



Dissociative Identity Disorder as an Ambivalence: A Critical Analysis of Gogol's Character in *The Namesake*

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The migrators with pre-immigration selfhood find it a dilemma to react to situations and people in a desired way; but more sadly, their children experience almost the same because of geneticism. This research paper explores, how does Gogol experience ambivalence? Gogol, who is the immigrant of second generation and the hero of *The Namesake*, Jhumpa Lahiri's (2001) debut novel with identified culture genes, faces identity matrices in the foreign land. There are different theories about ambivalence including Homi Bhabha (1995), Gayatri Spivak (2010), and Edward Said (quoted in Sheikh Ahmed, 2020) but Bhabha's (1995) ambivalence theory is applied to the text of the novel using Ruth Wodak's (2001) model of Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) as a method of analysis. Specific words/sentences of the novel are analyzed in the wake of DHA's strategies, which include argumentation, prediction, mitigation, perspectivization, and intensification. In addition, these strategies are subdivided into several tools in the form of a table which include grammatical construction and metaphorical devices. The study found a split between American and Indian cultures which produces ambivalence in Gogol for both of them. It concluded that Gogol is severely affected by the psychological effects of ambivalence due to which he faces identity loss (Asma Sharif, 2021).



Keywords: *Ambivalence; Discourse Historic Approach; Immigrant; Second Generation; Split Identity*

Introduction

Migration, sometimes if not often, results in the Hobson's choice only where opting for one damages the other end with an experience of ambivalence. It is a concept that neither imprisons nor detaches persons from their social and symbolic universe (Fred Davis, 1991). Behaving towards others becomes a mental argumentation relating to how does one suffer? This search brings in the identity crisis the immigrant surfs and ambivalence being one of those crises, is also the one that Gogol readily accepts. Gogol experiences ambivalent feelings almost the whole story; at first, seeking American identity, American name, its culture and at the end falls to be Bengali and an Indian. His parents were also in pursuit of the Bengali version of his personality. They gave him the name of a famous Russian writer but he wants to change it irrespective of the fact that the first name seems to play a significant role in marking social status, rank, and relationships (Watzlawik et al. 2012). As he often visits his parents' birth country India, he is considered American by the locale. Thus he develops the acculturation of both America and India. In India, he seems to be the manifestation of American culture, while in America, he is seen as the other: the Asian, Indian. Fatahi Nabi (2014) concluded that the alteration of immigrants' social and professional status has a significant impact on their psychological well-being. Change in the social status means change in the mental well-being, which is Gogol's concern to the core (Sharif, 2021).

A Word about *The Namesake*

The novel explores and contradicts the life and culture of its protagonist Gogol in three different cities i.e., New York, Calcutta and Boston. It predicts the psychological miseries of the second generation immigrant. The story of the novel can be called 'the triangle of emotions' of Gogol, whose feelings are set in three cities. It is an account of the two desperate cultures, American vs. Indian.

Rationale of the Research

Gogol suffers from the identity crises throughout his life. These crises include physical as well as psychological. They can be called double consciousness and split personality etc. but the main focus of the paper rests on the ambivalence of Gogol, who develops these feelings during the course of his life in America and India. His parents want the Indian version of his personality but he wants the American one. Eventually, he produces ambivalence and at the end adopts the Indian version. The purpose behind this research was to bring a general awareness as public message across cultures in a global village to make the people conscious of the adaptation in multicultural communities.



Significance of the Research

Since its publication, the novel has been extensively and profoundly worked out. The novel is interpreted with different angles and objectives and therefore, many themes and motifs of social issues are attributed to it. Delineation is made with multidimensional problems, but the problem of ambivalence of the protagonist of the novel is rare and hence needed to be explored. It adds to the world literary criticism in general and to the ambivalence literature in particular.

Delimitation of the Research

The research paper is delimited to the ambivalence of only one of the main characters of the novel i.e., Gogol, using specific strategies and tools of DHA. The selected paragraphs are analyzed to draw a conclusion that serves the purpose of the ambivalence of Gogol. Being hermeneutic in its character, the analysis may become multimodal at times in order to facilitate the interpretation with the inclusion of every possible category i.e., syntactical, grammatical, semantical, and rhetorical etc.

