



**The Quintessential – Vol. 01, Number 02, July-September 2023. ISSN:
2584-0185**

Web: <https://thequintessential.co.in/>

**The Question of Sanity in Insanity and Insanity in Sanity: An Investigation into
the Madness of Deewane Maulvi Sahab and other sleepwalkers in Joginder
Paul’s *Sleepwalkers*.**

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ABSTRACT

The Indian partition is a cataclysm. It impacts the Mohajirs. They have no desire to remove their past from their consciousness. Thus, in Karachi, they build India's Lucknow. They exist in a state of limbo between dream and reality. Their migration from India to Pakistan gives them a sense of haunting trauma and mnemonic experiences. It shows how difficult it is for them to accept their memories of the abandoned home. Thus, they slip from sanity into insanity and from insanity into sanity.

Keywords: *Sleepwalkers, India’s Partition, Creation of Karachi in Pakistan, Insanity-Sanity and Sanity-Insanity*

Sleepwalkers is modeled on the people in Karachi who “were walking, talking or whatever, in deep sleep” (Paul, “On Writing” 112). Joginder Paul came to know that “Lucknavis” had the habit of walking at night. His Khwabrau is based on such sleepwalkers in Karachi.

The Quintessential – Vol 01., Number 02, July-September 2023. ISSN: 2584-0185, S.P.Karen Jeyashree & P. Jeyappriya



Indian partition affects the Mohajirs. They want to belong to the Lucknow of India. They construct their Lucknow of India physically and mentally in Karachi, Pakistan. Deewane Maulvi Sahab takes the Lucknow of Karachi as his home in India. He does not have a fragmented psyche or a split personality. He becomes a monomaniac. He has an idea that he is at his hometown, the Lucknow of India. However, to others, he is a madman. He “believes that he continues to live in the old Lucknow” (15). Achhi Begum calls him a madman. She admits “only the mad know the ways of the mad” (16). Even, he never knows his real name.

Deewane Maulvi Sahab’s name is actually Nawab Mirza Kamaluddin, but he is known as Deewane Maulvi Sahab both at home and outside. He is so used to it that if anyone were to call him Nawab Kamaluddin, he would think that the poor fellow had mistaken him for someone else. (15)

Such is his neurosis. In his neurosis, he does not realise that the Lucknow of India had been created by the Mohajirs in Karachi, Pakistan. He fails to understand the socio-cultural climate of Karachi. He takes the Lucknow of Karachi as the Lucknow of India. His madness is endorsed by Roginder Paul. In his “On writing Sleepwalkers” he admits. “Deewane Maulvi Sahab pities the Sindhi Sain, believing in a rush of pure and plain madness that Sain has had to travel all the way from his native Sindhi to their Lucknow for more food and shelter” (115). He further admits:

Deewane Maulvi Sahab’s emphatic belief that he has been continuously living in his old Lucknow all these years is perhaps pathetic, yet if this belief alone can serve as a divine cure for his malady, why shouldn’t we grant him the privilege of madness? But, when a sudden bomb-explosion at Nawab Mahal takes away the lives of his wife, his eldest son and daughter-in-law, you find that madman is no longer mad. (115)

He is a well-integrated man. He takes the Lucknow of Karachi as his Lucknow of India. He never compares Lucknow of India with Lucknow of Karachi. He has never understood that he had migrated from India to Pakistan. “When Deewane Maulvi Shab is displaced from Lucknow, he recreates his city in Karachi; and when this Lucknow crashes down, he finds a place for it in his dreams and starts preparing for another journey. However, he does not shut himself in this paradise forever” (Agha 128). He has a delusion that he is in his hometown, the Lucknow of India. He exiles his mind. He never realizes that he is in Karachi. He has



been wandering the streets of Lucknow of Karachi in Pakistan. When his wife, Achhi Begum, wants to arrange for the visa to go to India and offer prayers at the cemetery of their ancestors, he questions her regarding the visa. He doubts why should they cross borders. The cemetery is after all a couple of streets away right behind Nazeerabad in Chhote Mamun Ka Maqbara. Achhi Begum Says:

