Psychoanalytical Study of Siddhartha

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Abstract: Psychoanalytical study has become an important tool of understanding the human mind since the 20th century. Sigmund Freud has contributed significantly to provide a basis for the psychoanalytical studies. He has offered various terms that explain behavioural conditions of human minds. Psychoanalysis has helped the counsellor understand and treat their patients effectively. The present research paper undertakes an effort to humbly analyse the following psychoanalytical parameters such as alienation, ambivalence, apathy and despair in Hermann Hesse’s Siddhartha. Alienation is a psychosomatic disorder that makes an individual recluse and aloof. Individual suffering from alienation usually starts living a secluded life. Such individual may stop having social communication. Ambivalence is the possession of contrasting emotions or feelings towards the same object. The object in question could be a living entity or a non-living entity or situation. If an individual feels contrasting emotions towards the object, he is said to be ambivalent towards the object. Absence of emotion is characterized as apathy. Apathy arises out of little interest in the events surrounding an individual. Apathy is a mind-set of unresponsiveness, callousness, indifference or detachment. Despair is the lack of hope. Despair is experienced commonly by human beings. Difficult and struggling periods of life often bring despair.

Key Words: Psychoanalysis, Siddhartha, Alienation, Ambivalence, Apathy, Despair.

1. Introduction:
The psychoanalytical study emphasises unconscious mental processes. It is a tool to study persons who are struggling with difficulties in living a sustainable and satisfying life. The psychoanalytical study helps people to understand themselves better and thereby to improve their life. Sigmund Freud is the original contributor to the field of psychoanalytical study. The psychoanalytical study provides us explanations and interpretations about the irregularities in our social, cultural, political, and domestic life.

The present research paper analyses the following psychoanalytical parameters, such as alienation, ambivalence, apathy, and despair in Hermann Hesse’s Siddhartha. Siddhartha was originally published in 1922 in the German language. Siddhartha is a story of a young Brahmin who struggles to find enlightenment. He abandons his life and aims to find the peace and tranquillity that would empower him to overcome his fear and remain stoic in both joys and sorrows, as well as life and death. His journeying takes him to a river, and there learns simply to listen. In the end, Siddhartha understands the wholeness of life and achieves a state of bliss and the highest wisdom.

2. Alienation in Siddhartha:
“Siddhartha had started to nurse discontent in himself, . . . the spirit was not content, the soul was not calm, the heart was not satisfied” (Hesse 11). Siddhartha began to feel that the love of his father, mother, and his friend Govinda was not enough. Even though being in the midst of everyone and being loved by everyone, Siddhartha felt alienated. Such alienation stems from the cause that Siddhartha had several questions about life, which he was searching for answers. However, he was not able to get his answers, and he felt isolated, even though being with everyone.

Siddhartha being a bright and intelligent boy, had several questions regarding life. He was highly inquisitive, and he wanted to know the meaning of life, and he wanted to achieve perfect calmness and tranquillity. He sought to resolve his queries by meditation, but he was not successful. He tried to find perfection by maintaining breathing techniques. Nevertheless, he failed in that. He had several questions, but none of his methods were providing any substantial answers.

William Bier in Alienation: Plight of Modern Man? writes, “Alienation is a condition of psychological existence that is emotionally and motivationally flat and dispirited, devoid of meaningfulness to self as well as to others” (53). Siddhartha felt that neither his parents nor his best friend Govinda would be able to understand him. Even though living a social life, he had started to feel lonely. Even though being surrounded by everyone, he felt no one understood him. Siddhartha felt that if being social was not giving him peace, then the next option was to leave the social life and try to search for the answers that could give him peace. Hence he felt alienated.
“But he, Siddhartha, where did he belong to? With whom would he share his life?” (42). Siddhartha introspected a lot about life; he always thought that he would be returning to his home, to his father, to his family. He always considered himself as a Brahmin and an ascetic. However, now he realised that all this was over. He could not now choose to go back. He had no one now. Although for many years, he was without his home and family member, alone and alienated, he had never felt alienated. Now he felt alienated. He felt the loneliness in his life. It was probably the first time that he felt alienated in his life. He experiences the loneliness and felt chills from it.

