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# Muslim English Literature



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# Freud's Mourning and Melancholia and Arissa's Loss and Grief in Shaila Abdullah's *Saffron Dreams*

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## Abstract

This research aims to discover the mourning and melancholia that the main character, Arissa, experiences in Shaila Abdullah's *Saffron Dreams* (2009). By using close textual analysis, we investigate the ideas of loss and grief as well as the struggles of Arissa lives in the US and how she solves her problems. This research engages with Sigmund Freud's theory that discusses about mourning and melancholia in Abdullah's novel. The findings reveal that Faizan's death was the beginning of the problems faced by Arissa. She felt unable to live forward because she felt her world collapsed immediately and her dreams had vanished together with Faizan's death. In this novel, Arissa's melancholia appears whenever memories of Faizan come, and it affects her mind. However, the relationship between mourning and melancholia is formed due to Faizan's sudden death in the 9/11 tragedy in the United States, and the birth and presence of Raian have relieved Arissa's sorrowful and miserable since Faizan's death. Moreover, Raian is a significant factor in eliminating Arissa's mourning and melancholia in the novel. Thus, Abdullah's novel can be used as an example to understand Freud's mourning and melancholia that the protagonist's experiences and struggles to solve her conflict within herself and beyond as a Muslimah-American who struggles to survive because of mourning and melancholia after 9/11.

**Keywords:** *Abdullah's Saffron Dreams, Mental Disorders, Pakistani-American Muslimah Literature, Phase of Mourning, Phase of Melancholia.*

## Introduction

*Saffron Dreams*, published in 2009, is the second book by Pakistani-American novelist Shaila M. Abdullah, which tells the tale of a lady whose life is irreparably changed by the sad murder of her husband in the 9/11 World Trade Center attacks. The protagonist of the story exemplifies the minor ups and downs of genuine, lived-in experience as she struggles to let go of her anger and sadness, become a mother to a child with special needs, and learn how to hang on to her Muslim traditions in the face of growing antagonism. The first-person narrative of a lady reflecting back on the most difficult time in her life and following her rediscovered faith and self-assurance is the focus of the book, which is told in the first person.

Arissa Illahi, the main character, was born and raised in Karachi, Pakistan, in a prosperous middle-class family. Her mother remarries and departs from the family after she gives birth. Arissa is brought up by her devoted father because her mother is emotionally removed from her life. Her father is supportive of her abilities and goals, assisting her as she launches her career as an artist. In the end, her father arranges for her to get married, and it is a wonderful match. Arissa gets partnered with Faizan, a young guy she had already met and taken a liking to when visiting family in New York City. Faizan and Arissa decide to go to America, where their life appears to be pleasant and full of potential. Faizan works as a restaurant cook, and also writes novels in his spare time, while Arissa continues to pursue her artistic endeavors.

After two years of marriage, they are thrilled to find out that Arissa is expecting a baby, and they will soon become parents. However, on September 11, 2001, terrorists hijack planes and smash them into the World Trade Center towers in Manhattan. In the attack, Faizan, whose restaurant is located in the Trade Center, perishes. The loss of her devoted husband and the realization that she would have to raise their child alone have left Arissa in a total state of shock. She is then confronted with further unsettling information: during a prenatal examination, her unborn child is discovered to have Charge syndrome, a condition that affects several body systems and results in a number of problems, including the possibility of childhood mortality. Why would anything like this happen to Arissa all at once, she wonders as she begins to question her trust in God.

After the attack, she is shaken by the way that people now perceive her when she wears her hijab outside. Even though she has no ties to or affinity with the monsters who murdered all those people, including her husband, it becomes hazardous and unpleasant to be outwardly identified as a Muslim person. On one occasion, she is assaulted on the subway by a group of skinheads.

During her grieving phase, Arissa finds the draft of the incomplete book Faizan was working on before he passed away entitled *Soul Searcher*. Fueled by a fresh sense of purpose, that from this point forward, raising her child and completing Faizan's job will be her motivation for getting through life and getting over her great sense of loss. As the book says, this is what will allow her to rediscover her own spirit. Arissa quits wearing her headscarf after deciding not to return to Pakistan but rather stay in the United States and blend in with her adopted nation.

