

Transition from Sanity to Insanity: A Sociopsychological study of Bashir's Scattered Souls

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Abstract

This paper embarks on a profound exploration of Shahnaz Bashir's literary masterpiece, "Scattered Souls," undertaking a comprehensive analysis through the intricate prism of socio-psychology. The backdrop against which this analysis unfolds is the volatile crucible of Kashmir's enduring conflict, which serves as a powerful backdrop against which to examine the transformation from sanity to insanity within the narrative. To undertake this journey into the depths of human consciousness, the researcher adapts the psychoanalytic ideas of Frantz Fanon. Within the realm of the human psyche, we navigate a rich tapestry of psychological features, delving into the inner recesses of mental life. Our discerning lens uncovers the nuanced and multifaceted elements that permeate the characters' psyches, including Paranoid Anxiety, Phobia, Fear, Destructive Anger, Unconscious Attraction, and Collective Catharsis. These elements are carefully scrutinized and dissected to elucidate their manifestation within the narrative, shedding light on the intricacies of the characters' psychological unraveling. Furthermore, our analysis ventures into the realm of Cultural Trauma, a compelling force that casts a shadow over the mental well-being of the characters. The interplay between cultural trauma and psychological distress is explored with meticulous care, illuminating how the characters' deteriorating mental conditions are intricately intertwined with the broader cultural trauma they endure.

To enrich our understanding further, we employ a qualitative content analysis, guided by the profound insights of theoretical frameworks such as social identity theory and social stigma. These theoretical underpinnings provide a solid foundation upon which to unearth the complex interplay between societal conditions and mental health as artfully depicted in the narrative.

Keywords: Socio-psychological, Insanity, Fear, Paranoid Anxiety, Destructive Anger, Collective Catharsis, Unconscious Attraction, Identity Fragmentation, Subjective Insecurity

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Introduction

Literary examination of mental health refers to the study of how writers and authors have depicted the intricacies of the human mind and the problems involved in mental well-being throughout the history of literature. Multiple perspectives on mental health like fear, anxiety, social insecurity, cultural trauma, identity crisis and alienation are considered in this research. This research has increased understanding of the complexities of mental health across historical and cultural boundaries. The socio-psychological perspective considers stigma in both its societal context and the context of stigmatization of mental health. Prejudice, negative attitudes, and stereotyping are common experiences for those with mental health illnesses who encounter the general public. Stigma is the term used to describe this occurrence. When persons with mental health problems feel ashamed to seek help or speak frankly about their struggles, they are less likely to do so. In order to devise solutions that will diminish this stigma and establish more welcoming and supportive communities, it is crucial to comprehend the processes responsible for the stigmatization of mental health.

The beneficial influence of social support on an individual's psychological well-being demonstrates the significance of relationships, groups, and networks in the upkeep of mental health. Positive social support networks may be protective qualities that help people deal with adversity and maintain a healthy lifestyle. However, factors such as a lack of social support or the presence of negative social interactions may either initiate or aggravate mental health issues. This branch of sociopsychology looks at the many ways in which one's social connections may boost or dampen their emotional and mental health.

This remarkable book is a collection of 13 short stories that are artistically woven together in such a way that it becomes a novel. Shahnaz Bashir has authored this book in such a manner that highlights the emotions and feelings of Kashmiris and discusses their daily challenges. He has written in a really vivid manner that transports you to a whole different planet. It deals with a central theme that revolves around the lives of ordinary people who just want peace and happiness in their lives but it's really a distant dream.

Shehnaz has portrayed the condition of Muslims of occupied Kashmir through the portrayal of different characters. There is a female character named Sakeena who experienced sexual abuse which resulted in the birth of her illegitimate child Bilal.

She suffered from unconscious memories and feelings incompatible with the central mass of thoughts and feelings that constitute her experience. This abuse leads her to suffer from hallucinations and PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) for last six years.

Ayesha, another character, suffered from a similar mental upheaval. She was living a joyous life with her husband, Tariq Zargar. But he was killed by Indian Army. After his death, Ayesha's reaction was so strange. She became silent and did not cry at his death. She started to behave like her husband by leaning on the railing over the grille the way Tariq did, smoking a cigarette exactly in his style, standing in the same posture and in the same manner as that of Tariq. She took a haircut like Tariq's. Her own identity became fragmented. She also suffered from Post Traumatic Disorder.

