

Diasporic Anxiety and Ambivalence in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*

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Abstract

This paper explores diasporic tensions like identity crisis, anxiety, and ambivalence in Jhumpa Lahiri's The Namesake. It argues that Gogol, a representative of the Indian-born American, suffers a more acute identity crisis, anxiety, and ambivalence than his parents do. Ashoke and Ashima, the first-generation emigrants, resist hybridized identity and keep a conscious connection with the root by maintaining Indian culture, religion, and ideologies in their host land America. On the other hand, Gogol faces severe crises with his name right after his birth and desperately tries to assimilate into the mainstream American culture and tradition, but finally realizes, with deeper shock, that he belongs nowhere. His attraction to the host country and its culture turns out to be repulsive and produces ambivalence in him. Gogol succeeds in becoming an American 'almost total' but 'not quite'. This paper draws on the relevant post-colonial concepts like hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence advocated by Homi K. Bhabha, and validates the argument that Gogol is fated to become a diasporic nomad.

Key Words: Diaspora; Identity Crisis; Ambivalence; Hybridity; Gogol; Acculturation; Jhumpa Lahiri.

Sometimes we feel we straddle two cultures; at other times, that we fall between two stools.

Salman Rushdie (1992, p.15)

1. Introduction

The above quotation by Salman Rushdie explicitly reveals the tension, identity crisis, and ambivalence in the life of diasporic migrants living in the host country America. As it hinges on the fact that having lived for a long period of time in the new land, the first generation of migrated people unwillingly assimilate into the social and cultural values of the new land, and accept them

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as their new diasporic hybrid identity. Their conscious understanding of the impossibility of coming back to their former land generates anxiety and tension in them. On the other hand, the second generation of youths born, brought up, and educated in the second land face more acute problems as they have a dual identity. As they are born and brought up in the new land, they are more affiliated with it, but their parents want them to carry their former cultural, religious, and social ideologies. As a result, they fall victim to traumatic anxiety, identity crisis, alienation, and ambivalence.

The major characters in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* manifest the mentioned crises. Ashoke migrates from Kolkata to America along with his newlywed wife Ashima in pursuit of higher education. Their children Gogol and Sonia are born and brought up in America. They both belong to second-generation Indian Americans. For Ashoke, acculturation to the new culture becomes relatively easier, while Ashima finds it difficult to acculturate and construct a second identity, though she unwillingly tries to adjust and finally comes to terms with herself that she would stay both in Kolkata and America simultaneously. But it is the protagonist Gogol who suffers most since his birth. As his father names him after famous Russian novelist Nicolai Gogol, he starts disliking the name right from the beginning of schooling. He finds the name to be neither Bengali nor American. He wants to get rid of this weird name and puts subsequent efforts to become an American by embracing the mainstream culture of America- its lifestyle, food, clothing, language, and manner. He makes friends with white Americans Ruth and Maxine and has sex with them, and later falls in love with Maxine, though it eventually breaks up. He then marries another Bengali lady Moushumi, who is born in Britain and brought up in America, yet their marriage also breaks up after a certain time. Gogol is alienated and hyphenated and suffers from a severe identity crisis with a huge deal of anxiety and ambivalence. This paper, based on the arguments made by Homi K. Bhabha (2006), Robin Cohen (1997), and John McLeod (2007), attempts to critically explore the anxiety and ambivalence of the Indian Americans as evidenced in the major characters of Jhumpa Lahiri's novel *The Namesake* and argues that the second generation of Indian American youth Gogol suffers from a more acute sense of identity crisis and ambivalence as he fails to locate himself anywhere- neither in America nor in India.

1.1 Diaspora

Since the colonial and post-colonial era, people from the colonized parts of Asia

