uncertainty as meanings decided upon are one’s own for which one is responsible. It is understood as crisis because it offers a potential chance to change the meanings that one has and the way that one relates to these. (93)

Thus, an existential crisis provides a useful platform for developing an understanding of spirituality and it results from experiences of crisis, loss, and grief. But “when the absurdity of life is fully recognized, the dread converted, the choice made and the responsibility assumed, existence is felt as a value in itself. Existentialism thus becomes an active way of life to be practiced and lived through effort and achievement” (Chatterji 81). It makes the protagonist look for deeper meanings to understand one’s self and discover a new way of being. According to A. N. Dhar, “Spirituality essentially aims at man’s inward transformation, leading to the realization of the Self. This process involves cleansing of “the doors of perception,” enabling the aspirant to see the Divine as the indwelling spirit of all creatures, inhabiting “a blade of grass,” the stars above and “all that we behold” (Mysticism Across 6). Thus spiritual awakening becomes the medium for the protagonists to attain purposeful meanings by which to live and commit themselves.

This spiritual awakening leads the protagonists into the next phase of the journey wherein the mystic-protagonists encounter a lot many people and events that teach them truths about the way of the world. In Jungian process of individuation, the second stage is elucidation which is marked by sorting out various psychological intricacies via a medium (person), or following a model (in most cases the model is one’s ‘self’, the inner potential self). At this juncture, one may question or examine things on one’s own. The third stage is that of education. It is characterized by assimilation of which is sorted out in the second stage of individuation process. After the discovery of the defects in the personality, new attitudes develop. This realization may dawn upon the individual through the encounter with the
archetype of the wise old man may appear in any form—teacher, doctor or anyone possessing authority. At this stage, which is certainly the most crucial one, a definite way is paved for a seeker, or in other words, he gets the right direction (Sharma, Raja 72).

In Hesse’s Siddhartha, the mystic protagonist becomes determined to find a path to self on his own. He leaves behind his devotion to rituals along with self-denial of Samanas and becomes his own teacher. He also moves beyond the realm of reason and mind and takes to worldly life. His determination to find a path for himself leads Siddhartha to Gautama and questions him about his teachings and expresses his doubt that teachings can ever provide the learner with the experience of Nirvana. He argues that Gautama’s path can be appropriate for some but he must take his own path. His subtle query differentiates him from other seekers. He argues:

You have learned nothing through teachings and so I think, O Illustrious One, that nobody finds salvation through teachings. To nobody, O Illustrious One, can you communicate in words and teachings, what happened to you in the hour of your enlightenment. The teachings of the enlightened Buddha embrace much, they teach much—how to live righteously, how to avoid evil. But there is one thing that this clear, worthy instruction does not contain; it does not contain the secret of what the Illustrious One himself experienced—he alone among hundreds of thousands. That is what I thought and realized when I heard your teachings. That is why I am going on my own Way—not to seek another and better doctrine, for I know there is none, but to leave all doctrines and old teachers and to reach my goal alone. (28)

Siddhartha comes to realize that if he does not experience things on his own, he will be living in deception. Hence, he decides to leave his friend Govinda and realize the Self
through his own experience. In his confrontation with the Buddha he states that the ultimate
goal cannot be attained by imitation or following the teachings of somebody else. He is taken
in by the demeanor of Buddha: “I also would like to look and smile, sit and walk like that, so
free, so worthy, so restrained, so candid, so childlike and mysterious. A man only looks and
walks like that when he has conquered his Self. I will conquer my Self” (29). Joseph Mileck
differentiates between the two ways of life espoused by Buddha and Siddhartha:

For Buddha, the physical world and life in all its involvements are Maya, a transient,
painful illusion; for Siddhartha all this is very stuff of treasured being. Buddha’s goal
is a release from the wheel of Sansara, from life, its reincarnations and its incessant
suffering, and a quest for Nirvana, for oblivious extinction; Siddhartha’s goal is life in
all its temporal agony and bliss. Buddha’s is denial and Siddhartha’s an affirmation of
the self. Siddhartha’s message is to stand in awe of the self and of life, to embrace
both for what they are, and to live fully. (164-165)

Siddhartha’s encounter with Gautama helps Siddhartha shape his quest for self-
realization into a self-directed one. He transcends his doubts and dilemmas and experiences
an inner transformation. He firmly believes that no one can show him the path, and that he
has to find it for himself. Hesse writes that “Something was no longer in him, something that
had accompanied him right through his youth and was part of him: this was desire to have
teachers and to listen to their teachings” (31). Siddhartha decides to leave and be his own
teacher. He realizes that he must choose himself and should himself judge the course of his
action. He feels a man now who reasons with logic and concludes that he could not know
himself because he was too occupied with his seeking for Atman and Brahman and “by doing
so, I lost myself on the way.” A feeling of awakening comes over him and he concludes that
he must not escape from his self to know his true Self. He rejects the notion that teachings
can lead him to self discovery and declares' “I will learn from myself, be my own pupil” (32).

His perception of the world changes and finds meaning in every aspect of it. He appreciates the multiplicity of the world. He is thrilled with this awakening and feels as if he has “only been born today.” He starts afresh and realizes that it is by living in this world that he needs to discover who and what he is. He becomes convinced that “meaning and reality were not hidden somewhere behind things, they were in them, in all of them” (33). He feels “no longer an ascetic, no longer a priest, no longer a Brahmin . . . [but] only Siddhartha, the awakened.” He does feel the existential angst when “he was overwhelmed by the feeling of icy despair” at his decision to move all alone on his path. But his spiritual convictions make him “more himself than ever” and he walks on his path “. . . quickly and impatiently, no longer homewards, no longer to his father, no looking backwards” (34-35). This stock taking by Siddhartha of his previous experiments to reach his Self and new perception regarding his future course of action is summed up by Colin Butler thus:

On leaving the Buddha, Siddhartha indulges in a period of stock-taking. He transfers attention back to himself, accepts the reality of the phenomenal world, which he has previously held to be illusory, and accepts for the first time the isolation of the seeker operating without the support of pre-established certainties. His objective remains the same: to find the sense of life as if there were a single sense to be found. Only the location of his enquiries and his modus operandi are changed. Having abandoned the possibility of forcing a solution by intellectual action, he will now try his luck with the senses. (119)

He sees the physical world with fresh eyes noticing every aspect of nature, rather than ignoring it. He realizes that “he must gain experience himself” (40). As Emanuel Maier puts
it, "He must experience the "enlightenment" himself in order to become enlightened. The way to Self is not through asceticism, nor by means of acceptance of doctrines, but by experience" (159).

In the course of his journey, Siddhartha reaches a river and stays in a ferryman's hut for the night where Siddhartha dreams of Govinda turning into a woman and Siddhartha sucking her breast. Siddhartha's dream has symbolic significance and indicates his desire for sensual pleasure that has been lying dormant in his subconscious and finds an outlet in his decision to let the world to influence him. And he moves in the world of desire and makes a conscious choice to become a lover of Kamala, the courtesan. In order to fulfill her desire he joins the business world of Kamaswami. Siddhartha's complete break from the spiritual world is signified by his shaving his beard, trimming his hair, his interest in fine clothes and in his own physical body and this transformation of himself to fit into the materialistic world. Siddhartha involvement in the materialistic and sensual world of Kamala, which he had looked down upon up to now, is necessary for his growth as "the seekers of truth are believed to pass through a very critical transitional stage before they attain perfection and so . . . 'fulfilling his carnal desires' is a necessary step before he attains the fulfillment" (Bhambar 145).

