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# Siddharta 2020

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*A short story inspired in Herman Hesse's book 'Siddharta'*

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## - Part 1 -

### 1. Young Siddharta

In that time, India was characterized by being the most populated country in the world, reaching more than two billion of persons. Most of them were concentrated in huge metropolis, where a rising middle class had established and was always moving stressed around trying to reach higher position and poorer social classes concentrated in the unprotected and wild surroundings of the big metropolis. The rich and middle class areas had been closed by big walls that protected them from the external influences and prevented from social problems, wildness, delinquency, dirt, etc. Young Siddharta didn't know anything about, as he was born in a rich family. This fact, within Indian society, historically driven by different social classes systems, provided him a natural advantage, lots of resources and good wealth fare ever since he was born. Coming from a well positioned family of politicians which managed to provide him all the commodities he needed, he was living well accommodated in a rich area. His world was big houses with garden, swimming pool surrounded by big yards, where Siddharta could play freely together with all the other children of the community. All the area was well protected by an electronic security system able to detect and reject strangers. He had everything to grow up happily and healthy.

Among his world, driven by the economical prosperity of the area, everything was surrounded by electronics. All kind of devices from the most little nail till the biggest advertisement panels had any kind of intelligent system and was able to communicate electronically. Networking systems were available from everywhere and through every single object he could keep contact with his family, chat with his friends or check what was going on around his world. Especially, in-home intelligent systems had grown a lot in the latest years, so every single device in the house (from the coffee machine, the fridge, till the more complex cleaning or climate comfort systems) could be controlled remotely. And this was the first area in which Young Siddharta's curiosity towards electronics and communications systems arose quickly. He learnt quickly how to handle the house, full of intelligent electronic solutions. There was the common saying that anybody really knew how to control all the features it provided, so anybody was totally able to use the possible commodities. However, by playing with the automatic devices of the house young Siddharta came first in his earliest age in contact with electronics, internalized it and became quickly later on an expert. He developed a first common understanding on how to use them and little by little he started programming all the systems to adapt them to his needs. One day, when he was 8 years old his parents had to castigate young Siddharta, because he had programmed the security system to jump every time his father opened the fridge. Even if his parents started putting security codes he always managed to unblock them and take control over the systems.

Nevertheless, his family was very pleased, as Young Siddharta was showing to be very smart and able to interiorize quickly the new technologies. Little by little they started providing new challenges to fulfil young Siddharta's curious mind. Among other things they bought him one of most advanced computers of the moment, and Siddharta started playing with it and learning about. He got very interested in the recently developing virtual realities. An advanced form of Internet where the information flow was driven and depicted in electronically created virtual worlds. These were simulating real scenarios, where people could imagine and interact with the data and each other or even

feel what was going on the digital environment. The infinite possibilities of the system opened an opportunity to develop new playfields and entertainment options for the people. The virtual reality enabled the users to travel around the world without moving from home. People not watching films, but could become the best bollywood actors, they were not playing polo, but feeling every single movement of the horses and the sensations of the riders. These parallel digital worlds fascinated Young Siddharta, he spent hours and hours lost in the virtual stream, diving and playing completely absorbed.

## **2. The path of technologies**

Siddharta had spent most part of his youth playing with all the technologies that the accommodated situation of his family had provided him. But he also had some obligations regarding to the rich condition of his environment. His family was expecting from him to get a good education so that he could one day inherit their legacy and be able to maintain the family status. Indeed, they had realized Siddharta's intelligence and they knew for sure he was not going to have any problem to accomplish his duties. All over the years his interest in ITC Technologies had been increasing, so when the moment came when he had to choose what to study, all his knowledge and excellence in informatics, networks and virtual realities became relevant: He decided to study computer science.

In his studies he learnt how were working the systems behind the intelligent houses, computers and virtual realities, that he had been learning to use during all over his young years. He comprehended that intelligent systems in the houses were built in integrated wireless communications systems, controlled by miniaturized-central units which enabled full connectivity and an intelligent control of all the devices. He discovered how computers had been able to follow their miniaturization increasing their capacity and speed. Nano-scale chips had enabled the development of quantum devices, the new generation of the computers which provided an almost unlimited performance which was starting to be exploited by means of the development of the virtual reality. This still young technology was expanding fast and getting generalized among all the areas and all the people. Recapitulating, he learnt all the new innovations and tendencies in Information and Telecommunications Technologies.