Bilal, Sakeena's illegitimate son, also suffered a lot due to his illegitimate birth. He became a well-known stone pelted. He was not accepted by society. This leads him to destructive anger. There are also some other characters who suffer from the same feelings of anxiety, fear of death and insecurity. Here's one more character, who is introduced as the victim of violence by Indian Army; Ghulam Mohi-ud-din, who is tortured physically and mentally, which results in utter fear and subjective insecurity.

This paper applies a socio-psychological lens to an analysis of Bashir's work in an effort to shed light on the manner in which "Scattered Souls" depicts the relationship between social context and psychological well-being. Moreover, Shehnaz Bashir's "Scattered Souls" offers an interesting narrative lens through which to examine the complexities of mental health in the context of war-torn societies. This socio-psychological study intends to probe the connections between personal mental health issues and larger social and political contexts (Bashir, 2016, p. 53). The Social Identity Theory, developed by social psychologists Tajfel and Turner in the 1970s, posits that people classify themselves and others into various social groups, such as nationality, ethnicity, religion, gender, or even shared experiences like mental health conditions, and that these group memberships are closely tied to an individual's self-concept and self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1970s).

In the context of mental health, Social Identity Theory can be applied to understand how one's identity as someone with a mental health condition affects their well-being. For example, individuals with conditions like depression or schizophrenia

may develop a specific social identity associated with their diagnosis. This identity can shape their self-esteem, self-concept, and how they perceive themselves in relation to others. It can lead to stigma and discrimination if society negatively stereotypes or marginalizes those with mental health conditions. To better understand the mental processes that may be at play when navigating the societal perceptions and stereotypes associated with a stigmatized mental health condition, the Social Identity Theory provides insight into how people tend to favor and identify with groups that they perceive as positively distinct from others.

The first significance of the study lies in its contribution to the scarce research work on Pakistani English writings. Secondly, the research attempts to highlight the characteristics of Shehnaz Bashir's works to pave the way for further research and to attract the readership. Moreover, the current research is an effort to critically analyze the selected text with reference to sociopsychological insights by Lewin. This research will help us to understand the psychology of the characters and their intrinsic and extrinsic conflicts. It will also help to analyze how intrinsic and extrinsic conflicts are surmounting in the lives of characters.

Methodological Framework

This research is purely qualitative in nature. So, it doesn't involve any kind of numeric data in it. The socio-psychological theories like Social Identity Theory by Tajfel, Social Stigma and social support are adapted according to the psychoanalytical insights presented by Frantz Fanon. These sociopsychological insights serve as a theoretical framework of this study. According to sociopsychological theory, the social variables and factors are significant determinants in shaping an individual's personality rather than the biological instincts. It tries to unveil the relation between social and psychological aspects and their impact on the social and mental lives of characters. This theory asserts that individuals and society are interlinked, and social factors are responsible for damaging an individual's mental health. This mental fragmentation results in elements like fear, anxiety, phobias and social insecurity.

Review of the Literature

When one investigates diverse historical viewpoints on insanity, it is as if one is seeing through a glass into the ever-evolving knowledge of mental health that has

existed throughout different ages. Ancient beliefs in civilizations such as Greece and Egypt saw insanity as the product of spiritual or supernatural powers, and these ideas were strongly intertwined with mythology and mysticism. We find ourselves in the Middle Ages as our trip through time continues. During this period, mental illness was commonly related to ideas of demonic possession, which led to stigmatization as well as harsh therapies. On the other hand, the Age of Enlightenment was a turning point in history, bringing innovative approaches to mental health that were more scientific and empathetic. This transformation represented a major change in society's views towards mental disease and created the framework for contemporary psychiatry. Understanding this historical context is essential because it not only offers insight into the ever-changing perceptions of insanity, but it also highlights the role that literature has played in both reflecting and shaping these shifting perspectives, providing a profound backdrop against which to investigate the socio-psychological aspects of insanity (Tingleff & Gilberg, 2014).