With Kamala and Kamaswami, Siddhartha has the first experience of the real world. He explains to kamala that his only wealth is that he can think, wait and fast and because of these he is capable of acquiring anything he needs. And it is Kamala who enables Siddhartha to fully experience this world and to integrate those experiences so as to enlarge and develop his personality. She teaches him about the body, its language and its pleasures, which he had previously sought to abandon. She teaches him the art of lovemaking and the lessons of giving pleasure to receive it, of balancing conquest with submission—essentially the art of relationship in lovemaking, the give and take instead of the narcissistic flight to ecstasy. She
makes him aware not only of his virtues and talents but also of his limitations and the
limitations and restrictions of the realm he has entered.

He experiences existential vacuum (pointlessness) in his relationship with Kamala
too. At one occasion he says to her, “Perhaps people like us cannot love” (61). But still
Siddhartha works hard with Kamaswami in order to afford gifts and clothes necessary to woo
Kamala because he wants a deeper insight into the world of love that is possible through her.
Siddhartha now starts living a splendid life of a merchant but he eats only once a day. He
learns the ways of business from Kamaswami. Gradually with growing riches, Siddhartha
acquires some characteristics of ordinary people but he still feels distanced from them as he
envies the ordinary people “for the sense of importance with which they had lived their
lives.” Eventually the “soul sickness of the rich crept over him” (64) and he realizes that his
inner voice has silenced.

Siddhartha plays with his business and people around him. He watches them and feels
amused but in the depth of his heart, he is not there. His real self wanders elsewhere as it
remains far away. Siddhartha learns how to transact business affairs, to exercise power over
people and to amuse him with women. He becomes well versed with the ways of the world
but he never becomes part of it: “But he had always felt different from and superior to others”
(63). He gets trapped by the world as Hesse narrates: “like a veil, a thin mist, weariness
settled on Siddhartha, slowly everyday a little thicker, every month a little darker, every year
a little heavier” (64).

Siddhartha is confronted with the same existential discontentment with his situation
that drove him away from his home. His inner voice becomes silent but his senses get
awakened as he starts experiencing the world. With the passage of time, disillusionment and
nausea overcome him and he realizes that many years have been wasted without any
spiritual thirst and exaltation. He questions himself as to why he left his father, Govinda and the Buddha, the Illustrious One. He indulges himself in gambling: "He wore himself out in this senseless cycle, became old and sick" (66). Colin Butler aptly observes:

Neither trading, nor sexual expertise, nor gambling is *per se* of sufficient teleological significance to provide Siddhartha with the feeling that here at last he has found the way. And so he not unnaturally generalizes his situation and succumbs to the notion that *all* human activity is "Sansara," a game. (120)

But all this does not last long and he reaches a turning point in his life when he becomes conscious of the mortality of human life when he notices that Kamala’s face has wrinkles and his own hair has traces of grey. Siddhartha for the first time notices grief and weariness concealed behind her words when she implores him to tell her about the Buddha. He is filled with anxiety and awareness of his totally dissolute life makes him miserable. The dream of the dead songbird reminds him of his own mortality. He ponders over his predicament and leaves Kamala and the materialistic world in utter despair and wanders aimlessly to the river. He feels miserable about his life and contemplates suicide: "There was no more purpose; there was nothing more than a deep, painful longing to shake off this whole confused dream to spit out this stale wine, to make end of this bitter painful life." This suicidal propensity reflects the power that death has over him. The river water reflects the "terrible emptiness in his soul" (72).

Nevertheless, Hesse’s protagonist is not an ordinary human being. His spiritual convictions are so strong that he is able to transcend this human predicament. His literal death is prevented by his sudden awareness of the indestructible when he heard the "sound of Om [that] reached Siddhartha’s ears, his slumbering soul suddenly awakened and he realized the folly of his action" and he remembers "all that he had forgotten, all that was divine" (73). He
falls into a deep sleep or metaphorical death and regains connections with his inner life and finds a new Siddhartha who is “self willed, individualistic” (74). The near death like experience brings in him a total understanding of it and fills him with a sense of fullness because “when you understand that life and death are one- they are one when you begin to end in living- then you are living side by side with death, which is the most extraordinary thing to do; there is neither the past nor the present nor the future, there is only the ending” (Krishnamurti 63). This experience has an invigorating influence on Siddhartha and he feels spiritually more deeply and feels more connected to the world around him. Hesse narrates thus:

And at that moment, in that splendid hour, after his wonderful sleep, permeated with Om, how could he help but love someone and something. This was just the magic that had happened to him during his sleep and the Om in him –he loved everything, he was full of joyous love towards everything that he saw. And it seemed to him that was just why he was previously so ill- because he could love nothing and nobody. (77)

Siddhartha looks at the whole situation with fresh perspective and justifies the hedonistic and materialistic way of life that he has lead as steps in his spiritual growth. He argues that such a life was necessary in order to diminish his thinking self: “[He] had to sin in order to live again” (79). His spiritual growth gives him the ability to move beyond the existential dilemma had taken him to the point of suicide.

Siddhartha now feels affection for the river and decides not to leave it. He identifies himself with the river. As river “was always the same yet it was new” (83). The river can be all places all at once, but its essence never changes, likewise Siddhartha has undergone varied experiences but his essential self has remained the same. He calls his life “a river” (88). He realizes that human soul is always experiencing a new experience but it is always the same
yet every second it is new. He feels the timeless and oneness in river and in his life too.

Mileck observes thus:

Contemplating himself in the manner in which he has contemplated the water, Siddhartha realizes that his very life is a river. It, too, has its source, its course, and its point of termination: birth, childhood, youth, manhood, old age, and death. So observed, his life also suggests only a present, and as such, timelessness. To contemplate life in this manner is to concentrate on essence, on the idea Siddhartha, and not just on the ephemeral manifestation of the idea . . . (166).

He is now able to see his life with a new perspective: “nothing was, nothing will be, everything has reality and presence” (88).

Siddhartha stays happily with Vasudeva, the wise old man, and learns how to row the boat, to work in rice fields, to make basket, to gather wood and pick fruits from the banana trees. Siddhartha finds his destiny and identity; as time goes by Siddhartha not only learns from him but begins to act like him, looks like him, and eventually becomes him, taking his place as ferryman. Siddhartha learns to listen to the message being conveyed by the flowing water of the river from Vasudeva. While contemplating on the river he “[. . .] learned from it how to listen, to listen with a still heart, with a waiting, open soul, without passion, without desire, without judgment, without opinions” (87). Even the signs of aging on Kamala’s face, that once reminded him his mortality, no more terrifies him, rather he feels “more acutely the indestructibleness of every life, the eternity of every moment” (94), when she dies due to a snake bite on a pilgrimage to the Buddha, and leaves Siddhartha’s son behind that was born after Siddhartha leaves her.

Siddhartha’s encounter with his son brings out his love for his son. But the boy remains defiant and arrogant. Siddhartha does not get any happiness from his son. Siddhartha
remembers how in the company of Kamala he once compared himself with the stars and other people with falling leaves. But with his son Siddhartha feels that he has become completely like one of the ordinary people through his sorrow and attachment for his son. He begins to feel that “he had never undergone the follies of love for another person” (99). Siddhartha tries to win him over with friendly patience. But the boy remains angry, rebellious, and scornful of his father’s simple way of life. Eventually the boy runs away and Siddhartha is distraught with misery.