and Africa migrated to imperial Europe and America in pursuit of economic, political-cultural, and personal reasons. They settled there in those new lands. Cohen (1997) discusses its origin saying, "The word 'Diaspora' is derived from the Greek verb *speiro* (to sow) and the preposition *dia* (over). When applied to humans, the ancient Greeks thought of diaspora as migration and colonization" (p. ix). He, in his next edition of the book, further explores the basic reasons for the diasporic situations in different historical realities, "Babylon for the Jews, slavery for the Africans, massacres and forced displacement for the Armenians, famine for the Irish, the formation of the state of Israel for the Palestinians" (Cohen, 2008, p. 4). Apart from these types of diasporas, there are other types of diasporas such as voluntary migration to different countries for working and wage-earning, which has become a very regular phenomenon in the modern times of the open market system. Shukla (2001) observes, "The subject of diaspora immediately elicits basic questions of origins and locations. Where do people come from? Where do they pause, rest, live? What routes have they traveled?" (p. 551). The above questions give rise to the idea of travel from one country to another country and the social, geographical, and political situations or contexts behind the travels. Furthermore, the issues involve the socio-cultural, economic, religious, and other ideologies of the migrants and their acculturation into the above-mentioned traits and values of the host land or the failure to do that, along with the repercussions of all diasporic anxieties and tensions which the diasporic people undergo subsequently. McLeod (2007) discusses the diasporic tensions distinctly, "But diaspora communities are not free from problems. Too often diaspora people have been ghettoised and excluded from feeling they belong to the 'new country', and suffered their cultural practices to be mocked and discriminated against" (p. 208).

2. Literature Review

Theorists and researchers have explored diasporic issues and have come up with diverse observations. The post-colonial concept of ambivalence refers to uncertainty or fluctuation in the human mind, especially when one becomes unable to make a choice and tries to do two opposite or conflicting things at a time. Quoting Young (1995) Ashcroft et al. (2004) observe, "... psychoanalysis describes a continual fluctuation between wanting one thing and wanting its opposite. It also refers to a simultaneous attraction toward and repulsion from an object, person, or action" (p. 12). The concept adapted by Homi K. Bhabha (2006) into the colonial discourse theory characterizes the binary relationship

between the colonizer and the colonized describing a complex mix of attraction and repulsion. This relationship is always ambivalent for the colonized subject and does not always and completely oppose the colonizer. Rather some colonized subjects are 'complicit', thus, ambivalence suggests that complicity and resistance exist in a fluctuating relationship in a colonial subject. The colonial relationship is always ambivalent, and it brings about its destruction. (Ashcroft et al., 2004, pp. 12-13). McLeod (2007) studies Homi K. Bhabha's concept of mimicry and comments:

Bhabha builds on these ideas and explores how the ambivalence of the colonised subject becomes a direct threat to the authority of the colonisers through the effects of 'mimicry'. Bhabha describes mimicry as 'one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge. (p. 55)

Ambivalence and mimicry go hand in hand, and mimicry exposes the ambivalent nature of the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. The colonizer encourages the colonized to mimic/imitate the colonizer by adopting their culture, values, and lifestyle. The mimic or the colonized people are empowered through mimicry and ready to 'menace' the colonizer and thus expose the ambivalent nature of their relationship. Thus, ambivalence disrupts the authority of the colonial discourse by generating the seeds of destruction. (Ashcroft et al., 2004, pp. 12-13).

The diasporic people while living in the second land must unwillingly accept the socio-cultural, religious, and economic values of the land, and as such acculturate into those values. This very idea of unwilling acculturation or acceptance brings about a sense of hybridity in them. The tension and anxiety arising out of having a home and no home or imagining a home beyond the home is the outcome of the diasporic people's having no home -- they embrace a hybrid in-between identity, yet their sense of loss is never to be mitigated. Mitchell (1997) observes, "With both diaspora and hybridity it is the spaces in the margins, the unfixed spaces in-between states and subject positions that are vaunted as the location of resistance and intervention in hegemonic narratives of race, culture, and nation" (p. 260).

The diasporic emigrants suffer from an acute sense of loss and alienation, and their attempt to recreate the homeland is never realized as it only exists in their imagination—their ambivalence further intensifies. The divide between the home and beyond along with the back and forth, going and coming back, the

condition of the diasporic people with hybridity has explicitly been discussed by Bhabha (2006) as he asserts:

The 'beyond' is neither a new horizon nor a leaving behind of the past ... Beginnings and endings may be the sustaining myths of the middle years; ... we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion. (pp. 1-2)

Tensions regarding the complex identity of diasporic people get more intense and complicated.