These historical viewpoints on insanity give an essential context for comprehending the intricacies of mental health and the ways in which society has struggled to come to terms with this problem throughout the course of time. They reflect the cultural attitudes and deeply established ideas that have contributed to the formation of our knowledge of mental illness. For instance, the spiritual and supernatural explanations that ancient cultures offered for insanity reflect a lack of medical expertise as well as a predisposition to assign mental health issues to magical powers. In contrast, the link of mental illness with demonic possession throughout the Middle Ages is an example of the societal stigma and terror that often-enveloped persons who were having mental health issues during that time period.

The transition towards more scientific and compassionate approaches to mental health that occurred during the Enlightenment period was a substantial break from past ideas. This change highlighted the significance of reason and compassion in the process of treating mental disease. This shift not only set the way for breakthroughs in psychiatry but also mirrored a changing society attitude towards mental health, one that was more bent towards understanding and support rather than condemnation. In other words, this shift made it more acceptable for people to seek help for mental health issues (Mercier, C., 1890).

It is important to note that literature has acted as a mirror to these shifting mentalities across time. Characters that struggle with mental health disorders have been portrayed by authors throughout history. These depictions provide insight into how society has seen and reacted to challenges of this kind at various points in history. It is essential for contextualizing the sociopsychological components of mental health as examined in the literature (Rosenhan, 1974) that we examine these historical viewpoints. This allows us to acquire a greater awareness for the evolving society attitudes about insanity and mental health.

The review that focuses on literary representations of mental health across genres and epochs look into the rich tapestry of how writers have harnessed the written word to expose the intricate features of mental health issues. This review focuses on how authors have used the written word to reveal the complex facets of mental health conditions. It encompasses iconic works such as Shakespeare's portrayal of Hamlet's inner turmoil and Sylvia Plath's modern classic, "The Bell Jar." Through these literary lenses, authors have deftly unraveled the complexities of mental health, offering readers profound insights into the inner worlds of characters struggling with conditions such as depression, anxiety, and schizophrenia (Smith, D., 2011). This topic spans the entire history of literature and includes iconic works such as these.

❖ Theory (Sociopsychological)

According to the psychoanalytical perspective, human beings are motivated by forces that are hidden from view and under the direction of the unconscious mind. This school of thought places a lot of emphasis on the unconscious portion of our brains. But on the other hand, sociopsychological theory deals with social influences that affect the human mind and consequent behavior (Lewin, K., 1924). It focuses more on the social aspect rather than the biological instincts. In this research, sociopsychological theory by Kurt Lewin is adapted with respect to psychoanalytical insights presented by Frantz Fanon to know that how social influences result in individuals' fear, paranoid anxiety, alienation and insecurity and how their mental health disintegrates and becomes fragmented. Literature has benefited from psychoanalysis. By delving deeply into the characters' complex motivations, and anxieties, psychoanalytical critics uncover hidden or invisible meanings and highlight the rich layers of stories or works of fiction. Due to this, sociopsychological aspects are explored with respect to psychoanalytical lens.

Frantz Fanon introduced novel ideas in the field of psychoanalysis. Fanon's focus lies on the psychological effects of social insecurity, suppression, violence, social stigma and loss of social support on the minds of individuals and how the behavioral changes like fear, paranoia, anxiety, phobias and identity crises occur due to social suppression.

❖ Sociopsychological Frameworks

Socio-psychological theories and frameworks including social identity theory by Henry Tajfel, social stigma, and support are adapted for analysis with respect to Fanon's insights which result in the occurrence of the psychological elements like fear, paranoid anxiety, alienation, subjective insecurity, destructive anger and collective catharsis etc. due to the external forces and their suppression. The sociopsychological aspects affecting the characters' mental health may be identified and interpreted with the help of these frameworks. These sociopsychological frameworks help to explore that how social atrocities, social pressure and violence affect the mental health of people and become the cause of mental degradation of people.