Statement of the Research Problem

The main focus of this research is on the ambivalence of Gogol that is attributed to his psychological status. Though, there are several aspects of his mental aspects which can be analyzed and interpreted but the ambivalence is an important one among many. He loses his original identity, and hence, is torn between the two halves of his single personality which compel him to long for both of them.

Research Objective

The objective of the research is:

To analyze the ambivalence Gogol faces in *The Namesake*.

Research Question

How does Gogol experience ambivalence during the course of the novel *The Namesake*?

Literature Review

Ambivalence as a psychological phenomenon is globally debated and interpreted. It affects the life in general and the individual in particular. Its meanings and interpretation varies to different perspectives and contexts. Michael Church and Charles Brooks (2009) found:

There is substantial evidence that overtly suicidal patients typically experience ambivalence about ending their lives. People are often afraid of change, and their fear makes them resist trying to produce change in their lives” therefore, “the resistance causes ambivalence, because one part of them wants positive change while another part senses the dangers and challenges the challenge. (p. 136)



It means that ambivalence is fatal psychological ailment that an individual can suffer from who fears any change in their life.

Harry Frankfurt (1999), in addition, finds that ambivalence is a conflict of special kind which is based on the action and experience of the individual himself. It can be argued that one is not only disturbed by the physical world around him but that he is internally segregated. This is an explorative account of the ambivalence which the researcher surfaced as it “constituted by conflicting volitional movements or tendencies” (p. 99).

Another researcher, Jennifer Swindles (2010) contradicts the above mentioned arguments of Frankfurt, and contends that his account is somewhat ambiguous and argued that “at times, Frankfurt writes as if ambivalence occurs at the level of identification, and at other times he writes as if it occurs at the level of identification plus willing” (p. 26).

Ambivalence, Steve Harrist (2006) defines is “feeling more than one emotion at times is thought to be a central aspect of human experience and to play an important role in a range of psychological processes” (p. 1).

Moreover, Bhabha (1995) opines that ambivalence disrupts the chemistry of both the colonizers and colonized. Robert Young (1995), talking about the Bhabha’s ambivalence, says that it is “a way of turning the tables on imperial discourse. The periphery which is regarded as ‘the borderline, the marginal, the unclassifiable, the doubtful’ by the center, responds by constituting the center as an equivocal, indianite, indeterminate ambivalence” (p. 161).

However, Philip Koch (1987) further classified emotions on the basis of ambivalence and concluded that it is “sometimes dismayingly obscure, turbulent, multi-layered, partially hidden, and unnamable” (p. 15).

In her study, Greenspan (cited in Kristján Kristjánsson, 2010) divides ambivalence as rational or irrational based on the exploration of researchers which she believed as philosophical. She explored that some of the philosophers believe that emotions are not rational while some of them on the contrary, say that they are irrational.

Peter Wade (2012) found the combination of identity and ambivalence. He is of the view that “race-kinship congruity has been a variable construct, historically and geographically; it has offered different possibilities for thinking about human relatedness and racial identity” (p. 79).

The aforementioned critics made analysis in the light of their experiences and research and analyzed ambivalence as a psychological phenomenon that has different kinds of manifestations and faces in different contexts. The present study explores and analyses these faces of



ambivalence in the character of Gogol, in the novel. He experiences ambivalence during his life in America and India. Living in two different cultures as well as speaking two different languages, Gogol faces ambivalence. Though, at first he hates being Indian, but with passage of time when he realized that he is the other in the alien land, his eagers to be Indian.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology of the Study

In the light of Wodak's (2001) model i.e., Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), the ambivalence of Gogol is analyzed. Using the theory of Bhabha's (1995) ambivalence, the specific paragraphs of the novel are chosen. The specific words, sentences and phrases are taken in the form of a table using several strategies (tools) of the model: argumentation, prediction, mitigation, perspectivization, and intensification for the purpose of their interpretation. The target paragraphs, serving the research objectives, are numbered, and a few words of the first and the last line of each paragraph are written for the purpose of citation. Interpretation in the form of discussion, is done under each table to reach to specific conclusion keeping in view the objectives (Sharif, 2021).

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Emotional Conflict/Name Conflict

1. *"But Gogol does not...will ever be anyone but Gogol"*. (Lahiri, 2001: 63)

Reference

This is the first emotional conflict (ambivalence) that Gogol produces when his parents named him in a hospital at the time of his birth and who, later wanted to give him another name to be used in school. But Gogol is confused to have another name. He was mocked at in school because of his strange kind of name.