Song (2007) observes the issue of difficult situations that the major characters of Lahiri's novel are set in. Song argues:

Rather, *The Namesake* dramatizes the difficulty of allowing its characters to be fully penetrated by a moment of multiple and converging crises that offer no magical routes toward resolution, a moment that may, in fact, present itself as not interested in resolution of any kind. (p. 347)

Khorakiwala (2021) aptly examines the issue of the reflexive identity of first-generation migrants and exposes the predicament brought about by their subsequent failure to acculturate. He posits:

A constant combination of distance and intimacy binds the parents in their native homeland. They have no home there, yet they insist on calling Kolkata their home. Each character is juggling their past, present, and future to come to terms with their way of 'being' and who they are "becoming". (p. 265)

Monaco (2018) examines the issue of mimicry and assimilation by second-generation migrant youths, and he claims, "Lahiri's second-generation migrants epitomize the psychic splitting generated by mimicry and assimilation to whiteness" (p. 170). Henceforth, it is realized that the major characters of Lahiri's novel are doomed to diasporic tensions, anxieties, and ambivalence.

Although the above studies have dealt with diverse issues such as dislocation, identity crisis, tensions, conflicts between the two generations, their attempts to assimilate to the new culture, and the subsequent failures and sufferings, the issues of anxiety and ambivalence in diasporic reality and their impact upon the

major characters of Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* remain less addressed and demand much attention and investigation. This paper, thus, attempts to mitigate the gap by contributing to the existing body of diasporic knowledge of identity crisis, anxiety, and inner ambivalence in the major characters of Lahiri's *The Namesake*.

3. Discussion

3.1 Ashima's Longing, Anguish, and Acculturation

Jhumpa Lahiri (2007) deals with the identity crisis, tension, anxiety, hybridity, and ambivalence in the major characters of her novel *The Namesake*. Ashoke and Ashima belong to the first-generation immigrants in America while their children Gogol and Sonia belong to the second generation of youths born and brought up in America. Sonia, however, is kept outside the central tensions of the novel. Ashima feels the brunt of being in a new land and giving birth to a child there without her relatives around, and her sense of loss and alienation begins. Lahiri (2007) narrates, "But she is terrified to raise a child in a country where she is related to no one, where she knows so little, where life seems so tentative and spare" (p. 6). Ashima begins to feel the uncertainty of life and its instability as an outsider, and her crisis culminates, "As she strokes and suckles and studies her son, she can't help but pity him. ... a person entering the world so alone, so deprived" (Lahiri, 2007, p. 25). Ashima's sense of anxiety, loneliness, and uncertainty accumulates and she declares, "I'm saying I don't want to raise Gogol alone in this country. It's not right. I want to go back" (Lahiri, 2007, p. 33). Ashima's inability to recreate India makes her suffer more, and she pushes Ashoke to go back to India. Her gradual realization of the fact that she cannot go back to India gives birth to diasporic tension and anxiety. She suffers from ambivalence in her thoughts of the past and present life. She tries to construct her hybridized identity with her new 'self' by doing everything alone, going to market, and buying everything necessary, and she "begins to pride herself on doing it alone" (Lahiri, 2007, p. 34).

To this end, Ashima, having realized her dependency on Ashoke and her helplessness in the new setting, tries to adjust her position. Khorakiwala (2021) makes an apt observation:

Ashima tends to display an integrated mode of reflexive identity in the sense that her identity is linked to that of her husband, and later to that of her children. She knows she cannot return to India, so she learns to compromise and adjust. (p. 268)

Ashima's tension hinges further, and she feels helpless about her child's entry to a new land where she cannot fit in, "... like everything else in America, feels haphazard, only half true" (Lahiri, 2007, p. 25). Her once 'attraction' for America before her marriage with Ashoke turns out to be 'repulsion' now, and this binary mix of like and dislike reveals her ambivalence. Ashcroft et al. (2004) while examining the nature of ambivalence, posit by quoting (Young 1995), "... to describe a continual fluctuation between wanting one thing and wanting its opposite" (p.12). Ashima's ambivalence is explicit.