❖ Thematic Analysis Identity Crisis

The concept that the protagonists are going through an identity crisis is one of the overarching ideas that emerges from the story that Bashir tells. Their sense of self and their social identity are profoundly altered as a direct result of being forced to exist in the volatile environment that is Kashmir. It would seem that the chaos that is all about them is stripping away traditional identities, which in turn forces a separation between their sense of self and the environment that is all around them. Several excerpts point to this increasing dissonance between the characters' inner lives and outer reality:

"He even ambled in renounced orchards, neglected places where people hardly knew him. He strolled through empty paddy fields, napped in gloomy, dense poplar grooves and willow forests. " (Bashir, 2016, p. 78). "He cherished his solitary expeditions; they helped him understand himself and his existence in the world a little better. Helped him come to terms with the guilt of his being and make a bit of sense of the absurdity of his loneliness, an absurdity most difficult to express through language." (Bashir, 2016, p.79).

The line "He cherished his solitary expeditions" (Bashir, 2016, p. 79), which is taken from Shahnaz Bashir's book "Scattered Souls," highlights a heartbreaking moment that eloquently portrays the severe separation and dissociation experienced by the character named Bilal at a specific juncture. This succinct but potent comment corresponds with the underlying topic of the work, which is that character's struggle with the debilitating effects that conflict has on his mental wellbeing.

"he even ambled in renounced orchards, neglected places" embodies a feeling of extreme alienation and estrangement, implying that the character is unable to find resonance or connection with his immediate surroundings. This sensation of alienation and estrangement is conveyed using this phrase. This detachment goes beyond the physical environment, extending into the emotional and psychological sphere of the character, which highlights the persistent nature of the mental battle that he is going through. It is a mirror of the character's solitude, as he struggles with inner turmoil and confronts the collapse of his own sense of self or identity at the same time.

Bilal is a 13-year-old boy. Society does not accept him due to his illegal birth. Resultingly, he shows a sense of insecurity towards society and wants isolation. His character clearly depicts the feeling of alienation and loss of identity.

He feels safe in isolation because he was rejected by the society, Imam of the Mosque didn't allow him to enter into the mosque by saying:

"Biul had already grown indifferent to the public taunting, to the grunting of the assistant Imam of the local mosque who would always try to keep him from entering the house of God, implying that illegitimate people desecrated mosques." (Bashir, 2016, p. 81)

They tried to keep him from touching the Holy Quran. He was punished more than the other students due to his illegitimate birth. So, all these rejections and neglections led him to be isolated from society.

These excerpts provide the impression that one's feeling of alienation and identity is becoming more fragmented as a result of environmental factors. Using the framework of Social Identity Theory, this identity crisis has a strong connection to

the characters' social environments and the disruption of their group memberships that protracted conflict causes.

Ayesha's character, who became her own husband, also portrays the feeling of alienation and fragmented identity as she started to behave like her husband who had been killed by Army in a crossfire. There couple was an ideal couple for their love and mutual understanding. At Tariq's death, people thought that Ayesha will be wailing and mourning. But it was quite strange that she was quite normal as usual. The women asked her to weep but she did not cry. She was shocked due to his sudden death. The following textual excerpts reflect her mental condition after the death of her husband, Tariq:

".... Another day, I found her dressed in Tariq's navy-blue suit, smoking a cigarette just like him, wearing his pair of brogues, carrying his leather briefcase, limping down the lane for 'office'." (Bashir, 2016, p.183)

These excerpts depict that how she has become insane and has lost her real identity after the death of her beloved husband in a crossfire.

❖ **Deteriorating Mental Health/Madness**

The recurring pattern of worsening mental health is connected to the overarching issue of identity crisis in this work. Characters created by Bashir display a variety of symptoms that are linked with a psychiatric breakdown, including intense hallucinations, paranoia, hysterical laughter, thoughts of suicide, and social isolation. These are communicated via narrative that is unfiltered and emotionally charged:

"The nightmares have become infrequent. Now I don't see my body rolling down the riverbank. Nor does my bloody shalwaar appear. But the smell of sperm barely leaves me. Even pleasantly scented things smell dirty to me." (Bashir, 2016, p. 55)

These lines show the deteriorated mental health condition of Sakeena. The character of Sakeena also shows the travel from the state of sanity to insanity. She was admitted to hospital for acute onset of confusion, delusions, hallucinations, altered behavior, pan anxiety, elation, happiness or ecstasy of high degree, self-blaming and mood swings. The doctors and her attendants had been prepared for

her transfer to asylum section of hospital. Her deteriorated mental health is shown by these lines.

Another example taken from the text is:

"He watched her chew the edge of her dupatta all day." (Bashir, 2016, p. 82).