As the level of the technologies was so high and all the fields needed a so specialized knowledge, few people were able to pass the courses. However, Siddharta's intelligence, effort and teamwork with his study colleges enabled him to have always excellent results. For that he had to spend a lot of hours studying and studying, in front of the computers or in the research labs trying to finish some practical experiments. This usually produced him big headaches, caused by too many hours concentrated and too much overstress.

## **3. Sickness and pain**

After several hard studying years, his headaches started to increase. They were happening more and more often, lasting for longer and being more painful. After some of the worst pain attacks he had to spend several weeks resting in order to get completely healthy again. As he had never been ill, he had never had the need to visit a doctor. But now that the anti-stress and anti-pain medicines were proving to be

completely useless, he needed to go to a hospital. In the end, as he was the whole time feeling headache, not being able to eat properly, he started to feel very weak. His body, which had grown strongly in the early years, now was starting to look thin and colourless. He was diagnosed cerebral tumor which had also derived leucemia and generalized tumors all in this body. However, hospitals had become oversaturated and he would have to wait several months before being treated. One of his best friends, Narain, went to visit Siddharta and found him in an especially bad condition, completely white, burning and shaking. Completely worried Narain decided to help his friend.

In their university years, due to their excellence, both Narain and Siddharta had got some contact with the *Nexus*, the information commuting centre of the city. It was the place where all inbound and outbound information flow was analysed and filtered. Everybody believed that people working there were the wisest in the city (the country or the world). So they would be able to recommend Siddharta to be accepted in a medical centre. Narain accompanied Siddharta to the *Nexus*. It was a tall big building located in one of the extremes of the civilized area. Once there they got extremely surprised: They had been expecting some high-tech advanced virtual reality labs, with the most advanced techniques in data analysis and monitoring, but instead, they were in an almost empty building. It was only filled by a huge tube, where probably millions of optical fibre connections were converging. At certain points that tube was connected to some humble equipment: some old-fashioned monochrome computer monitors showing successions of digits (numbers and letters). Several people were looking at those screens in a distracted way, while laying down in comfortable chairs, having some drinks and chatting in a relaxed mood. One of the wise men approached Siddharta and after asking him a couple of questions he recommended him a medical centre out of the city boundaries.

In Siddharta's delirium, he and his friend crossed the walls that were separating the civilized world from the waste poor areas of the metropolis and after several hours travelling in endless deserted zones, they finally arrived at the medical centre. The doctors explained to them the reasons of Siddharta's disease: "Throughout all his life since his childhood Siddharta had been under strong influence of electromagnetic fields from everywhere. All the telecommunications systems, wireless solutions were somehow exposing the people to a supposedly harmless radiation. Virtual Reality needs for broadband communications had driven a considerable increase of electromagnetic emissions. However, some people seemed to be more sensitive towards those radiations. Even more, the number of similar diseases had increased dramatically all over the years so that this kind of illness had become very common in the most advanced societies. That was one of the reasons why hospitals in the city were so saturated. Moreover, the place was so far away from any city because it had to be completely isolated from electromagnetic influences and was supposed to be one of the best medical specialized centres. There he was treated with the most advanced treatments, using biomedical treatments and nano-scale medical devices, after one year he had managed to overcome his illness.

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## - Part II -

### 4. The life behind technology

During the time in the Medical Centre something had changed inside Siddharta. More than the fact that his illness could have been produced because the extreme use of technologies, he was shocked about everything he had seen on the way to the centre. As before he had never crossed the boundaries of his rich accommodated area, and the security system had protected him from any influence from the exterior, he had never come in contact with the poorer layers of the society. Thus, during the last year he had realized how many things are still in the world to be discovered. He wanted to investigate all those other people that were living outside the walls, in the waste poor areas, in the dessert, etc. How could they manage to live without the commodities he had had all his life? He felt somehow he didn't need the technologies anymore. If they were able to live without, he also should be able.