Siddhartha had left his house. His inquisitiveness about finding the meaning of life had left him to lead an ascetic life. He had denounced upon his parents and social life and had started the journey of leading a spiritual life. Nevertheless, he soon found out that the journey was quite challenging to tread. He had left his parents and his house for several years. Because if he could not go back just like that. Otherwise, his whole decision to leave his parents and social life would be considered a fluke. After facing hardships on the road of spirituality, he wondered about returning to his home.

Nevertheless, alas, he could not go home then. He could not return empty-handed. He was an exceptionally self-esteem individual. For him to return home from the path that he had chosen would be like a failure. He was too self-righteous to consider himself a failure. He was caught in no man’s land. Neither was he mustering the courage to walk on the spiritual path, nor was he able to convince himself to return to his social life. Furthermore, this void of being surrounded by no one on the path that he has chosen made him feel alienated.

“That this wound did not blossom yet, did not shine yet, at this hour, made him sad. Instead of the desired goal, which had drawn him here following the runaway son, there was now emptiness” (114). Siddhartha had hardly felt alienated in his life. He had planned the course of his life as such. There were a few situations that could make Siddhartha feel alienated. One such situation was when little Siddhartha deserted him. Little Siddhartha had been living with Siddhartha for quite a few months after the death of his mother. Even though Siddhartha had learned and practiced spiritualism and stoicism, he genuinely fell in love with his son.

Glenn Cartwright writes in “Expanding the Parameters of Parental Alienation Syndrome”, Alienation does not occur overnight. It is a gradual and consistent process that is directly related to the time spent alienating. The longer the child or children spend with the alienator, the more severe will be their alienation. Their supposed hatred of the lost parent does not lessen with time away from that parent but instead grows stronger, precisely because they are continually taught hatred by the alienator, have unlimited opportunity to practice that hatred, and have no time at all to learn an alternative response. (210)

Siddhartha became obsessed with his son. The paternal feelings of love kicked in Siddhartha. He loved his son dearly. Nevertheless, little Siddhartha was not satisfied with his life. He started behaving in a rash manner. He started throwing tantrums. He would hurt his father and speak humiliating words to him. Moreover, one day he left Siddhartha. For Siddhartha, it was as if the world collapsed. He became hell-bent on bringing his son back. He started feeling lonely and alienated. His mind and heart longed for his son.

3. Ambivalence in Siddhartha :

“While talking, she put her left foot on his right one and made a movement as a woman does who would want to initiate that kind of sexual pleasure with a man, . . . Siddhartha felt the source of his sexuality moving, . . . And in this moment he heard, and this voice said No” (50). Siddhartha was overwhelmed with the feelings of lust and sex with the woman that he encountered in the village. The woman advanced towards Siddhartha and initiated to have sex with him. Siddhartha also felt his desire to have sex, and he kissed the nipple of the aroused woman. He was almost about to submit to his passions when his inner voice shouts ‘No’ to him. The next moment itself, Siddhartha lost all charms and passion for the woman, and he turned away from the woman and started to walk in the forest.

Siddhartha was a young man. He had high adrenaline levels. His sexual libido was also at its peak. Once when he was passing by a village, he was noticed by a woman who started to initiate sexual activity with Siddhartha. It was the time when the id of Siddhartha was overpowering the ego as well as the superego of Siddhartha. He was getting sexually aroused due to his passions. Even his penis was reacting to the stimulus. He was about to engage in sexual activity with the unnamed woman. However, an inner voice inside his head stopped him.

This was the moment when Siddhartha felt both the types of emotion for the unnamed woman. He became sexually aroused, and just the next moment, all sexual desires evaporated in Siddhartha. Iris Schneider et al. in “One Way and the Other” write, “What people feel and think is often reflected in the way their bodies move. People regularly encounter objects or situations about which they have both positive and negative affective evaluations, which results in ambivalence” (319). This is a case of ambivalence when one encounters two contrasting emotions for the same source.

