

# PERSONAL AND POLITICAL PARALLELS IN Suleri's

## MEATLESS DAYS

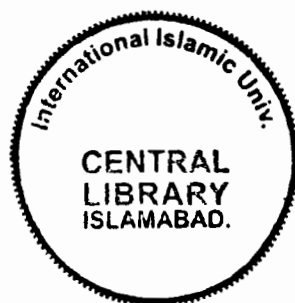
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## ACCEPTANCE BY THE VIVA VOCE COMMITTEE

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## CANDIDATE DECLARATION FORM

I, Ali Usman Saleem

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candidate of Master of Philosophy (English) at the International Islamic University, Islamabad do hereby declare that the thesis Personal and Political Parallels in Suleri's *Meatless Days* submitted by me in partial fulfillment of M.Phil degree in the Department of English (FLL) is my original work and has not been submitted or published earlier. I also solemnly declare that it shall not, in future, be submitted by me for obtaining any other degree from this or any other university or institution.

I also understand that if evidence of plagiarism is found in my thesis/dissertation at any stage, even after the award of a degree, the work may be cancelled and the degree revoked.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Ali Usman Saleem

**DEDICATED TO**

**MY PARENTS**

## ABSTRACT

The relationship between the personal and political (or impersonal) narratives has been an important area of investigation under postcolonial studies. Apart from making efforts to retrieve the pre-colonial past the writers tried extensively to analyze the post-independence chaos and anarchy these nations underwent after getting independence. Sara Suleri, being the daughter of an eminent Pakistani journalist Z. A. Suleri has seen many ups and downs of the political history of Pakistan. She has witnessed various major political catastrophes her country went through during the early post-independence years. Martial law regimes, wars with India, separation of East Pakistan and its making into Bangladesh, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's hanging in 1979 because of a controversial judicial sentence and Zia-ul-Haq's era of military rule are some of those major tumultuous political events which not only had their share in destabilizing Pakistan but also affected the life of Sara and her family a lot. *Meatless Days* is not just a political and historical record of Pakistan but it also highlights the impacts these events had on the common populace. She has incorporated various tales from her experience of life in Pakistan in the text and has knitted them with various political episodes she had been a witness to. In this context the political is inevitably connected to the personal and analyzed through the lens of the experiences and reactions of common people. This research will focus on this parallelism drawn between the personal and political and the areas where they influence each other. Moreover this study also endeavors to probe into the reasons leading to an unstable postcolonial Pakistan as highlighted by the writer in *Meatless Days*.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Foremost, all gratitude to Almighty Allah, The Beneficent and The Merciful, Who blessed me with the strength, will and means to accomplish this task and all compliments to our Holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH), who enlightened humanity with true faith.

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**Ali Usman Saleem**

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# Chapter - 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background and Argument

Postcolonial societies, since their independence from the colonial powers, have undergone various shifts on political, historical and even emotional levels. Most of these societies have made rigorous efforts to recreate the essence of their identity as a different nation. Extensive study of their own cultural values, their oral and written traditions, exalted historical events and attempts to rewrite their histories have been made to realize and relive the sense of pride as a nation. But ironically, almost all the nations, once under the hegemony of the empire, are still reeling under unstable and turbulent political, economic and intellectual crises.

Postcolonial texts are essentially rooted in the historical and political contexts and experiences. Postcolonial space is an imaginative territory for the scholars and writers alike where they make continuous and rigorous intellectual efforts to establish and recreate their own version of history and talk about colonial, post-colonial and neo-colonial issues. Various writers from all over the world, belonging to the postcolonial nations, have not only criticized their colonial masters for corrupting the native cultures but have also highlighted their own postcolonial efforts to re-establish their native cultural and linguistic ascendancy. Inability of the political and democratic leaders, in these countries, to reorganize the newly liberated people into a coherent and harmonized nation and their failure to put the nation on the road to success and progress is also

criticized by the intellectual elite. This dissatisfaction expressed by the intelligentsia and literary figures in the postcolonial nations has become a major voice in Twentieth century literature.

Pakistan, being one of the major postcolonial nations of the subcontinent, got its freedom in 1947 but has experienced a far more disturbing political scenario when compared with other such countries in the region, in particular India. The country has suffered from military dictatorships, political upheavals, wars with India and severe economic crisis since the very beginning. None of these crises is as acute as the crisis of leadership. The tumultuous and turbulent phase of Pakistan's early days of existence has not only affected its national integrity and self-esteem but has also cast some serious and damaging impacts on its national life. Pakistan has yet to emerge as a cohesive and solid society. The individuals are yet to realize their place in the larger, national set up. This turbulent and distressed social and political history of Pakistan's national life has ultimately transfused on the individual level. The micro structure of individual lives in Pakistan, in a way, is a reflection of the macro structure of Pakistan's chequered historical record.

Written during her self-exile, *Meatless Days* is a re-narration of Pakistan's history from a female perspective and a record of Sara Suleri's reactions to some significant political happenings since the time of Partition till she decided to leave Pakistan during the late 1970s. The memoir becomes more significant, not just because of its revisiting the past but because of the writer's subjective effort to locate the past in a matrilineal fashion. Sara successfully retraces the ambivalent relationship between the troubled history of the newly born nation she belonged to and the family she was a member of. This revisiting of

the past from a female point of view is not a journey based upon a chronological sequence of time but she keeps on floating in the mist of her memories in order to grasp the scattered reminiscences. She further strengthens her view point by stressing that the national history of Pakistan is filled with so many inauspicious and dark spaces and constantly needs re-writing, re-visiting and remembering. These gaps need to be addressed in order to make a sense of our past as a nation.

Being the daughter of an eminent and notable Pakistani journalist Z.A. Suleri (Ziauddin Ahmad Suleri; 1913-1999), Sara had a good exposure to both personal and larger political situations of Pakistani society. Z.A. Suleri was an active member of the freedom struggle, launched by the Muslims of the subcontinent, for a separate homeland. He had worked and interacted with Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, and the leader of the Muslim League, on many occasions and wrote an account of Jinnah's life entitled *My Leader*, published in 1944. Z.A. Suleri not only fought for the cause in the subcontinent but also went to England in order to popularize Muslim's stance on the issue of their separate homeland and independence. In post-independence era he adopted the role of a political analyst, worked as editor of the national newspapers *Dawn* and *The Pakistan Times* and also founded the *Times of Karachi*. He often harshly criticized the politicians of the country because of their alleged corruption and misdemeanor. Due to his vocal and harsh critique of the policies of the government, he had never been a favourite figure among the ruling elite of Pakistan. Because of his unrelenting stance on many national issues, he was sentenced to jail as well on a number of occasions. Particularly during the era of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1928-1979), he had to face persecution. In *Meatless Days*, Sara recalls her father's imprisonment with bitter irony.

Even Mair Jones, Sara's mother, who was looking after the duties of editorship in her husband's absence, published blank sheets of the newspaper as a sign of protest against her husband's imprisonment. Sara had been a witness to all these hard times her family had to face because of their (in)direct involvement in the politics of the country. Those painful days in terms of personal/familial trauma, coupled with the traumatic political developments not only made Sara think of the life she had to have, and the price paid by the whole family, but also developed her own ideas about the nature of politics and society in Pakistan. Hence, Sara Suleri was well exposed not only to the political tragedies of her country but also to the gloomy shadows of pain and agony these tragedies cast on the family. She reminisces how her life as a girl, along with the life of her siblings, was influenced by those impersonal forces on a grand scale.

The apocalyptic trauma of early post-independence days of Pakistan and the disturbed life of the writer and her family are foregrounded simultaneously in *Meatless Days*. The macro structure of the political life of Pakistan has very strong influences on the micro structure of individual lives. Both the spheres, personal and political, are intertwined in such a manner in this highly creative handling of history, politics, and personal narrative that interpreting them separately becomes almost impossible. It is the biography of not only a family, a father and mother, and the writer herself, but of a country going through the throws of history. In this narrative, the Suleri family's personal narratives are never pushed to the background in the saga of political events unfolding in Pakistan in the 1970s and 1980s. She had aptly appropriated and discussed, both in terms of space and significance, the grand tour of Pakistan's history.

Pakistani nation, for Sara, is lost and feels angry at being lost. Each character in *Meatless Days* reflects upon the national scenario through its own lens but none of them seems satisfied with the scheme of things in the political and social arena of Pakistan. The frustration of the characters is evident throughout the memoir but more important is the fact that the prospects to find any means of catharsis are not available. Individual characters are suppressed and feel suffocated. All of them have their own ways to live with the realities of ever increasing pressures and frustration. Sara's mother always seems lost, absorbed and always succumbing to her husband by saying 'what an excellent thing' in response to every query. Her grandmother found solace in food which became a way for her to communicate with her son and family. Her sister, *Iffat* was always biting her lips, expressing her inability to harmonize with the male dominant society of Pakistan. All the female characters in the memoir are dominated by their male partners in the patriarchal Pakistani society. Identity crisis for women is a recurrent issue in the memoir and they struggle throughout their lives to gain their due status in the society of Pakistan. Mr. Suleri manhandled everybody at his home and particularly subjugated the women because of his domineering and authoritative personality. Similarly Mr. Jinnah, in Sara's view, manhandled the Muslims of the subcontinent by singlehandedly deciding their fate resulting in the bloodshed at the time of partition. In Sara's house various military regimes were marked through the names of different family cooks, serving on different occasions, as if politics in Pakistan was not more than a non serious activity of cooking of mish mash. Religion is another contentious issue as its role could never be defined in the public as well as private spheres.