3.2 Ashoke's Acculturation and the Hybridized Identity

However, Ashoke succeeds as a teacher and lives happily with his wife Ashima and the newborn son. He has left India for a better life through his pursuit of a Ph.D., leaving a nightmarish experience of a train accident in Jamshedpur, India, the place "... in which he was born and in which he had nearly died" (Lahiri, 2007, p. 20). He is ready to acculturate to mainstream Americanism. Though he has settled in America and is unwilling to return to India permanently, he has a strong feeling for his homeland, India. This in-betweenness is a common phenomenon among immigrants. Ramraj (2000), in his essay, "Diaspora and Multiculturalism" aptly observes:

Yet though diasporans may not want actually to return home, wherever the dispersal has left them, they retain a conscious or subconscious attachment to tradition, customs, values, religions, and languages of the ancestral home. (p. 215)

Thus, in his attempt to recreate India in America, Ashoke holds fast to his Indian sect very consciously. He keeps his attachment to his root by sending his son Gogol to learn Bengali language, and he visits Durga Puja and other religious occasions with his children. Yet, the diasporic tensions strongly prevail in him when Ashima insists on going back to India. But he remembers the train accident he luckily survived, and the passenger named Mr. Ghosh. Regarding his coming back from London Mr. Ghosh confessed to Ashoke, "It is my greatest regret, coming back" (Lahiri, 2007, p. 33), hours before his death in the accident. The sense of social uncertainty in India pushes Ashoke back. Therefore, he makes his final move, Lahiri (2007) narrates, "But as the months passed, Ashoke began to envision another sort of future. He imagined not only walking but walking away, as far as he could..." (p. 20). Both Ashima and Ashoke, the first generation of emigrants, reconcile with the duality of their

identities, and thus they get hybridized in-between identities. Nayar (2011) discusses the issue and nature of diasporic people/authors in the second land by quoting Elleke (1995), "... within the precincts of the Western metropolis while at the same time retaining thematic and /or political connections with a national background" (p.179). They desperately try to maintain the link to their motherland India while living in America, this very act reveals the state of their mind in constant flux—ambivalence is vivid.

Ashoke and Ashima's incessant attempts to acculturate into the host American culture while keeping a conscious connection with the culture of their homeland India is a typical trait of first-generation immigrants in a foreign land. This act of recreating the homeland is an imaginary homeland, for they can never recreate their real homeland in all its proportion and substance. The situation is explicitly dissected by Rushdie (1992) as he posits, "we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind" (p. 10).

3.3 Gogol's Namesake and his Identity Crisis

However, with the protagonist of the novel, Gogol Ganguli, diasporic tensions like identity crisis, culture clash, hybridity, and ambivalence surface. Gogol suffers from diasporic tensions right after his birth with the name. Ashima and Ashoke must wait for a name to arrive from their grandmother in India, as the customs require that elderly persons in the family are given the privilege to name the newborns. But the mail doesn't arrive. Meanwhile, they need a name for the baby to take him out of the hospital. They decide to wait for the name, but Ashoke names him after his favorite Russian writer Nikolai Gogol. With this name, "Gogol enters the world" (Lahiri, 2007, p. 29) and encounters an identity crisis throughout his life. It is neither Indian nor American, haunting him in school and beyond. As Gogol keeps growing, his parents keep putting pressure upon him; they want him to simultaneously learn both Bengali and English. The first-generation Indian emigrants, Ashoke and Ashima, want their children - the second-generation Indian Americans - Gogol and Sonia to carry the culture, religion, and ideology of their homeland, India. When Gogol is six months old, his parents make an elaborate Bengali festival on "Gogol's annaprasan, his rice ceremony" (p. 38). Lahiri (2007) narrates how Ashima tries to recreate the lost culture of home by dressing Gogol in Indian tradition, "Gogol is dressed as an infant Bengali groom" (p. 39). When Gogol turns five,

Ashima “teaches him to memorize a four-line children’s poem by Tagore” (Lahiri, 2007, p. 54) and before she goes for a nap every afternoon, “she switches the television to Channel 2, and tells Gogol to watch *Sesame Street* and *The Electric Company*, to keep up with the English he uses at nursery school” (Lahiri, 2007, p. 54). These activities create an inner ambivalence in Gogol, for he doesn’t understand why he must learn double languages, and that too against his will. He suffers from a culture clash and feels ambivalent about his parents’ activities with him. They must make sure that Gogol learns English as an American does. But they also desperately want Gogol to hold fast to Bangla, their mother tongue.

