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MIND – BODY CONFLICT IN HESSE'S STEPPENWOLF

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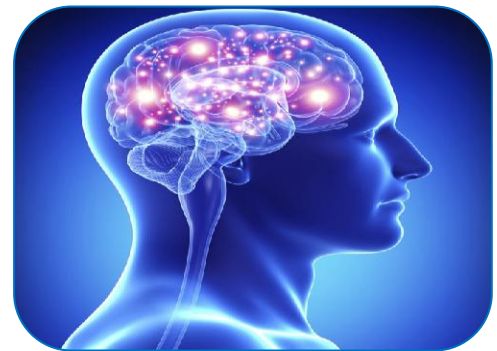
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ABSTRACT:

Hesse found fame with the novels, *Siddhartha* (1922), *Steppenwolf* (1927) and *Narcissus and Goldmund* (1930), all of which address the split between the world of physical sensation and the world of mental reasoning. In his novels, Hesse strove to reconcile the physical and spiritual elements of his characters whose desires frequently involve transcending the realm of the individual and entering the realm of the universal spirit.

KEYWORDS: *mental reasoning , physical and spiritual elements.*



INTRODUCTION :-

Hesse has written a lot on the mind-body conflict in his novels. He carries out an inquiry into the nature of the mind and the body. Owing to this perocception of dichotomy between mind and body, Hesse gives more importance to the rule of mind over body in human affairs. For example, in *Siddhartha*, the protagonist of the novel lives an ascetic life, neglecting his body to learn that the role to the life of mind goes through body. In other novel, *Narcisuss* as a teacher friend sends his friend *Goldmund* to the society because *Goldmund* must satisfy his physical

desire first only then and then he will be eligible for mental and spiritual life.

In the present novel, Hesse examines the mind-body conflict but he says that the growth of the modern world is nothing but externalisation of internal desires and cravings of the man. In order to project the above mentioned theme of externalisation of internal desires of man, Hesse creates a typical character of an outsider in a man called. *Harry Haller* who is 47 years old and still is in the grip of the libidinal will. Although he stays away from the society, prefers to live the life of an academic intellectual still he has not been able to conquer his animalistic nature.

Talking about this problem of animalistic nature, Hesse says that this is the melody of our time. Since this man wants to free himself from this melody, he stays away from the society only to find that he himself is not different from them. The import of the whole thing is this that *Harry Haller* carries with him all symptoms of *Bourgeois World*. Thus, Hesse wants to say that *Bourgoise's* life is innocent. For example like *Bourgeois*, *Harry* wants cleanness and order. Like them, he is regular and violent but *harry* has this virtue in order to have absolute success or victory, complete monopoly and authority in his ventures. He also believes in progress, future, order and perfection. Like *Bourgeois*, he has

also accumulated so many things and although he leads the life of an outsider and escatics, still he is far from wise like the geniuses of the past and on the contrary, he has strong ego. He is still the same savage, cruel person who has sublimated row nature. He seems to be living under so many illusions and he has yet to come to learn with his own psyche mind and self. According to Hesse, this is the melody of our time which he tries to project in an ideal character like Harry Haller in this novel.

Harry Haller's age, profession, intellectual interests, and unpopular pacifist journalism match Hesse's own character. Hesse suggests that Harry is actually a reflection of himself. Hesse published this novel after a failed marriage and two subsequent years of debauchery. Hesses suggest that Harry is actually a reflection of himself. Just as the concept of "The Steppenwolf" is useful to Harry for self-analysis. Harry is useful to Hesse as an illuminating fictional construction.

Harry Haller or Steppenwolf is a man divided against society and him. He also describes himself an individual whose nature consist of a man and a wolf. He despises bourgeois society and everthing it represnt: empty valuses, petty pleasures, intellectual stagnation. However, he is incapable of separating himself completely form bourgeoise. He engages in bourgeois activities such as mindless reading, checking the mail and even working at a job.

Internal Division is just as much a theme as social division. Just as Steppenwolf believes that he is divided from other individuals due to class constraints, he also feels divided against himself due to his dual nature. From the very beginning, Steppenwolf asserts that he is part human and part wolf.

He states,

"I am in truth the Steppenwolf that I often call myself; that beast astray that finds neither home nor joy nor nourishment in a world that is strange and incomprehensible to him."

Harry illustrates the duality through an inner conflicts and an outer conflict. Inwardly, he believes two natures battle within him: A Man and A Wolf. While he longs to live as a wolf free of social convention, he continually lives as a bourgeois bachelor. Hesse would agrue that there is a little bit of Steppenwolf in everyone. It is upto readers to decide whether to accept or reject that idea.

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