Shaila Abdullah's novel *Saffron Dreams* compared to mourning and melancholia are different in context but similar in science. Literature and psychology are two scientific disciplines that investigate the human soul (Yimer, 2019). Psychology investigates human behavior and its underlying causes, whereas literature depicts human behavior through fictional characters. The study of human behavior in Literature and Psychology is both related and beneficial. Language is used as a medium of expression in literature to interpret human beings, life and culture, personality, mindset, and individual differences, all of them are constantly studied and mentioned by writers, artists, philosophers, psychiatrists, and psychologists (Dar, 2022). Literature and psychology have a strong connection because they both deal with human beings: their behaviors, reactions, wishes, miseries, fears, desires, conflicts, culture, individual differences, reconciliations, and social concerns (Aftab, 2022). To deal with situations, it employs a variety of methods and approaches. Through fictional characters, literature has the advantage of developing human beings. Psychology aids in gaining a better understanding of the emotions, relationships, messages, characterizations, and other elements in the novel.





Sigmund Freud introduced the study of psychology to literature, literary works, and writers. According to Freud's psychoanalysis, literature is an important source of inspiration for the science of psychology, which attempts to explain human emotions, behavior, and mental processes scientifically (Freud et al., 2022). This is because every literary character can be used as a case study for psychological research as described in the novel *Saffron Dreams* by Pakistani-American novelist Shaila Abdullah's character, Arissa. This novel tells the story of Arissa, a woman whose life is turned upside down after the tragic death of her husband in the 9/11 World Trade Center terrorist attack. Arissa was completely devastated by the loss of her beloved husband and knowing that she had to raise their baby without him (Atar, 2021).

Freud developed a theory about mourning and melancholia and the object of this theory is called libidinal cathexis. Cathexis comes from the Greek which means to fill or occupy. Thus, libidinal cathexis is the desire to control an object which often tends to be excessive. The condition after losing libidinal cathexis or what is generally considered as someone who is very loved is divided into two; mourning and melancholia (Knutsen, 2022). Mourning or what is called grieving is a natural expression that humans make when they are losing. This condition can fade and human psychology returns to normal over time. This can happen because the person has forgotten all of these events or has found another object. Then melancholia is a protracted state of mourning. The subject is unable to find a replacement for the libidinal cathexis and the libido turns to destroy the personality itself (Hardianti, 2022).

The condition of melancholia occurs for years and is almost incurable. Melancholia can already be interpreted as a psychological disorder (Freud et al., 2022). Melancholia may result from major depressive disorder, which is the term used to describe a condition when a person has frequent and intense depressed symptoms. According to a psychodynamic perspective, between the ages of one and a half and birth, depression has the capacity to develop. This phase was known by Freud as the oral period. A child's requirements at this oral stage, like food, love, and so on, may be fewer or higher than those needs. As a result, one could feel as though they need other people to keep them alive.

Based on the explanation above, the researchers are interested in making *Saffron Dreams* novel as a primary source of this research because Arissa's lowest phases are interesting to discuss such as during her prenatal check-up and when her unborn child is diagnosed with Charge syndrome, a disorder that affects many areas of the body and which means the baby will have many defects and may be at risk of death. In addition, Arissa must face new hostility from her surroundings as a Muslim living in the United States along with her strength to maintain her Muslim identity (Chandio & Sangi, 2020). However, the focus of this research is not only on the mourning and melancholia experienced by Arissa. It is also about Arissa's struggles with her faith in God when she even wonders about why something like this happens to her all at once. Then, the researchers are also interested in discussing the turning point in Arissa's life especially her efforts in tracing her faith and confidence to become a better Muslim woman and a mother in the future. Overall, the protagonist of this novel shows the ups and downs of life through her experiences. In addition, the writing style in the novel is from the first person point of view so that the reader can dive into the memoirs of Arissa who looks back on the darkest period in her life.