Categorization

Text	Tools
Why do I have to have a new name?	Question
if, but	Conjunctions
Do	Emphasis
Nikhil, school, name,	Nouns

Discussion

Gogol began schooling. Though, he is thoroughly being practiced to write his name, he still does not like it. At the same time, he becomes angry for his name to be changed as his parents want it. A questioning technique/device is used here as *"why do I have to have a new name?"* Questioning is a device that shows the inquisitive technique of Gogol. A story must have an



enigma which keeps the reader read to the full. Gogol's parents were also ambivalent about the nature of their child's name. Packed in grammar words like conjunctions used in this paragraph as *if, do* etc. to articulate the ambivalence. Emphatic 'do' is interpreted as to force Gogol to have another name. Several nouns are 'Nikhil, school, name' etc. are used to show the name crisis and the schooling of Gogol. A beautiful imagery is used here to describe the condition of Gogol in the words, "tears springing down his eyes". Thus the overall gist of the enigmatic question and the imagery of tears flowing down his face, and grammatical construction have been used which accounts for Gogol's ambivalence of emotions, also called internal conflict (Sharif, 2021).

Unemotional Apathy to Name

2. "As for his last nameto buy the missing letters again". (Lahiri, 2001: 74)

Reference

As a young boy of ten years, Gogol visited Calcutta three times. He also visited his relatives. He is being accustomed to the culture of India and its people. He observes keenly his parental house and continues schooling. The crisis of his name still continues.

Categorization

Text	Tools
Last name GANGULI	Noun
To rip the pages as souvenir	Speech act, imagery
GANG , GREEN	Connotation
Who, that	Relative pronouns
Six pages full of Gangulis, telephone directory	Mitigation

Discussion

By the age of ten, Gogol visits Calcutta. He develops to understand the culture of India. Visiting different markets and his relatives, his father seems to convince him that the Ganguli is a legacy. He wants to instill in his mind the importance of his name. When Gogol knows that his name is actually a short form of Gangupadya, which is shortened in India as 'GANG', he is surprised. Speech act construction is used here as 'to rip the pages'. Gogol is laughed at by his cousins. The words 'gang and green' used here as connotations that refer to his name crisis. Moreover, relative pronouns are used to refer to his parents' negligence of and lessening the magnitude of the issue of his name. The paragraph is totally devoted to the acculturation of both the Indian and American cultures. It can be interpreted as a growing ambivalence of Gogol towards both the cultures. Ambivalence, as Koch (1987) found, is sometimes unnamable and hence virtual, which Gogol is passing through (Sharif, 2021).



Identity/Ambivalence

3. “*But now he is Nikhil....three times before he answers*”. (Lahiri, 2001: 102)

Reference

Gogol changed his name as Nikhil via the court decision. He is happy with his new name. He wrote his name over his papers. He also lost his virginity in a party. Both the losses are surprising. Though happy; yet, he feels awkward for his name and virginity. He began to sip liquor as well.

Categorization

Text	Tools
Nikhil it is easier to ignore his parents	Implied meanings
Loses his virginity	Topoi
Fake ID allows him to be served liquor	Stative verb, feeling
Has cast himself in a play, acting the part of twins	Reflexive pronoun
To hear Nikhil three times before he answers	Sense of hearing, imagery
Who, or, like	Relative pronoun, coordinating conjunction, simile

Discussion

This is rather a longer paragraph which shows Gogol’s inner self. He is happy after changing his name into Nikhil. He forgets his parents and their concerns for his name. He also lost his virginity and started a fake ID to get liquor. The longer paragraph is filled with details. Underlying one of the tools i.e., topoi, which refers to the analytical level of the given sentence as ‘*loses his virginity*’; actually he lost his old self, started new things which are abominable for his parents. It manifests Bhabha’s (1995) theory of ambivalence as a marginalized and inordinate ambivalence. Reflexive pronouns and imageries have been used to contradict the old and new self of Gogol/Nikhil. Moreover, relative pronouns are used here in this paragraph to emphasize the ambivalent feeling of the hero/Gogol (Sharif, 2021).

Indian Novels in English

4. “*One day he attends a panel discussion...India as desh*”. (Lahiri, 2003: 130)

Reference

Gogol is attending a discussion of Indian novel which was written in English. He is a bit confused to hear the marginality and ABCDs. He ignores the words ‘*deshi*’ or ‘*desh*’ for India. He considers it as a country.