The pain of losing a son is long lasting for him. Siddhartha’s attachment impels him to go to the town to seek his son. He rows across the river but returns back realizing that the river is laughing at his folly. Vasudeva makes him realize the futility of Siddhartha’s action in trying to save his son from misery and follies of the worldly life. He makes Siddhartha realize that everyone has to choose his own destiny as Siddhartha himself had left his father to find his own truth. When he listens to the river attentively, Siddhartha sees his past coming alive before him. He thinks of his father and realizes that, “Had his father also not suffered the same pain that he was now suffering for his son? . . . Did he not expect the same fate? Was it not a comedy, a strange and stupid thing, this repetition, this course of events in a fateful circle?” (106).

Siddhartha’s own son rejects the life chosen for him by his father as Siddhartha himself had many years ago. He feels that “[. . .] this emotion, this pain, these follies also had to be experienced” (99) in order to complete his worldly education. Reluctantly he blesses his son and allows him to depart. The pain of losing a son enables him to identify with the common people more than ever. He has always been scornful towards people of mortal world, but his pain makes him identify with them. He now regarded people in different light:
There was the blind love of a mother for her child, the blind foolish pride of a fond father for his only son... all these little simple, foolish, but tremendously strong, vital, passionate urges and desires no longer seemed trivial to Siddhartha. For their sake he saw people live and do great things, travel, conduct wars, suffer and endure immensely, and he loved them for it. He saw life, vitality, the indestructible and Brahman in all their desires and needs. (105)

Thus, through suffering he finds unity in his role as father, traveler and son. He now realizes that wisdom is “a preparation of soul, a capacity, a secret art of thinking, feeling and breathing the thoughts of unity at every moment of life” (105). The river teaches him the truth that “the path going to the final meaning of the text of life is not straight and linear. It is circular” (Jamil 145). He realizes that “everything that was not suffered to the end and finally concluded reoccurred and the same sorrows were undergone” (106). He observes that there is no sense of novelty in anything and that everything is integrally related to a unified whole, including attachment in relationships. Vasudeva asks Siddhartha to listen to the river intently:

Siddhartha tried to listen better. The picture of his father, his own picture, and the picture of his son all flowed into each other. Kamala’s picture also appeared and flowed on, and the picture of Govinda and others emerged and passed on. They all became part of the river...the river’s voice was full of longing, full of smarting woe, full of insatiable desire...Siddhartha saw the river hasten, made up of himself and his relatives and all the people he had ever seen...other voices accompanied it, voices of pleasure and sorrow, good and evil voices, laughing and lamenting voices, hundreds of voices, thousands of voices...When Siddhartha listened attentively to this river, to this song of a thousand voices; when he did not listen to the sorrow or laughter, when he did not bind his soul to any one particular voice and absorb it in his Self, but heard
them all, the whole, the unity; then the great song of a thousand voices consisted of one word: Om—perfection. (108-109)

Siddhartha intently listens to the various voices of the river till the voices are subsumed under the great sound of Om. Realizing the unity of these voices, Siddhartha’s pain fades away and his self too, merges into unity. Siddhartha’s own life, his own troubles, are reflected in the river along with all the voices and in this way he is able to look at his life in the context of his new mystical identification with Atman. As a result of this mystical encounter with Atman, the mystic protagonist develops the capacity to move beyond the existential problems of life and affirms his faith in life.

Ramaswamy in Raja Rao’s *The Serpent and the Rope*, on the other hand, moves on with his journey for self-realization through active involvement in social life and relationships. Madeleine hopes to be a good match for him and finds an alter ego in Rama. Though she is a Christian by faith, she is emotionally inclined towards the Indian way of life. However, she experiences emotional breakdown after marriage. Marriage with Madeleine soon proves to be a misadventure and Rama falls to see in her a companion at the soul-to-soul level. There appears a gap between husband and wife resulting from spiritual incompatibility rather than physical incompatibility. Later, Savithri fills the gap enabling Rama to see his self in her being.

His spiritual growth is inspired and assisted by people who he comes in contact with. The women characters in the novel help Rama giving a proper direction in his spiritual quest. Through Savithri he goes one step up in his journey of self recognition. During his brief visit to India, he meets Savithri, daughter of raja of Surajpur. She has a fascinating, charming personality and is plump and mature. She has been educated at Cambridge, is modern and progressive in her views. She is betrothed to Pratap, a friend of Rama, but she doesn’t love the man. In their first meeting Rama likes her intelligence and vivacity but detests her
modernism. But something about her fascinates him. Savithri is enamored of Rama's acumen and personality and the research he has been doing. Also, Rama's description of what he feels about Savithri—when he first meets her—shows what he expects from a wife: “We had one thing in common: we both knew Sanscrit, and could entertain each other with *Uttara Rama Charita* or *Raghuvamsa*” (31). Savithri’s visit to Rama and Madeleine in villa Sainte Anne has transforming influence on him. He observes her:

Savithri gave one the sense that, do what you would, you could only *be*, and since you could only *be*, nothing could happen to you. Virtue for her was not a principal, a discipline; it was the acceptance that whether she married Pratap or “liked” that Muslim in London—she vaguely referred to both—they were both instants of an experience, always happening to itself. For her truth was not tomorrow or yesterday—that is why she scarcely ever referred to India; the truth was wherever one is—for there is no anywhere or anywhen, but all *is*, for one is not. (128)

Thus, Rama is fascinated by her natural purity. In spite of her modern ways she wears *kumkum, choli*, black beads which are essentially Indian. She has a fair knowledge of Barthrihari and sings the songs of Mira. Once Lakshmi, Savithri’s friend tells him to see Savithri objectively and calls her “flirt,” for going out with so many men at the same time, Rama silences her with the words “... we shall never have such innocence. Savithri is a saint” (187). Rama’s visit to Cambridge to study for his thesis brings him closer to her as she is also there. Savithri invites Rama to meet her at Cambridge where she has been pursuing a course in English literature. Rama's meeting with Savithri is a turning point, which blossoms into spiritual love and which enables both to see their existence in each other’s soul.

They meet frequently and passes many evenings together. A deep spiritual passion grows between them. His knowing Savithri becomes an experience of making him conscious
of the truth of his life. S.S. Agarwalla observes: "Savitri embodies not only the feminine principle as surrender to the masculine but also the hypostatic presence that the protagonist, Rama has been seeking" (131). Rama and Savithri together affirm the central adavaitic position that ultimate reality is identical with the individual self and that duality of I and thou is false. She wakes him into the truth of life. Later on being asked what happened between him and Savithri in Cambridge, he tells Georges:

I heard myself say I heard myself. Or I saw my eyes see that I saw. She became the awareness behind my awareness, the leap of my understanding. I lost the world and she became it. For whatever I gave her she accepted, as the Ganges receives the waters of the Himalayas, that go on down to the sea and come again as white flakes of snow, then blue, then very green; and as the sun comes northward again, the ice melts and once more the Ganges takes the water to the sea-so we gave love to each other, as though it did not belong to us but a principle, an other, an impersonal reality, from which we saw gifts emerge in each of us. (169)

These words express a deep spiritual affinity that he feels with her. He is deeply in love with her and she makes herself the means by which Rama can accomplish his spiritual quest. Slowly but steadily Rama seems to get oriented towards the understanding of his own self through Savithri:

"Saint I had to become if I would know, not a saint of ochre and done-bowl, but one which had known the extinction of the ego... to know Savithri was to wake into the truth of Life. To be remembered - unto God" (169).

He realizes through Savithri that "I could be I" (171). He recalls the famous saying of Yagnavalkya to his wife: "The husband does not love the wife for the wife's sake; the husband loves the wife for the sake of the Self in her" (171). We get an insight as to what the Advaitic Rama expects from a wife: "It makes all the difference in the world whether the
woman of your life is with you or not; she alone enables you to be in a world that is familiar and whole. If it is not his wife, then for an Indian it may be a sister in Mysore, or little Mother in Benares” (57).