This line (Bashir, 2016, p. 82) from Shehnaz Bashir's book "Scattered Souls" shows Sakeena's degenerated mental health and powerfully captures the character's spiral into a bewildering and uncomfortable state of mental anguish.

Within the setting of the violent strife in Kashmir, this emotive line acts as a sad window into the character's failing mental health. The word "chew" not only alludes to the bewilderment of Sakeena, but it also stands for the emotional and psychological turmoil that surrounds the figure in question. It is a sign for the overpowering sensation of confusion and bewilderment that has seized control of her mental state. The phrase "chew her dupatta" emphasizes the character's experience of a disordered world, where her own ideas and perceptions have been warped as a result of the sickness.

Sakeena's intense hallucinatory experiences show the character's failing mental condition, in which she is no longer able to discern between what is real and what is a product of her unraveling psyche. This is a sign that the character's mental state is deteriorating. These components elicit a strong feeling of displacement and vulnerability, highlighting the significant psychological toll that struggle and competition may take on a person.

All these quotations are notable example of how literature, such as "Scattered Souls," can beautifully portray the complexities of mental health difficulties. It offers readers a view into the character's internal world as they travel the dangerous route from sane to a state of growing instability.

The character's perspective of her own mental instability is highlighted by the expression "The nightmares have become infrequent" gives the impression that her ideas are not aligned with reality, which is unsettling since it gives the impression that her own mind is working against her. This aspect effectively illustrates the

battle that the character is having with reality as well as the blurring of barriers between fantasy and fact.

The line "Even pleasantly scented things smell dirty to me" conjures up images of hallucinations in the reader's mind. These vivid details, which are rich in sensory information, illustrate the character's decline into a realm of disordered perceptions and hallucinations. She can no longer tell the difference between truth and illusion, and the appearance of peculiar images lends an eerie and unpleasant quality to her mental condition.

❖ Pervasiveness of Death

Death, both literal and symbolic, emerges as a significant theme, its imagery reflected through poignant metaphors. The characters in the novel are always terrified in some way or the other and there is always the fear of death pervaded all around. Because they see the innocent people being killed every day around them. Each knock on their doors makes them freeze due to the fear of being raided by the Army:

"Suddenly, there was a power cut. The children were writing their school homework. There came a loud bang on the main door. Yousuf and his family froze for a minute. Naseema and Yousuf looked at each other in wonder. They were not expecting any visitors at this hour, Then, there was another, louder knock. 'It must be Army. They are angry with me.'" (Bashir, 2016, p. 13)

This passage (Bashir, 2016, p. 13), which is taken from Shehnaz Bashir's book "Scattered Souls," creates a vivid and evocative image of the mood that pervades the story's events. The lives of the individuals are set against the turbulent background of the Kashmir dispute, and this expression portrays the pervading feeling of desolation, fear, and pervasiveness of death that permeates the lives of the characters in this context.

For example, there are many characters in the Government Psychiatric Diseases' Hospital who are being treated there for the impacts the deaths of their loved ones have left on them. There is a woman in hospital whose son has been killed in front of her eyes. There is also an old man whose son has been killed by Army:

"The old man had stopped feeling his legs after an Army tanker ran over his only son." (Bashir, 2016, p. 53)

There are also many other examples that highlight the theme of death and loss. There is a character named Gul. He is the head gardener at one of the terraced Mughal gardens in the Zabarwan hills in Srinagar. He is childless. After all the failed attempts to reproduce, he decides to adopt his nephew Showkat. Gul and his wife prove themselves as ideal parents for Showkat. After his education, Showkat got a clerk's job in a government department. One day, on his way home from work, he passed an Army bunker:

"The troops in the bunker instantly opened fire and shot indiscriminately at whoever was around. Showkat was one of those who died on the spot." (Bashir, 2016, p. 103) The tale takes on a more strange and scary tone when it refers to "shot indiscriminately." It gives the impression that the specter of death, in both its literal and figurative senses, has broken through the limitations of mortality.