Only the mad know the ways of the mad! Such was his condition that whenever we would ask him to arrange for our visas, so that we could go back and offer prayers at the graves of our ancestors, he would immediately say, ‘Have you left your brains in the grazing fields? Do you believe the graves of our ancestors are located in some foreign land? Arre bhai, we only have to go and offer prayers. Come, let’s do it right away’. But, seeing me flustered, he would soften and say, ‘My dear Begum, how far do you think our ancestral cemetery is? It is just a couple of streets away. Right behind Nazeerabad is Chhote Mamun ka Maqbara, and to its right, a stone’s throw away, is the cemetery’. (16)

He never understands the difference between the Lucknow of India and the Lucknow created by the Mohajirs in Karachi, Pakistan. He is affected by dementia. It makes him a monomaniac. He thinks he is in his Lucknow of India. He never thinks about the violence, bloodshed, riots and the causes of uprooting and re-rooting in his derangement. He never feels the pains of losing one’s own country in his lunacy. To a cousin of him, he says: “Quibla Maulvi Sahab, what can I say? I am beginning to feel that real Lucknow is, in fact, here. And it is not you who have migrated from our place to this, but it’s we who have migrated from here to there” (18). He protests against him when he says that they have migrated from India to Pakistan. He says:

‘We haven’t moved anywhere, Bhai!’ Deewane Maulvi Sahab said, suspecting that he was stuck with another one of those lunatics. ‘Coming and going is the business of tourists like you. Anyway, the same place cannot be situated at two locations. Our Lucknow is the only Lucknow. We don’t recognize any other Lucknow. Do you understand?’ he said, proffering his silver case to the guest, with a paan with special zafrani tobacco in it. ‘And, listen. You may find it hard to believe me, Bhai, but you



cannot refute the truth. Natives do not just represent their land, they become the native land!’ (18)

His conception of home is clouded / blurred / shadowed by his insanity. He never understands his home away from his home in Karachi. He is frenzied. He is filled with some sort of madness. His Lucknow exists only in his mind. He suffers from delusion. He is identified as an eccentric. He goes from house to house. He asks everyone to offer namaaz five times a day. “The old settlers of Lucknow in Karachi even find some truth in the utterances of the eccentric Deewane Maulvi Sahab” (17). Even he laughs on his bed. He accepts Achhi Begum calling him a madman “Lying in bed, he is unable to contain his laughter, when he thinks, How right Achhi Begum is when she says that I am mad.” (54) Further, he says: “you are so very right Achhi Begum. I am completely mad.” (55). But his wife does not want to take him to a psychiatrist for his madness. She knows that if his dreams are broken, he would turn to be a madman. She wants him to dream. She does not like his son Nawab Mirza to take him to a doctor to treat his madness clinically. She knows that he is sane in his insanity / madness (59). To her, “a treatment which will make him homeless is no treatment for him” (59).

Deewane Maulvi Sahab’s derangement is the result of his forgetfulness related to partition and migration. He never accepts that he has migrated from India and come to Pakistan. He becomes insane. He does not believe in creating a home outside a home. He admits: “Can there be a greater misfortune than not feeling at home in your own house?” (17). In his idea of spatial identity, he becomes a monomaniac or a fanatic. He continues to believe that he is in his hometown. He becomes schizophrenic. He fails to note that Indian partition has ruptured and destroyed their identity. Mohajirs are compelled to recreate their Lucknow of India in Pakistan. They are forced to delocate and relocate their socio-cultural space. They are made to transplant themselves in an alien land and even live in perpetual fear. Chand Bibi fears and prays: “Allah forbid, if something goes wrong” (22). Nawab Mirza and Chand Bibi fail to feel at home in Lucknow. But Ishaq Mirza feels at home as he was born in Karachi. He has married a Sindhi girl. However, one can fear police raids and surveillance in Pakistan. Particularly, when “the Mohajirs had started to settle down, the situation has come to such a pass in recent years that nothing is more audible than the din of riots between the locals and the non-locals. And, if there is a lull, one fears a loud blast will rend one’s ears at