What Rama has failed to see in Madeleine, he finds it in Savithri. They go out frequently and Savithri takes keen interest in philosophical discussions. Savithri gets so enthralled by his philosophical outpourings that she urges him to pursue with his quest. They often talk about philosophy of love and she feels impressed with Rama when he says: “You can love; or rather you can be love” (176). Once she asks him if his philosophy of love implies that one cannot love another because she doesn’t love Pratap and yet is marrying him. Rama answers her:

“No, you can love another. But love can never be a movement, a feeling, an act. All the acts can only be of the body, or the mind, or the ego. Only the selfish can love.”

“And the loveless?”

“They become love.” (177)

Rama convinces her as no other man has done in her life. The moment of realization is also the moment of surrender for her. But for Rama also this is a moment of recognition—a stage in the development of his own self.

His journey for self-realization culminates in a symbolic and mystical marriage in London. Savithri comes to meet him in his apartment. He wants to touch her but refrains as he feels there is something mysterious about her. She comes with a preparation to worship him as her lord, her Shiva, to perform arti, and in this way to accept him as her husband. She kneels before him placing her head on his feet; she stays there for long with her breath breaking into gentle sobs. She gently holds herself up. Taking the kumkum from the box, Rama places it on her brow, at the parting of her hair. He asks her to stop and takes out the toe rings given by the Little Mother for her daughter-in-law. He says: “I, too, had come
prepared for this morning...yes but it was a preparation made a very long time ago- a long time, Savithri. Not a life, not ten lives, but life upon life...” (211). He places the toe rings on her feet. Savithri is delighted to receive them: “this Cambridge undergraduate, who smokes like a chimney and dances to barbarian jazz, she says unto you, “I’ve known my lord for a thousand lives, From janam to janam I have known my Krishna ...” (212 ).

Their symbolic marriage helps Rama to see his self and he sees the possibility of the self realization. Thus, as Swain observes, “She serves as a catalyst to Rama’s entry into a transcendental existence. Rama’s realization of his nativity becomes a reality and his search for a guru becomes a spiritual need” (Swain, 155). His love for Savithri gives new dimension to his life. They become husband and wife in the eyes of god. At the time of parting Savithri tells him that she will meet him.

The marriage of Saroja takes him to India as he is the eldest son leaving pregnant Madeleine behind. Rama constantly keeps thinking about Savithri. Savithri, now in India, through a letter asks Rama whether he will marry her, for she feels that marrying Pratap is like marrying a Turk, and every Hindu woman will prefer death to such a fate. Rama realizes that one can marry only after conquering one’s ego and he is not yet ripe for a marriage of souls. In his reply, Rama states that all brides should be Benares born, knowing that Savithri will grasp his meaning. A few days later, Rama receives from Savithri another letter which informs that she has married Pratap to whom she will be a good wife and seeks his blessings.

D. S. R. Sastry observes:

Both Rama and Savithri realize ultimately that their ‘marriage’ is only spiritual and should never be corrupted by physical desire. He reveals to her the true nature of love...He accepts her as principle; his Queen Savithri achieves her happiness in life as a true wife. (62)
He cannot endure Savithri’s marriage to Pratap and seeks compensation by plunging into an affair with Lakshmi in Bombay. Often his immaturity and lack of inconsistency impede his spiritual progress. He appears not to have mastered the art of freeing himself from temporal pleasures. He lapses again into secular pleasures when he commits adultery with Lakshmi, wife of Captain Sham Sunder. But soon he realizes his mistake that he had taken the wrong turn. He boards on plane to France with a new attitude towards self realization.

Thus, Hermann Hesse and Raja Rao depict gradual progression in their protagonists’ journey towards self-realization. But there are psychological complexities that need to be resolved in the process. Thus Siddhartha having rejected following any teacher or the teachings, decides to have first hand experience of the world. His plunging into the materialistic world does not bring him any closer to his Self and his existential angst surfaces again leading to his symbolic death. A spiritual experience becomes a necessity to overcome this sense of disillusionment with Sansara and eventually his agonizing love for his son. In fact, it is Vasudeva who makes him aware of the unity of everything by making him listen to the message of the flowing water of the river and peace dawns upon him as he transcends his existential predicament. Ramaswamy’s existential preoccupation, on the other hand is manifested in his coming close to Savithri and becoming estranged from his wife, Madeleine. His spiritual passion for Savithri brings to surface the emotional and spiritual vacuum in his relationship with Madeleine. Though he fulfills his responsibilities sincerely, a sense of alienation prevails. It is Savithri who brings him face to face with his spiritual aspirations and hence a need for a mentor who could dissolve his illusions with the knowledge of light.

II

In Paulo Coelho’s *The Alchemist*, Santiago’s experiences on the path of his quest help him overcome his doubts and apprehensions as he becomes more determined with each step forward. He becomes a keen observer of happenings around him and learns to read the omens
and interpret dreams as “the dreams or the things that one’s heart truly desires are the messages, appearing as omens from the universe and it is in pursuing them to the best of one’s ability, that one is truly alive and spiritual” (Mishra 101).

Santiago’s journey becomes an accumulation of knowledge that serves to take him at higher levels of spiritual growth. Santiago’s faith in his quest makes him work hard at the crystal merchant’s shop. After almost a month’s work he feels dissatisfied with his work and offers the crystal merchant an innovative idea of building a crystal display case to attract more customers. But the merchant argues that the business has been running good and asks him why he wants more. If they make a mistake, they two have to live with their mistakes (53). This reason really differentiates the crystal merchant from Santiago. Santiago made a mistake previously by giving all his money to the robber. It affects him deeply. Santiago tries to improve upon his mistake and do something meaningful.

Santiago seems more determined about his quest when he answers the merchant that he needs more money in order to go to Pyramids. Through the portrayal of the crystal merchant, Coelho brings him in sharp contrast to his protagonist, Santiago who is keen to pursue his personal legend whereas the crystal merchant fears his dream of making a pilgrimage and feels comfortable with what he has. Santiago shows the crystal merchant that by ignoring his greater dream, he also reduces his perspective. When the crystal merchant finally agrees to the risk of changing his business, which could affect his lifestyle Santiago, introduces him to the “immense possibilities” that one might be able to realize if s/he is open to taking up challenges. He rather concerned with the satisfaction of realizing his dream.

The risk he may run is not something important to think about because he comprehends that every action obliges him to make commitment to accept the following consequences. Nearly a year after his arrival in Africa, he has become rich as a result of the crystal shop’s success. One morning Santiago decides to return to Tarifa and buy a large
sheep flock. The decision making process begins when Santiago packs his belongings. At this time, he finds his old shepherd’s pouch. The stones remind him about the old king and all the king’s statements. This memory eventually does not influence him to decide to go to the Pyramids because after finding the stones, Santiago decides to go back to Spain and become a shepherd.

When he chooses that option, Santiago thinks that maybe it is better for him to do what the crystal merchant does—never trying to realize his dream. He tries to conform to this decision, but it does not make him happy. The unhappiness he feels after choosing to go back to Spain illustrates his inner urge not to feel satisfied with less. Moreover, it also signifies that the crystal merchant’s perspective towards his dream is different from Santiago’s. While the crystal merchant prefers dreaming about it, Santiago likes to see his dream come true. He takes stock of his situation, and comes to conclusion: “I can always go back to being a shepherd....But maybe I’ll never have another chance to get to the pyramids in Egypt” (61).