Moreover, the theme of death is highlighted through the story of another family who suffered mentally after losing their loved ones. Farooq Ahmad Mir and his wife Zareena also become victims of the atrocities committed by the Army. Army attacked them. They both were injured but Zareena couldn't survive:

"...., the Army was already inside the compound, furious and desperate. The troops fired indiscriminately and Zareena was hit." (Bashir, 2016, p. 135)

After Zareena's death, Farooq Ahmad became frustrated, lonely and deeply forlorn. He missed his wife and would often stay indoors and cry secretly in her memory. "He would aimlessly run up and down the stairs." It may be an allusion to the fact that the living is weighed down by the weight of their traumatic experiences and the continual reminders of death in their surroundings, which together provide an eerie and unsettling environment. The above passages provide a chilling and vivid look at the tremendous emotional and psychological effect that the Kashmir war had on the individuals and the environment in which they live.

The idea of "fired indiscriminately" evokes a haunting sense of desolation, insecurity, frustration and death all at the same time. This suggests that the protagonists are continuously confronted with somber reminders of their own

mortality, and that death is an ever-present companion in their existence. This expression serves as a potent emblem of the ongoing pain, fear and loss that the war has imposed upon the community. This trauma and loss have been inflicted as a direct result of the conflict.

Despite the fact that the characters are still alive on the outside, their souls and emotions have been suffocated by the weight of the horrible events they have been through. This term beautifully encapsulates the tremendous pessimism, loss, insecurity and fear of death all around.

The characters' frequent brushes with mortality in Kashmir, which is plagued by strife, are brought to light through references to deaths. It also represents the end of their normal lives, the end of their connections, and the end of their sense of identity. The pervasiveness of pictures depicting death is indicative of significant trauma and a sense of pessimism brought on by external conflict. They enter a downward cycle of psychological deterioration as their coping systems break down.

❖ **Socio-psychological Analysis Impact of Social Stigma**

The story told by Bashir provides some interesting insights into the ways in which the societal stigma that surrounds mental health may make issues worse. The characters like Sakeena, her daughter Insha and her son Bilal become clear victims of social ostracism and stigma after the detention of Ghulam Mohiuddin. Sakeena is gang-raped by the group of five men of Army that resulted in her son's birth. Their whole family suffered a lot after these incidents. Bilal faces social stigma throughout the story. Insha is met with social insecurity and distrust and is accused of theft at her workplace for being the daughter of a rape victim as well as an ex-militant. Sakeena suffers physically and mentally due to the sexual violence committed by security forces:

"The men threw her down to the ground and held her legs and arms. One of them stripped her of her shalwaar and stuffed it into her mouth the men didn't let Sakeena go for an hour. "(Bashir, 2016, p. 62)

Due to this incident, she becomes a victim of societal stigma and faces social disgrace as well along with the psychological turmoil. Bilal is also not accepted by society and is called 'a bastard' and 'haraamzada' by the people. He suffers a lot due

to this ostracism and becomes a well-known stone pelted to shed his frustration. He is treated badly by everyone at school and even by his own mother:

“The first time Biul became indifferent to his social stigma was when a policeman called him *haraamzaada*, bastard, and kicked him exactly ten times in ribs. The policeman repeated the word each time he kicked him. Then Biul was left alone, shivering in the January night on the bare, cold, chipped cement floor....in the police station.” (Bashir, 2016, p.75)

“When he was sure that no one was around, he shouted and screamed at the top of his lungs until he felt a little relieved.” (Bashir, 2016, p.82)

These passages depict the intense and solitary struggle faced by the characters as they grapple with their own mental health difficulties. These moving lines focus on the widespread stigma and the fear of judgment that relates to disclosing mental health difficulties. This is a subject that resonates deeply within the framework of the book.

The character's fear and sense of vulnerability shines through in the sentence "When he was sure that no one was around." It highlights the dread that comes along with admitting mental health difficulties, which is typically the fear of society judgment and the possibility for stigma. In many communities, like the ones represented in the book, disclosing one's mental health issues might

be received with ignorance, discrimination, or social exclusion; as a result, people are more likely to keep their troubles a secret. It is a symbol of a great inner conflict that the character is dealing with in secret because they are afraid of the repercussions that might result from speaking out about their experiences.