In the novel, Arissa and Faizan have many dreams that they want to fulfill while living together. Because of that, Faizan's death left a deep wound for Arissa. She becomes hopeless



with her life, her world collapses and her dreams vanish. As Freud (1917) explained, dreams have served us as a prototype in normal life of narcissistic mental disorder (UCL Staff, 2020). These mental disorders are melancholic traits which are then compared to the normal effects of mourning. In this case, Freud emphasized that being ready to put a dream on something means also having to be prepared to lose it. The effect of this loss can cause a person to experience mourning and melancholia. In mourning, one feels the pain of physical loss. The world around them may feel changed, gloomy, or heartbreaking, but when they allow themselves to feel and process these changes, they can regenerate their feelings of loss: their pain slowly turns into positive motivation to replace or move away from the sadness they feel. Whereas in melancholia, a person feels the pain psychologically. Freud believed that the pain of loss in melancholia is felt subconsciously, meaning that the significance of the loss is not as obvious to the person who is grieving, even though the pain may still be intense (Trudeau, 2020). This study attracted the attention of the researchers for doing this research related to the physical and psychological conditions experienced by the character Arissa in the novel *Saffron Dreams*.

Discussing psychology is a quite interesting thing to discuss because it is directly related to a person's personality and psychological condition. For example, if someone loses someone/something that is very valuable, of course there is a feeling of not accepting the situation and maybe they will be too late in grief, so they will do anything to replace the loss, then that person is already in the psychological disorder of melancholia. Research on mourning and melancholia has been carried out by previous studies as follows: the first is a journal entitled "*Gangguan Kejiwaan Destruksi Melancholia pada Tokoh Utama Yuuko Moriguchi dalam Film 'Confessions' Karya Kanae Minato.*" by Eva Riski Amalia (2017). This study aims to analyze the behavior and psychology of the main character, Yuuko Moriguchi, after losing her beloved child, Sakuramiya Manami. The analysis uses the theory of psychoanalysis and the theory of mourning and melancholia from Sigmund Freud. With the finding that the essence of the story of the main character, Yuuko Moriguchi in the film *Confessions* is revenge which ends in destruction on various sides.

Another research is conducted by Citra Angelina Manalu (2022) entitled "*Mourning and Melancholia in Julie Buxbaum 'What to Say Next' Novel.*" The research aimed to describe the depiction of mourning and melancholia in the novel *What to Say Next* and to find out the causes of melancholia on the characters in *What to Say Next* novel. The result of the research is that the main character experiences melancholia as depicted by changing his behavior, blaming himself, having death wishes, and being paralyzed.

The last one is the research conducted by Dr. Gowher Ahmad Naik and Deepak Kapur (2020) entitled "*Deciphering Mourning and Melancholia in Herta Muller's The Fox Was Ever The Hunter.*" The research discusses the way the characters in Herta Muller's *The Fox was Ever the Hunter* have been treated inhumanely, causing him to become depressed and melancholic. The results of this research is that the person thus experiences a variety of psychological problems. In addition, the loss has traumatized, agitated, and distressed.

In this research, the researchers are interested in analyzing mourning and melancholia experienced by the protagonist, Arissa, in a novel entitled *Saffron Dreams* by Shaila Abdullah to investigate how Arissa's mourning and melancholia phase occur, and how she accepts her destiny and, more importantly, how she finds solutions to her problems.



## Method

The main purpose of this study is to seek the depiction of mourning and melancholia as well as the struggles and solutions through the analysis of the novel *Saffron Dreams*. The researchers need to highlight the main aspects of primary sources, and then they will be identified, examined, and verified to answer the research questions. Further, the paper used the theory "Mourning and Melancholia" from Sigmund Freud in order to bring the objectivity of the research and to avoid bias. To support the analysis, a descriptive qualitative method with a descriptive analysis approach is used to obtain relevant information and descriptions from relevant sources such as journals, articles, books, and previous research as secondary data which support theoretical literature. In addition, according to Rawat (2021), descriptive analysis is statistics used to analyze data by describing the data that have been collected, and then conclusions can be reached.