Santiago is a person who has a high self-awareness of what he wants, how to reach it, and with what degree of accountability. The trip to the desert will offer him the chance to get to know a new place: “May be world had other hidden treasures.” He feels determined to continue his personal legend and moves on “once again on his way to his treasure” (62). It makes him all the more buoyant and optimistic realizing his dream. Moreover, his consideration does not rely on what the crowd says. That is why his consideration is based on his subjectivity. Although the recall of his dream is caused by the appearance of the two stones and the memory of Melchizedek, Santiago’s act signifies that Santiago still makes his own decision which shows his determination to find his own destiny.

Santiago joins the group travelling with desert caravan. He meets an Englishman, absorbed in his books, and who is on his way to meet an alchemist residing in the desert. The Englishman serves both a friend and foil to Santiago during their journey. He represents the
worldview of an educated man based on his learning and books rather than instinct, which is a guiding force for Santiago. He says: “He is diving into a strong current that will carry him to places he had never dreamed of when he first made the decision” (65).

His coming across the Englishman becomes helpful in imparting him with all the knowledge of the art of alchemy encompassing the Master Work that involves the transformation of lead into gold. Santiago’s treasure hunt also become his quest for metaphysical treasure as he decides to learn about the Soul of the World: “When you want something with all your heart, that’s when you are closest to the Soul of the World. It is always a positive force” (75). He now understands the Language of the World in a better way and pays attention to minute details. The narrator says: “The boy was beginning to understand that intuition is really a sudden immersion of the soul into the universal current of life, where the histories of all people are connected and we are able to know everything, because it is all written there” (71). He also learns the secret of happiness that lies in living the present moment, in his meeting with the camel driver: “I don’t live in either my past or my future. I am interested only in the present . . . life will be a party for you, a grand festival because life is the moment we’re living right now” (81).

Thus, Santiago’s wisdom grows from strength to strength as he is sensitive enough to learn from one and all. He knows that everyone has something to offer that he genuinely needs to possess. His pursuit of treasure is his symbolic journey of exploration and self-discovery adding spiritual riches to his character. The next phase of his spiritual journey takes him to an oasis as the caravan must stop at the oasis because of the tribal war in the desert. The leader of caravan chooses the oasis because it is a neutral place.

At the oasis, Al-Fayoum, Santiago meets a woman named Fatima. As soon as Santiago approaches her, he notices her beauty and falls instantly in love with her. He felt that it was predestined and “knew that his love for her would enable him to discover every
treasure in the world” (90). The love affair between the two moves on quickly, but it has a symbolic value as it is another step in Santiago’s journey or quest for his personal legend. Fatima reaffirms Santiago’s faith in his personal legend: “I am a part of your dream, a part of your destiny, as you call it... If I am really a part of your dream, you’ll come back one day” (93).

Santiago feels sad at the prospect of leaving Fatima. His love for Fatima takes him closer to understanding the Language of the World as it becomes evident when he sees a pair of hawks attacking each other and a vision of an army heading towards the oasis. He deliberately tries to read meaning into the hawk’s flight and feels that he is “learning the Language of the World and everything is making a sense... when you are in love, things make even more sense” (95). This vision gives him a clear and specific picture of the future as Santiago is able to penetrate the soul of the world. When the chieftain raises doubts about Santiago’s dream, he affirms his faith in his dream: “I can see things that eyes habituated to the desert might not see” (101). Santiago’s vision comes true and he is appointed as a tribal counselor.

Santiago feels overwhelmed with his love for Fatima and declares: “I want to stay at oasis” (113). But the alchemist makes him realize the essence of true love: “love never keeps a man from pursuing his destiny. [True love] speaks the Language of the World” (115). He makes it clear that love only, doesn’t bring satisfaction. Only by following his personal legend will Santiago find lasting satisfaction without any regrets. Thus Santiago is able to transcend the biggest hurdle in journey and makes love his biggest strength and moves on with journey with new jest and enthusiasm.

His faith in his dream gives him courage as the alchemist observes: “Courage is the quality most essential to understanding the Language of the World” (106). It becomes evident in his encounter with the alchemist. Santiago thinks that the man on the horse would kill him
but he feels no fear because he would die in pursuit of his personal legend. The alchemist chooses Santiago his disciple because of Santiago deep understanding of the Language of the World. Santiago deciphers the presence of the alchemist as a good omen in his personal quest. But Santiago does have his moments of hesitation regarding his quest as he feels satisfied with his present situation: “I have already found my treasure. I have a camel, my money from the crystal shop and I have fifty gold pieces. In my own country I would be a rich man” (110).

But the alchemist pushes him forward and asks him to buy a horse. He tests Santiago’s proficiency of getting in touch with the Soul of the World by asking him to look for life in desert. His interaction with the elements of nature such as the desert and the horse emphasizes that the soul of the world exists in every natural thing and one needs to have a keen sense for it. Santiago’s journey with the alchemist takes him to the higher level of spiritual consciousness. The alchemist underlies the importance of Santiago’s journey: “everything you need to know, you have learned through your journey” (120). He has learned everything about the world by going through the hurdles and gaining wisdom by overcoming them. He makes it clear to Santiago that alchemy is just a metaphor for the purification in the pursuit of one’s quest. Many people fail in their quest because they want the fruits of destiny without any action.

In Richard Bach’s Jonathan Livingston Seagull, the protagonist Jonathan understands that success cannot be gained instantly and he needs to struggle to overcome obstructions whether they are internal such as fear, anger or boredom or external such as Gull Flock. He realizes that it is inner fear and anger that is hard to overcome and he has to transcend his inner hurdles in order to find his path. He realizes that it is through perseverance and remaining true to one’s unique self that he would be able to find himself.
All alone he keeps on learning. What he hoped for the Flock, he now gains for himself alone as he learns to fly and is not sorry for the price that he had paid. He struggles to be himself. He flies high. He flies fast. He surpasses what other seagulls thought possible. He pushes past his seagull limits and finds truth and freedom. He courageously separates from the flock to pursue his urges, his desires, his calling to define his very being.

During his practice, he is accompanied by two seagulls that encourage him in his flying and says: “we have come to take you home” (36). The radiant gulls tell him that he's learned a lot but that they'll teach him more. Jonathan agrees to fly with the two gulls to another level and reaches a society where all gulls enjoy flying. He feels elated and says: “So this is heaven,” which is a higher plane of existence. He notices his body glowing as bright as his companions' bodies. He felt as if he was a new gull: “It felt like a seagull body, but already it flew far better than his old one had ever flown” (45). He performed better and better but he still felt a limit that he had to crack: “In heaven, he thought, there should be no limits” (46).

He is welcomed by the other seagulls. He learns the new things of flight as his companions also had the same passion for the flight: “for each of them, the most important thing in living was to reach out and touch perfection in that which they most loved to do, and that was to fly” (47). Jonathan gets engaged with his flight and finds beautiful control over his body. Sullivan, his instructor, calls him “a one in million bird” as he has learned the lesson of life: that it is not just to get through but to seek your own perfection. He tells Jonathan that they have gone through many lives before realizing the essence of life: “there is more to life that eating or fighting or power in the Flock” (48).

