



From Suffering to Self-Realization: Spiritual Transformation in Hesse's *Journey to the East*

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Abstract

Set against the backdrop of post-World War I Europe, marked by collective trauma, social fragmentation, and existential disorientation, Herman Hesse's novella *Journey to the East* (1932) portrays the quest for human spiritual restoration and inner transformation. In this context, this study examines the spiritual trajectory of the protagonist H.H. in the novella through the combined theoretical tool of Carl Jung's insight into individuation and Hindu-Buddhist soteriological concepts on suffering and salvation. Within the dual theoretical frameworks, the analysis of the text reveals that suffering, ethical responsibility, and self-reflection help individuals to achieve psychological and spiritual wholeness. H.H.'s experience of despair, fading memories, and psychological stagnation correspond to the preliminary stages of a Jungian ego crisis. Simultaneously, these experiences mirror the Buddhist doctrine of *Dukkha* (existential suffering) and Hindu notions of *Karma* and *Dharma*. His suffering emerges from the *Karmic* consequences of deviating from his moral and spiritual duty to the League. Through H.H.'s relationship

with Leo, a servant-leader who embodies both the Jungian wise old man archetype and the spiritual guide, H.H. confronts his psychological shadow, embraces selfless service, and moves toward self-realization. The study argues that Hesse portrays suffering or post-war trauma as a catalyst for spiritual realization and psychological wholeness rather than a terminal condition of defeat or despair, even in modern existential uncertainty and hardship.

Keywords: *Dharma*, Jungian individuation, *Karma*, self-realization, suffering, salvation

Introduction

Herman Hesse's literary journey is characterized by a profound exploration of "psychological depth, individuality and tradition, spirituality and modernity, and self and society" (Ghimire 14). Through his writings, he has synthesized the Eastern and Western philosophical traditions. He has been strongly influenced by the Upanishads and Buddhist scriptures, which deeply shaped his perspectives in his literary creation because of his "family's missionary life in India" (Freedman 281). His works manifest a meditative rhythm, allegorical structures, and a humanistic reverence for

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the inner life. His oeuvre reflects the search for transcendence amidst modern alienation. In the early 20th century, many European intellectuals were developing negative responses to modernity. Hesse was aware of the "moral and social difficulties plaguing Europe at the time of warfare" (Jose et al. 849) and addressed these problems in his literary work. Despite being a German author, he has characters whose quests and journeys of self-discovery captivate young people worldwide (Jose et al. 849). As a result, Hesse's writings remain relevant for their enduring exploration of spiritual growth, identity, and the human quest for purpose. Consequently, Hesse's writings remain relevant for their enduring exploration of spiritual growth, identity, and the human quest for purpose. Hesse's literary works comprise novels, poems, and autobiographical reflections. His works, particularly, address the complexities of the modern human psyche through characters who grapple with internal conflicts. Moreover, he explores the "problems of the spiritual and cultural crisis of the youth" (Madiyeva 159) through various figurative images and seeks solutions in his works. Hesse shows his interest in the multifaceted nature of human identity and the inherent contradictions within an individual through his writings.

Hesse's writings are deeply rooted in Eastern philosophies, particularly Hinduism and Buddhism. Kumari and Supria note that his intellectual development is shaped by "his early exposure to Indian literature, art, music, and religious thought along with his maternal grandfather's scholarly engagement with Eastern philosophy" (222). Across his works, Hesse explores main Eastern concepts such as "suffering, renunciation, detachment, and enlightenment" (Kumari 254). Drawing on Hind-Buddhist thought, Hesse examines selfhood, inner freedom, and the search for meaning in modern life. His works also suggest that genuine self-realization emerges through confronting

and integrating the conflicting aspects of the self rather than avoiding them (Yang 7). In this context, the present study examines the process of psychological and spiritual transformation in *Journey to the East*. Particularly, it seeks to answer the following research questions:

- a. In what way does H.H., the protagonist, undergo psychological and spiritual transformation in the novel?
- b. How do H.H.'s experiences of suffering, ethical reflection, and spiritual awakening illustrate, as evidenced in the text?