“He saw mankind going through life in a childlike or animal-like manner, which he loved and also despised at the same time” (66). This is another case of ambivalence. Ambivalence is possessing two contrasting emotions towards the same source. Siddhartha, having plunged into a materialistic world, wanted to taste its fruits. He was taken over by the beauty of Kamala. He wished to learn the secret art of lovemaking from her. He had left the life of a Samana in order to understand and experience the materialistic world.
Earlier, he used to look at the people with a patronizing tone. Nevertheless, now he wished to plunge in it. So he started to work with a merchant named Kamaswami. He started to earn money and gift Kamala. Having been living this life, he would look at the life of the people with differing emotions. He observed people both with love and hate. Leading the life of a Samana had changed his outlook on people. Hence, he was experiencing ambivalence towards people.

Siddhartha saw that people were stressing and taking tension of negligible aspects. Being a Samana, Siddhartha learned to keep distance with materialistic aspects. Siddhartha, who was new to the life of materialism, was interested in plunging into it. He wanted to experience it completely. He wanted to make love and enjoy carnal pleasures. However, at the same time, when he saw people grieving and suffering due to materialistic life, he felt both love and contempt for them. This reflects the presence of ambivalence.

“This pleasure also had to be atoned for, this pain had to be endured, these foolish acts also had to be committed” (111). Siddhartha was experiencing contrasting emotions at the same time. His son was giving him troubles, and Siddhartha was unable to decide whether to forego his emotional attachment towards his son or be emotionally attached to him. Because of these two contrasting emotions, Siddhartha was experiencing ambivalence.

Siddhartha, who had trained himself to live an ascetic life, found it challenging to handle the matter of his son. His son often used to throw tantrums and create havoc in the life of Siddhartha. As Siddhartha was obsessed with his son, it created a dilemma for him. His emotional attachment to his son was the reason for his pain. He was unable to distance himself from his son. His patriarchal emotions started flowing. He faced difficulty stopping them.

Karl Pillemer et al. carried out research to determine the ambivalence results in children. They summarized in "Ambivalence towards Adult Children" that,

We hypothesized that ambivalence is lower because mothers tend to be more invested in the parent - child tie and to focus on positive rather than negative aspects of their relationships with their children, whereas fathers balance negative feelings with positive ones. . . Fathers reported greater ambivalence toward sons whereas mothers reported greater ambivalence toward daughters. (1109).

It was a pitiable situation for Siddhartha. He was undergoing both obsessions for his son and also repulsion. His feeling for his son was causing obsession, whereas the tactics and tantrums of his son were making him feel repulsive towards him. However, he could not forego his duties as a father. Hence he patiently endured the pains caused by little Siddhartha.

4. Apathy in Siddhartha :

“Siddhartha saw merchants trading, princes hunting, mourners wailing for their dead, whores offering themselves, physicians trying to help the sick, . . . Furthermore, all of this was not worthy of one look from his eye, it all lied, it all stank, . . . it all was just concealed putrefaction” (18). Siddhartha, after becoming a Samana, had become devoid of emotions. He witnessed the happenings going around him, but without any reaction and any feeling. He did not feel the sensory fulfilments around him. He did not express any reaction. There was no emotion generated in him, looking at the world. He had become devoid of any emotions.

Robert Marin in “Differential Diagnosis and Classification of Apathy” writes,

Apathy is a common and salient feature of many psychiatric, neurological, and medical diagnoses. Besides, it has broader relevance to human functioning, which is evident in its occurrence in response to persona tragedy, natural catastrophe, social loss, environmental deprivation, and role change. Conceptually, apathy is closely linked to motivation and emotion. (22)

It was a transitional phase in the life of Siddhartha. Having been toiling to find inner peace, Siddhartha had decided to leave his parents and the materialistic life that was on offer, and instead live the life of spirituality. He desired to become a Samana, having watched them roam in different villages. He was so captivated by the lifestyle that the Samanas were living that he decided to become one. He idolized their simple, pure, and ascetic lifestyle, which compelled him to give up his materialistic life.