They took many lives to learn the concept of perfection and many hundred years to find the purpose of their life that is “to find . . . perfection and show it forth.” He tells
Jonathan that the purpose of their life is to prepare for the next life: “learn nothing and the
next world is the same as this one, all the same limitations and load, weights to overcome” (48). Jonathan learns new ways of flying and gets closer to perfection. He finds pleasure in
pure experience of flying. Jonathan’s inquisitiveness takes him to Elder Gull, Chiang, who
makes him understand the concept of Heaven. According to Chiang: “Heaven is not a place,
and it is not a time. Heaven is being perfect” (49), where world is found through perfection in
knowledge. He teaches Jonathan that his aim should not be speed but perfection: “Because
any number is a limit and perfection doesn’t have limits. Perfect speed my son is being there” (52). Chiang, the Elder Gull becomes Jung’s wise old man, who becomes a source of
inspiration and guidance for the Jonathan in his quest for self realization. Roshan Lal Sharma
underlies the importance of the Wise old man in the journey of the hero quester:

The wise old man is spiritual savant and empirically transcendental. He is the torch-
bearer for the hero in his quest. The wise old man be a quester, but his esoteric
mythical knowledge may also have been gained through dreamless encounters with
self via the practice of Yoga, rumination, reflection or ethereal imagination. (Raja,
75-76)

Chiang makes Jonathan learn deceive time and place because they are meaningless.
He learns to forget his body restrictions: “the trick was to know that his true nature lived, as
perfect as an unwritten number, everywhere at once across space and time” (53). Jonathan
feels himself more powerful as he starts learning with tremendous speed. Sullivan, his
instructor applauds Jonathan’s fearlessness to learn new ways of flying. Jonathan thrives, and
picks up spiritual wisdom from his gurus. Jonathan comes to the realization that “Each of us
is in truth an idea of the Great Gull” and that a seagull is “an unlimited idea of freedom, an
image of the Great Gull” (70). His friendly relationship with Chiang makes him realize the
importance of being true to one’s self: “You have the freedom to be yourself, your true self,
here and now, and nothing can stand in your way” (76). He moves on his path of self-actualization with his knowledge and intuitive understanding. He masters Chiang’s words exhorting: “Never to stop their learning and their practicing and their striving to understand more of the perfect invisible principle of all life” (55), and working harder ever.

The learning process, linking the highly experienced teacher and diligent student is raised into almost sacred level. When Chiang vanishes, Jonathan is reminded of the last words of Chiang: “Keep working on love” (55). Jonathan understands that the spirit cannot be really free without the ability to forgive and the way to progress leads through becoming a teacher not just through working hard as a student. With the passing of time Jonathan’s memories of the time spent on earth started peeping up. He strives to understand the more vivid principle of life that is love and “[. . .] his own way of demonstrating love was to give something of the truth that he had seen to a gull who asked only a chance to see truth for himself” (56). Jonathan decides to go back to Earth as the recurrent images of the old Flock keeps haunting him:

[. . .] the old feeling came back, and he couldn’t help but think that there might be one or two gulls back on Earth who would be able to learn, too. How much more would he have known by now if Chiang had come to him on the day that he was Outcast! (56-57)

Ultimately he listens to his heart and bids farewell to Sullivan and goes back to earth “being not of bone and feather but a perfect idea of freedom and flight, limited by nothing at all” (57). Thus, one may observe that Jonathan has grasped the idea of limitless freedom and ceased to be constrained by space and time. Jonathan realizes his true self and becomes a complete individual with the new attitude, behavior and manner. He is able to transcend all his fears and limitations and seeks his higher ambition of understanding love and kindness.
The mystic-protagonist in Sujatha Vijayaraghavan’s *The Silent One* is “mouni,” who is known by varied names by different people in the course of the narrative, such as “the silent one,” “tatha,” “Oomaiyan” and “Kalia,” has already attained higher state of consciousness. He is accorded the spiritually evolved status at the very beginning of the narrative. The essence of the silent one is captured by the old priest Mouli Sastri in these words: “Sometimes, the divinity within us moves about in a simple, human form. For our sake . . . not it has anything to do or not to do. Such man can roll the world up like a mat and walk away’ tucking it under the arm” (29).

The silent mouni keeps on walking and his presence becomes the means for people to feel blessed and rise above their mundane existence. People collect information about him in fragments because of his godly presence. But nobody knew that the name of the silent one was Pichaikuppan who could sing hymns of godly intoxication. He was born to Parvathi and Paramasivan at the later stage of their life: “it was a boy, dark and healthy like his father, with a mop of hair” (108). To ward off the evil, she was advised by the people close to her to receive him in alms. And as was planned, an elderly woman placed Pichai near a heap of rubbish and another woman picked him up and brought to Parvathi, who stretching her saree fold asked for him in alms. He was named Siva Ramakrishnan, but nobody knew him by that name.

Pichai grew up as the years passed by and he carried forward the family tradition of worshipping the deity as he was initiated by his father at the tender age of seven. He too has to follow the rigid discipline that is required to perform the ritual worship of the deity. His father would wake him up early in the morning, and after a bath they used to sit for ritualistic worship everyday: “the child learnt to imitate his father, carefully dipping three fingers into the small wooden boat that held the sacred ash and smear himself” (109). According to the Vedanta philosophy, self-realization can be achieved only through spiritual knowledge,
which requires meditation. The Vedantic approach to attain *samadhi* is threefold: hearing the teaching with a receptive mind, deep thinking, and meditating on it consistently until realization dawns which is called *jnana* (state of *samadhi* or transcendent awareness). Hearing is not simply noting the words of the teachings; it involves a deep inner listening with an open mind and heart. *Manana* requires full concentration and a firm intent to understand oneself. Contemplation involves self-examination and self-remembrance throughout the day as one's primary mental state. The main feature of Vedantic meditation is self-enquiry and analysis through intellect. Vedanta uses intellect to experience the real nature (Frawely 7-8).

It is via using this threefold approach that the boy attained mastery over the branch of the *Veda* that was prescribed to their family in the first three years of being in the patasala (Vedic school). As per family tradition, he had to master other two approaches as well. Paramasivann was proud of the fact that his son too was an “ekasanthagrahi,” the one who remembers and retains in his memory after listening to or reading it just once. He had advanced in his learning process, and it was time to move another teacher. He gave his son a gold chain with a pendant that belonged to his father, who had given it to Parvathi on their marriage, to give gurudakshina to his guru. He also handed over him a bundle of palm leaves that contained the text written by the boy’s grandfather and it was Paramasivan’s wish that his son write a commentary on the text in simple language. Paramasivan showed faith in him that he would be able to do it and the boy was overwhelmed with faith that his father had reposed in him and he felt strong. On completion of his first three years of study, the father gave his blessings to his son and taught him the truth that remained with him always. He said, “You must remember that there is nothing to search for outside in the world . . . everything is within!” (113). In between the strict regime he had some light moments too, with his mother.
He would tease her with his pranks. Sometimes he would sleep in the lap of his mother while rocking in the swing and his father would carry him in his hands to mat.

After passing on his wisdom to his son, Paramasivan passes away. The death of his father brings a great change in him as his mother decides to leave their home and live in Tiruvaiyaru with Pichai’s mama. Pichai questions his mother as he couldn’t bear leaving his home but she placates him by explaining her reason: “the house is for people, people are not meant for houses. What have we got to do with bricks and mortar when the deity has left” (115). Pichai and his mother lived in Tiruvaiyaru with his mama, who made proper arrangement for Pichai’s study and was sent to the best scholar in Tiruvaiyaru. After his three years stay, he had requested to go to Kanchi, to Upanishadswami. Pichai used to go for his classes and Parvathi would wait for him in the courtyard. They used to have a little food. Her only wish was that she would die in the presence of her son. When she died Pichai was with her and held her in her lap as she wanted. His mother’s death brought a great change in him as he became completely detached from everyone. People around him noticed the silence that was becoming part of him. They observe: “the boy is becoming silent” (124). He started moving places. The family members searched for him everywhere but “in all those years, none could catch him for he moved faster than the wind” (127).

