river and his belief that the river teaches him the essence of life, “The River has taught me to listen, from it you will learn it as well. It knows everything; everything can be learned from it. See, you’ve already learned this from the water too, that it is good to strive downwards, to sink, to seek depth” (Hesse 78). The reference provides the illustration that the learned Siddhartha has become a ferryman. How it becomes is that Siddhartha has taken the river as a real ‘Guru’ in his journey to the spiritual. Guru, in Hindu and Buddhist tradition, is the uppermost image; the symbol of divine consciousness from where/whom knowledge is transferred. This belief of “river knows everything and everything can be learned from it” is the sole cause of Siddhartha’s realisation of the river as consciousness.

No paradox exists in the argument that a river is an object. But how the river is consciousness is a real paradox. Consciousness enables one to think differently. It is not the matter as seen in the substantial world. It is a symbol and an abstract identity. The river is the symbol of consciousness because the river appears differently to different people in the way Krishna appears differently to all his followers as Krishna consciousness. While looking at the river through material eyes, one finds it just an object. One who makes use of the eye of consciousness, the inner eye, sees many things in the

river. As “Hindu tradition embodies a wide variety of perceptions of nature” (Nelson 663), Vasudeva has realised many facets of the river, both physical and spiritual:

I have transported many thousands, and to all of them, my river has been nothing but an obstacle on their travels. They travelled to seek money and business, and for weddings, and on pilgrimages, and the river was obstructing their path, and the ferryman’s job was to get them quickly across that obstacle. But for some among thousands, a few, four or five, the river has stopped being an obstacle; they have heard its voice, they have listened to it, and the river has become sacred to them, as it has become sacred to me. (Hesse 79)

Vasudeva has spent his whole life with the river and in the river as a ferryman. He has understood the river properly. It is an obstacle for many people, especially those who are always in search of material prosperity, money and business. Very few people can listen to the inviolability and purity of the river. River is the same; sound is the same; pattern and mode are the same, but the way people perceive the voice of the river is different “the river has many voices, very many voices? Hasn’t it the voice of a king, and of a warrior, and of a bull, and of a bird of the night, and of a woman giving birth, and of a sighing man, and a thousand other voices more?” (80). The river, consisting of thousands of voices, is really a consciousness. This consciousness can be felt in two ways: the river having the quality of consciousness and the river enabling people to feel the sense of consciousness. In either of the cases, the river is the symbol of consciousness.

River reflects the cognitive essence to the ones who can really understand its voices, “the human cognitive process as comprising three parts: the initial sensory flux, the relations obtaining between this and the mental ‘copies’ that we then work on, and our existing stock of abstract truths from culture and past personal experience” (Stephen 281-82). The river in Siddhartha has “all voices of the creatures are in its voice.” (Hesse 80). The multiple voices of this river have the combination of sensory flux, mental state and abstract truth. For those who think river just as an object through their sensory perception, presume it as an obstacle for their journey to the material life. Only a few who suppose the river as an abstract truth of life regard it as a conciliator to their journey to the conscious. Vasudeva

has felt the same, and so does it happen to Siddhartha, but this cognisance comes into him only when he has returned from the journey of material life to the voyage to spiritual understanding.

This attachment of the river to Siddhartha's quest for the spiritual, beyond all mundane existence, reveals his quest for the essence of reality in the river. His belief in the essence of life in the voices of the river ultimately relates to his belief in 'natural religion' — the pantheistic belief of nature itself as God — and 'natural theology' — the belief of the existence of God based on natural facts. Siddhartha's perception to the river has changed from just as the physical object to the divine source similar to the theme of natural religion with the belief of nature as God or the divine, "a number of items came forth from the waters. Among them was Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity and apsaras, the divine nymphs who were a class of demigoddesses" (Krishna 116), and Siddhartha also thinks the same, "every wind, every cloud, every bird, every beetle was just as divine and knows just as much and can teach just as much as the worshipped river" (Hesse 109). He has felt something special in the voice of the river, "he spoke of the tree by the river, and of his deep fall, of the 'holy Om', and how he had felt such a love for the river after his slumber, the ferryman listened with twice the attention, entirely and completely absorbed by it, with his eyes closed" (Hesse 78). This realisation has different effects in life: "a symbol of nature; sensual experiences leading to spiritual awakening" (Field 147). In the natural world, "it refers to the intrinsic property of ecological entities" (Jain 115). Modern ecological practice defines this pleasure of listening to the voice of the river as one of the properties of an ecological entity. Likewise, in the supernatural world, "it refers to the matters related to religion" (115). This religion does not mean the worship of gods and goddesses; rather, it is the religion of fathoming into the sense of spirituality. Both Siddhartha and Vasudeva have understood that this realisation is a way to learn "the secret from the river: that there is no time" (Hesse 79). The river is the way to learn the secret of life.

As the way of learning the secret of life, Siddhartha listens attentively to this river, this song of a thousand voices, "he neither listened to the suffering nor the laughter, when he did not tie his soul

to any particular voice and submerged his self into it, but when he heard them all, perceived the whole, the oneness, then the great song of the thousand voices consisted of a single word, which was Om: the perfection" (101). Thousand voices are united into a single word "OM", and "OM" sounds like the thousands of voices; the voice of suffering and laughter and the voice of oneness and wholeness up to the level of his soul. The sound of "OM" unites everything in a discipline in which "morality and natural phenomena are connected and interdependent" (Jain 113). This discipline has empowered both Siddhartha and Vasudeva into the mode of understanding. The river is a teacher in one sense. It teaches them the voice of the reality of life. Siddhartha tells his realisation of the teaching of the river with his childhood friend towards the end of his life, "when this holy man went into the forests, he knew everything, knew more than you and me, without teachers, without books, only because he had believed in the river" (Hesse 109). He has found that the 'OM' is floating in the air over all the voices of the river. With this word, he believes he has received the knowledge of life that has led him to the sense of enlightenment.

