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2009-10-xx
ENG IV / A

Individuality

In all three works (Siddhartha, Gandhi, and the Bahgiva-Gita) the concept of Dharma is dealt with, and ultimately shown to be fallible. Dharma, which is a system in which a person has one life duty that they must fulfill, does not account for individuality or show any form of flexibility; people are born into their Dharma and they must embrace it. This can be seen as an allagory for stereotyping, racism, bigotry, and other forms of blanket categorisation. Any system which ignores individuality to the point where you are born into a life role is a poor system, which is demonstrated in the three works (whereas the Bahgiva-Gita does not explicitly state this, it is arguable that one can draw that conclusion).

In Siddhartha, the novel begins with the title character living out his Dharma as a Brahmin's son; he would eventually become a Hindu priest as his father did. However, he rejects this life and becomes an ascetic in a quest for enlightenment. The whole novel follows his path to enlightenment, which consists of completely unique actions on his part; if he had followed Dharma he would certainly not have reached any form of enlightenment, something he realised in the first chapter.

In Gandhi, the title character burns pass cards that Indians are required to have in South Africa; something that categorises Indians as "inferior". Indians there are treated as lower class citizens, limiting what they could do and how they could contribute to society. This didn't account for individuality at all, since it was assuming all Indians were "lower", a false generalisation.

In the Bahghiva-Gita, the character has doubts about following his Dharma, because it involved killing his friends and family. The god in the story, however, convinces him he should follow Dharma, listing the "benefits" of following your path, which are all built on the assumption that your path is indeed correct for you and you possess no special individuality or choice. In the end the character ends up killing the people he knew, demonstrating the folly of Dharma. (The story is meant to convey the opposite, but often religious texts seem to demonstrate the opposite message when read by more enlightened individuals.)