Methodology

To answer the above research questions, the study adopts a qualitative textual analysis as the research methodology "to understand how text might be used to make sense of the world we live in" (McKee 16). It focuses on the protagonist H.H.'s psychological and spiritual transformation in Hesse's novella *Journey to the East*, utilizing a dual theoretical framework, Jungian individuation and Hindu-Buddhist soteriological principles. The study interprets H.H.'s experiences through Jungian concepts of showdown confrontation, self-reflection, integration, and psychological wholeness (Jung 139) alongside Hindu-Buddhist ideas of suffering, detachment, and liberation. A thematic and interpretive approach identifies patterns in despair, ethical conflict, guidance from Leo to H.H., and spiritual insight, categorizing them under the stages of suffering, shadow confirmation, integration, and salvation. The study highlights how Hesse, a Western author, reconciles psychological and spiritual dimensions in his text, *Journey to the East*.

Review of Literature

Hesse's *Journey to the East* is written amid the turmoil of the world, where individuals seek solace, spiritual renewal, and understanding in the midst of the suffocation of World War I in the early

1930s. In this context, the text reflects H.H., the protagonist, who embarks on a mystical pilgrimage toward the East with the League, a group of like-minded fellows seeking wisdom and enlightenment. The League includes characters such as Plato, Mozart, Pythagoras, Paul Klee, Don Quixote, Tristram Shandy, Baudelaire, Vasudev, and Siddhartha. They are from both Eastern and Western intellectual traditions. The primary goal of their journey is to discover the absolute spiritual truth. However, their external quest soon devolves into despair and suffering after the abrupt disappearance of Leo, the group's mysterious leader. With Leo's reappearance, who now embraces a life of servitude, H.H. undergoes a radical shift in his understanding of leadership, faith, and spiritual truth. This crucial episode is characterized by a shift from an external physical journey to an internal quest for a psychological exploration of the self. The journey can therefore be viewed not only as a travel adventure but also as a profound meditation on the human quest for the meaning of life in an imperfect and disordered world.

Since the publication of Hesse's *Journey to the East* (1932) [*Die Morgenlandfahrt*], it has received considerable critical appraisals that have focused on the intersections of spirituality, the quest for the self, and the "connection between Eastern and Western philosophies" (Roberts 252; Shrestha 170), including a reflection of Hesse's own inner journey. According to Roberts, the novel is a "metafictional memoir" of the protagonist H.H., who recounts his experience as a member of the League, a mystical fellowship whose primary purpose is to undertake the symbolic journey to the East ("The Dream" 47) for self-actualization and transcending the limits of the self. In that regard, Hesse's novel is deeply concerned with the search for meaning in the modern age. The *Journey to the East* synthesizes "Western and Eastern philosophies" through Hesse's own "intellectual journey and critical response

to modernism to explore self and society" (Shrestha 167; Heilbrunn 81). Roberts also highlights the significance of the League itself, which functions as "both a literal and metaphorical community". As he stated that the nature of this community blurs the lines between a historical organization and an inner, psychological reality, probing the paradoxes of faith, doubt, and the fragmentation of identity ("The Dream" 47). Through the depiction of the League's mysterious nature, Hesse interrogates the fragility of collective identity and the quest for spiritual belonging within the League and with its leader, Leo. Moreover, the novel's "engagement with Taoism and Zen philosophies", as discussed by Roberts. He underlines Hesse's fascination with balancing self-control and adaptability, a duality that defines the protagonist H.H. throughout the text (255). This tension guides H.H.'s spiritual journey, revealing that self-realization arises through humility, openness, and harmony with change.

Hesse's reflection on the individual's connection to the collective is further discussed, highlighting the "autobiographical and confessional elements", reflecting Hesse's own personal journey through the protagonist of the novel, H.H. (Greenleaf 27). As stated by Roberts, the *Journey to the East* consists of themes of "confession and self-reflection" (Roberts, "The Dream" 27), using Jungian psychology to examine the conscious and unconscious elements of self. As noted by John Collins, Hesse's *Journey to the East* is not only a religious pilgrimage to Asia but also a "mirror of his own inner tensions" (87), especially his spiritual longing. This shows how Hesse's work resonated across different religious and intellectual traditions.

Similarly, argues that the 'Oriental reaction' to Western modernity, exemplified through "the figures such as Swami Vivekananda and D.T. Suzuki for Hesse's engagement with Eastern spirituality" (398). Within this lens, Hesse's representation

of the 'East' is shaped through a Western perspective. However, critics contend his writing fosters a cross-cultural dialogue that shapes both his self-reflection and critique of modern Western civilization. Further, Hesse's early texts highlight the East, "reveal a dual orientation," while they critique colonial ideologies, they also "exhibit romanticism and exoticism" (Zilcosky 214). This duality shows Hesse's blending of interests in Eastern thought. Set in Europe during the post-World War I era, Hesse's *Journey to the East* reveals universal concerns of peace, prosperity, and spiritual truth in human life. His works consistently focus on personal and collective growth and the broader needs of humanity.