any moment” (21). Mohajirs had left their homeland. They came to Pakistan as refugees / migrants. They feel disillusioned by the violence in Pakistan. They are subjected to communal riots and violence. When violence threatens them, they long to go back to India. It is evident in Achhi Begum’s desire to get visa to go to India to offer prayers at the cemetery of their ancestors. She expresses her nostalgia and her grief of having lost her home / homeland. It is also because the same house and lanes created by the Mohajirs in Karachi do not provide her security. She is surrounded by riots and bombs. Mohajirs cannot forget their home / homeland. They recreate the Lucknow of India in Karachi. It is made in such a way to remember, recall, recognize their old home / city.

Hakim Jamaluddin is not mad like Deewane Maulvi Sahab. He desires to get away from his nostalgia. He creates a haveli in an alien land, Karachi. He has rows of trees of Malihabadi mangoes. He identifies his home in Malihabadi Mangoes and in the stolen family tree. The stolen family tree provides him a connection to his historic past and its members, his ancestors. It also makes him lose his fingers, when Sandookchi is stolen by the thieves (38-39). It also provides a glimpse into the divide between natives and non-natives. When Sandookhi is stolen, Hakim Sahab’s eldest son, Salamat Ali, warns Hakim “not to employ and trust any Sindhi Sain as a watchman” (35).

Mohajirs have made the natives of Pakistan homeless. They outsmart the Sindhis. They make an economic progress. They live as aristocrats in an alien land. Nawab Mirza employs Punjabis, Sindhis and Pashans in his shoe factory. The Mohajirs have made the Sindhi natives of Karachi feel homeless and nomads. It is pointed out through the character of Sain Baba. Sain Baba is a native but he remains homeless. He becomes a refugee even in his homeland, Pakistan. “Sain Baba’s poverty has made him a perfect refugee running from town to town in his own land, in search of his Pakistan” (115). The Mohajirs and the people like Sain Baba exist in a liminal space. They are caught between two nations and two homes, two assumptions and two thoughts and between reality and dream. They create a dystopia in their utopian vision.

Achhi Begum personifies Lucknow in her words: “Such a shrunken little face it had”. She continues: “Our Lucknow came alive, exactly as it had been. In fact, prettier than its earlier self” (16). In Karachi, the illusory town, Lucknow becomes the real Lucknow / their real



home. However, it goes against Deewane Maulvi Sahab's psychic and emphatic assertion that his home cannot be created or recreated again. Almost, all the characters in the novella are migrants from Lucknow. They have an innate desire to identify themselves as Lucknowallas. They collectively raise a question: "Even after recreating a whole Lucknow, exactly as it was, over this long period of time, why do we still have this gnawing sense of being strangers in our own home?" (17). It is because "Deewane Sahab and other refugees from India, thus carry Lucknow first as a geographically bounded place in the refugees' imagination but more importantly Lucknow also becomes a fabric of their 'social existence' through which they imagine their identity and subjectivity" (Ghosh4).

The loss of Indian Lucknow is the cause of losing Deewane Maulvi Sahab's sanity. He thinks that they have not shifted to any new place. They have been staying in the original Lucknow of Hindustan. It has been well understood by his family, neighbours and particularly by his wife, Achhi Begum. They never make him feel that he is living in the Lucknow of Pakistan and not in the Lucknow of India. They all help him preserve his precarious balance of mind. Everyone knows that for him his Lucknow comes first. They know that it is impossible to make him realize that he is in Lucknow of Karachi. In fact, he has never and can never come out of the Lucknow of India. He has himself internalized his Lucknow in his mind. If he comes to understand that he has moved out of his Lucknow, he will be shattered/broken. His disillusion is erodent when he gives the clay mango, malihabadi mango, to his son Ishaq Mirza. The clay mango makes him feel that he lives in Lucknow of India.