It was a difficult time convincing his father to let him lead the life of a Samana. Nevertheless, he ultimately succeeded. He became a Samana and was joined by his best friend, Govinda. The moment he became a Samana, he gave up all his emotional aspects. He started practicing spirituality rigorously. He started to view the world with disdain. He would observe the people and the world but without any feelings. He engrossed in everyday life but without any emotional attachment. His method of living can be compared with that of a stoic.

“He gave advice, he pitied, he made gifts, he let them cheat him a bit, and this entire game and the passion with which all people played this game occupied his thoughts just as much as the gods and Brahmans used to occupy them” (67). Although Siddhartha was engaging in a materialistic life, he did not fully embrace it. The condescending feeling for the world still existed in him. He merely observed the proceedings of the world with non-reactive eyes. He took in experiences from all parts of the world but did not participate in it. He kept himself, aloof and distant. This demonstrates that Siddhartha had apathy towards the world. He did not have emotions that bind him to the world. He was more of a passive observer of the happenings of the world.
This reflects a shrewd aspect of Siddhartha. He was merely playing a game. He was participating in the game of life with no concerns. The question then arises that why did Siddhartha choose to live such a life. The answer lies in the analysis of Siddhartha’s mind. Siddhartha was testing himself. He was challenging himself. He was willingly plunging into the materialistic world only to see how much can he be affected by it. He did not choose to run away from materialistic life. Instead, he chose to plunge into the materialistic life and come out unscathed. This was the ultimate test that he was giving to himself. He had to come out of it without being affected by materialism. Only then would he be able to achieve mastery over himself and lead a spiritual life.

“It was still the art of thinking, of waiting, of fasting, which guided his life; still, the people of the world, the childlike people, had remained alien to him as he was alien to them” (70). Siddhartha’s life of being a Samana had changed his way of looking at life. He did not feel any emotions towards the people. He let the world go on continuing its actions. He would not partake in any action. He considered people childlike and immature. The sentence in the novella aptly showcases that Siddhartha felt apathy for the people.

Siddhartha was predisposed with a different outlook towards the world. His attitude was quite aloof. His leaving behind the materialistic life had quite a significant impact on him. He had been meditating. His way of life was stoic. He had stopped to feel emotionally attached to the world. For him, the world was a game. He was delving into the game according to his wishes. For him, emotions and feelings for the world had no place in his heart.

Dr. Jennifer Newman in “Social Apathy” writes,

Disinterest in things that once interested a worker can indicate depression, and consistently avoiding gettogethers can be a symptom of social anxiety. However, social apathy can occur when workers are not suffering from anxiety or depression. It can be an early sign, something is wrong, either in a worker’s personal life or as a symptom of problems in the workplace. (drjennifernewman.com)

Siddhartha’s outlook towards the people was more of a patronizing tone. He looked at people in a mocking tone. He perceived them as childlike. Siddhartha compared the people with children who throw tantrums over small things. Even though Siddhartha had personally wished to jump into the materialistic life, he did not fully accept it. The Samana way of life still guided his life that he had learned. He thought, he waited, and he fasted. This helped him to keep a balanced attitude in life. This helped him be aloof towards the people.

People were still alien to him. In a sense, that, Siddhartha did not have any emotions towards them. He looked at the frailties of the people and admonished them internally. He considered them childlike and immature. He looked at people going over their routine of life and getting extremely devoted and emotional. Siddhartha considers it a weakness. Moreover, because people follow such a way of life, Siddhartha considered them weak. The childlike people who do not control their life, have no place in the heart of Siddhartha. He felt apathy towards them.