The process of collecting the data is as follows: the researchers read the novel *Saffron Dreams* by Shaila Abdullah to understand the research context. In addition, the researchers have to highlight the term mourning and melancholia as well as the struggles and solutions faced by Arissa in the novel. Then the researchers need to classify the data findings regarding the research questions. After the classification, the findings of mourning and melancholia were then analyzed according to the theory of Sigmund Freud to provide the interpretation of its contexts. Furthermore, the researchers also analyzed the findings of Arissa's struggles and solutions to her problems as the turning point of Arissa's sorrowful phase. Finally, the conclusions are drawn based on the findings.

## Results and Discussions

### Representation of the Mourning Phase

Sadness is a normal emotion that everyone feels. Many things can cause humans to experience sadness, one of which is loss. Grief in each individual is different. The way each individual expresses his emotions is also different. Loss is a state in which individuals' part with something that before it was there, then it was not there. Mourning is a feeling of deep sorrow especially when someone dies. Then, they start to feel sad and have an uncomplicated sense of loss. It is just intense sadness, but melancholia is different. It becomes more complicated because the sadness is deeper and leads to depression as is the case with the character *Arissa* in the novel *Saffron Dreams*. After the 9/11 tragedy which caused the death of her husband, Faizan, obviously made Arisa go through a period of mourning. Sadness and irresistible as seen in the following quote:

"My body was shaking uncontrollably, and her hands kept slipping off. I blinked back tears and watched with blurry eyes as people, dazed and bloodied, passed by the camera: a man's arm at a crooked angle, a woman's terrified face covered in blood and grime, panicked firemen looking for comrades, saving lives, losing their own, running toward the smoke-filled hallways to save one more life, never to return. And as we watched transfixed, another plane crashed into the South Tower" (Abdullah 49).

In the quote above the situation where she knows the incident that happened at her husband's place of work. Shock and disbelief.

"It was over. He was gone" (Abdullah 52).



The quote above may look short and simply, but it reflects the shock. The wound that must be felt by Arissa is very painful because of the fact that her husband has died because of this tragedy.

"I have to see him, to say my goodbye," I wailed. "I have to find him." (Abdullah 53).

The beginning of the symptoms of melancholia is a deep feeling of grief because of the loss of an important person in his life, namely someone who has become libidinal cathexis for him. Arissa has lost her husband Faizan. There is a feeling of not accepting him. Where Arisa still cannot accept the fact that her husband has died. She still wants to find him. This shows that Arissa has entered the mourning phase, namely the phase of grief. Expressing grief is a natural thing that humans do at times when they have lost someone, he/she loved. However, grief that drags on and does not go away letting go can lead to depression. Prolonged depression is depression that is not reasonable. Depression is what leads a person to suffer from mental disorders of melancholia.

"Dr. Mitchell ran a laundry list of things they had seen during the advanced ultrasound—heart defect, urinary tract malformations, kidney abnormalities, cleft lip. My heart sank as the list kept growing. I gripped the edges of the bed as Ma held my hand tight, squeezing it every few minutes, passing on some of her strength to me" (Abdullah 65).

At that time Arissa was attacked on the subway by teenagers, her stomach hurt until she passed out on the subway. She wakes up in the hospital. They did an ultrasound to check the baby. Apparently, the baby was deformed inside, feeling sad and shocked by the results of the ultrasound. This is of course very hard for Arissa after losing her husband, and now she knows her baby has abnormalities. However, Arissa is still sure that she is pregnant with a baby who will be a boy. She said she would carry the baby until full term.

### Representation of the Melancholic Phase in the Novel

Freud's conception of mourning and melancholia (severe depression) was put forward in an article entitled *Mourning and Melancholia* (1915). Freud stated that mourning and melancholia are often experienced by people who are divorced, or their spouse has died (Syawal & Helaluddin, 2018). The excessive mourning phase then develops into the melancholia phase. The main cause of melancholia is loss of libidinal cathexis. For sufferers of melancholia, libidinal cathexis is part of their identity. If it is lost, then the sufferer also feels that part of him/herself will also disappear (Amalia, 2017).

"I paced the apartment, restless and jittery, meandering in and out of hope and desolation. It seemed that my mind had accepted his loss, but my heart was in denial. I refused to sleep or lie down. I felt that if I did, I'd lose him forever." (Abdullah 52).