In the moment the doctors confirmed that he was completely healthy and gave him permission to leave the hospital, Siddharta decided not to come back to his place anymore, to leave everything behind and to start a new life, out of technologies. He had realized, if he really wanted to discover the other side of the world, he had to experience the life of the poorest segments of the society by himself. So he installed himself in one of the forgotten suburbs of the metropolis, somewhere lost, lots of miles far away from his home. Helped by some locals, he built a hut made of wood and waste he managed to find in the area. He hadn't even got clean water (he had to wash himself in a dirty river in the area). Some neighbours sold him some seeds and animals with the last cash he still had. This way he could have some survival food, vegetables coming from agriculture, milk, meat, eggs, etc coming from the animals. Moreover, once a week, a representative from an NGO visited the community. They were providing the people some extra basic food, medicaments and basic education lessons for the children.

People living in the suburb were mainly families who had been grown their whole life there without having got any integration opportunity. This way, for them the technologies instead of getting out of their situation, they had increased their isolation. Moreover, an immigrants' wave had come from the countryside or other countries. They had to leave their homes due to the increase of the global warmth that had caused a progressive harvest of their land. It was a multi-cultural multi-religious poor environment that caused a set of social problems between different ethnic groups. Crimes and honour issues between gangs and little thefts became Siddharta's everyday life. However, overcoming the illness had provided him a very strong mind, prepared to control the suffering. After all, the only thing that mattered in that world was the survival, and he was able to get along peacefully. The fact was that anybody had really any material belongings (or almost anything) created also stronger bounds between the people that were helping each other. And everyday something new was going on, so he did not have the need or even time anymore to care about technologies.

### 5. The fight against technology

Some poor people had already realized how technological advances had polarized the society and increased the gap between rich and poor people. The ones without economical resources had been captured in a circle which was impossible to break:

Technology was driving all the aspects of advanced modern society leaving everybody else behind. It had reached a complexity which for disadvantaged poor people was impossible to understand. They didn't have any basis to learn and catch up, and governments had been forced to reduce the social investments in order to keep their privileged position in the technological race.

Due to this unfair situation more and more anti-technology groups were arising. They grew with the belief that technological advances had to be stopped. They usually came from upper class people that had understood the ecological problems of the world and reacted. The most radical ones wanted to eradicate the technologies. These ones were driven more from strong integrist religious beliefs. All these groups were trying to storm in the security systems of the rich areas and create chaos and instability. From time to time Siddharta was helping this groups, profiting his knowledge in technologies he had learnt in his early years. But he never got much involved in them. He had realized the paradox that even if they were fighting to eradicate technologies, they were also misusing them. They were using the most advanced automatic precision weapons, were hacking experts or moving around with luxurious gasoline-engine cars. So, did they really want to save the world, or just power?

## **6. A new hope**

On that time a rumour started invading every day's life. More and more there were people saying that a new leader had been chosen in United Nations that was strongly committed to ecological and social problems. He was going to limit the power of transnational corporations, and promote the investment in the poorer layers of the society. Everybody seemed to be pleased as their unfair situation was going to change. Another rumour said that the UN leader was going to visit the poor areas of city. Driven by curiosity Siddharta decided to investigate where and when, and attended to the meetings and speeches and try to get in close contact with him. He wanted to meet the UN leader, to explain him his experiences from the poor world, to discuss political measures to be undertaken, etc. However, during all the visit, the UN leader had been surrounded by extremely high security measures, so he was completely unreachable. Moreover, Siddharta got very disappointed because the speeches showed that the promising political actions maybe were maybe more part of the rhetoric, too constrained to be really effective.

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## - Part III -

### 7. Back in the city

Siddharta had realized that he could do some action to contribute in solving the ecological and social problems. So he decided to come back to the city and try to make people arise their awareness of the real problems of the world. He got nostalgic when he was crossing the big building of the *Nexus*. He started thinking in all that he was leaving behind and he knew a new life was waiting for him in the metropolis. Everything was the same as when he left. The wise people were monitoring distractfully the numbers and letters. Inside the city walls life had gone on as usual. The citizen had gone on with their stressed lives.