Finding and defining the roots of Pakistan's national/collective feeling of loss and rootlessness is the hallmark of Sara's narrative. The Muslims of the subcontinent had to struggle and rush a lot for their survival in the days of partition but they could never define their roots. Later on, the anarchic and confusing sociopolitical conditions within the country never allowed them to get hold of their roots. This inability to find the roots and identity caused a sense of resignation among the ordinary masses of Pakistan. Sara herself expresses the sense of relief when she leaves Pakistan and moves to USA because of her father's increasing obsession with religion which happens simultaneously at a time when many people were busy in celebrating the Zia government sponsored reforms of Islamization in the country.

Sara Suleri, in *Meatless Days*, through a narration of her family tales has tried to reflect on some of the very salient political events in the history of Pakistan. This research aims at a comprehensive and meaningful study of these parallels between personal and political episodes, related by the writer, in order to highlight their significance in the memoir and the political history of Pakistan.

## **1.2 Thesis Statement**

Suleri's *Meatless Days* revisits Pakistan's political history by establishing parallels between personal and political spheres of existence and highlights the way they influence each other.

## **1.3 Research Questions**

The current research intends to investigate and explore the following research questions.

1. How does Suleri renarrate Pakistan's history through the accounts of her personal life within the extended family system?
2. What strategies does Suleri employ to draw/establish parallels between personal and political in *Meatless Days*?
3. How does Z. A. Suleri's life and his involvement in politics influence Suleri's perception of the image and history of Pakistan?

#### **1.4 Research Methodology**

As postcolonial writings make exhaustive use of political contents, the politics of identity and culture and the place of history in defining the roots of any nation, therefore, the proposed research will follow main currents from New Historicist and Postcolonial models for analysis and would involve a detailed study of literary and historical materials produced by Pakistani writers. New Historicist critics believe literature to be essentially a product of social, historical and political situations of the era in which that is being produced (Murfin, 1989, p. 226). McGann (1985, p. 17) also believes that literary studies and analysis remain incomplete without involving socio-historical subjects and methods. Any historical change gets triggered by many factors at work at the same time and none of them, in isolation, can be called responsible for that change (Greenblatt, 1980, p. 4). Literature not only refers to the realities around but, simultaneously, at a retrospective position it is 'referred to' as well and therefore all the social or historical realities contributing in the production of literature must be brought into consideration while analyzing or interpreting it. Though it almost seems impossible to reconstruct past exactly as it was but a new historicist critic believes in collecting apparently disjointed



pieces and then put them to their proper places in order to have a seemingly closer real picture of the times gone by. A New Historicist analysis is to take into consideration any work's point of origin and reception, various factors contributing in determining what that work intends to express and writer's intentions expressed (McGann, 1979, p. 62). The current research will also focus on these steps involved in the analysis of the literary texts produced by the contemporary Pakistani writers. The research will also make use of the theoretical issues raised by postcolonial theorists and various critiques of neocolonialism. Particularly the works of Fanon, Ahmed, Bhabha and Spivak would be of central importance while studying various literary works from postcolonial point of view. At the same time it will be a close textual analysis of the literary text involved. The researcher will be highlighting well marked areas from the text to contextualize them for later analysis. Most of the material used (literary and non-literary) in the research will be collected from the libraries and e-sources. Pakistani and international newspaper articles will also be an important source to understand and analyze the world view regarding the research questions at hand.

## **1.5 Framework and Chapter Division**

The chapter division for this research will be as such:

### **1. Chapter 1: Introduction**

The first chapter of this thesis will present the background and the rationale of the study, theoretical approaches to Postcolonialism and an individual's relationship with a Postcolonial society. This chapter will further discuss aims and objectives, research methodology and the significance of the study.

## **2. Chapter 2: Literature Review**

This chapter will discuss the literature review, previous criticism and different aspects of Sara Suleri's *Meatless Days* which had been the subject of interest for the researchers. This chapter also includes an overview of some of the important key issues like writing of autobiographies, significance of re/visiting history for Postcolonial nations and place of Islam in the socio-political milieu of Pakistan to familiarize the reader with the academic environment in which the study will be carried out.

## **3. Chapter 3: Contextualizing Sara Suleri's Work: Z. A. Suleri's Role in History and Politics of Pakistan**

The third chapter gives an account of the active political life and journalistic career of Z. A. Suleri; Sara's father. He provided Sara an opportunity to develop her personal gaze and views about Pakistan's early days.

## **4. Chapter 4: Personal and Political Parallels in *Meatless Days***

This chapter will focus upon the analysis of the text of *Meatless Days* to highlight various personal and political parallels. This parallelism will be drawn while keeping in view various events happening on the political scenario of Pakistan, as described in the memoir, and then comparing them with the events happening in individuals' lives. Reactions of the individuals and the influence of these political events upon them would also be discussed in this chapter.

## **5. Conclusion**

The final chapter will try to determine whether *Meatless Days* draws a realistic parallelism between the two levels of existence in Pakistan or not. Moreover findings of the research and suggestions for further investigation into the area of inquiry would also be a part of this chapter.

### **1.6 Aims and Objectives of the Study**

The first objective of the research is to highlight the parallel existence of the personal and political spheres of life in Pakistani society as drawn by Sara Suleri in *Meatless Days* and point out the impacts that the larger political context extends on the individual members of the society.

The second objective of the study will be to determine the reasons for Pakistan's failure to cope up with the hurdles and difficulties it had to face soon after independence and becoming an unstable postcolonial state.

### **1.7 Significance of the Study**

The ultimate purpose of this research is neither to find answers of those riddles and dark corners from the Pakistani political history, which still remain unanswered nor to blame the political or religious hierarchy of the country for the negligence they are accused of in *Meatless Days*. Rather this study is aimed at to make the readers think of their national past with a different perspective where there might be somebody responsible for the national tragedies. It is pertinent to see how literary and creative writers of Pakistan

respond to their socio-political milieu as postcolonial writings are known for their political contents and the politics of identity and culture.

Moreover though some work has been done on the structure, linguistic ingenuity and structural aspects of *Meatless Days*, but a detailed analysis of various socio-cultural and political conflicts of Pakistani society and their effects on the individuals as highlighted in the memoir remains to be explored. Therefore the present study is of much significance since it would probe into the concerns of post-independence Pakistani society and will provide a critical indigenous gaze on these characteristics and issues.

## Chapter - 2

### Literature Review

Since this research is an integrated study with more than one theoretical dimension and fields of inquiry, it is necessary to highlight the key terms involved and review the related literature on the relevant issues and debates. This chapter will therefore exclusively focus on explaining various terms, and related literature, holding this research together and defining the boundaries within which this research is managed and conducted. As the research undertakes the analysis of a memoir written in postcolonial context, discussing various socio-political milieu of Pakistan, therefore the chapter begins with a discussion about art of writing autobiography and moves onto a discussion of issues faced by postcolonial society of Pakistan including identity crisis and memory. Moreover the study involves many references to various historical references from the past of Pakistan, so it also becomes pertinent to discuss the importance of history for a postcolonial nation. One important issue from the past of Pakistan that has shaped its politics of 'Islamization' will also be discussed in this chapter with its various phases.

#### 2.1. Writing Autobiographies:

Autobiography is "a retrospective prose narrative produced by a real person concerning his own existence, focusing on his individual life, in particular on development of his personality" (Lejuene, 1989, p. 193) or could be defined as 'made up' descriptions of experiences as they may have occurred; such a recognition of the fictive nature of the individual writing is not new" (Roos, 1994, p. 6). The tradition of writing about one's own self, past experiences and the situations witnessed are recorded in memoirs and

autobiographies in the form of reflections on and description of the past. The issue of re-narrating past exactly as it happened is almost an impossibility and there are always chances of writer's imagination's mingling with the truth and resulting into a 'desired for' past. Hirsiaho also argues that autobiography is always "imaginary and fictional inasmuch as our memories are a retrospective pastiche of chaotic flashes from a past that can never be rendered in a precise form" (Hirsiaho, 2005, p. 100). For Koselleck (1987) memories of the past are like a whirlpool or the sight from the window of a washing machine where an ever changing vision faces us. Re-narrating and sharing our life stories with others is like "purging, or releasing, certain burdens and validating personal experience; it is in fact central to the recovery process" (Atkinson, 1998, p. 26). Past is more like a foreign country and recalling or writing it necessarily involves subjective narrations having lots of dates and archival writings. Because of this issue of subjectivity and its fictional nature autobiography is not the simple real narration of the past and involves many other issues to be taken care of. Vilkkö comments in this context that,

Autobiography has not come about in the real world; more precisely, it can be said to have happened to its narrator. In addition to its centredness on the individual and situation, an autobiography is strongly context dependent. The storage of themes and narratives that organize our lives is our common property, our culture.

(Vilkkö, 1997, p. 92)

The term autobiography has also been described in terms of 'life writing' by some theorists including Benstock (1988), Cixous (1992) and Henke (1998) which gives the writer a liberty, with a very broad literary canvas, to embrace fiction, memoirs and personal diaries as well, as a part of autobiography writing. Life writings are more open to 'discontinuity in expression' and constant revisits by the writer. "Interiority is the key focus of autobiography, whereas a memoir focuses on external events" (Marcus, 1994,

pp. 4-6). The postmodern era has seen a rise of memoir as a way of writing about one's life when compared with autobiography. Hirsiaho writes,

In the recent postmodern cultural milieu of the Western world, autobiography, as understood in the classical sense, is becoming almost extinct. The term memoir is more inclusive, and can be valued according to other merits than external achievements or unusual wisdom of life. A memoir often experiments with form and temporalization, and may not cover the person's whole life.