"A realization of a life stretching before me without a partner, holding a baby made by two but who will be brought up by one." (Abdullah 56).

When the libidinal cathexis disappears, the subject feels that part of herself or her identity has also disappeared. The disappearance of her husband's figure because it was taken away by death made Arissa lose herself too. This also made Arissa realize that in the future she has to stand



alone to raise her baby with Faizan. It can be concluded that Arissa cannot let go and forget the departure of Faizan, her libidinal cathexis.

"Never again will I live the same way. We are sheltered no more" (Abdullah 54).

"How did I get here, from blissful married life to stark bleak widowhood and now this?" (Abdullah 66).

After the death of her husband, Faizan, Arissa Illahi is forced to endure anguish that she is unable to withstand. She is not in a mental position to acknowledge and accept the reality that her spouse has passed away and is no longer a part of this planet. Through her words, Arissa does a good job of revealing her pain and helplessness.

"How do you fill a void? Kill an emptiness?" (Abdullah 39).

The phrases "absence", "empty" and "void" become themes in Arissa's narrative style as she describes her psychological and emotional states. She is plagued by a crippling feeling of loss and absence, which permeates both her story and her damaged mind (Ghasemi et al., 2022).

Arissa's previous traumatic experience has an impact on her psyche, causing her to become confused and uneasy, which breeds trauma. She is plagued by her recollections of the past, which give her a type of premonition of Faizan's passing. She recalls the words of a beggar lady who once whispered that Faizan's fate is unfortunate and continues,

"Giant flames will be his blanket one day. Tantalizing, scorching flames will chase him...he will dance with fire one day...she didn't ask for money, I remember thinking ... The event found its way into one of my compositions much later. But then, the fire dance was long over" (Abdullah 46).

Arissa starts to remember the events in her past related to Faizan. This makes Arissa's melancholic phase even worse. Arissa struggles mightily to fall asleep at night because of these heinous thoughts and memories that torment her so intensely.

"After Juhi left, I picked up a book that had fallen to the floor from an overfilled box I had marked "miscellaneous." For a while, I couldn't move. The book, titled *Surviving Susan*, a shoddy Victorian romance novel, had seen happier days and was responsible for some of the lighter moments in my life. Half of its cover was torn off, and the bosomy lady in the arms of a dark man had lost a breast. It seemed that the man was about to drop the woman on her head. It was pretty comical, but my heart did a flip when I reminisced about the novel's presence in my brief married life." (Abdullah 134).

The objects around are silent witnesses to the story between Faizan and Arissa. When she saw these objects, it brought Arissa to memories of her happy story with Faizan. These sweet memories bring Arissa into a deep melancholic phase. Even Arissa began to start questioning herself,

"What life would have been if the towers had not crashed" (Abdullah 2).

The survivors' experiences in the past also have an impact on how they perceive the severity of the threat. They regret not following their instincts because they believe that if they had, they may have prevented such suffering from occurring.



"Who was I bidding farewell to?.....the age-old tradition or the husband I had kept alive in my heart?" (Abdullah 3).

Arissa's inability to let go of Faizan and seek a substitute for libidinal cathexis, makes Arissa's melancholia worse.

How could anyone help me? I was having an abnormal baby, all on my own, with no partner to share the burden with. This was too big. Mountainous. How did my life end up this way? (Abdullah 66).

Arissa keeps complaining and questioning the destiny she has to face. It makes her more and more dissolved in her mourning phase which eventually causes a psychological issue that traps her into a melancholic phase. All the sorrows that came to her over and over again made her wonder why all the painful things always came to her.

For several days, she even uses valium or better known as sleeping pills, to numb her discomfort. She struggles to fall asleep, though, even with a sleeping pill's assistance. Even after a little period of sleep, Arissa awakens with a jolt and admits the extent of her mental torment and misery, saying,

"Waking was a nightmare," (Abdullah 56).