In *Sleepwalkers*, one can find two sleepwalking instances. In the first one in chapter one, Manwa Chowkidar sees people walking in their sleep in the streets of Ameenabad. One night, he happens to bump into Deewane Maulvi Sahab. He gets a two rupee note from him. Then, he happens to see him vanish into thin air. Even he begins to see apparitions. It happens "In the dying hours of the night, when the silent land of Ameenabad are lit with the eerie glow of colourful lamps, people lying deep in sleep in the pitch dark of their homes roam about the bustling chowk, as if it were day." (13) Even "He could clearly see all the people who had walked to the chowk through their sleep" (13).

In the second sleepwalking scene, Manwa Chowkidar sees many people begin to gather in the middle of Haphal Rahe. He happens to see Deewane Maulvi Sahab going on a procession to



Laat Sahab's bungalow as bombs exploded in Nukhlow (95). In this second instance of sleepwalking, Manwa Chowkidar admits to Azizo that Deewane Maulvi Sahab is an insane man. "He (Deewane Maulvi Sahab) does not know that it has been nearly half a century since Pakistan was created" (96-97). In fact, the entire city of Karachi becomes the city of wandering people or sleepwalkers.

All the characters in *Sleepwalkers* are caught between reality and dream. They remain sleepwalkers. They suffer from their haunting trauma. Deewane Maulvi Sahab believes that he has never moved out of his Lucknow. He becomes a sleepwalker. He exhibits a lack of psychological assimilation. Ishaq Mirza considers his father's, Deewane Maulvi Sahab's, "Insanity as nothing less than a blessing" (86). He is "convinced that the cure for his father's insanity lay in the Malady itself" (86).

In the end, when a bomb blast kills his wife, Nawab Beta, Chand Bahu and Suraiya, he returns to sanity. He regains his sanity. He realizes that he is in Karachi and not in Lucknow of India. He keeps in mind that he is on a short visit to his son's, Ishaq Mirza's, place. He is not able to understand that his wife (Achhi Begum), Bhaijaan (Nawab Mirza), Chand Bhabhi (Chand Bibi, Nawab Mirza's Wife) and Suri (Suraiya) are all dead. He continues to be a sleepwalker. He wants to go back to the Lucknow of India. He wants to take his grandson Salim to Lucknow too. But Salim tells him that he is in Lucknow of Karachi, Pakistan. He cannot understand Salim's words in his sleepwalking existence. He remains a sleepwalker. He never separates his Lucknow from his mind. He is sane in his insanity and insane in his sanity. He fails to believe that the Lucknow of India is created by Mohajirs in Karachi. In the end, he wants to return to Lucknow of India. He is deracinated, His conception of the homeland makes him a mere shadow or an apparition. He pleads to Ishaq Mirza in his sanity as an insaneman: "I have seen your Karachi to my heart's content. I am homesick now. Send me back to my Lucknow. If possible, today itself, in fact, just now beta" (109).

Not only one can find Deewane Maulvi Sahab's madness in *Sleepwalkers* but also one can witness occasional frenzy and delirium of some other characters like Chand Bibi, Achhi Begum, Nawab Mirza and Hakim Jamaluddin. Chand Bibi has "fearful associations with the word 'Pakistan' because of her circumstances. She is scared that her husband has to pass through 'a Pakistani corridor' every day on his visit to and from work "(Paul, "On Writing"



115). Achhi Begum is also “apprehensive of a Pakistani corridor” (115). Nawab Mirza has problems with his workers in a shoe factory. He has to make compromises with Punjabis, Sindhis and Pathans. Hakim Jamaluddin is so obsessed to have a familiar tree in the Lucknow of Karachi. All these clearly indicate that they have psychological struggles to come to terms with the memories of their lost home. Thus, they slip from sanity into insanity and from insanity into sanity.

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