(Hirsiaho, 2005, p. 102)

Women have used this genre to raise voices for their identity and Feminism had a remarkable impact on autobiographical writings. Brian Roberts in his book *Biographical Research* comments that "Feminist perspectives have given auto/biography the notion of the 'personal is political'" (Roberts, 2002, p. 77) because of a "postmodern challenge to grand narratives" (Evans, 1993, p. 5) and a focus on unearthing various deprived minority groups. The focus of the autobiographies written by female writers also becomes different as their experiences, life episodes and issues are different from those of their genetic counterparts. Laura Marcus points out a difference in the approach of male and female autobiography writers where she believes that autobiographies written by men are "ego-centric and progressive and women's as discontinuous and associative" (Marcus, 1964, p. 67). Oliver Lovesey quotes Gusdorf about the construction of the self in a female autobiography writing that,

The individual does not feel *herself* to exist outside of interdependent existence that assert its rhythms everywhere in the community...(where) lives are so thoroughly entangled that each of them has its center everywhere and its circumference nowhere. The important unit is thus never the isolated being.

(Lovesey; 1997, p. 36)

Jelinek (1986, p. xiii) adds that female autobiographies mostly revolve around their family life, close circle of friends and their subjective experiences.

Similarly most of the autobiographies by Pakistani women revolve around their existence in predominantly patriarchal society of the country and the resistance they have to face by the social and political factions. Benazir Bhutto, first and the only female prime minister of Pakistan, had to face many hard times in her life and political career. After the hanging of her father Zulfikar Ali Bhutto she even had to suffer imprisonment. *Daughter of the East*, her autobiography is a testimony of hardships from her life, record of some important events from the political milieu of Pakistan and details of political episodes. She recalls her days of prison as,

Time, relentless, monotonous. To keep my brain stimulated, I recorded everything that was happening to me in a thin little notebook a sympathetic jailor smuggled into my cell. That passed some of the time.  
(Bhutto, 1988, 53)

Another autobiography *My Feudal Lord* (1991) by Tehmina Durrani explores the existence of women in rigidly patriarchal society where they are circumscribed, exploited and oppressed. Durrani's work links religion with patriarchy and class as she describes the mental and physical violence she was subjected to by her husband, Mustafa Khar. She emphasizes that the country's social values and male interpretations of Islamic thought, supported his unjustified behaviour. A more recent political autobiography *In the Line of Fire: A Memoir* (2006) by Pervez Musharraf, former president of Pakistan, encompasses various episodes from the political saga of Pakistan. Coming from the pen of a male writer this autobiography is different in its treatment of past as it focuses more on the external episodes as compared to personalized female life writings by many Pakistani and even non-Pakistani female writers. Where female writings are associative and relative in



nature talking more about feminist issues in the cosmic picture, Musharraf's autobiography comprises of his reflections on some of the major episodes from the politics of Pakistan along with his memories from various facets of his life including his military ventures, service in Pakistan Army and as President of Pakistan.

### **History:**

The need to probe into early post-independence history was felt by many writers who took up the issue in their writings. Boehmer writes in this context that "many more postcolonial narratives...have plots which are based on history. Especially in the early post-independence era, this was the history concerned with the colonial times" (Boehmer; 2005, p. 187). Ahmed (1999) speaks of past in terms of an 'inventory of traces' as an important tool for having a knowledge of one's self and past and "such an inventory must therefore be made at the outset" (Gramsci, 1981, p. 324) which makes it possible to fit scattered pieces, produced by different writers and historians, from history to make a coherent picture out of it. History as 'a collective memory' (Walder; 2005, p. 190) should be put to continuous revisions as it becomes one of the major possible ways to understand real human dimension. Greetz also finds it appropriate to look for the reasons of reaching a particular state of affairs out of many possibilities and the factors responsible but at the same time he believes that a backward glance is never a "faithful representation of the past" (Greetz, 1968, pp. 59-60). Benjamin's (1968) thesis about history of our 'flash like' recalling of past also puts the authority and reliability of historical truths to question. Every member of a society "internalizes the culture unconsciously and unknowingly and fails to recognize its control over life as unnatural and abnormal .... What we see and

how we interpret it is also determined by culture” (Eitzen & Zinn; 1991, p. 100). The beginning of Pakistan’s political history and culture empowered the individual when Jinnah himself introduced a ‘unitary political system’ and kept the three most powerful positions of governor general, president of the constituent assembly and president of Muslim League at the same time. This step made the individual more important and powerful in the political set up of the country than the ‘institutionalized distribution of the state power’ (Khan, 2005: p. 62).

## **2.2 Islam and Pakistan:**

The place of Islam in the social and political layers of the country had been an issue ever since the creation of Pakistan. Pakistan won its freedom in 1947 on the basis of religious ideology but the degree of Islam’s involvement in legislature and constitution making could not be finalized during the first few decades of Pakistani history. This confusion and uncertainty in ‘assigning the place of Islam in the country’s polity’ (Suleri, 1962, p. 3) led to an atmosphere of uncertainty which still encompasses the country’s politics. Haqqani (2004, p. 1) writes,

Nevertheless Pakistan’s status as an Islamic ideological state is rooted deeply in history and is linked closely both with the praetorian ambitions of the Pakistani military and the Pakistani elite’s worldview. For the foreseeable future, Islam will remain a significant factor in Pakistan’s politics.

Islam has been used by the political parties, military and other actors alike in shaping an ideological construct during the formative years after independence. The role of Islam in shaping Pakistan’s past and future is too great to be ignored. In Gul’s view “much of the recent and current turmoil in the country has its roots in the seismic events of 1979 and policies taken in response to them” (Gul, 2009, p. 13). The next part of the review will

exclusively focus on Zia's military regime of Islamization in Pakistan when Islam was asserted on the people of Pakistan as the sole available way of thought and life.

### 2.3.1 Zia-ul-Haq's Era of Islamization:

"Islamization of Pakistan began systematically after Bhutto's execution in 1979" (Hirsiho, 2005, p. 273). General Zia-ul-Haq who 'toppled Bhutto's government in 1977 and had him hanged two years later' created a 'plethora of homegrown militant groups' (Irfani, 2009, p. 16) after the Afghanistan war was over once. In Rouse's words, Zia's regime witnessed "a powerful alliance between the guardians of the state and guardians of public and private morality" (Rouse, 1988, pp. 59-60). *Jammat-i-Islami*, a leading religious and political party in Pakistan, became Zia's partners in implementing *Nizam-i-Mustafa*; the system given by the prophet. *Jammat* acted as a 'civilian paramilitary force or 'martial law's concubines' (Anwer, 1998, p. 21), practicing violence, in order to bring Islamic reforms in the Pakistani society and boys from the families supporting *Jammat* were rewarded with large number of jobs in army. Zia's theory of Islamization was a shift from 'sufism' towards a more extreme and aggressive approach towards religion focusing public manifestations of the religious rituals and punishments for the culprits as corrective measures. Zia was clever enough to get legitimized his implementations of strict Islamic rules from *Majlis-i-Shura* (Hussain, 1979, p. 90), the advisory Council of Islamic Ideology established by the president himself in 1980. He believed that Islam and Pakistan were the two sides of the same coin and he was the only best choice as a safeguard for the both (Jalal, 1988, p. 319). Zia's dream of implementing Islamic laws was realized partially in the form of *Hudood Ordinace* which included severe punishments for theft, adultery, consumption of alcohol, slander, robbery and apostasy

(Weiss, 1985, p. 2). His vision of *Sharia Courts* though could not be completed before his death in 1988. These so-called Islamic reforms by a military government served not only as a tool to divert the attention of the nation from the political and economic crisis but also led to marginalization of the voices of the labour and working class (Ahmed, 1997, p. 209).

#### **2.4 Available Literature on *Meatless Days*:**

Apart from a few research articles published in various national and international research journals and one unpublished thesis, it is almost impossible to find any critical material about *Meatless Days*. The postmodern narrative technique and the strategies which Sara Suleri uses in the text are paid more attention than the issues she tries to raise in the text. She selects ordinary and every day experiences from her life and goes for a figurative treatment of these literal events by extending the meanings to a larger scale, a familiar device in English literature. Tallat & Ghani (2004, 8) write that “this extension of meaning is also a compression – since so much personal emotion, grief and sorrow has been thrown into it”. Such many episodes are the subject of *Meatless Days* where many experiences which Sara gathered in her life from the ever changing political scenes in Pakistan are incorporated in the text, turning the text into an autobiographical venture. Oej and Lejuene have talked about Sara’s particular narrative technique in her memoir. Sara claims a name identity not only with the narrator but also with the protagonist of *Meatless Days*. Lejuene (2006, p. 26) claims, that this deliberate “name identity of the author with the narrator and protagonist guarantees the author’s intentions to affirm her identity in the text and to do justice to his or her signature on the cover of the book” whereas Oej in ‘Aspects of (Self-) Representation in Suleri’s *Meatless Days*’ is of the

similar view that Suleri, by adopting the roles of author, narrator and the protagonist, incorporates her reflections and reminiscences from the diverse cultural and political landscapes of Pakistan, Great Britain, and the United States and raises some very important issues of cultural belonging and exile, identity and alterity, processes of identity formation and the production of 'otherness' (Oed; 2006, p. 36). Kruckles (2006, p. 173) has remarked that the women in Pakistani society are defined in terms of their bodily functions and roles which ultimately leads to increase in male violence and subjugation of their rights. Mair Jones, Sara's Welsh mother also lost her identity in Mr. Suleri's home about which Dalal (2007, p. 3) writes, "Pakistan's colonial history and intrinsic patriarchy makes Suleri's Welsh mother a marginalized entity in this country". This construction of complicated female identity in the memoir is achieved through rejection of "a linear, spatially demarcated, autobiographical recounting of the events in one's life" (Ray; 1993, p. 48) whereas Lovesey (1997, p. 36) believes by "rejecting a postmodern ahistoricism and a western bourgeois notion of the individualistic self, Suleri's text, nevertheless, celebrates the protean inter-discursive subject of the postmodern project". Talaat and Ghani (2004, p. 1) have further discussed the symbolic significance of the narrative, turning ordinary words, events and incidents into metaphors as they argue that her "scheme of narrative is determined by her concern to bring a unity to tales in which she narrates a variety of personal incidents about different characters, for no other purpose than to reminiscences"

A re-narration of these experiences might have been impossible by employing the traditional techniques of storytelling. The use of varied linguistic devices in creating complex sentence structures indicates the complexity of experiences that Sara had tried to

put in her text. Sara created two parallel worlds, political and personal, in *Meatless Days* and none of the two can be explored in isolation with each other for each world's existence is bound with the other. The parallelism between the two spheres of existence and the meanings it establishes is still an area of the memoir that needs to be explored and studied in detail but remains untouched by the literary scholars and researchers. This research will therefore focus to probe into the workings of this parallelism and a particular view of the political and social history of Pakistan that Sara Suleri wishes to present.