5. Despair in Siddhartha:

“It happened more and more often that, in the morning after having had company the night before, he stayed in bed for a long time, . . . the disease of the soul, grabbed him” (72). Siddhartha had been living a materialistic life without being a part of it. He had become quite rich working with Kamaswami. He spent money on Kamala and used to enjoy his life. Nevertheless, slowly and gradually, he started to nurse discontent in his heart. As it happens with everything materialistic, Siddhartha also failed to get the satisfaction of life from it. More often than not, Siddhartha started to feel despair. Siddhartha was engrossed in the materialistic life after leaving his parents, his life of a Samana, his best friend Govinda, and even Gotama. Furthermore, deep down inside, he was not satisfied. It seemed to him that he was starting to lose control of his life. This started to affect his mental health, and hence culminated into despair.

“And after each big loss, his mind was set on new riches, pursued the trade more zealously, . . . occasionally dreaming at night about money!” (74). Siddhartha was gambling with high stakes. He wanted to test himself. He wanted to experience fear deliberately. Earlier, he used to gamble away tens of thousands at one roll of the dice and laugh at it. Nevertheless, now he was becoming more strict and petty with his business.

Martin Bürgy, in “Phenomenological Investigation of Despair in Depression,” writes, “Despair represents the reaction to a stressful occurrence, which quantitatively exceeds the coping possibilities of the affected individual. In the context of the acute stress reaction, despair is coupled with hopelessness and in the case of post-traumatic stress disorder, is included solely for the purpose of emphasizing the degree of the experienced trauma” (148).

Earlier, Siddhartha used to abstain from alcohol, but then he had started to consume wine freely. His act of experimenting with fear was making him go into despair. He had become frantic and erratic in his dealings with people. The earlier touch of calmness and composure of the self was getting lost by him. Not only that, but he has also started to dream about money. Never had Siddhartha thought of money in his life, but things have changed in him.

“ . . . his heart full of misery which he thought he could not bear any longer, full of a disgust which he felt penetrating his entire body like the lukewarm, repulsive taste of the wine . . .” (75). Siddhartha was utterly immersed in the life of materialism. Even the company of Kamala was not able to satisfy Siddhartha, and he had started to feel empty inside. The life that he had lived as a Samana was the life of austerity and spirituality. The present life was something that Siddhartha was unable to forego with. Even though he had jumped in the materialistic life, he could not totally
fathom it. However hard that he tried to embrace and accept the materialistic life, it did not give him any respite. He had started to consume alcohol, but even that was not helping Siddhartha to ease into the materialistic life.

Such an attitude towards life ultimately leads to despair. When one is not able to justify one’s purpose of life, despair is what usually sets in. Siddhartha here was unable to accept neither spirituality nor materialistic life. He was hanging between both of them. His mind was at unrest. Furthermore, he had dissatisfaction that was creeping in his life. This cause of depression stemmed from Siddhartha's failure at not being able to take steps to reform his life and get it back on track. He had deviated from what he had planned about his life, and hence this had resulted in despair.

“... No, there were no more goals; there was nothing left but the deep, painful yearning to shake off this whole desolate dream, to spit out this stale wine, to put an end to this miserable and shameful life” (81). Siddhartha, having left the materialistic life, had started to live an ascetic life having abandoned everything. Alone in the forest, and have walked many miles, Siddhartha was starting to feel depressed about himself. He wants to end his life, end his condition, which he thought was miserable. He was feeling tired and hungry. He felt that there were no goals to be achieved; nothing left to be done. He just wanted to embrace death. He had started to feel delusional about his life and his goals.

Erik Erikson writes in Identity: Youth and Crisis,

Self-consciousness is a new edition of that original doubt which concerned the trustworthiness of the parents and of the child himself-only in adolescence; such self-conscious doubt concerns the reliability of the whole span of childhood, which is now to be left behind and the trustworthiness of the whole social universe now envisaged. The obligation now to commit oneself with a sense of free will to one’s autonomous identity can arouse a painful over-all ashamedness somehow comparable to the original shame and rage over being visible all around to all-knowing adults-only such shame now adheres to one’s having a public personality exposed to age mates and to be judged by leaders. (183)

Siddhartha had been obsessed since his childhood to achieve eternal peace. Siddhartha left his parents’ home and started to lead a spiritual life. He became a Samana. He tried adopting the way of a Samana, but he felt dissatisfied. He then challenged himself by delving into the materialistic life, but again he failed. After having left the materialistic life, Siddhartha was having premonitions. He started to feel that his life had been a failure. Even after umpteenth attempts, Siddhartha was not able to find eternal peace. This created despair in him.

