

Exploring the Mental Disorders of the Lunatics in the story, "Toba Tek Singh"

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Abstract

The aim of the present study is to explore the mental disorders of the lunatics in the story, 'Toba Tek Singh.' For this study, the anxiety disorder, habit changing disorder, increased insanity and sense of displacement have been taken into consideration. On the basis of the case study of the characters from the story and their behavioral analysis the conclusions have been drawn that the anxiety is increased, the routine habits have changed, insanity has increased as well as sense of displace has caused for suicidal attempt

Key words: Mental Disorder, Lunatics, Partition.

Introduction:

Literature and psychology have bilateral relationship. Both studies and depicts the psychology of the human being. The writer portrays the psychology and mental illness or disorder of the characters in the story through their behavior and actions. The present story also depicts the mental disorder of the lunatic's aftermath of tragic event of partition.

"Toba Tek Singh" is the short story written by a prolific writer, Saadat Hasan Manto in the year 1955. The story is written originally in Urdu and later translated into various languages. It is based on the aftermath of Great Tragic Division of the British India into Pakistan and India. The story presents what happens after the three years of partition. It is about the lunatics and their exchange on the basis of their religion. The story is set in the Asylum in Lahore. It explores the impact of partition on the psychology of the insane.

Objective of the study:

1. To study the impact of partition on the behavior of the lunatics.
2. To explore mental disorder in lunatics.

Partition Literature:

Literature based on or inspired by the event of partition and its aftermath is called partition literature. Partition refers to the division of colonial British India into India and Pakistan on the basis of Hindu and Muslim religions. Partition has a very great impact over the psyche of the people of the both countries.

Trauma and Mental Disorder:

Trauma is the deeply distressing experience. It is a great shock on the mind of a person. The Psychology Today defines trauma as, 'the experience of severe psychological distress following any terrible or life-threatening event. A traumatic person may develop emotional disturbances such as extreme anxiety, anger, sadness etc' (Kraybill, 2019). Traumatic experience affects the action and behavior of the individual. It causes mental disorder. Mental disorder is also called mental illness. Bolton defines mental disorder as, 'a behavioral or mental pattern that causes significant distress or impairment of personal functioning' (Bolton,6). Mental disorders are conditions that affect thinking, mood and feeling. In the present paper, the researcher has tried to explore the mental disorders found in the lunatics after the great tragic event of partition.

Signs and Symptoms of Mental Disorder:

The signs and symptoms found in the lunatic are varying. The patient feels sad or down. There is confused thinking and excessive fear or worry. The mood of the person frequently changes. The person always wants to remain aloof and alone. There are major changes in eating, sleeping habits. The person feels angry and violent. There is suicidal thinking also.

Representation of the Lunatics in the story and their mental disorder:

'Toba Tek Singh' is the story about the partition and its impact on the lunatics. The story takes place after three years of partition in an asylum at Lahore. The government of Pakistan and India had decided to exchange the lunatics confined in the asylums.

The Muslim lunatics whose families were still living in Hindustan were allowed to stay on while all the Hindu and Sikh lunatics were sent to the border.

There were different types of lunatics in the asylum. There were Hindu, Muslim, Shikh and Anglo-Indian lunatics in the asylum. The news of the exchange had reached the asylum and had created the atmosphere of confusion among the lunatics. There was anxiety, worry and stress regarding the displacement and separation.

Disorder of Anxiety: Sense of Uprootedness and Insecurity:

Anxiety is the mental illness of an individual. It affects the human behavior. The healthline defines anxiety as, 'a very normal response to the stressful life events.' Partition and separation are the stressful events in the story. The anxiety disorder is seen among the lunatics as decision of exchange is passed. It has created the feeling of worry, fear and stress. The anxiety of the lunatics is about what will happen to them as they would be separated from each other. These lunatics had been living for many years irrespective of caste, gender, boundaries and religion together in brotherhood. But now the exchange was taking place on the basis of religion. That feeling had created anxiety and stress among the lunatics. Some of the lunatics felt happy on the formation of Pakistan as a new country while some felt sad. There were mixed or confused feelings of the lunatics. The writer depicts this scene as like, 'A Muslim lunatic, while taking his bath, raised slogan "Pakistan Zindabad", with such gusto, that he slipped on the floor and passed out' (Manto, 37). Some other raised slogans "Pakistan Murdabad". On this issue these lunatics were almost to blow each other as the slogans incited both the Muslims and the Sikhs. Formation of new countries had become the point of discussion, debate and fight for the lunatics.