Categorization

Text	Tools
Deshi, desh	Transliteration
ABCDs,	Abbreviation
As India, a country	Point of view of writer
Where are you from?	Questioning
To attend, to greet	To infinitives

Discussion

The five strategies of DHA are almost employed in this paragraph for example: transliteration tool, which is writing of Indian words in English alphabet like '*deshi, desh*'. Gogol was asked to attend the discussion about the Indian novel written in English. Though, happy to attend; yet, he was possessed by the idea of marginalized, and the abbreviation as ABCDs. ABCDs stands for American-Born Confused Deshi (Indian). He is sensitized to be Indian and hence a marginalized one. The tools of questioning and infinitives have also been used in the paragraph. The idea of being marginalized, and American-born confused deshi, refers to Bhabha's (1995) theory of marginalization (Sharif, 2021).

Partly Indian, Partly American

5. "*Part of him knows this is a privilege...the French never do that*". (Lahiri, 2003: 180)

Reference

Gogol is now with Moushumi, his wife. He is torn between the two selves; the American and the Indian. He has his Indian self in his better half. He is an architect now and works hard.

Categorization

Text	Tools
Why did not you tell me that in the first place?	Questioning, alliteration
Neither, nor	Correlatives
Sightseeing	Imagery
She instruct him to walk	Referential
The French never do that	Proper noun



Discussion

This paragraph is taken from the last few paragraphs where almost everything is settled in his life. He is a hard worker now who works for survival. The question used here is an alliterative one revealing the inner self of Gogol. Moushumi instructions work as his driving force which leads him to be ambivalent. The reference to French has been used as the difference between the two cultures. In addition, correlative conjunctions are used here that he is neither American nor Indian, which can further be interpreted in the form of his ambivalence (Sharif, 2021).

Reading a Book

6. “Gogol gets up, shuts the door...for now he starts to read”. (Lahiri, 2003: 190)

Reference

This is the last paragraph of the book, which sets the conclusion of the life story of Gogol. He starts reading the book which his father used to read. The author of the book was Nikolai Gogol, his father’s favorite writer, after which Gogol was also named.

Categorization

Text	Tools
He opens the book	Resolution
If he will be married again. If he will ever had a child	Dependent clause
The overcoat	Stream of consciousness
He starts to read	Universalism

Discussion

Gogol starts reading the book which his father used to read. The sentence ‘*he opens the book, and starts reading*’ actually concludes his life lesson. He comes to know the satisfaction of his father naming him at the start of the novel which he offended. Later on, he changes his name. Now, he believes in family and longs for his own children and wife. In addition, dependent clause and stream of consciousness technique are used to illustrate his ambivalent feelings for Indian culture of family reunion and social gathering (Sharif, 2021).

Conclusion

Ambivalence has multifaceted manifestations. Some of the researches call it ‘internal conflict’, while others on the other hand, call it as identity crisis. Philosophically speaking, ambivalence is actually a psychological phenomenon having some virtual and unnamed aspects of a man’s personality. In addition, ambivalence is of some grave magnitude when it comes to the personality of a second generation immigrant like Gogol. Gogol, the hero of the novel suffers



from almost all of the aspects of ambivalence. He is torn between the American and the Indian cultures because he saw both of them. Though, nurtured and upbraided in America; yet, he visits India time and again because his parents were Indians. During the course of his life in the triangular cities i.e., two of America, New York, and Boston, and one Indian that is Calcutta, he produces what can be called 'cultural emotions' for all of them. He is actually an 'acculturation version' of both the American and the Indian cultures. At one time, he is American but at some other, he is Indian. He manifests all the aforementioned aspects of ambivalence. At first, he is not happy with his original name and changed it to Nikhil, but in the end, he knows the fact that he is the 'other', and 'marginalized' for the Americans. He becomes one of the Indian and realizes that his father was true to give him the name of Gogol. He leaves off the groins to be American and feels comfort to be an Indian. The second generation immigrants like Gogol can be seen torn between the two cultures i.e., their parents' and his own. He is having Dissociative Identity Disorder or split personality as he is socially disintegrated. With ambivalence, he produces the emotions of split personality and double consciousness which further intensifies his behavior.



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