### **River and Siddhartha's Nirvana**

The novel, *Siddhartha*, does not exactly mention whether Siddhartha has received Nirvana, however, he has been on the journey to it. It is the state of ultimate knowledge of the real world and the position of the soul beyond the possibility of rebirth into physical life again. The whole journey Siddhartha has undergone shows that he has really understood the real world even without receiving any formal teaching. The source of knowledge is the experience of life. Towards the end of his life, Siddhartha spoke with Govinda, which reflects that he can imagine Nirvana and Samsara as one" (111). Govinda has felt that his words and appearance match together from which it is possible to guess Siddhartha's departure of his individual body and transformation of the soul to the mode of spiritual journey, "He no longer saw the face of his friend Siddhartha, instead he saw other faces, many, a long sequence, a flowing river of faces, of hundreds, of thousands, which all came and disappeared, and yet all seemed to be there simultaneously, which all constantly changed and renewed

themselves, and which were still all Siddhartha" (111). He has seen the smile on Siddhartha's face when his soul is departing his body:

Govinda saw it like this, this smile of the mask, this smile of oneness above the flowing forms, this smile of simultaneousness above the thousand births and deaths, this smile of Siddhartha was precisely the same, was precisely of the same kind as the quiet, delicate, impenetrable, perhaps benevolent, perhaps mocking, wise, thousand-fold smile of Gotama, the Buddha, as he had seen it himself with great respect a hundred times. Like this, Govinda knew, the perfected ones are smiling. (112)

With this point of Siddhartha's departure, the novel focuses on the fact that the river is one of the major sources of Siddhartha's sense of understanding, enlightenment and Nirvana he has achieved. In Siddhartha, the river is one of the most important symbols. It symbolises not only the journey towards enlightenment, which is the entire goal of Siddhartha throughout his life, but also the realisation of enlightenment itself. River is an eternal power "as a symbol of time, timelessness, unity, spiritual reconciliation" (Ziolkowski 112). Kumari opines that the river is a powerful symbol:

The river is also a powerful symbol for eternity. It is there at different points of Siddhartha's life, and it will be there long after he is gone, just as it was there long before he was. This idea of being able to interact with such a powerful part of nature that is clearly eternal makes a powerful impression on Siddhartha. While the river's course may change, its depths swell or shrink, or even if it be dammed for agricultural use, the fact is that the river will always be there. (Kumari 655)

The river presents itself in Siddhartha's spiritual journey; provides the path to his journey of lust; and ultimately grants him salvation. It guides him through the entirety of the story, enabling him to find unity among his experiences. Indeed, it stands as the single most important symbol of the story. Once Siddhartha achieves his unity through the river, he smiles as the perfect Buddha does, for he achieves true enlightenment. Hesse uses the river to symbolise the unity of all things, eternity, and overall, the path of life and enlightenment. He mentions how the river's voice was full of longing, full of smarting woe, full of insatiable desire. The river flows on towards its goal. He connects how the river never stops flowing, never reaching an end or complete stop, to goals. This is what

Siddhartha has realised his life consisted of. At first, his goal is to be a good Brahmin, then he wants to find his self by becoming a Samana, and after that, he wants to seek Buddha's experience in efforts to achieve enlightenment. One goal after another, Siddhartha is always chasing after something and his sense of desire to achieve his goal changes. Furthermore, the river shows how in life, the flow of the cycle of goals creates the feelings of desire, pleasure, sorrow, etc., which is what life is composed of. Siddhartha figures out through the river that to find unity and wholeness, one does not focus on goals or each outcome, such as pleasure or sorrow, which will then eliminate desire. Through the river, he learned what it took to find true salvation.

### **Conclusion**

Herman Hesse's novel *Siddhartha* narrates the events in the life of Siddhartha, as the author admits, a reflective character of Siddhartha Gautama. It is the journey of Siddhartha's life from a young boy to his old age, from ignorance to his knowledge and from his search for the material world to the world of the spiritual. In his quest for ultimate knowledge, the river becomes a symbol of transcendence. It transcends the material into spiritual, corporeal into incorporeal, ignorance into knowledge, and part into the whole. It is the symbol of existence and eternity at a time. It teaches Siddhartha to exist and to learn the lesson of eternity. Along with his understanding of the river as awareness and consciousness, Siddhartha, with the voices of the river, has attained the highest level of understanding, which can be defined as enlightenment. It is the mode of self-realisation that he has learnt through nature, especially the river and its voice joined with 'OM'. In this sense, the river not only has physical value to him. It has the divine value to transcend him to the mode of self-realisation. Therefore, the river, in the novel, has a symbolic connection between the physical and spiritual, life and beyond life.

Eco-theology helps us see nature as sacred and alive. This idea of nature as divine symbolism establishes the connection between natural elements like rivers, mountains, and trees and sees them as divine forces. In *Siddhartha*, the river reflects these meanings. It is not only water flowing through the land. It is a spiritual guide. The river teaches through sound, movement, and silence. This role connects to

the Vedic idea that nature can reveal deeper truths. These ideas lead directly to the philosophical theme of self-realisation. Siddhartha does not reach understanding through books or teachers. He learns by listening to the river. The river shows him unity, change, and interconnectedness. These lessons help him understand his true self. Hence, the novel *Siddhartha* establishes the sacred value of the river and its voices.

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