Additionally, *Journey to the East* has been interpreted as Hesse's radical appeal for an alternative community, particularly through the utopian "concept of collective commitment to a high spiritual and cultural ideal" (Wilde 87). In the text, Hesse proposes an enlightened community, highlighting the broader causes of human suffering and hope for overcoming the devastation of war through Eastern mysteries and religion. Moreover, Wilde notes that "Hesse's depiction of the League member in *Journey to the East* emphasizes the hope of overcoming war's devastation through Eastern philosophies and religions" (89). Moreover, Greenleaf interprets the novel through the lens of servant leadership, analyzing Leo as an embodiment of true and spiritual leadership. Leo's mysterious disappearance reveals a shift from a hierarchical to a servant-based leadership model. Focusing on how spiritual leadership serves to reunite the members of the League, Greenleaf writes:

On the journey, a servant named Leo carries bags and does the travelers' chores. There is something special about Leo. He keeps the group with his presence and songs. When Leo mysteriously disappears, the group loses their way. Later in the book, the

main character, H.H., discovers that the servant Leo was actually the leader. The simple, but radical shift is emphasized from followers serving leaders to leaders serving followers (17).

This moment clearly illustrates a shift from hierarchical to servant leadership. Leo embodies leadership through service, humility, and care, guiding the group by nurturing their collective spirit. His character exemplifies that true leaders serve their followers first, creating unity, direction, and transformation through service.

In addition, Bozdoğan interprets *Journey to the East* as a symbolic 'grand tour', where the East represents the quest for curiosity, enlightenment, and peace. He refers to the East as "the land of the new dawn" (38), which symbolizes the rebirth and reformation of the spirit. These interpretations indicate that Hesse's *Journey to the East* intertwines personal and universal components of the spiritual journey and the fulfillment of the human spirit.

Though *Journey to the East* has been analyzed from the perspectives of its autobiographical, psychological, utopian, and metafictional aspects, little attention has been paid to a systematic study of the text through the lens of Jungian Individuation and Hindu and Buddhist teachings. When Hesse's text is studied, Eastern thought is used more in a biographical sense than as an Eastern soteriological framework. The study of the psychological and theological aspects of the text focuses on the themes of suffering, detachment, and liberation. Therefore, this study intends to fill this gap by providing a Jungian and spiritual integrative framework and situating the text's quest motif within the Eastern philosophies of Hinduism and Buddhism, which address the concepts of suffering and salvation. The fusion of the concepts offers a comprehensive approach to the text's themes of suffering, self-realization, and salvation.

Theoretical Frameworks

Jungian Individuation

Carl Jung's theory of Individuation serves as one of the theoretical lenses for analyzing Hesse's *Journey to the East*. Jung defines individuation as a "lifelong psychological process of self-realization" (Jung 140), in which an individual integrates the conscious and unconscious aspects of the psyche to achieve wholeness and authentic selfhood. For Jung, individuation is the process of becoming "one's own self" (137), distinct from cultural, familial, or ego-imposed identities. This process is cyclical rather than involving cycles of progression, regression, and inner reflection. In Jungian terms, individuation encompasses both a "personal and transpersonal development", bridging "psychological growth with spiritual insight" (Mack 16–17). Accordingly, an individual's experiences reflect the Jungian pursuit of wholeness through the reconciliation of inner conflicts and spiritual growth.

Jung finds modern life to be characterized by confusion and moral uncertainty that is "haunted by spiritual nihilism," and people are living in a "spiritual vacuum" where traditional and spiritual values have lost their meaning (Jung 302). He argued that this loss has redirected attention inward; psychology and the exploration of the unconscious have begun to fill the metaphysical gap left by waning religious forms. As Jung explains, when a society's external forms, such as ideals, rituals, or living religions, no longer express the soul's longings, the psyche turns inwards, making psychological problems visible and urgent. Furthermore, he states:

Whenever there exists some external form, be it an ideal or a ritual, by which all the yearnings and hopes of the soul are adequately expressed—as for instance in a living religion—then we may say the psyche is outside and that there is no psychic problem, just as there is then no unconscious in our sense of the word. In consonance with

this truth, the discovery of psychology falls entirely within the last decades, although long before that man was introspective and intelligent enough to recognize the facts that are the subject-matter of psychology. (79)

In his view, the contemporary emphasis on psychology reflects an expectation that the psyche will supply what the outer world and failing religious systems no longer provide.