To sum up the discussion it can be concluded that the study of *Meatless Days* involves an extensive understanding of various strategies of writing about past and history. A narration of history of any country is necessarily embedded in its historical and political records and myths. *Meatless Days* is also one such text which deals with the socio-political and cultural past of Pakistan from the lens of various individual characters in the memoir. Although the memoir has been evaluated critically from its stylistic and structural viewpoints yet its thematic study still remains unexplored. Sara created two parallel worlds, political and personal, in *Meatless Days* and none of the two can be explored in isolation with each other for each world's existence is bound with the other. The parallelism between the two spheres of existence and the meanings it establishes needed to be analyzed and studied in detail, but, to the researcher's knowledge, it still remains untouched by the literary scholars and researchers. This research has therefore focused to probe into the workings of this parallelism and a particular view of the political and social history of Pakistan that Sara Suleri wishes to present in her memoir.

## NOTES

1. This popular slogan of past as a foreign country was introduced by David Lowenthal (1985). He believes that a true and exact re-narration of past is simply impossible because of author's subjectivities and biases. For a detailed study of the concept see David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
2. Postmodern thought brought down a very harsh criticism on every universalizing discourse (meta-narratives or grand-narratives as labeled by Jean Francois Lyotard). The myth and authority of these meta-narratives, in the past, as all explaining and totalizing discourses was rejected by Lyotard for their being repressive of individual creativity. Instead he stressed on the importance of mini-narratives to replace meta-narratives. For a detailed study on Postmodern rejection of meta-narratives see Stuart Sim ed. *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism* (London: Routledge; 2001); Angela McRobbie *Postmodernism and Popular Culture* (New York: Taylor & Francis; 1994); Paul Cilliers *Complexity and Postmodernism: Understanding Complex Systems* (New York: Routledge; 1998); Steven Connor *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 2004).
3. The acronym Pakistan was developed by a group of students studying at Cambridge University in 1933 who published a pamphlet titled *Now or Never*. The word Pakistan means the land of spiritually and religiously pure people. The idea behind the name was to bring together Muslims of the Subcontinent under one flag and unite them in struggle for a separate homeland.
4. The Jamaat-i-Islami is probably the most organized religious and political party of Pakistan. The Jamaat's ideology and its political activism have left its imprint not only on Pakistan's political history but on Islamic revivalist movements across the Muslim world. It's the main spokesman of Islamization process in Pakistan. In fact Jamaat-i-Islami activism has been main motivation and impulse for other religious groups to create space for their distinct religious identities. Jamaat was founded in August 1941 in Lahore. Its founder, Maulana Abul Ala Maududi, was one of the outstanding scholars of his time. The Jamaat was initially averse to electoral politics but later on it embraced the imperative of electoral politics and remained one of the key political players which, according to its critics, are an indication of one of its many doctrinal compromises. For a detailed view on Jamaat's role in Pakistan's politics see Abdul Rashid *Revolution to Revolution: Jamaat-e-Islami in the Politics of Pakistan* (Karachi: Royal Book Company; 2003); Syed Vali Raza Nasr *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution* (London: IB Taurus Publishers; 1994).
5. General Zia in a move to associate civilians to his military regime appointed Majlis-i-Shura (Federal Advisory Council) in 1981. Its main functions were not to

legislate but only to locate public issues within certain limits and it fell far short of satisfying the people's demand for democratic institutions. Most of its members were scholars, intellectuals, journalists, economists and theologians, sympathetic to Zia regime. For an overview of politics in Zia era see Mushahid Hussain *Pakistan's Politics: The Zia Years* (Lahore: Progressive Publishers; 1990); Craig Baxter ed. *Zia's Pakistan: Politics and Stability in a Frontline State* (Lahore: Vanguard; 1985).

6. Mair Jones, Sara Suleri's mother was a Welsh lady by birth and met Mr. Z. A. Suleri in London in mid 1940s. She married Mr. Suleri, embraced Islam, came to Pakistan after the Indo-Pak partition and became a lecturer in English at the University of Punjab. She got her Islamic name Surraya Suleri to which Sara often refers to in *Meatless Days*.



## Chapter – 3

### Contextualizing Suleri's Work: Z. A. Suleri's Role in History and Politics of Pakistan

Sara Suleri's exposure to the covert political episodes of Pakistani history and her disturbed family is mainly due to the life and profession her father Zia-ud-Din Ahmed Suleri's (Z.A. Suleri) chose. Her father's active involvement in the politics of the country and his hate and love relationship with various democratic and military governments of Pakistan helped Sara develop her critical gaze on various events of national significance happening around her. She was grown up in a home which was all the time charged with political discussions or writings about the ongoing political affairs of the country. She recalls her childhood in *Meatless Days* as:

What sounds of conversation filled my infancy, patterns of urgent and perpetual talk! I heard my parents talking to each other all the time, but never of themselves, only about newspapers and circulations and odd names like Khwaja Nazimuddin and Mr. Liaquat Ali. For there was still a parliament in Pakistan: an abundant, talk-filled era, long before we had developed with such gusto or taste for censorship and martial law.

(Suleri, 1989, p. 117)

Her father Z. A. Suleri was one of the leading journalists of English language newspapers of Pakistan. He left a lasting influence on Pakistani society and politics since the pre-partition era till his death in 1999. Beginning his career as a journalist after receiving a diploma in Journalism from the University of Punjab in Lahore and an active member of the Muslim struggle for freedom in the Indo-Pak subcontinent, he later came to be recognized as a leading journalist of Pakistan. Z.A. Suleri's professional career and his forays into country's politics were full of controversies and paradoxical episodes. Z. A. Suleri's role in the political arena of the country began even before the inception of

Pakistan as he was an active member of the freedom struggle. Mr. Suleri, during the freedom movement, got a chance to work in close alliance with Mr. Jinnah and observe him closely. During the process he became so much captivated by the charm and aura of his personality that he could never come out of it for the rest of his life. Mr. Suleri's this obsession became a permanent feature of his household and Sara along with rest of her family members had to bear the burden of Mr. Suleri's unquestioned devotion to his leader. Sara reacts that "I grew up in a world that had only a single house hold god, called the Quaid ..." (Sara, 1989, p. 113). Jinnah established an organization in London named Muslim India Information Center to propagate the point of view of the Indian Muslims in Europe and facilitate the organization of the All India Muslim League in London. Z.A. Suleri was appointed as secretary of this organization where he served the cause of the All India Muslim League. He wrote a book entitled *My Leader* in 1946 (one of the earliest biographies of Jinnah) about Mr. Jinnah for which he received a letter of appreciation from Mr. Jinnah himself.

Z. A. Suleri's journalistic career is also an important aspect of his life which had long lasting impact on Sara's life. He started his career in the daily *Dawn* and later established *Times of Karachi* where he worked as its editor from 1953 to 1957. Sara along with other members of the family used to sit in her father's room and listen to various editorials that Mr. Z. A. Suleri wrote and narrated to them. Mr. Suleri was arrested and sent to jail on more than one occasion because of his editorials and writings that criticized government's policies. These hard moments in Suleri family did not go unnoticed by Sara even when she was a little kid. She records her bitter and unpleasant childhood memories of her father's being in jail as:

So Prime ministers came and went, and Pip was in and out of jail: it made Iffat sob dramatically, "Oh, no, he's not a jailbird, not Papa!" But life had a center like a printing press, constantly in motion. So when Papa was jailed for sedition, during my gestation, and Mama was in charge of the *Times of Karachi*, she made her protest known. She ordered into press an empty paper, sheafs of blank newsprint that bore nothing but the title, the *Times of Karachi* and the burden of nude paper.

(Suleri, 1989, p. 117)

She further adds:

Then he was in jail for what felt like the longest time for me, after we had moved to Lahore and Pip was imprisoned for the Gurmani case...when Iffat and Shahid and I sat down to draw hideously vicious little representations of the man and send them off to Papa to cheer him up in Jail. I missed him when he was gone.