However, as Gogol grows up, he experiences identity crises more acutely. He starts hating his name, “He even hates signing his name at the bottom of his drawings in art class... it has nothing to do with who he is, that it is neither Indian nor American but of all things Russian” (Lahiri, 2007, p. 76). His hybridized identity brings in his anxiety and contradiction, leading him to ambivalence. Gogol neither belongs to India nor does he belong to America, he is in an in-between position. As Gogol grows fourteen, his tension and anxiety with the name continue to intensify, and “He hates that his name is both absurd and obscure, that he has nothing to do with who he is” (Lahiri, 2007, p. 76). His ambivalence culminates and, in his anxiety-crippled mind, he often thinks of reminding his father that the author, the source of his name, “was his father’s favorite author, not his” (Lahiri, 2007, p. 76). This very shaky and turbulent state of mind of Gogol subscribes to Edward Said’s (1935-2001) anguish suffered in his youth as a student in a foreign setting, as Said (2001) in his essay, “Between Worlds” asserts:

Why, I remember myself, could I not have had a simple background, been all Egyptian, or all something else, and not have had to face the daily rigors of questions that led back to words that seemed to lack a stable origin. The worst part of my situation, which time has only exacerbated, has been the warring relationship between English and Arabic. (p. 558)

The diasporic anxiety and ambivalence of the emigrants, either the Arabs or the Asians, remain excruciatingly tormenting for them. Gogol, having been unable to absolve the identity crisis brought about by the name given to him by his parents, finally decides to get rid of it from the court. He submits the relevant documents to the court and waits for the judge to deliver them but gets startled when he must reply to the judge’s question, “Would you care to be more

specific?" (Lahiri, 2007, p.101). Gogol caught off-guard and challenged on the insistence of the Judge to be more specific about his reason, fumbles. Lahiri (2007) relates, "But instead he takes a deep breath and tells the people in the courtroom what he has never dared admit to his parents. 'I hate the name Gogol,' he says, 'I've hated it'" (p. 102).

Though Gogol successfully changes his pet name from Gogol to Nikhil, he still believes that his parents, friends, and acquaintances around him will call him by the pet name Gogol. He knows, "He will remain Gogol during holidays and in summer. Gogol will revisit him on each of his birthdays" (Lahiri, 2007, p.103). This very sense of helplessness intensifies his alienation and the lack of identity, which are typical of second-generation Indian Americans.

3.4 Gogol's Acculturation and the Ultimate Shock

Moreover, Gogol tries to bring meaning to his identity by acculturating and imitating the mainstream American culture - language, food, and lifestyle to be accepted as an American. He completely separates himself from his parents and other Bengali people regarding culture and lifestyle issues. He abhors his parents' culture and ideologies. Lahiri (2007) narrates, "He didn't want to go home on the weekends, to go with them to pujos and Bengali parties, to remain unquestionably in their world" (p.126) rather, "He prefers New York, a place which his parents do not know well, whose beauty they are blind to, which they fear" (Lahiri, 2007, p. 126). Now he is ready to mimic -- to imitate the American lifestyle so that he is accepted as an American. When he mixes with his American girlfriend Maxine, visits her house, and meets her parents, he feels attuned to them, their life, and their manners. Lahiri (2007) makes it explicit, "From the very beginning he feels effortlessly incorporated into their lives. It is a different brand of hospitality from what he is used to" (p. 136). He constantly compares Maxine's parents with his parents and disapproves of the latter ones. He thinks of his parents to be pressurizing him unlike Maxine's parents, and compares, "But their lives bear no resemblance to that of Gerald and Lydia" (Lahiri, 2007, p.138). He further notices the untampered nature of Maxine's upbringing, "No sense of obligation. Unlike his parents, they pressure her to do nothing, and yet she lives faithfully, happily, at their side" (Lahiri, 2007, p.138). He falls in love with Maxine and loves them all and tries his best to be a part of them. Lahiri (2007) states, "Quickly, simultaneously, he falls in love with Maxine, the house, and Gerald and Lydia's manner of living, for to know her and love her to know and love all of these things" (p.137). Maxine is a white

American, who is rich and sophisticated. The interracial romance between Gogol and Maxine brings representatives of the two races together. Maxine represents western high culture with international sophistication, while Gogol represents the second-generation Indians in America with diasporic tensions and anxiety. Gogol, an American by birth, has Indianness about him and his family in his surroundings. The differences between them are highly pronounced and distinct. Bhalla (2012) argues:

She functions as a representative of Western high culture and international sophistication. Detailed lists of what Maxine instructs Gogol to eat, drink, and buy abounds, implicitly commenting on their class difference. Maxine becomes a cultural usher, teaching Gogol how to affect the highbrows tastes that would enable him to realize the cultural capital of his Ivy-League education and gain proximity to the advantage of whiteness. (p. 113)