For Jung, individuation is the pathway out of spiritual emptiness. He compares human development to the acorn into an oak: people are by nature meant to develop fully integrated, whole beings. Achieving this wholeness requires accepting and integrating all parts of the self, including instincts and rejected tendencies often labeled the "shadow." By attending to symbolic communications from the unconscious, what Jung calls "listening to the voice" (Jung 323) and by integrating that content with conscious awareness, the ego is transformed and can move toward a broader center of psychic organization, the self.

Moreover, Jung's individuation is a non-linear "circumambulation" that shifts the psyche's center from the ego to the transcendent self, an inner director that communicates through symbolic, compensatory messages from the unconscious to restore psychological balance (Kenevan 13). To analyze this process of personal development and conflict, Jungian theory offers analytical tools such as typological functions, attitudes, and archetypes like the anima, animus, and shadow, the latter of which presents moral responsibility and integrates repressed traits rather than projecting them onto others. They are crucial because widespread spiritual transformation is an exceptionally slow process that "follows the slow tread of the centuries" (Jung 324). Jung argues that individual self-realization serves as the necessary, practical catalyst for collective growth, enabling transformed individuals to

organically enrich the symbolic life of their broader communities.

Hindu-Buddhist Soteriological Concept of Suffering and Salvation

In Buddhist thought, *Duḥkha* (suffering) encompasses the inherent "unsatisfactoriness of existence, manifesting as physical and mental pain, the impermanence of pleasure and the conditioned nature of all phenomena", highlighting the pervasive and inescapable character of suffering in human life (Peacock 210). Therefore, suffering ranges from physical pain to a general dissatisfaction with life. Buddhism argues that desire is the fundamental source of suffering. Desire leads to attachments and frustration. As Bahm puts it, "Desire for that which will not be attained ends in frustration; to avoid frustration, avoid desiring that which will be attained" (23). To stop this suffering, people can use the Four Noble Truths and follow the Eightfold Path. The four noble truths explain the nature of suffering and provide insight into how to stop suffering. The "Eighth path starts with the right understanding and right resolution, followed by right speech, right behavior, and right occupation". It ends with "right effort, right mindfulness, and right contemplation" (Bhattacharya 155). All these steps focus on training the mind internally to attain enlightenment.

Buddhist principles place "value on human life" (Coomaraswamy 23); however, human lives are unequal when analyzing the greater capacity to bring good into the world. Buddhism teaches that life is suffering caused by craving/attachment, which is rooted in ignorance (Ross 93). Moreover, Buddhism recognizes suffering as an integral part of life; therefore, it should be understood. The religion focuses on breaking down the self through mindful actions that help the practitioner subdue desire and embrace compassion. *Nirvāṇa*, or liberation, is the final product of Buddhism. Commaraswamy describes *Nirvāṇa* as "the

goal to which all other purposes of Buddhist thought converge" (34), and Jacobs describes "it as the cessation of carving the connection between lives" (393). Similarly, *Nirvāṇa* can be seen as akin to *Mokṣa* (liberation of the soul) in Hinduism, which is liberation from suffering, birth, and death. However, regarding the Buddhist tradition of liberation, it is liberation of all beings (*Mahāyāna*) that opens up the path to salvation by placing importance on Buddhahood or the enlightenment of self and others (Ross 179), challenging the notion of liberation as purely individualistic.

Meditation is highly focused on in Buddhism because it does not preach salvation through faith but through mindful practice. Highlighting the significance of meditation in Buddhism, Bhikkhu Bodhi states that "Protestant Christianity teaches salvation by faith, while Buddhism places great reliance on meditation" ("Noble Truths" 76). Meditation is the tool through which wisdom can be practiced to break free from attachment and understand impermanence. Buddhism denies any spiritualism and focuses on knowable reality. There is no permanent soul, and Buddhism does not focus on metaphysical claims or supernatural events. The teachings of Buddha allow for attainable salvation through the practice of the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path (Bhattacharya 153), which will lead beyond craving, ignorance, and reincarnation.