(Suleri, 1989, p. 118)

The relationship of press and the government, in Pakistan, had always been that of mistrust and guile. Only five years after the independence a major clash between the government and the press took place when in 1952 the Government of Punjab banned the publication of two weeklies from Lahore, *Chattan* and *Asia*, for a period of one year on the allegations of indecent and immoral writings (Niazi, 1979, 57). Z.A. Suleri along with Khurshid Alam and N. M. Katpal was arrested soon after for they were together in publishing a cartoon in *Evening Times* accusing the government of bringing turmoil to the nation. During these tough times in 1952, the press observed a 24 hour strike about which Niazi writes,

It was a remarkable demonstration of public feeling that in protest...the entire national press closed for one day, including *Dawn*, which was the foremost spokesman of the Nazimuddin regime and certainly a bitter opponent of *Evening Times*.

(Niazi, 1979, 57)

Another incident where Mr. Suleri rose his voice was the clash between Liaquat Ali Khan's government and Miss Fatima Jinnah, Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's sister. In 1951 Ms. Fatima Jinnah was supposed to broadcast her message for the people

of Pakistan on the day of death of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah as had been the usual practice for the last two years. There arose a clash between Miss Fatima Jinnah and Mr. Z.A. Bokhari, the government official and Controller of Broadcasting, when the later objected to the two sentences in Ms. Jinnah's speech. Later on, her speech was manipulated during broadcasting and the government had to pay the price for this malafide manipulation. Z.A. Suleri regretted this episode in the following words,

The government's long failure to explain the incident seemed to confirm people's worst suspicion. This silence helped to reveal the atmosphere of touchiness which came to surround the regime and the sycophantic attitude which officials had come to adopt. The inference was drawn that if it could happen to Miss Jinnah of all people, there was no one who could raise his voice.

(Niazi, 1979, 68)

Another very significant and controversial aspect of Mr. Suleri's life is his unquestioned support of almost all the military rules and rulers in Pakistan. Be it Muhammad Ayub Khan, Yahya Khan or General Zia-ul-Haq, he always wrote to justify their unlawful rules and various steps taken as the leaders of the country. During the Ayub martial law regime he, being the editor of *Times of Karachi*, wrote an editorial to give justifications of the government's strict actions against the press media in the words,

The occasion demands that the rest of the National Press should hail the ideological re-birth of the *Pakistan Times* and its allied publications. They will no longer be 'strangers in the house'. We send them our greetings and felicitations on their liberation from 'distant orbits and alien horizons'. THE REVOLUTIONARY REGIME HAS RENDERED A SIGNAL SERVICE TO THE CAUSE OF A FREE PRESS IN PAKISTAN. (emphasis added)

(Zaheer, 1998, 14)

Suleri's support for Ayub Khan in 1962 elections and his criticism of Miss Fatima Jinnah as a presidential candidate is another occasion where he prefers a military ruler over Miss Jinnah who was the sister of Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah. All his slogans and

claims in favour of democracy were set aside and he openly appreciated Ayub's policies and role in the progress of Pakistan through his writings. Ziring in his book *The Ayub Khan Era: Politics in Pakistan 1958-1969* quotes Z.A. Suleri's words criticizing Miss Fatima Jinnah for causing hurdles in smooth running of the affairs of the country as:

Now Miss Jinnah is not challenging President Ayub in merely personal terms; she is equally questioning the validity of the presidential system and wants it to be substituted by the old parliamentary system...the people cannot vote for anarchy; they will prefer the presidential system which bestowed stability and made for phenomenal progress in every field of national activity.

(Ziring, 1971, 11)

Suleri's stance in favour of the then president Ayub didn't go waste and he was rewarded during Ayub's era. During the India-Pakistan war of 1965, he was appointed as Director General ISPR where he worked with international journalists and media correspondents to propagate Pakistani point of view in the international press. He was given the rank of a colonel and the privilege to wear the army uniform. In late 1960s when Muhammad Ayub Khan was no more the president of the country and Suleri being an opportunist had left his side, his views about the once favourite Suleri changed quite dramatically. His remarks in 1969 about Mr. Suleri in his *Diaries* are telling:

I see Suleri has become the editor of an English daily called the *New Times* freshly started from Rawalpindi. Though an opportunist of the first order and a thoroughly unreliable and ungrateful man, he writes well.

(Khan, 2007, 365)

Muhammad Ayub Khan was not the only military ruler in Pakistan who enjoyed Mr. Suleri's support during his rule as Suleri was also successful in winning the heart of the next president Agha Muhammad Yahya Khan, also descending from the army ranks. Sara Suleri, though in a patronizing tone, also mentions her father's this ability to shift his loyalties that 'there was always an alacrity to his switch of allegiance' (p. 116) and he

'was brilliant at fresh starts' (p. 128). During the Yahya rule, he enjoyed the status of a special courtesan and his expertise was considered valuable by Yahya. He was one of those few people, close to the president, who had been staunch supporters of Yahya Khan's martial law regime and played a role in turning his mind against Bhutto which resulted in widening the gap between the two. Later when Bhutto took over the charge of the government from Yahya, one of the early arrangements made by him to curb the press was the dismissal of all those persons and journalists who showed a hostile attitude towards him or his policies in the past. Mr. Z.A. Suleri was the first one to bear the brunt in the form of his dismissal as editor of the *Pakistan Times*. Raza writes in his book *Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and Pakistan 1967-1977*

Martial law was used to fulfill not only the Manifesto but also other 'promises' made by ZAB. He dismissed those who had been hostile in the past. Almost immediately, he removed, by Martial Law Order No. 28, retired Lt.-Gen. Habibullah Khan as Chairman of the National Press Trust and Z.A. Suleri as senior editor of *The Pakistan Times*. Both had been critical of ZAB.

(Raza, 1997, 150)

Later on, during General Zia-ul-Haq era, another martial law regime in the history of Pakistan and time of fortune in the life of Z.A. Suleri, he worked as additional secretary of the Ministry of Information, Chief Executive of the Pakistan Progressive Papers Limited and the chief editor of *Pakistan Times*. In 1981 when General Zia-ul-Haq established *Majlis-e-Shoora*, Z.A. Suleri was nominated as one of its members and he remained one till 1985. In 1988 he was appointed as 'advisor to president' for media and worked on the post till the death of General Zia in a plane crash in 1988. Suleri always praised General Zia as a great hero of Afghan war and a visionary and indispensable leader for the survival of Islam, and Pakistan. Through his writings, Suleri always propounded Islam, democracy and freedom but at the same time he eulogized Zia-ul-Haq

beyond limits even though Zia was a military dictator and held a very controversial position in the history of Pakistan because of the prolonged martial law and forced implementation of Islamic principles in Pakistani society. In his article *A Leader with Faith and Vision* Suleri is more than eager to dispel the shadows of all the controversies about Zia-ul-Haq and presents him as one of the greatest leaders that Pakistan ever had. 'Shaheed Zia-ul-Haq', 'gentleman', 'obedient and disciplined soldier' and 'saviour and liberator' are some of the adjectives and attributes that he uses for Zia. He further writes,

Similarly, Zia-ul-Haq became associated with an eventful phase of recent history which put in the shade all the many other things that could be said about him as the Chief Martial Law Administrator, Islamic reformer, innovator of the Shoura variety of legislature, a military commander of exceptional tactical skill and a dictator who voluntarily surrendered power to a popularly elected National Assembly.

(Azzam, 1989, 13)

Not only does Mr. Suleri favours Zia's military regime but even thinks of it inevitable for the survival of democracy in Pakistan. For Suleri, firstly Zia-ul-Haq's simple and a common man's lifestyle and secondly his not being just an idle preacher but a practicing Muslim are the two important reasons which attribute to his great impact on the hearts and minds of Pakistani nation, continuing even after his death. Not to wonder Suleri pays huge tribute to his 'utter commitment' to Islam, his stout regularity in prayers and *tahajjud* and above all his raising the clarion call of Azan in the United Nations auditorium. Suleri believed that Zia's obsession with Islam became the reason for his death. He writes,

He wanted to bring matters to a conclusion so that Pakistan and Afghanistan could lay the foundation of an Islamic alliance before India's threat to the region assumed dangerous proportions. But that was not to be. Zia-ul-Haq's resolve was in direct conflict with the combined strategy of America, Russia and India. They feared that if Zia-ul-Haq was allowed to have his way, he would go far-perhaps too

far-to establish an Islamic government which would truly pinch Russia's 'soft underbelly', and create the infrastructure of an Islamic bloc which might jeopardize their scheme of things. Even as Zia was preparing for the final struggle, he was assassinated...Aptly the Islamic Union of Afghan Mujahideen inscribed on his tomb the epitaph, 'Shaheed-e-Jihad-e-Afghanistan'.

(Azzam, 1989, 20)

Suleri went so far in praising and finding justifications for Zia-ul-Haq's greatness that he spoke of him as the greatest leader that Pakistan ever had after Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and the harbinger of Islamic renaissance in the country. In the same article, Suleri further praises Zia-ul-Haq,

However, the impact of Zia-ul-Haq has proved so indestructible in the mores of Pakistan, whether in the field of Islamization, politics, Afghanistan or policy towards India, that nothing can alter the course he set. That course is like a river which will keep flowing after the blocks put up by anti-Islamic elements are removed by the pro-Zia torrents...To my mind, Zia-ul-Haq is the only leader to date who can take a place next to the Quaid-i-Azam. Like the Quaid, Zia has opened another chapter of Islamic renaissance.

(Azzam, 1989, 22.23)

Suleri's fervent support for almost all the military rulers of Pakistan is contrary to his loud slogans of democracy and proponent of Jinnah's vision and his principles he claimed to uphold throughout his life. About this dichotomy in Suleri's claims and actions, Khalid Hassan's comments on Z. A. Suleri's ever willingness for unconditional support to every military ruler are quite telling,

He passionately supported every martial law, every imposter, every strutting general from Ayub onwards. Had he been alive today, he would without doubt have been the greatest of Musharraf's supporters.