The ethnicity of Gogol's culture gives birth to the limitations of his social class and status. Their separation is inevitable; the co-existence of these two opposite races and cultures is impossible. On Gogol's twenty-seventh birthday, a middle-aged woman named Pamela asks him if he has migrated from India to America. Gogol assures her that he is from Boston, but the lady sneers at that and declares that one of her girlfriends had once visited India and "She came back thin as a rail" (Lahiri, 2007, p. 157). Pamela further frowns at Gogol saying, "But you're Indian" (Lahiri, 2007, p. 157). At this point, Lydia comes forward and asserts "Pamela, Nick's American" (Lahiri, 2007, p. 157). This encounter reveals Gogol's identity crisis and his position very explicitly. He is not accepted to be an American; Gogol fails to establish his position as an American among mainstream white Americans. He is confused and ambivalent about his identity.

To this effect, Gogol's act of imitation and acculturation gets shattered when he realizes that they, the Americans, think and talk negatively about his parents mixing with all their Bengali friends and that his mother cooks all Indian foods every day, and she wears Indian saris. Maxine finds it difficult to believe and is surprised, "But you're so different. I would never have thought that" (Lahiri, 2007, 138). Gogol though doesn't feel insulted, "but he is aware that a line has been drawn all the same" (Lahiri, 2007, p.138). Gogol is not accepted by the Americans despite his being American by birth, and his continuous efforts to imitate and acculturate with the mainstream American lifestyle, language, manner, food, and clothes. His ambivalent position is explicitly exposed; Field (2004) examines this situation and opines:

The second generation exists in a liminal space of cultural borderlands between the United States and their family's country of origin. The second generation is constantly negotiating their understanding of themselves, striving to balance, if not also integrate, their cultural roots and their American lifestyles. (p.166)

She further asserts, "... the second generation often is not accepted as "real" Americans, because of racial or ethnic differences from the white majority" (p. 166).

Gogol realizes his hybridized identity, his "other" self among the Americans; he thus has a binary perception of his attraction and repulsion toward the Americans and their life. He further sinks deep down into his ambivalence. Bhabha (2006) asserts, "The ambivalence of colonial authority repeatedly turns from mimicry – a difference that is almost nothing but not quite – to menace – a difference that is almost total but not quite" (p. 131). Gogol succeeds in becoming an American 'almost total' but 'not quite.' He is "mocked and discriminated against" (McLeod, 2007, p.208). Like many other Indian youths, Gogol fails to locate himself in America despite his successful career, birthright, and fascination for America and its lifestyle; he is more displaced and alienated than his parents, fitting nowhere.

Kara (2021) examines this deepening crisis in the novel's major characters. She asserts, "... the first-generation immigrants, and their western-born second-generation children, burdened with the psychological and emotional toll of colonization, not only struggle internally but also face the consequences of cultural conflict" (p. 1214).

Both generations of Indian American immigrants grapple with diasporic tensions, identity crisis, anxiety, and ambivalence, and vehemently suffer inwardly leaving a good deal of psychological and emotional toll behind, but it is the second generation, as has been validated, that pays the higher price in the process.

4. Conclusion

Diasporic generations struggle to acculturate into the mainstream culture and lifestyle of the foreign land and embrace hybridity and ambivalence. Ashoke and Ashima belong to the first generation of Indian diaspora in America and manage to locate themselves as a hybrid identity, though they have a strong

nostalgia, memory, and longing for their homeland, and try to maintain a link to its culture, ideology, and religion in the host land, but Gogol their son, born, brought up and educated in America belonging to the second generation Indian Americans fails to have an identity and suffers more acutely than his parents. Despite his successful career as an architect and birthright, fascination with American culture, and subsequent efforts to acculturate to it, Gogol utterly fails to be a part of it. His hyphenated position highlights his alienation from both the countries America and India - he belongs to nowhere. The first generation being aware of their 'minority' position, manages to stick to the host culture, though they suffer from the anguish of dislocation, immigration, and the sense of loss, the second generation, on the other hand, becomes 'double minority' as they belong neither to their native land nor to the host culture - their ambivalence is more acute. Gogol is a victimized nomad.

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