In Hindu thought, suffering is attributed to attachment to the material world, regarded as illusory. As stated in the *Sri Isopanishad*, "all living beings are inherently flawed, possessing imperfections" such as the tendency to make mistakes and live in illusion (Prabhupāda 37). As stated by Radhakrishnan, the ignorance binds individuals to the "cosmic cycle of birth and death", whereas the realization of Brahman- the ultimate reality- leads to *Mokṣa* or liberation. Hinduism adheres to the "doctrine of action-*Kārma*", where action yields

corresponding consequences. The "good actions lead to positive results", while "bad actions bring suffering" (Prabhupāda 37–39). This law operates both in the physical and moral realms, which guides individuals towards the "consequences of their actions" (Dandekar 122). Hinduism emphasizes the need for the purification of the mind. The *Bhagavad Gītā* also advocates "renouncing the fruits of actions to attain freedom from the cycle of birth and death" (Prabhupāda 22). Liberation is achieved through "self-realization and union with Brahman" (Radhakrishnan 137), marking the end of the cycle and reincarnation. and duality

Hinduism includes three key spiritual disciplines rather than a single exclusive path of liberation. They are the path of knowledge (*Jñāna Yoga*), the path of action (*Kārma Yoga*), and the path of devotion (*Bhakti Yoga*). *Jñāna Yoga* emphasizes self-realization and insight into the unity of *Ātman* (the individual self) with an ultimate reality, overcoming ignorance (*Avidyā*) through meditation and contemplative inquiry. *Kārma Yoga* focuses on performing one's duties selflessly, without attachment to personal reward, purifying the self through disciplined and selfless action. "Bhakti Yoga" centers on loving devotion to a personal deity as the "path to spiritual liberation" (Sunkad 201). The *Bhagavad Gītā* teaches that true renunciation does not require withdrawal from action or its outcomes. This notion highlights that suffering arises from attachment to impermanent things, which creates an illusion and binds individuals to the cycle of birth and rebirth. Liberation is attained through "disciplined action, devotion, meditation, and the realization of one's divine nature" (Moffitt 324). Thus, liberation is achieved not by abandoning worldly responsibilities but by performing them with detachment, self-discipline, and spiritual awareness.

Although Hindu-Buddhist notions differ in their doctrinal foundations, both

regard suffering as a fundamental aspect of human existence rooted in attachment and ignorance. Similarly, Jung's theory of individuation also deals with the psychological dimensions of the individual for transformation. Together, both of them highlight the psychological and spiritual dimensions of transformation: suffering begins self-examination, ethical commitment, and reflection for inner integration, and liberation emerges through the realization of psychological wholeness and spiritual awakening. This interdisciplinary framework, therefore, offers a meaningful basis for interpreting H.H.'s journey toward self-realization and transcendence in Hesse's *Journey to the East*.

Suffering, Individuation, and Spiritual Awakening: H.H.'s Path to Self-Realization

Journey to the East is set against the backdrop of post-World War Europe, a period marked by social upheaval, collective trauma, and existential uncertainty. Within this context, Hesse introduces the League, a spiritual fellowship that transcends the boundaries of time and space, looking for healing, meaning, and spiritual renewal. It includes the members, both historical and fictional figures, such as Plato, Mozart, Baudelaire, Don Quixote, and Pythagoras, whose diverse backgrounds symbolize a universal quest for wisdom, harmony, and spiritual fulfillment. The League undertakes a symbolic journey toward the East, traditionally associated with enlightenment and spiritual wisdom. As Bist notes, "the journey draws upon the philosophical and religious traditions of Buddhism and Hinduism", which shape the League's spiritual aspirations (35). Accordingly, the *Journey to the East* works as a powerful metaphor for the human search for meaning.

Additionally, the journey is not just a geographical destination but a symbolic realm of spiritual space, transcendence,

enlightenment, and liberation from existential suffering towards the Eastern land. This land offers League members a vision of spiritual peace and liberation from worldly suffering. It aligns with the "*Nirvāṇa* and *Mokṣa* as indicated in Buddhism and Hinduism", respectively, representing the "liberation from suffering the cycle of rebirth" (Aithal and Srinivasan 90). The journey towards the East is seen as a search for these spiritual ideals. H.H. states, "For our goal was not only the East... it was the home and youth of soul, it also was everywhere and nowhere, it was the union of all times" (Hesse 24). It is an attempt to reach the ultimate goal of life, which is beyond the temporal and spatial boundaries. Moreover, H.H. realizes that he has not only joined himself as a pilgrimage to the East, but other disciplines have incessantly been moving towards the East, towards the home of light. Furthermore, H.H. narrates:

Throughout the centuries it had been on the way, towards light and wonder, and each member, each group, indeed our whole host and its great pilgrimage, . . . towards the East, towards the home. The knowledge passed through my mind like a ray of light . . . pleased me immensely without my realizing its full significance. . . . "where are we really going? Always home!" (Hesse 12–13). H.H.'s realization shows that each of the members of the League is moving towards the path of salvation- East, which is ultimate for human eternity. Therefore, he has led all members towards the East, the land of home, for liberation. Furthermore, this reflection of H.H. suggests that the path toward salvation is both personal and universal, shaped by persistent striving toward the "home of spiritual realization" (Hesse 12). It also indicates that the quest for enlightenment is a universal journey that transcends time and space.

H.H.'s initial journey begins with profound disorientation and despair, emblematic of the initial stage in Jungian

individuation, where the individual encounters the limitation of the ego and confronts inner conflicts (Kenevan 387). Regarding this issue, the protagonist reflects that "it was not only that I had lost faith in finding Leo again, but everything now seemed unreliable and doubtful; the value and meaning of everything was threatened: our comradeship, our faith, our vow, our Journey to the East, our whole life (Hesse 33). The protagonist's reflection illustrates the destabilizing effect of doubt and attachment, resonating with the Buddhist notion of *Duhkha*, wherein suffering arises from craving and clinging to impermanent phenomena. Similarly, Hindu philosophy considers such attachment a source of spiritual stagnation, reinforcing the consequences of *Dharma* and unfulfilled responsibilities (Prabhupāda 22). It embodies the concept of *Dharma*, central to Hindu thought, in which adherence to "ethical and spiritual responsibilities determines one's progress along the path of liberation" (Radhakrishnan 55). Therefore, the protagonist's inner conflict shows that attachment, neglected duty, and spiritual doubt lead to suffering, reinforcing the Buddhist and Hindu view that liberation depends on detachment, ethical conduct, and self-realization.

All members of the League illustrate the pursuit of their spiritual *Dharma*. However, members of the League face significant challenges due to the physical and emotional scars left by the devastating World War I. The erosion of faith with the League, especially in H.H.'s experience, reveals the profound psychological and spiritual consequences of disillusionment. In reflection on this crisis, he states:

. . . since the World War, troubled and confuse For not only do I no longer possess the tokens, mementos, documents and diaries relating to the journey, but in the difficult years of misfortune, sickness and deep affliction which have elapsed since then, a large

number of my recollections have also vanished. As a result of the buffets of Fate and because of the continual discouragement, my memory as well as my confidence in these earlier vivid recollections have become impaired. (Hesse 3)

The protagonist attempts to document the journey amidst fading memories, lost records, and past hardships, which illustrates how external adversity and internal doubt disrupt the fulfillment of *Dharma*, reflecting a tangible manifestation of negative *Karma* (A. Sharma 102) as outlined in Hindu philosophy, where neglecting one's spiritual duties leads to spiritual stagnation and suffering.

His faith reflects the destabilizing effects of disrupted duty and moral uncertainty, which lead to a crisis of meaning and direction. This inner struggle suggests the challenge of maintaining duty in H.H.'s hardship. When spiritual duty is neglected, the journey unravels, showing that losing faith disrupts the search for spiritual awakening. As H.H. is acutely aware of his spiritual crisis: "It was not Leo and the League who had deserted and disillusioned me, but only that I had been so weak and foolish as to misinterpret my own experiences, to doubt the League, to consider the *Journey to the East* a failure, and to regard myself as the survivor and chronicler of a concluded and forgotten tale, while I was nothing more than a run-away, a traitor, a deserter" (Hesse 83). This recognition exemplifies Jung's shadow confrontation, where one acknowledges personal flaws, fears, and unconscious impulses. This process is essential for "achieving individuality" (Kenevan 19). This self-scrutiny parallels the recognition of one's errors in Hindu and Buddhist thought, forming the first step toward liberation, where awareness of attachment and misjudgment guides ethical and spiritual correction (Bodhi 47 "The Noble Eightfold"; U Sharma 351).