Arissa is given a new lease of life by Ma and Baba, who support her throughout by showing consistent compassion. According to Arissa's recollection,

"Ma came to me each morning with a cup of hot tea and helped me sit up, compelling me to face the new day...she would draw the curtain and sit next to me, encouraging me to talk" (Abdullah 57).

"The days after Faizan's death were a blur to me. Relatives and friends from all over had gathered to help and support me, overwhelming at times and much needed at others. Then, like fall, they started to disappear leaf by leaf, going on with their own lives and work, until two remained: Ma and Baba." (Abdullah 87).

Soon Arissa found a replacement or a substitute for her libidinal cathexis. In her relationships with Ma and Baba, as she refers to her in-laws, Arissa's divided and broken personality is developed and maintained.

From the cases above, it can be concluded that Arissa's abnormal depression has entered the stage of secondary depression. Secondary depression is depression that can cause other psychiatric disorders besides major depressive disorder, namely melancholia. The fatal symptom of melancholic mental disorder is that the sufferer must eliminate the factors that cause loss of libidinal cathexis to satisfy his/her desire for destruction so that he/she can be released from his/her depression.

### **Acceptance and Solutions**

Arissa's mourning and melancholia phases represent the downfall of humans in life. In that phase, human is tested mentally, faith and common sense by God. Humans always have high expectations of their lives, but sometimes these expectations are too far from reality. God wants man to fight and try to accept reality, then move on step by step. In this condition, it is important





for humans to believe in themselves that they will pass the test. The support from family, best friends, and environment usually speed up the process of recovery. According to Freud, we have to learn to accept the reality that a loved one has gone forever which means that the connection with the memory of the beloved person should be closed temporarily until he/she can face the fact (Sarror, 2019). This is a painful process, and most people resist it for a while.

For Arissa, losing Faizan was not only emotionally but also financially devastating. Arissa, like most wives, was financially dependent on her husband, but after her husband died, she forced herself to work so that she and her son, Raian, would not face economic hardships. Previously she received support from her in-laws, but soon she decided to live independently with her son who was diagnosed with charge syndrome. Experiencing this downturn, Arissa could not escape from constantly asking God why she had to go through all of this.

"There are many of you who ask, 'Why me?' And the answer is, 'Because you were chosen.'" (Abdullah 165).

As seen in the sentence above, Arissa was chosen by God. God believes Arissa could survive. Arissa is a tough woman. Arissa works day and night to support Raian, pays for his treatment, and buys him toys to make his lips always pull up in his face. While Arissa was working, Raian was raised by Ma and Baba—Arissa's parents. Arissa also sometimes tells stories about his father, Faizan, to Raian. Moreover, Arissa claimed that Raian's birth clearly distracted her grief over Faizan. Arissa's single routine is measured by Raian's achievements. Owing to her persistence and faith in God, Arissa became an extraordinary woman and mother.

Arissa's attempt to continue her life is by applying for jobs in various places. Until finally Arissa got a job as an interviewer. This opportunity not only assured her future life but also provided her with new connections and social connections. Arissa finally understood something that healing does not start with forgetting,

"Healing is achieved by dedicating yourself to certain causes.... that, there is no help in shy away and distance" (Abdullah 111).

In this case, Arissa has shown a change from her grief phase to her recovery phase. This recovery phase is described in the book *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence--From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* in 2015 by Judith Lewis Herman. The book explained that the traumatized person's symptoms of psychological distress both call attention to and distract from a secret, unspeakable existence. This is most noticeable in how the traumatized individual alternates between feeling numb and reliving the event. Because traumatic syndromes have the same basic characteristics, the recovery process follows the same path. Building safety, reconstructing trauma stories, and restoring relationships between survivors and their communities are fundamental stages of recovery. Then, 'disconnection' and 'disempowerment' are direct consequences of trauma. Therefore, recovery is "based upon the empowerment of the survivors and the creation of new connections" (Herman:94). Eventually the novel's trauma characters understand that recovery is not expected to occur in isolation. Herman distinguishes three main stages in recovery from trauma: "salvation", "warning and grief" and "reconnection with ordinary life" (Herman:155).