(Hassan, 2005, 3)

Nawaz in his book *Crossed Swords: Pakistan, its Army and Wars Within* speaks of Suleri's ability to become a favourite courtesan for the military administrators and reasons for his popularity during all the army rules when he supports Khalid Hassan's version about Suleri and writes that,



As usual, these rapid actions and the appearance of martial law were greeted by the coterie of government-sponsored journalists who inhabited the upper echelons of the media bureaucracy, specifically *The Pakistan Times* and other papers of National Press Trust. Among them, Z.A. Suleri was among the better known names, a man who managed to find salvation in military rule and served as a vocal supporter of such regimes. As Yahya's chief public relations person, Colonel (later brigadier) A. R. Siddiqi (head of the ISPR Directorate) observed about Suleri: 'Not only did he justify the resort to martial law, but he also lent it a depth and dimension beyond the dreams of the junta.'

(Nawaz, 2008, 251)

Such loaded and charged opinions and various controversies which engulf Suleri's life make him a controversial personality for many of the thinkers and historians in Pakistan. Sara Suleri, had been a witness as well as a victim of most of these different phases of her father's life. Mr. Suleri's devotion to Jinnah, his clashes with Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and most importantly his unquestionable support for the process of Islamization initiated by Zia-ul-Haq are some of the facets of his life which largely affected Sara. Zia's Islamic reforms and Z. A. Suleri's religious metamorphosis made her reactionary to every person who somehow or the other was related to Islam. She vehemently criticizes her grandmother for she was the one at home performing the religious rituals meticulously. At occasions Sara becomes unnecessarily harsh by making fun and even giving insulting remarks about her in the memoir. But surprisingly when it comes to Mr. Z. A. Suleri who underwent an overnight change from being secular to religious as a result of Zia's Islamization, Sara is not as critical of him as she was of her grandmother. Instead, on this occasion her dislike and criticism is targeted towards Zia-ul-Haq, the initiator of the process of Islamization in Pakistan. This dichotomy in Sara Suleri's writings of ignoring her father's unjustified actions is not just restricted to religious sphere but she also seems to be biased towards his unprincipled political and professional career when instead of questioning Z. A. Suleri's ever changing loyalties she boasts of and eulogizes his

towering personality and competence. All those issues for which she ruthlessly criticizes the political leaders of the country and even her grandmother turn out to be the 'longest romance' (p. 120) of Mr. Suleri's life for Sara. He had been one of the most vociferous supporters of all the martial law regimes and military administrators of Pakistan during his life time. He enjoyed special privileges and posts during various such rules which he earned through his not so principled support for these but Sara consciously ignores these details and never discredits or belittles her father.

Salman Rushdie, an Indian-British novelist, is another important literary figure of Twentieth century whose influence can be traced notably not only in Sara Suleri's thought but her writing style as well. Both Sara Suleri and Rushdie's literary aptitude is born out of similar social and political background: since both of them belong to the Subcontinent, both are migrants and hence displaced, both have problems with past, history, memory and historical and political crisis of their nations. Rushdie, in his novel *Shame*, writes about the not so welcome effort of suppressing the past carried out during the early post-independence days of Pakistan and Sara Suleri sees the country hung over by the patches of amnesia like a fog, due to its repeated but unsuccessful attempts of erasing and rewriting the pre-independence history. Sara further shares Rushdie's views regarding the misuse of Islam by the political and military elite of Pakistan. Sara is very critical of General Zia-ul-Haq's obsession with religion and then his politicizing Islam for his personal gains. Rushdie also gives similar accounts of the issue in his novels, particularly *Shame* and *Midnight's Children*. Ian Almond in *The New Orientalists: Postmodern representations of Islam from Foucault to Baudrillard* speaks of Rushdie's views about Islam's political position in Pakistan as,

Rushdie in novels such as *Midnight's Children* and *Shame*, often observes how Islam is invoked to facilitate the nationalisms proclaimed by the newly born states of Pakistan and Bangladesh. Whether it is Commanders-in-Chief who quote the Quran, descriptions of Pakistan as 'Al-Lah's new country' (*Shame*, p. 69), Quranic promises of paradise and virgin *houris* to would-be war heroes or the Karachi TV chief who considers 'pork' to be a 'four-letter word' (*ibid.*, p. 70), Rushdie deftly delineates and comments upon the various hypocrisies involved when nation-states employ the faith of their peoples to justify and colour their own self-seeking policies.

(Almond, 2007, 100-101)

Both Rushdie and Sara share a common dissatisfaction with the way things were managed after independence and expressed their disapproval and dissatisfaction in their writings openly. Both Sara and Rushdie wed public sphere of existence with personal and create political fiction from this intermingling of the two. Their experimentation in fiction writing includes an excessive use of words from Urdu language in their writings making their texts rooted in the linguistic and socio-cultural milieu of their countries.

## Chapter - 4

### Personal and Political Parallels in Suleri's *Meatless Days*

In *Meatless Days*, Sara Suleri, in a setting of geographical and temporal dislocation, writes of her past memories and creates an autobiographical fiction which is embedded in political connotations. Sara, with most of her formative years in Pakistan, has interwoven the early post independence turbulent phase of her country and reminiscences of tragic events in her family. This web of political and personal experiences is intentionally woven to highlight how in Pakistan lives of individuals are inextricably interwoven with and affected because of various decisions and happenings at the greater political level of the country. Sangeeta Ray in her article, *Memory, Identity, Patriarchy: Projecting a past in the Memoirs of Sara Suleri and Michael Ondaatje* writes of Sara's intermingling of personal and political spheres in her memoir thus: "Suleri's memoir constantly imbricates her family in the reconstruction of the nation of Pakistan so that the gap between the micro-political and the macro-political is continuously collapsed" (Ray: 1993; p. 49). In *Meatless Days* Sara attempts to re-narrate the history of Pakistan and the Pakistani nation, to locate the gaps left unattended hitherto and to challenge the established historical narratives emerging from Pakistan. This was not the problem faced by Pakistan or the Pakistani nation only but almost all the postcolonial nations felt the need to probe into their early post-independence history and many writers took up the issue in their writings. Elleke Boehmer comments in this context as,

Many more postcolonial narratives...have plots which are based on history. Especially in the early post-independence era, this was the history concerned with the colonial times, the build-up to independence and its immediate aftermath.

(Boehmer; 2005, p. 187)

Dennis Walder insists on the need of continuous revision of history because, “the real human dimension can only be read through a sense of history, which is a form of collective memory, continually revised” (Walder; 2005, 190). For this purpose Sara Suleri consciously intertwines the histories of individuals with that of her country for an individual is an extension of the social and cultural milieu. Eitzen and Zinn claim that, “any individual living in a society internalizes the culture unconsciously and unknowingly and fails to recognize its control over his life as unnatural and abnormal. Culture even shapes thoughts and perception. What we see and how we interpret our surroundings is also determined by culture” (Eitzen & Zinn; 1991, 100). Political and personal in *Meatless Days* are merged in such a way that both the levels become the reason for each other’s existence and interpretation. The attempts to understand one sphere without taking the other into account invites the risk of incomplete and incorrect explanations which might ultimately lead to rise of feelings of frustration among the people. Oliver Lovesey in “*Postcolonial Self-Fashioning*” in Sara Suleri’s *Meatless Days* quotes Georges Gusdorf,

The individual does not feel herself to exist outside of interdependent existence that assert its rhythms everywhere in the community...(where) lives are so thoroughly entangled that each of them has its center everywhere and its circumference nowhere. The important unit is thus never the isolated being.

(Lovesey; 1997, p. 36)

The reasons of one event happening on any of the two levels and its impacts are necessarily rooted in the other. This parallel and simultaneous coexistence of both the levels, personal and political, creates an impact of retrospection and Sara has deliberately made an effort to reflect upon her family and her nation’s past. Lovesey comments of Sara’s narrative style and her merging of political and personal tales in *Meatless Days* in these words:

Transmogrification or dream like transformation of personal and collective history – the story of self, family and nation in Pakistan where ‘change was all there was’ (p. 18) – is the central organizing trope of *Meatless Days*, and draws together its discursive negotiations with autobiography and history, and underlies its status as metaautobiography and metahistory.

(Lovesey, 1997, p. 43)

For Lovesey details from the past of Sara, her family’s life and history of Pakistan go simultaneously in her tale and formulate the intrinsic underlying structure of the memoir. Sara believes that it is impossible to make an attempt to rewrite the history of her nation by simply discussing the major political calamities or the events of national and historical significance. Individuals, with their existence rooted in the family ties and their social roles build up a nation. The political episodes or affairs affect the family lives and thought patterns and therefore cannot be ignored from the study of any nation’s past and history. Consequently Sara had to incorporate tales from her family life in order to synthesize the greater and larger political context of Pakistan in *Meatless Days*.

Throughout the act of writing this autobiographical record of her and her nation’s past, Sara has remained conscious of her ‘self’, being always present in the tales. Lovesey believes that Sara Suleri’s is anyhow aware of the risks of a narrator’s and especially a female narrator’s position in the text. She comments,

Rejecting a postmodern ahistoricism and a western bourgeois notion of the individualistic self, Suleri’s text, nevertheless, celebrates the protean inter-discursive subject of the postmodern project. While locatable referentially in terms of its juxtaposition to national events and also as a discursive formulation in terms of social roles, and gendered, racial and religious difference, the autobiographical subject in *Meatless Days* is persistently unstable and multifarious. *Meatless Days* self consciously interrogates postcolonial identity by engaging with the self’s construction in language, the body’s temporal location, and the limits of the technologies of the self.