The protagonist's prolonged experience of despair and near suicidal impulses shows how attachment to the deceptive material world generates suffering and serves as a transformative stage toward self-realization. True knowledge and inner peace arise only through detachment, discipline, and spiritual insight. Through this insight, and with Leo's guidance, Hesse ties the protagonist's personal crisis to broader Eastern spiritual frameworks, portraying suffering as the catalyst for self-realization rather than a condition of despair. With Leo's insight, H.H. begins to move from despair to self-awakening. Reflecting on his earlier despair, he confesses:

During such a period of despair, it seemed to me as if I, a lost pilgrim, had reached the extreme edge of the world, and there was nothing left for me to do but to satisfy my last desire: to let myself fall from the edge of the world into void to death. In the course of time this despair returned many times, the compelling suicidal impulse, however, had been diverted and almost vanished. Death was no longer nothingness, a void, negation. (Hesse 61)

This reflection reveals H.H.'s gradual transformation in understanding suffering and morality. In the beginning, his despair stems from a profound sense of meaninglessness and attachment to a fixed sense of self, which reflects the Buddhist notion of *Dukkha*, the suffering arises from attachment and mistaken perception of reality. However, as H.H.'s awareness deepens, death is no longer perceived as annihilation but as a stage in a larger process of spiritual transformation. In Jungian terms, this shift signifies the ego's growing acceptance of psychic change and its movement towards individuation.

The constant dedication to the League's mission is another indication that faith and preservice training turn suffering into a way of psychological and spiritual development. Thus, H.H. states, "Yet we had within

us something stronger than reality or probability, and that was faith in the meaning and necessity of our action" (Hesse 19). In this case, faith does not mean optimism; it refers to an internal belief in something that gives people the strength to go on. From the Jungian perspective, the faith means an agreement of the ego with something more profound inside, an integration of fears and doubts into an individuating process (Kenevan 351). Moreover, this shows that *Dukha*, which has its origin in attachment, can be transformed into liberation through disciplined awareness, moral behavior, and dedication (Bhikkhu Bodhi 76). According to *Dharma*, one creates positive *Karma* and attains *Moksha* (U. Sharma 350). Hesse, therefore, presents faith as both a psychological and spiritual force that transforms suffering into a means of growth.

In line with the four noble truths, suffering is an essential condition of human existence, a catalyst for self-awareness, and a medium for spiritual awakening. The path to enlightenment involves recognizing, understanding, and transcending suffering (Sharma 351). H.H.'s journey, marked by despair, loss, and eventual clarity, reflects this Buddhist teaching. His self-reflection captures the essence of suffering as a means of spiritual awakening: "Despair is the result of each earnest attempt to go through life with virtue, justice, and understanding and to fulfill their requirements" (Hesse 83). By experiencing suffering, one draws closer to spiritual truth, just as H.H. eventually comes to understand the deeper meaning of the League's journey.

As Protagonis progresses in his journey, the appearance of Leo signifies the emergence of the archetypal spiritual guide- the Guru or enlightened master, who is perceived as a mere servant in the beginning and gradually reveals the archetypal wise old man guiding H.H. and other League members. He directs H.H. toward both psychological integration and ethical realignment. In Jungian terms, Leo

embodies the wise old man archetype and gradually reveals himself as a manifestation of the Self, the organizing center of the psyche (Jung 198). H.H.'s vision captures this transformative encounter:

... I began to realize whom it resembled, namely, the servant and President Leo, I discovered a second candle in the wall and lit this also. I now saw the double figure representing Leo and myself, not only becoming clearer and each image more alike, but I also saw that the surface of the figures was transparent and that one could look inside as one can look through the glass of a bottle or vase. (Hesse 42–43)

This exemplifies the Guru-disciple dynamic in Eastern spirituality, which converges with Jungian mentorship, symbolizing H.H.'s growing awareness of unconscious dimensions of his personality. Lighting the second candle reflects a deeper understanding, opening perception beyond mere absence of darkness. About Hindu thought on *Dharma*, Leo is not only a psychological guide but also a moral guide whose life "embodies selfless service and devotion" (Edeltraud Harzer 234). The vision marks the H.H.'s initial reconciliation with both his inner self and ethical duties.