Work gave Arissa a new network of social relationships and gave her a chance to overcome the bitterness of loss by reconnecting with ordinary life. Arissa noted that,

"Getting used to the noisy pace of Chamak was easy. The crew was supportive, team-spirited, and made me feel right at home...the work helped alleviate some of my anxiety over the future" (Abdullah 155).

In her new life influenced by her colleagues, Arissa reconnects with life and overcomes feelings of grief, melancholy, guilt and anxiety. She worked hard also to fulfill her husband's dream and also finished Faizan's unfinished novel, *Soul Searcher*.

"Saffron. It reminded me of an unfinished project that was much closer to completion than it was a year ago. I felt my culinary project bubbling and walking into the den to turn on the computer. I lost the minutes and then the hours as I swam in a sea of words, oblivious to the world around me." (Abdullah 11).

Working on the novel took a long time until midnight. Stumping, thinking, looking for ideas, then writing them down, Arissa did this repeatedly. However, Arissa's strong determination makes her believe that nothing can change her life without great effort (Asiyah, 2020). By giving her best, Arissa was able to finish the novel that at first, she doubted her ability to try. Days passed, weeks and months turned into years.

"My feet landed on some papers that I'd worked on the night before, freelance for a beauty salon's newsletter. I slept in the nude most days. I found the heated apartment too hot and sweated profusely during the night" (Abdullah 48).

Effort never betrays results. After Arissa's hard work succeeded in completing the work and also the legacy of her husband, *Soul Searcher*, Arissa dedicated with sincerity,

"Dearest Faizan, I completed a soul searcher! It took me six years to complete your legacy" (Abdullah 221).

Overall, the turning point in Arissa's miserable life was marked by Raian's presence. Raian is Arissa's strength. Raian is Arissa's reason to move on. Raian is Arissa's backbone. As Arissa said,

"You're shining, Mama," he conveyed with a grin. Signs make the world livable, I thought as I pulled him close. He might not be a product of someone's saffron dreams but he was definitely the answer to mine (Abdullah 223).

God gives humans a test not without a reason. Maybe this was God's way of giving Arissa a child with special needs to make Arissa's struggle to find something to do so that Arissa would slowly forget her sadness. God also gave Raian a face similar to Faizan's face so that Arissa feels she is still with Faizan even though in his mini version. God knows what is right for humans, and God cannot possibly give a test beyond the limits of human ability.

## Conclusion

By comparing the two conditions as a whole, it appears reasonable that melancholy and grieving are related. In addition, the fascinating environmental factors for both diseases are the same, to





the extent that we can even detect them. A common response to the death of a loved one or to an abstraction that has taken one's place, such as one's nation, freedom, an ideal, is grief. When the same factors cause melancholia in some persons rather than grief, we naturally assume that they have a pathological nature. In addition, it is important to note that despite the fact that grieving entails significant deviations from the norm, it never occurs to us to treat it as a pathological illness and refer to a doctor (Freud et al., 2022). We count on it to be overthrown when a certain amount of time has passed, and we view any meddling with it as pointless or even detrimental.

Based on our investigation of Abdullah's novel by using Freud's theory mentioned previously, it can be argued that the essence of the story of the main character, Arissa, in Abdullah's *Saffron Dreams*, Pakistani-American, is the various bad destinies that befall Arissa and how she overcomes them. Arissa shows signs that she has experienced melancholia due to the loss of her libidinal cathexis, namely Faizan, her husband. The substitution of libidinal cathexis that can be replaced by the roles of Ma and Baba, as her in-laws, makes Arissa act and have a destructive desire to fight and stand tall against the destiny she must live. Then Arissa began to enter several psychiatric phases until the melancholia she suffered slowly disappeared.

People struggle and face problems throughout their lives. This struggle is what makes them stronger. Abdullah's *Saffron Dreams* gives a glimpse of life's suffering and its tragedies. Internal and external wounds conflict. And in the end Arissa gradually tries to change herself, accept her husband's death, and make peace with the past. Moreover, this paper deserves to be used as a reference by future researchers who are interested or will discuss the topic of mourning and melancholia in other novels or other different objects and serves as an illustration to provide direction for further research.

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