There was a young Hindu lawyer from Lahore. He became insane after a failed love affair. He loved a Hindu girl, who was living in Amritsar. He used to abuse all the political leaders for separating the people. He did not want to go to Hindustan even his beloved lived there. He did not want to leave Lahore and settle in Amritsar. He was all worried about his law practice and his future career. He feels insecure due to displacement and problem of unemployment.

There were two Anglo-Indian lunatics. They were also shocked and were more worried about their changed status. They were worried about either they will get good food or not after separation. They also had the feeling of anxiety and worry.

Habit changing Disorder:

There was a Muslim lunatic, who was radio engineer, he used to be aloof and silent all the day and wandered lonely in the garden. But there was a sudden change in him. He took off all his cloths and began to run naked.

There was a fat Muslim lunatic, who used to call himself Mohammad Ali Jinnah. He used to take bath several times a day, but abruptly gave up this habit.

Increase in Insanity: Sense of Sadness:

The trauma has caused more insanity in the lunatics also. The lunatics could not bear the shock. A Muslim lunatic was involved in meaningless talk over Hindustan-Pakistan issue and he became more insane. He was excessively involved in talking. One day he climbed the tree and denied to climb down. He said, 'I want to live in neither Hindustan nor Pakistan...I'd rather live on this tree' (Manto, 37). When he climbed down he started hugging all his Hindu and Muslim friends. He started crying. He was very unhappy by the thought that his friend would go to Hindustan, leaving him back in Lahore. The feeling of separation was unbearable to these lunatics.

Sense of Displacement leading to Suicidal Attempt:

There was a Sikh lunatic whose name was Bishen Singh. He is the central character in the story. He was also called Toba Tek Singh. He was in the asylum from the fifteen years. During these years he used to stand up all the day and night. He used to be silent and harmless fellow. He did not lie down even though his legs were swollen. His relatives used to visit him once in a month. But due to partition these visits were stopped. Bishen Singh was worried about his whereabouts. He frequently and consistently asked about his village, Toba Tek Singh, either this village remained in Hindustan or Pakistan. But nobody told him or nobody knew about its exact status after partition. He was so much attached to his homeland that the idea of exchange of or uprootedness made him insecure and uncomfortable. He wanted to live in Toba Tek Singh, in his own homeland. But due to the exchange policy he was going to be shifted from his homeland to Hindustan. He did not like this idea. He strongly refused to go to Hindustan. He stood firm and resolute in between the border line. The narrator of then story tells here, 'when they tried to move him forcibly to other side, he stood on his swollen legs at a spot in the middle (in between the border line of Hindustan and Pakistan on Wagha Border), in a posture that seemed to suggest that no power on earth could move him from there' (Manto, 43). Here Bishen Singh had made his mind not to go to India as he had strong attachment and connection with Toba Tek Singh. No one could persuade him and use force against him. It seems that Bishen Singh had already decided or resolute not to leave his homeland. He either decided to die rather than to shift to new place. This feeling of displacement made him feel insecure and uneasy. He made 'a sky rending cry' (Manto, 43). and collapsed on the earth. He was lying dead in between the land that had no name. It seems that he could not bear feeling of displacement. He made suicide by killing himself rather than accepting the separation. The sense of rootedness was deeply rooted.

Conclusion:

From the above discussions the following conclusions can be drawn.

There is big impact of partition on the mind of the lunatics. The behavior of the lunatics is totally changed. The severe negative changes are found among the characters and their behavior. Mental disorders of anxiety, increased insanity, changing habit pattern and suicidal attempt are found among the characters of the story.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

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