The ethical dimension of transformation is further strengthened by Leo's teaching on service, which emphasizes humility and duty as essential foundations of spiritual growth. Leo states, "The law of service. . . He wishes to live long must serve, but he who wishes to rule does not live long" (Hesse 14). This principle reflects the essence of *Dharma*, which provides "moral guidance to individuals for responsible action" (Edeltraud Harzer 215). By rejecting domination and self-interest, Leo challenges the ego's desire for control and affirms the spiritual value of humility. From the Hindu notion of *Karma*, selfless service generates positive moral consequences, whereas attachment to power and personal gain perpetuates suffering. H.H. has accepted

this principle, aligning his actions towards a higher moral and spiritual development.

A further stage of H.H.'s transformation occurs when he confronts his fragmented self. Both Jungian psychology and Hindu notions regard self-awareness as essential to spiritual progress. Jung focuses on the integration of neglected aspects of the psyche, and Hindu thought stresses self-knowledge as a prerequisite for living in alignment with *Dharma*. Such inner confrontation is vividly portrayed in the following lines:

It represented a figure which was myself, and this likeness of myself was unpleasantly weak and half-real; it had blurred features, and in its whole expression there was something unstable, weak, dying or wishing to die and looked rather like a piece of sculpture which could be called "Transitoriness" or "Decay". (Hesse 42)

This image symbolizes H.H.'s facing the Jungian concept 'Shadow', which has kept his 'Self' dismissed or ignored. To achieve individuation, these hidden and ignored parts of his personality must be faced. The weak and unstable images reveal the limitations of an ego-centered identity disconnected from deep spiritual values. His confusion, self-doubt, and suffering suggest a departure from *Dharma*, which supports the Hindu belief that actions against one's moral duties lead to negative consequences (Sharma 99 "Karma"). Therefore, psychological fragmentation and spiritual suffering become catalysts for H.H.'s self-awareness and transformation.

Finally, Hesse suggests that spiritual awakening is not just about ethical and psychological changes. It also involves understanding things through symbolic and creative expression. Jung believes that archetypal truths often emerge through symbols, myths, and art, in ways that go beyond simple logical thinking. H.H.'s recollection of a conversation with Leo reflects this insight: "As I stood there

and looked and tried to understand what I saw, I recalled a short conversation that I had once had with Leo during the festive days at Bremgarten. We had talked about the creations of poetry being more vivid and real than the poets themselves" (Hesse 43). This observation shows the capacity of symbolic and artistic creation to reveal deeper dimensions of existence. Through narrative and imagination, truths that lie beyond ordinary consciousness become accessible. In Jungian terms, such symbols mediate between the conscious and unconscious mind, which facilitates the process of individuation. As a result, H.H.'s spiritual development extends beyond moral discipline and psychological integration to include the cultivation of symbolic awareness. Hesse ultimately portrays the transformation of suffering into spiritual growth as a multidimensional process in which ethical responsibility, self-transcendence, and creative insight work together to lead the individual toward psychological wholeness and spiritual enlightenment.

Conclusion

Hesse presents the pursuit of enlightenment as a universal and timeless journey in which personal struggle, ethical commitment, and symbolism converge to foster spiritual and psychological wholeness. Through H.H.'s experiences, the novella shows how Jungian individuation and Hindu-Buddhist soteriological perspectives offer a comprehensive framework for understanding human suffering, ethical responsibility, and the quest for transcendence. His movement from despair to insight reflects a profound engagement with his inner conflicts and the gradual integration of fragmented aspects of the self. Protagonist's experiences of disorientation, particularly when he perceives everything in his life as unreliable and doubtful, reflect the destabilizing effects of attachment and uncertainty. This

condition highlights the universal reality of *Dukkha* and the psychological crisis that initiates self-reflection and the process of individuation. At the same time, the ethical dimension of his journey relates to Leo's teaching on service. His guidance resonates with the concept of *Dharma*, emphasizing that ethical responsibility and selfless action are essential to both personal development and moral integrity.

Furthermore, protagonist's confrontation with his fragmented self exemplifies an encounter with the Jungian shadow, where acknowledging one's flaws and failures becomes a necessary step toward transformation. His final realization of the interconnectedness of the personal and the universal journey marks the culmination of his psychological and spiritual evaluation. Through the interplay of suffering, ethical responsibility, and guided introspection, H.H. transforms his personal crisis into self-knowledge, which brings his inner psyche into harmony with the broader quest of enlightenment. In the context of modern existential uncertainty, *Journey to the East* suggests that suffering can serve as a transformative force, which enables individuals to reorient their consciousness toward spiritual fulfillment and liberation.

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