This comment exemplifies a fundamental idea that runs throughout the whole book, which is the considerable influence that social stigma has on an individual's propensity to seek assistance and support for their mental health difficulties. It highlights the isolation that may come from this quiet, since people frequently suffer in solitary, reluctant to express their problems for fear of judgment. It encourages readers to empathize with the psychological turmoil that the character is experiencing and to reflect on the views that society as a whole has towards mental health.

Moreover, the character of Sakeena is shown to be vulnerable and anxious, and the line "She did appreciate how society had begun to respect him" (Bashir, 2016, p.84) after being a well-known stone pelter highlights this vulnerability and anxiety. It reflects her deep-seated anxiety about how society, including friends, family, or the larger community, would regard them. Specifically, it emphasizes her fear that they will be judged for their insecurities. This fear of being judged is sometimes a strong barrier that prevents individuals from getting treatment or sharing their experiences with mental health.

The phrase "shouted and screamed at the top of his lungs" is a profound recognition of the mental anguish that the character is experiencing. It suggests the existence of upsetting thoughts. It shows the inner pain of the character, which he is obliged to address quietly because of the possible implications of reporting his mental health difficulties. The character is forced to confront his inner suffering in silence because of this.

This quotation does an excellent job of conveying one of the themes that recurs throughout the book, which is the devastating influence that stigma associated with mental health has on people's desire to seek care and understanding. These above-mentioned passages allude to the idea that the characters' growing seclusion and final insanity were connected to perceived stigma as it relates to their condition. Because of the stigma, they are unable to seek outside social assistance, which makes their illness much more difficult to manage. This stigma, which puts further burden on their already fragile mental states, quickens the progression from sanity to insanity for such individuals.

❖ **Loss of Social Support**

A recurring thread is the lack of social support available to the characters because of the conflict. The narrator poignantly articulates this:

"She had never truly understood the things he went through, being a 'bastard'-the social ostracization he faced from his classmates and the neighborhood boys, the extra punishments he endured at school." (Bashir, 2016, p. 80).

Isolation contributes to the character's (Bilal's) deteriorating mental health, which is exacerbated by the fact that he has lost all his social and familial connections as a result of being uprooted and neglected by the loved ones, especially his mother, who

is his most dangerous enemy, due to his illegitimate birth. When the social support hypothesis is used, the absence of good social ties in an environment that is already hard may be connected to a person's reduced resilience and inability to deal with the demands of the environment. These support services are essential lifelines for those who are currently living in crisis zones. In their absence, people are left without any tools for dealing with traumatic experiences and difficult circumstances, which exacerbates the shift from sanity to insanity and makes it more difficult.

❖ **Fear and Paranoid Anxiety**

Paranoid anxiety is an illogical yet consistent belief that one is being systematically undermined, persecuted or attacked by a bad object, that is a person, group or thing which intends to do them damage.

Paranoid Anxiety leads to fear. The following textual references clearly depict the fear faced by different characters of the novel:

“One night we woke up to a loud thumping on the main door. I was terrified. I could feel losing some drops of pee.” (Bashir, 2016, p. 44)

The above-mentioned quote is the unmistakable evidence of fear and social insecurity on the part of the characters. These lines are uttered by Ghulam Mohiuddin who was captured and taken to unknown places where he was tortured mentally and physically. The atrocities committed by the Army in occupied Kashmir had affected the mental condition of individuals. Another example is mentioned below:

“Each knock on the main door set his heart racing.... Sakeena had begun to stitch clothes at home.... Her customers' frequent visits began to scare Biul. He took each knock for a police raid.” (Bashir, 2016, p. 78)

This line talks about the effect of a sense of social insecurity and fear faced by Bilal, who was a well-known stone pelter. Once Bilal was in his house and the door knocked heavily, “Biul's heart pounded. They have come to take me, he thought.... Biul ran upstairs to the attic to scan the settlement, ensuring that everything seemed normal, that nobody else was coming to get him.” (Bashir, 2016, p. 86)

But it was the milkman who was knocking at the door at that time. It also shows that how characters' mental health is damaged due to the social pressure which resulted in the form of fear and anxiety.