Siddharta started using the Virtual Reality as a platform for diffusing his visions of the other side of the world. He created a whole virtual environment simulating the living conditions he had experienced. He started participating in the discussion boards of new technologies and joined several regulation and standarization boards and forums, trying to make the people aware of the social and ecological implications of those new technologies. His contribution also went on by giving technological consultancy and support to several NGO's.

### 8. A world of children-men

However, normal people were not prepared to face changes in their life style as Siddharta was trying to promote. They were like children-men, who kept on living with their minor problems. People were more concerned in saving money to get a better life, to overcome their stressful challenges of their every day's hard working life. They wanted to enjoy their free time, make sports, keep themselves healthy and raise a family. They were not able to realize that if they wanted to keep a healthy world for their children lots of things had to be changed.

The fact was that they were not interested in Siddharta's cruel stories of injustice. He started realizing that he needed money to undertake his ambitions as his attempts to make the children-men change their perspectives were failing over and over again. He benefited from the technological advances in virtual reality, which were giving a lot of business opportunities. Virtual reality was a melting pot for little start-up enterprises working on V-business and V-commerce. Siddharta little by little turned his actions into more children-men's friendly applications. His virtual environment of the poor areas developed in a start-up providing virtual travelling all over the world. His social discussion boards turned into a consultancy service, where Siddharta was giving smart advises for overcoming the stress and reinforcing people's self-confidence. Little by little as the years were passing and Siddharta was growing older he started forgetting his young ambitions, getting deeper into the children-men's world. Over the time, driven by his entrepreneurial spirit had managed to create several start-up's. Some had succeeded, some others had been sold out and others had failed. Some time when he had managed to collect big amount of funds, he decided to reinvest it as a venture capitalist, profiting his experience to help others to grow their businesses. Sometimes he was losing this reinvested money, other times successfully getting high amount of returns.

## 9. The Stream of Knowledge

The years flew over very fast and Siddharta was starting to get old in the children-men's world. Nothing had really changed all over the years and he was feeling somehow exhausted and without energies. One day one of his business visits happened to be randomly very close to the *Nexus* building. A glance of his old rebellious years crossed suddenly his mind. All the knowledge he had learnt in his youth while studying, the years living between the poor, his early intention to contribute to a better and fair world. Driven by curiosity he decided to enter that building that had served as inflection point of his life several times.

Inside everything remained the same as he remembered from his other two visits in the *Nexus*. Several wise men were walking around relaxed, chatting peacefully or laying down in the comfortable chairs. Siddharta saw one empty chair and decided to sit down and watch carefully at the monitor showing the digits and codes. He stayed there quiet for long time, but anybody bothered about. There he had started to understand the information flow. Millions of code lines representing all the real-time generated knowledge were appearing in the monitors. His eyes were able to see successions of the events that were shaping the world. Peoples' lives were mixing, binding, getting separated. The information, as the water stream in a river, was having weird movements, paradoxes, surprises, following unexpected whimsical directions. World appeared as cruel but marvellous at the same time. It was an extraordinary spectacle. Sometimes some strange shapes were commented with other wise people. He staid there completely absorbed firstly for days which became years. The *Nexus* had become a peaceful retirement for Siddharta.

From time to time people were coming to the *Nexus* to looking for advice, the same as Siddharta had done when he was ill. Siddharta recognized one of the visitors, Narain, who was very surprised to encounter his old friend there. Both friends spent a whole day chatting and explaining their lives. After Narain left Siddharta in the medical centre, Narain had lived a fulfilling life, working hard to achieve his goals. He had raised a family and had been living happily with them. But now in his retirement Narain was also feeling exhausted. Narain listened impressed the stories of his old friend and realized how wise he had become. This gave Narain new energies to come back to his world and a reason to end his days with his family.

If Siddharta had grown into a truly wise person, he wasn't really able recognize it. In fact, he was able to identify and filter some patterns in the information stream but he knew it was impossible to envisage the knowledge as a whole. Taking his own life as an example, he had learnt, that every person was able to influence the world the same way they can modify the stream of a river when putting the hand inside of the water: It will change the direction for an instant, but in a while the inertia will make the water continue its way. All over the years thousands of these little influences driven by the inertia of the stream will completely reshape the form and determine the destiny of this river.