(Lovesey, 1997, p. 36)

A re-narration of Sara's experiences and to deal with the complications arising due to co-existence of personal and political lenses might have been impossible by employing the traditional techniques of storytelling. By adopting a postmodern technique of narration, she has rejected a traditional linear and chronological description of events and consciously blurred the boundaries of time. Sangeeta Ray discusses Sara's rejection of a linear account of her past memories that,

Sara Suleri's anecdotal record of her experiences consistently overcomes the boundaries drawn by the 'now' and 'then' and 'here' and 'there' of a linear, spatially demarcated, autobiographical recounting of the events in one's life.

(Ray, 1993, p. 48)

This particular narrative style in *Meatless Days* employs a technique of blending various deviant and non-deviant literary and linguistic patterns in the narration of many apparently de-contextualized and disjointed tales from her life. The use of different linguistic devices in creating complex sentence structures indicates the complexity of experiences that Sara had tried to put in her text. Talaat praises Sara for her mastery in fabricating her vision through the texture of her text as,

The representative paragraphs bespeak of Sara's dexterity in composing sentences that convey the most trivial detail strongly coloured by her perception of things, her feelings and her angles of thought. The construction of these sentences seem to have consciously designed to make room for an essentially personal, intimate 'comment' which follows some statement already given...Sara's 'musings' determine the structure of her sentences and paragraphs, as well as the choice of vocabulary and combinations of collocations in a particular way – especially where qualifying remarks are to be made. An abundant presence of qualifiers at different ranks in her sentences provides a linguistically determined feature of 'style' that allow her to build her vision into the very texture of narrative art.

(Talaat, 2003, p. 48)

#### 4.1. National Amnesia and Pakistan:

*Meatless Days*, according to Sara herself, is a tale that can only be understood, completely, by those who know the art to forget and have chosen to eliminate the haunting and painful past, at some point in their lives. In the very first paragraph of the memoir, Sara writes, "...and Fawzi, with a grimace of recognition, knows because she knows the impulse to forget" (Suleri, 1989, p.1). *Meatless Days* involves the mini-narratives of more than one characters who appear to be suffering from amnesia and facing the problem of history in their lives. Friedrich Nietzsche's<sup>1</sup> concept of history and his emphasis on the necessity of forgetfulness in *The Uses and Abuses of History* is of great relevance here. Nietzsche believes that man's existence is determined historically and his ability to forget his past also decides his capacity to act. Past or history cannot be escaped but forgotten only. The act of forgetting or remembering, according to Nietzsche, is an act of will and in order to escape from the pain, that accompanies history, it is necessary to forget. In *Meatless Days*, both in the case of mini-narratives of individuals and the meta-narrative of history of Pakistan, the tales involve an impulse and a conscious will to forget on the part of the characters. Lovesey comments,

*Meatless Days* denies the totalizing myth of objective history - progressive, homogenous and organic. Suleri's stance is not of a traditional historian, that 'absence obsessed with objectivity' to use Pierre Nora's phrase: instead, she is the historian of her own memory who does not attempt to resurrect or relive the past but remains alert to the 'subtle play between its intractability and its disappearance.' Suleri's position of utterance is poised awkwardly between the anxiety of remembering and the will to forget.

(Lovesey, 1997, p. 39)

Sara's grandmother forgets how many sisters she had; similarly she forgets to offer her prayers after her recovery from severe burns; her father has a tendency to forget some of



the details but the most striking parallel drawn by Sara, in the memoir, is of her grandmother and Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's deaths. Both die in the same week and both are forgotten soon because of the Pakistani nation's tendency of forgetfulness. Sara expresses her dissatisfaction and anger with this act of forgetfulness in the words,

My father called from London and mentioned Dadi was now dead. It happened in the same week that Bhutto finally was hanged, and our imaginations were consumed by the public and historical dying. Pakistan made rapid provisions not to talk about the thing that had been done, and somehow, accidentally, Dadi must have been mislaid into that larger decision, because she too ceased being a mentioned thing.

(Suleri, 1989, p. 17)

Later she laments;

Bhutto rapidly became obsolete after a succession of bumper harvests, and none of us can fight the ways that the names Mamma and Iffat have become archaism, quaint nesses on our lips.

(Suleri, 1989, p. 19)

Bhutto's calibre and contributions were bargained with a succession of bumper harvests and the controversial judicial sentence of his death<sup>2</sup>, in the martial law regime of General Zia-ul-Haq was never probed into and remains a controversy till today. Pakistanis are not just responsible for ignoring and neglecting these crimes of national level but they also used the same propensity to forget their personal loss. It is not just Bhutto who was forgotten but deaths of Sara's grandmother, mother and sister also go un-aggrieved in the family. Discussing the deaths of Bhutto and grandmother parallel to each other though seems out of context in the beginning where Bhutto, the most popular of all the Pakistani political giants and writer's grandmother, a simple household woman have nothing in common but Sara is of the view that the past of a nation can only be understood through the personal lens of masses. Sangeeta Ray discusses the simultaneity of Bhutto and grandmother's deaths as:

... the hanging of ex-Prime Minister Bhutto is linked to the death of Dadi and...the figure of a hanging Bhutto with a broken neck fills the space of a culturally imagined memory, erasing the more personal death of an indomitable woman who scuttled through significant historical and political changes with a spine 'frozen into a perfect curve' (2). However, it is precisely because the nation cannot be written only in terms of a public history that the personal curve is unearthed in the context of an international celebration of recollection.

(Ray, 1993, p. 52)

Sara's grandmother, a character in *Meatless Days*, had witnessed the most from the history of making of Pakistan and then building of a national consciousness hence becomes a very important person having her life deeply rooted in the past of her nation. The curve of her back carries the burden of many years of her life and whatever she has seen on the path to her old age. Therefore her death becomes as important, for the writer, as that of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and Sara discusses both the tragedies, personal and political, parallel to each other.

Sara recalls her grandmother's death thus, "anyway she was always outside our ken, an anecdotal thing, neither more nor less. So some sweet reassurance of reality accompanies my discourse when I claim that when Dadi died, we all forgot to grieve." (Suleri, 1989, p. 19) Sara's family 'worn by repetition' decides to eliminate grief from their lives once and for all which accounts for the fact that why and how Pakistani nation chooses to forget all the memories which remind them of their moments of grief and agony.

After going through so many tragedies on personal and political scales, the nation must had had to suffer from a lot of grief which must have always been reminding them of the loss they had to bear. Quite ironically the nation, instead of using this grief as a medium to raise a resistance against the continuation of the colonial policies, seems to have erased the very idea of grief from their memories. Pakistanis, both as individuals and as a nation,

developed the tendency to forget. The whole nation, it appears, is shrouded in a state of national amnesia. It is a willful forgetting and a conscious disremembering of past for neither the nation nor any of the characters from Sara's memoir seem focused on remembering the past. The narrative becomes even bitter when Sara points out that the things or issues which have been forgotten are those which should have made them answerable for some harsh realities regarding their failure as individuals and as a nation. Sara believes that the whole country had the ability to grow absent minded overnight just like patches of amnesia started to hang over the hollows of the land like fog. This amnesia made the nation forget some of the most important and dreadful incidents of its national history, like Bhutto's hanging, or the tragic events OF 1971<sup>3</sup>, and that in turn resulted in the formation of an alternate pseudo-history to satisfy the naïve and easily influenced thoughts of the general population. Rushdie in his novel *Shame* speaks of this problem of history for a postcolonial nation and particularly a postcolonial writer as,

I build imaginary countries and try to impose them on the ones that exist. I, too, face the problem of history: what to retain, what to dump, how to hold on to what memory insists on relinquishing, how to deal with change. And to come back to the 'roots' idea, I should say that I haven't managed to shake myself free of it completely.

(Rushdie, 1983, pp. 87-88)

Forgetfulness for Sara was a form of escapism practiced by the Pakistanis as a nation. The resistance that was required at some of the most crucial points in the history of the country was avoided by the people. Pakistan's defeat in the war of 1971 and Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's death are the two dark chapters in the country's history which remain unanswered and unresolved. Instead of questioning and protesting against the unlawful martial law regime, the people of Pakistan joined *General Zulu*<sup>3</sup> in the process of Islamization which in itself was a political ploy initiated out of principle of necessity<sup>4</sup>.

There are many tragic narratives described in *Meatless Days*, both from the lives of the individuals like deaths in Sara's family and from the political history of Pakistan as well. Both at individual and collective level silence and forgetfulness is preferred over questioning the responsible ones. Talaat in her article *The Metaphor of Meatless Days*, talks about Sara's skill of combining personal tragedies with political crisis of the nation and the writer's consciousness of her nation's getting amnesiac when she writes that, "No literati before Suleri, who emerged on the international scene from Pakistan, could give expression to common sorrows and joys, while still retaining a critical posture to evils that blight our culture and politics." (Talaat, 2004, p. 12)

#### **4.2. Treatment of Religion in *Meatless Days*:**

Another controversial issue since the very early days of Pakistan that Sara has dealt with in her memoir *Meatless Days* is the role and place of religion in the country. Pakistan is known as the only country in the world that won its freedom on the basis of religious ideology<sup>5</sup>. Islam was the major reason and the driving force in the unity of the Muslims of the subcontinent and rationalized their movement and struggle for independence. Muslims being the minority in the subcontinent, when looked at in terms of religion, realized and regained their sense of identity and saw a reason to raise their voice collectively against the future threat of Hindu dominance. It was religion which engendered the 'two nation theory' and became the main reason for the idea of 'Muslim nationhood' to re-emerge in the subcontinent and subsequently led to the creation of Pakistan. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, though previously known to be a secular person and ambassador of Hindu Muslim unity, became the leading spokesman<sup>6</sup> for an independent Muslim state for the people of the region. Pakistan<sup>7</sup>, as the name suggests, was promised

to become a place of peace and prosperity for the Muslims. Unfortunately that did not turn out to be the case. After the independence, Islam was immediately pushed to the background with the appearance of many other controversial issues on the political scenario of Pakistan. Islam which was thought to be the determining factor in issues like constitution making and laying out of social and cultural milieu of the country was continuously overlooked by the policy makers. The place of Islam in country's constitution and its role in politics remained undecided for quite a long period of time after 1947 adding to the already prevailing atmosphere of political chaos, stagnation and uncertainty. Suleri, in his book *Pakistan's Lost<sup>7</sup> Years* comments,

Three factors bedevilled Pakistan's national life: continued preoccupation with constitution-making and the suspense caused thereby; stalemate and stagnation in the political process and lastly confusion and uncertainty in assigning the place of Islam in the country's polity. Islam was involved both in constitution-making and party politics.