He was not able to accept the condition of his life. Walking lonely in the forest, Siddhartha was highly despair. He contemplated committing suicide. He was not able to seek the solution to the one problem that he had in his life. He felt that his goals were all vain. His life had no meaning. This happens when an individual, despite all efforts, is not able to find the solution. Neither did living with his parents, nor did living with Kamala bring him eternal peace. Moreover, neither did Govinda nor did the life of a Samana give him eternal peace. This lead to a rise in despair.

“Timid and weeping, the boy had attended his mother’s funeral; . . . he did not want to eat, did not open his heart, met his fate with resistance and denial” (106). The son of Siddhartha was feeling depressed. After the death of his mother, the eleven-year-old boy was dejected. His world had changed drastically. It was a tough time for a small boy, and he felt despair. He was not accustomed to living a life of hardship. He was a pampered and accustomed to excellent food, soft bed, and rich habits. Also, he was dearly loved by his mother. However, the sudden death of his mother made him despair.

Little Siddhartha had not seen anything in his life. He had been brought up in a pampered way. He used to live an elite life with his mother. His mother was fulfilling his wishes. And then suddenly, out of the blue, he lost his mother. It was a massive shock to him. Little Siddhartha did not have anyone in the world except his mother. He was the love child of the relationship between Kamala and Siddhartha. Siddhartha chose to leave the materialistic life and lead a spiritual life. Hence he had left Kamala, and went away.

Later on, Kamala, because of physical attachment, bore a son, little Siddhartha. Moreover, now that Kamala was no more, little Siddhartha had no choice but to stay with his father, Siddhartha. It took a considerable toll on the eleven-year-old kid to accept his condition. His father was not able to provide the materialistic comfort that little Siddhartha had been receiving from his mother. Siddhartha lived an elementary life. Little Siddhartha started to feel rebellious towards his father.

Maurice Green writes in “Anticipation, Hope and Despair”, “Despair is the anticipation of almost certain loss, defeat, failure, irrevocable guilt or injury to oneself or one’s loved one. This can be expressed in a very angry, agitated, desperately dangerous person — anticipating but not yet resigned, a desperation of protest. Or it may be expressed as a tearful, sobbing helpless supplicant” (223). It was a pitiable condition for little Siddhartha. It took time for an eleven-year-old to accept the death of his mother. After the death of his mother, little Siddhartha did not take meals and did not open his heart to his father. He was accepting the situation with resistance and denial. He did not consider his father warm enough to be able to open up to him. He was extremely despaired.

6. Conclusion:

Siddhartha experiences alienation several times in the novel. His inability to accept his life and his efforts to achieve tranquillity forced him to experience alienation in his society. He could not adjust to life decided by his father.
Even though he participated in the religious offering and absolutions, he felt alienated. Siddhartha also experiences ambivalence. When he meets a girl who arouses sexual ecstasy in him, he experiences ambivalence towards her. He left his house and had decided to achieve liberation. However, when he encounters the girl, he feels ambivalent towards her. He has strong and opposing emotions towards the girl.

His ambivalence is also reflected in his business life. He watches people with ambivalence. Even though he lets himself get involved with the people, he treats them with ambivalence. He despises them and mocking their weakness. He laughs at their folly. He felt apathetic towards the people. He perceived them with disdain. At various stages in his life, he also experienced despair. He desired to achieve the ultimate liberation from the bondage of human suffering, and his inability to achieve it generated the feeling of despair. The research paper has analysed alienation, ambivalence, apathy, and despair in the novel *Siddhartha*.

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