The silent one kept moving from place to place and silence in him grew deeper. The silence “grew in him tangible more and more powerful till it had become even more tangible than the sound of his voice” (128). He had travelled from the south of India till north. He had been in the land of five rivers for many years before he reached in the mountains. He had found himself in the mountains that were capped with snow and he felt as if he sat on “top of [the] little rock since creation began and watched life unfold in a thousand designs” (128). He observed the world stretched before him, the snow kept mountains, the fragrance of cedar mixed with the breeze, the friendliness of wild life around him. He felt charmed by the vast
desert of snow in Lahaul-Spiti as “all through the year there was only the season of silence” (129). He felt an affinity with the place because “the silence up there had been immense for he had known them” (129) and “each creature…only breathed to know itself, losing everything else in the consummation with silence” (129). His journey is beautifully described by using an appropriate metaphor of cloud:

A dark cloud that moved on land or in space, by day or by night, now east, now west, or north, watching itself and everything around and called by many names in the course of being blown about in eternity. (130)

The silent one roams from one place to another like a cloud and gives his magical touch to everyone who comes in his contact and releasing them from the vagaries of the existence. The fictional space is spiritually charged with his presence. His presence becomes a kind of benediction in the novel that spiritually influences the life around him and lends people around him a sense of actuality.

For the tribal mother Marutorammarai, Oomaiyan, the dumb one becomes the only hope for the salvation of the tribe. At the end of the single file is a dumb man who “was found dead to the world in crevice between two large knotted trunks of dry trees that were chosen to be felled, chopped and carried away” (37). He is beaten with a whiplash by the supervisor but “the slaves knew him to be one of their own and wept with dry eyes and castrated tongues” (38). The slaves clothe him by putting a loin cloth around his waist. The old man who is a carrier of sack of flour, brings the dumb man in their circle and offers him food to eat. As the old man looks into the eyes of the dumb man, he recognizes him as Oomaiyan and feeling of love gushes forth: “a flood of waters emerged growing enormously into the deluge, when all life and all knowledge of it was washed away, sweeping death along with it, and only love remained” (39).
Oomaiyan was given the task of tying the bundles which he does with perfection. The slaves carry the bundles on their heads and the dumb man walks in the end of the line. A favourite attendant of the royal family is bitten by a snake and succumbs to the poison. As a precautionary measure the wood carriers are made to walk in twos in front of the procession in order to clear the path for the maharajas and their entourage of nay possible danger, the mootan and Oomaiyan make the last pair at the end. They reach the estate and the wood carriers are made to stand in one file as the visiting king wants to appreciate the risk taken by these men by giving them a silver coin. It is mootan’s turn to take the coin but instead of resisting the move he stands in front of the king with his “hands folded and his shoulders slumped in subservience” (55). But Oomaiyan is not able to accept this disgrace and he pulls Oomaiyan and starts walking away while dragging the mootan.

Joining Oomaiyan, all of them throw down their loads and walk back to their village. They keep on walking and do not stop. They feel tired, hungry and thirsty but “they had to walk, not because of whip or out of fear, but because one of them had willed it” (56). It becomes an exemplary walk through the forest in the history of the tribe. They reach their kudi at the dawn and Oomaiyan rushes straight to dying Marutorammai. He places her head in his lap and pours water into her mouth. He places her hand on her chest and looks into her eyes to assure her that her only hope for their salvation will be fulfilled. She dies peacefully in his lap and becomes the last one of the tribe to be buried in the plains as they all pack their belongings to walk to their place in the mountains with Oomaiyan.

The old priest, Mouli Sastri feels that he can be liberated only if he could see the silent mouni whom he had revered in the temple. One day during the adi perukku festival, the villagers from Vengambur approached the old priest to ask about the silent one sitting on the mound in their village. He found a new life in him. The author states: “The old man listened with sparks of new life warming his spent and purposeless body. He caught the
farmer's hand and wept without a sound" (21). The old priest calls the villagers fortunate because of the presence of the silent one in their village. He expresses his desire to go with the villagers to meet the silent one: "before my breath goes out, I want to see him once more" (21) the priest enters the temple of his deity after a long time as he feels that his deity has put an end to his waiting to meet the mouni and its fruit of his years worship of the deity. The author beautifully explains the silent communion between the old priest and his deity:

When lamps and camphors that were lit were waved one after another, he stood behind the crowd of pilgrims watching the deity he had worshipped all his life. It was as if it spoke to him wordlessly, facelessly, from its phallic form, understanding all that he felt. The old man's face streamed tears of a happiness he did not know the reason of and he stood in silent communion with something more substantial than everyone he knew or called his own. (21)

The old priest defies everyone to meet his god and he is carried in a cart along with other villagers to Vengambur. He decides not to eat anything till he has seen the mouni. The carvan of the people reaches Vengambur and old priest gets off the cart and runs like a madman towards the banyan groove: "The old priest ran ahead of the others and with his hand spread and palms wide open stood for a moment, sobbing before he fell down on the warm sand in prostration" (26). He goes speechless for a moment and after gathering his wits he says: "You left me without a word" (26).

The old priest seems to have reached his destination after his long quest for his god. A sense of peace prevails over him: "after several minutes passed, the old man sat on his heels by the side of the figure on the sand, watching the other's calm face with its eyes half closed, while tears rolled down his own" (26). The disturbed soul of the old priest get soothed and he follows the returning crowd but he doesn't leave the groove and the next day comes to the
same place where the silent one has been lying down: “when convinced that he had found the exact spot, he fell flat in prostration, got up and repeated the exercise” (27).

Due to his long journey and fasting the old priest faints and is taken care of by the villagers. He stays at the village temple for many days and makes it his routine to walk in search of the silent one near the banyan groove and comes back in evening. The villagers treat him with reverence as he knows the mouni. In a conversation with the village priest he says that he has got what he searched for: “Your village is fortunate . . . otherwise why would he choose to stay here for so long? Somehow . . . by the kindness of your people, my last days are spent fruitfully. If I can close my eyes now . . . what more can I ask? (29).

People from the village start flocking to the old priest to hear something about the mouni. He sings the song composed by the silent one with the devotion to the amazement of the villagers who could not believe that the song has been composed by the mouni as they have never seen him breaking his silence. The old priest says that the songs have been taught to him by his grandfather, Krishna Sastri, who has been the priest in the temple. He becomes of reminiscent of his time with his grandfather who used to cry while singing those hymns. He remembers that he once asked his grandfather his reason for crying if the hymns were “the songs of a very happy heart” (32).

His grandfather had said that he had been preparing himself to see the boy. And through his tears he was washing the road for his eternal union with the silent one. His wish was fulfilled as on the day he breathed his last the silent one appeared from inside the banyan groove. His presence brought comfort to the thirsty soul and “my grandfather closed his eyes as if he fell asleep and died” (33). He had a peaceful death in the lap of the silent one. After that day his visits to the place were not frequent.