❖ **Destructive Anger and Collective Catharsis**

Destructive anger is a human emotion which is harmful as it is associated with negative thoughts about an individual or an incident. The person having destructive anger shows violent behavior which can be harmful for others as well as for himself. This destructive anger leads to a kind of purgation or pent up of negative feelings such as hatred through other activities. Frantz Fanon used a specific terminology for this idea which is known as collective catharsis. These ideas are clearly reflected through the character of Bilal who lives with social ridicule and "the guilt of his being" has become notorious as a Shoaib Akhtar among young stone pelters.

"Throwing stones at Police was the only vent to his frustration and the only way to give meaning to his life, he thought." (Bashir, 2016, p. 82)

This line shows that the character of Bilal is depicting destructive anger through his frustration and makes catharsis by throwing stones at Police. He feels as he is shedding off his burden while throwing stones:

"Each time he threw a stone, it felt like he was shedding off a burden." (Bashir, 2016, p. 83)

Bilal hated his very existence because he was not accepted by society. This social ostracization led him to have negative feelings like destructive anger:

"He wanted to stone his own slander-infested existence, the forever unknown face of that trooper.... who had raped his mother." (Bashir, 2016, p. 82)

So, all the above-mentioned quotes reveal the negative impacts of social events related to violence on the characters' inner worlds.

❖ **Phobia and Unconscious Attraction/Ambivalence**

Phobia is an extreme or irrational fear. It is the excessive fear of a person, an object, or a situation. Fanon presented the ideas that phobic elements are the cause of attraction as well. He talks about the coexistence of contradictory affects/impulses.

He names these ideas as unconscious attraction and ambivalence. In the novel, the character of Bilal is the cause of hatred, anxiety, frustration and painful memory of the worst event happened in the life of his mother, Sakeena. Sakeena did not like his presence in her life. She tried to kill him for many times because he was the sign of that physical abuse committed by a group of troopers at that night which resulted in her pregnancy. She hated his very existence:

“She has beaten him most often just because of what he symbolizes. He is the human shape of a painful memory. Earlier, she has even tried killing him.” (Bashir, 2016, p. 63)

The above-mentioned quote shows that she has a feeling of hatred for her son, Bilal due to his illegitimate birth. But along with the feeling of hatred, she also has an unconscious attraction and feeling of love and affection for him. Sometimes she wanted to love him out of motherly affection unconsciously when he was asleep. Then suddenly she thought of the event happened at that night and his birth and started hating him again:

“Then she carefully draws him close and covers him in a good deal of the warm quilt. For a moment, she feels like stroking his hair. But she withdraws her hand just as her fingers are about to touch him.” (Bashir, 2016, p. 65)

So, the above-mentioned lines highlight the idea of unconscious attraction and ambivalence given by Fanon that is depicted through the relation of Sakeena and Bilal.

Conclusion

In summation, this extensive sociopsychological analysis of Shahnaz Bashir's celebrated work, "Scattered Souls," has furnished profound and multifaceted insights into the intricate trajectory from sanity to insanity, set against the backdrop of a conflict-ridden social milieu. Employing a rigorous blend of qualitative research methodologies and the guiding frameworks of sociopsychology, this investigation has adeptly uncovered the myriad factors that contribute to the characters' mental deterioration. Through a meticulous dissection of carefully chosen textual passages, we have unveiled a rich tapestry of salient thematic dimensions, prominently including the profound identity crises experienced by the protagonists, the

relentless erosion of their mental well-being, their perpetual engagement with the specter of death, the enduring weight of societal stigma, and the stark absence of supportive social networks. These overarching themes coalesce to form a vivid and evocative portrayal of the intricate interplay between external socio-environmental forces and the intimate emotional landscapes of the characters.

Furthermore, this study underscores the profound significance of literature as a vehicle for elucidating the intricate nexus between external societal landscapes and the inner emotional realms of its readers. By seamlessly intertwining the private and public spheres, "Scattered Souls" emerges as a potent instrument for conveying the profound intricacies of the human experience amidst turmoil and conflict.

In its entirety, the exploration of "Scattered Souls" by Shahnaz Bashir not only enriches the academic discourse but also contributes to a broader understanding of the ways in which literature can serve as an invaluable instrument for scrutinizing the intricate tapestry that binds society and mental health. It underscores the profound capacity of literature to proffer nuanced insights into the human condition, thereby fostering empathy and enhancing comprehension across a diverse array of academic disciplines, encompassing not only psychology and sociology but also cultural studies.

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