After the Suvarnagiri mango groove episode, the debauched king is transformed. He orders to search for the man. Every nook and corner of Suvarnagiri, forests and villages
around it are searched but he is not found anywhere. Every year the king visits the mango groove, where he met the silent one for the first time, without wine and women, in hope that the dark man will return to that place. One day he leaves to search for the mouni on his horse but finds himself caught in the quicksand. It is the silent one who comes to his rescue literally and metaphorically. Even in nearing death experience the king is delighted to have found the mouni. It is the same hand that comes to his rescue which he hacked once. Metaphorically it is the presence of the divine man in the mango groove that initiates his transformation from a man of sensual pleasures to a man in quest for spirituality. After having found the silent one he is relieved of his anguish and he screams on his way back with his men: “He came! He came when I called . . . and pulled me out of the quicksand. He came walking over the quicksand . . .” (146). Thus it is through the silent one that the debauched king’s path for release from the material world is paved and total transformation takes place in him.

Chandu Pant, the local priest in the mountains of Lahaul-Spiti, is another character that is redeemed by the silent one. He finds a companion in the silent one and calls him “the dark one” or “Kaliya” because of his dark complexion. He shares few drinks of malt bear with him. Chandu takes the silent one to the summer fair that is takes place every year in a village of Kukumseri. A great affinity develops between them and when the silent one departs as he always does; his absence becomes unbearable for him:

Day after day the priest wept for his friend and called out as loud as he could, by cupping his thin hands around his mouth, straining his unhappy and tired eyes. The longing in him grew for the silence that had been so consoling and dear to him, for the large black eyes that knew how to watch, as if the one who was watched alone mattered and the slow hands, which had touched him beyond the body, when he had held them. (152)
He loses his balance of mind starts rambling about the stone goddess being alive. He goes to the higher ranges in search of his friend and keeps sitting in the temple for long hours hopeful of his friend’s return. The villagers take him to be a mad man but also feel worried about his survival in cold up there. They decide to bring him down forcibly and as they wrap the priest in a woolen gown, the dark one appears from nowhere and lifts the local priest with his arms and “the little woolen bundle and the wind-dressed darkness moved out of the small stone temple” (155).

At this time a snow storm engulfs everything “wiping away all boundaries between the earth, the sky and the mountains in between, till once more life belonged only to the elements” (155).

The silent one becomes a potent influence on the people around him and he becomes the reason behind their transformation and eventual release from the worldly bondages.

Thus, the protagonists of Coelho and Richard Bach move to the higher level of consciousness by transcending various impediments on the path of their spiritual journey. Santiago’s varied experiences though make him stronger but his doubts and hesitation and fear makes his existential dilemma evident. His decisions often show conflict between choices and he is able to finalize them with the help from outer sources such as the two stones and old king. He is able to transcend his doubts by his faith in love for Fatima and the alchemist’s exhortations to connect to the Soul of the World, thus paves way for his eventual transformation where as Jonathan’s strong faith in his quest takes him to Heaven, that is the place for like-minded gulls. He under the guidance of his mentor Chiang learns the intricacies of flight and attains perfection but existential anxiety grips him as he feels vacillating between choice of staying in Heaven and going back to Earth to help those who
wants to give meaning to their life. But his compassionate feeling of love for suffering gulls takes him back to earth, hence to his transcendence as a gull.

The mystic-protagonist of *The Silent One*, on the other hand, is beyond the vagaries of existence as he is initiated on the path of self-knowledge at very young age. By following the rigorous routine of meditation he is able to conquer time, pain and pleasure. His silence becomes the brooding presence in the narrative. The existential preoccupation in the text has been thus seen in relation to minor characters who have to struggle at the existential level and who become blessed because of the mouni’s benediction and divine presence.

### III

In this way, we see that various mystic protagonists as analyzed in the foregoing units emerge as existent individuals who confront not only the suffocating traditional and ritual practices in their respective socio-cultural setups, but also the excruciating existential angst. This confrontation results in anguish that leads to serious questioning of the self. This critical examination makes them aware of their spiritual aspirations culminating in the inner transformation. Their physical journey, in fact, becomes a journey into fathoming and transcending existential complexities that emerge as obstacles in the quest journey of various mystic-protagonists.

For instance, in *Siddhartha*, Hesse’s hero starts his journey from choosing his father’s traditional Brahmin practices and feeling dissatisfied with them, move on to Samana’s path of self denial in order to reach his innermost self. But having reached no closer to his goal, he rejects their way of gaining knowledge into self. He rejects every teacher and teachings as he comes to conclusion that someone else’s experience and teachings will not take him anywhere. He decides to be his own teacher, and rejects Buddha’s teaching too as he doesn’t want to be a follower of Buddha but Buddha himself. He takes a plunge into the materialistic world of Kamala, who becomes an important influence in his life and helps him overcome his
carnal desires. And it is Kamala who enables Siddhartha to fully experience this world and to integrate those experiences so as to enlarge and develop his personality. Viewed comparatively, Rao’s protagonist Ramaswamy’s spiritual awakening results not by breaking away from his family but from his coming close to his Indian tradition and assuming the role of the head of the family. His sense of spiritual alienation and anguish resulting from his relationship with Madeleine comes to fore with his coming close to Savithri. It leads to disintegration of his married life. As Kamala becomes instrumental in bringing a new experience of love in Siddhartha’s life thus leading to his integration of personality, Ramaswamy finds a soul mate in her that he has always wanted. Savithri becomes the solution of existential meanderings and he is able to determine his path towards salvation. While Siddhartha’s association with Kamala is strategized to learn the art of lovemaking, Rama’s passion for Savithri is purely spiritual as she makes him see his self in her. Siddhartha’s association with Kamala is purely physical one while in case of Rama and Savithri, it is purely metaphysical.

Whereas Siddhartha’s ultimate transcendence of his existential meaninglessness becomes possible through the spiritual guidance of Vasudeva, Ramaswamy keeps searching for a caring mentor throughout the narrative; it is only towards the end that the need for a Guru becomes prominent. Siddhartha overcomes his apprehensions by dissolution of ego in the cosmic unity of things and happenings whereas Ramaswamy’s path for self realization becomes possible only after his detachment from worldly ties and having found the Guru as per vedantic tradition of India.

Santiago and Jonathan embark on their journeys as they have full faith in their dreams. Both of them start their journey by having an existential dissatisfaction with their community that stresses conformation. Both the protagonists listen to their inner consciousness to follow their dream. All the similarities end here. For Santiago it becomes an
individualistic journey to find a treasure and break away from his family. On the other hand Jonathan’s journey begins to give meaning to the existence of gull community as whole but is banished from the society for not conforming to Flocks’ rules. He dedicates himself wholeheartedly to his pursuit and reaches higher level of consciousness whereas Santiago devotes himself completely to experience life as it comes to him. But he falters many times in his decision making and it is the old king and the alchemist who reaffirms his faith in his quest along the way. He learns to overcome his doubts and tribulations as he his experiences lead to his inner strength and his ability to find meanings in things around him. He is able to read the omens and understand the Language of the World, an ability that helps him in his preparation for ultimate destination.

Jonathan learns the lesson of compassion and love from the Elder Gull Chiang. He feels restless as the thought of some other gull striving to find meaning, crosses his mind again and again. He is caught in anguish as he has to choose between Heaven and Earth. He manages to overcome this confusion as he remembers the lesson of working on love, of his mentor Chiang and returns to Earth. The silent mouni of The Silent One attains the divine stature for the people and becomes the reason behind the salvation of those who are caught in the web of ignorance and existential chores. He becomes the means of salvation of various people in the narrative. Krishna Sastri, Marutorammai, the debauched king and Chandu Pant are liberated through the mouni’s silent presence, while Mouli Satri becomes lifelong devotee of him. Thus, upon transcending their existential predicament, the mystic protagonists attain enlightenment—a state wherein they stage a formal return to serve the community at large. This aspect shall be taken up for analysis in the ensuing chapter.