(Suleri, 1962, p. 3)

The involvement of Islam not only in the lives of the individuals of Pakistan but also the politics can not be negated. Islam as a religious ideology has been misused by the political leaders of Pakistan to hoodwink the masses and exploit their respect for the religion. Political and military governments, both, had been unsure about defining religion's role in running the affairs of the state and consequently Islam had been (mis)used differently by successive governments. This uncertain status of religion on the national scenario also got replicated on the social and individual scale as depicted by Sara in *Meatless Days*. Various characters in the memoir respond differently to the issue of religion at different occasions in their lives. Sara's grandmother, shown to be an ardent lover of God, is always the one in the family who imprecates Satan, loves God, converses with Him and gives uninvited sermons, of her own, to the people on the roads. She is

even very meticulous and eccentric in the performance of her religious rituals. Sara describes her religious eccentricities as,

In the winter I see her alone, painstakingly dragging her straw mat out to the courtyard at the back of the house and following the rich course of the afternoon sun. With her would go her Quran, a metal basin in which she could wash her hands, and her ridiculously heavy spouted water pot, that was made of brass. None of us, according to Dadi, were quite pure enough to transport these particular items.

(Suleri, 1989, p. 6)

In April, following the trying times of 1971, she suffers from severe burns while making tea in the kitchen one night and undergoes not just physical but spiritual transformation as she left her long kept friend God and forgot to pray (Suleri, 1989, p. 15). The incident of grandmother's burning happens at the time when Pakistan was about to witness a major change in the course of its history; Islamization of Pakistan. General Zia-ul-Haq announces the third martial law in the country on 5<sup>th</sup> of July, 1977 and takes refuge in Islam to perpetuate his rule<sup>8</sup>. Zia announced 'Hudud Ordinance' and many other punitive laws based upon the basic Islamic principles and decreed a ban on many major cultural activities, including music and theatrical performances. Islam from homes and mosques came out in the streets of Pakistan. Religious groups and organizations were empowered by Zia and served as a tool in perpetuating his rule. Sara witnessed this religious maneuvering of the nation and comments,

We dimly knew we were about to witness Islam's departure from the land of Pakistan. The men would take it to the streets and make it vociferate, but the great romance between religion and the populace, the embrace that engendered Pakistan, was done.

(Suleri, 1989, p. 15)

This process of Islamization also affected Sara's family. Mr. Z. A. Suleri, the most influential and authoritative person in the home, also undergoes a complete change from being secular to religious. Mr. Suleri, who never showed any religious inclination at any

point in his life, starts to pray and Sara's grandmother who had always claimed God to be her best friend suddenly stops praying.

That was a change, when Dadi patched herself together again and forgot to put prayer back into its proper pocket, for God could now leave the home and soon would join the government. Papa prayed and fasted and went on pilgrimage and read the Quran aloud with most peculiar locutions.

(Suleri, 1989, p. 15)

This transformation in the religious behaviour of grandmother and Papa in the family happens parallel to the process of Islamization in the era of General Zia-ul-Haq. Sara openly expresses her disgust for the man and throughout the memoir calls him not with his real name but as 'General Zulu'. The General brings Islam to the streets, makes it the property of masculine and politicizes it to serve his own purposes for erasing the fond memory of love among the ordinary masses and to ensure his prolonged rule. Religion in Pakistan had always been used to serve the political purposes and motives of the autocratic and democratic rulers alike. They have used Islam to lengthen their unpopular and at times even illegitimate rule. Commenting on this phenomenon Rushdie in his book *Shame* is of the view that,

So-called Islamic 'fundamentalism' does not spring, in Pakistan, from the people. It is imposed on them from above. Autocratic regimes find it useful to espouse the rhetoric of faith, because people respect that language, are reluctant to oppose it. This is how religion shore up dictators; by encircling them with words of power, words which people are reluctant to see, discredited, disenfranchised, mocked.

(Rushdie, 1983, p. 251)

In *Meatless Days*, religion is shown to influence not only individual's lives greatly but, as discussed above, it has also been used to serve the politicians' personal causes. Sara through her linguistic ingenuity has incorporated the interaction of both the individuals and the nation with religion and has highlighted the influence this interaction had on

personal and political levels in Pakistan. Talaat & Ghani (2004) praise Sara Suleri for her ability to turn various religious rituals in powerful literary symbols as:

She has turned veiling, praying, courtyard, mosque, and shab-e-meraj into powerful literary symbols. She has used them not only to depict the contour of Islamisation in Pakistan, but also as neutral symbols to describe her personal feelings and emotions. Never before they have been employed in a secular setting to symbolize merely a human condition.

(Talaat & Ghani, 2004, 12)

#### 4.3. Women in *Meatless Days*:

Religion is not the only issue which was mishandled in Pakistan by the political and the military elite of the country. Sara believes that women, a deprived community in Pakistan, are being denied of their rights and space in the society. They had always been treated as a minority and Sara is of the view that Pakistani women in particular are the one who suffer from an acute loss of identity. Women do not possess or share their due space in the social strata of Pakistan and are continuously made to realize of this denial of space. For Sara, although living in Pakistan means living among women yet she thinks that there are no women there; in as much as that they have no real meaning for their existence. Jane Tompkins also asserts that men suppress women allowing them very little or no space and voice in the socio-political and economic issues of the society. They determine what it means to be a woman. They make her devalued, devalue and a non-significant other. She claims,

What enrages me is the way women are used as extensions of men, mirrors of men, devices for showing men off, devices for helping men get what they want: They are never there in their own right, or rarely. The world of the Western contains no women. Sometimes I think *the world* contains no women.

(Jane Tompkins, 1987, p. 173)



Sara, after leaving Pakistan is alienated from the company of women and in order to fill this gap and to relocate all the women she had interacted with, either belonging to her family or from her circle of friends, she places them in her text and recalls whatever she can from their lives. Pakistani society is a patriarchal one and women have to struggle very hard in order to raise a voice for their due rights. Sara, in her memoir, has opted for a reversal of this social set up of Pakistan and gives far more space to women and their tales in her text as compared to men. Rays comments on women's place in *Meatless Days* as:

The desire to reinvent their lives rather than wait around to have them redirected by the changes going on around them motivates the sisters to act. Tillat gets married, moves to Kuwait and Sara journeys on to America. But this desire on Sara's part initiates a separation from her community of women, a connection she consistently seeks to reestablish by privileging the presence of her grandmother, mother, sisters, and friends in a textual celebration of a hegemonic heterogeneity.

(Ray, 1993, p. 52)

*Meatless Days* presents an account of Pakistan's history from matrilinear point of view. Sara in her postmodernist prose style blends the history of Pakistan with the issue of gender. Through the parallel existence of history and gender she is successful in creating an imaginary space where she combines the events of national significance with those of family, both happening at the same time and both explaining and accounting each other. Sandra Ponzanesi discusses this ambivalent relationship of gender and history in Suleri's memoir as,

It is the symbiotic relationship that links the female memory to the historical experience of nationhood. Borders cannot be located outside the body; neither is it possible to fix them in conventional writings. Suleri escapes not only the problem of essentialism by not giving a definition of the self, but she also dismantles a concept of nation that is based on a chronological notion of time. The nation is made by the recollection of the self and of other women, which can only happen

through a situated view in time/space/body. The nation is, therefore, subject to constant re-remembering, re-writing, and revision.

(Ponzanesi, 2004, p. 77)

What appear to be retrospective tales of the women from their life at the first look turn out to be highly penetrating episodes carrying much connotative and symbolic significance and meaning and serve as the referring parallels to the crucial events from the history of Pakistan. Denotative allocations, thus, are left far behind and these tales go a long way tracing and hinting upon much that still lies unquestioned in our past. Lovesay comments on the parallel handling of the national narrative of Pakistan and the place of women in the country as,

*Meatless Days* transmogrifies this grand national narrative by locating it within a maternal cultural tradition. The creative heritage of *Meatless Days* leads from the wily, eccentric Dadi and Suleri's Welsh Pakistani mother to the resplendent Ifat. Suleri writes through these women and particularly through her mother, lost on the divide of West and East and ignored in her husband's unrequited romance with national history.

(Lovesey, 1997, p. 45)

It seems very tragic and unfortunate that women, in the history of Pakistan, had been and are still identified through their biological existence and their roles based upon their duties of being a sister, mother, wife or a servant and are denied of any intellectual space or identity. Julia Kristiva, a leading feminist, believes that women are defined through a cyclical and non-linear temporality and this time based definition further marginalizes them. She comments,

As for time, female subjectivity would seem to provide a specific measure that essentially retains repetition and eternity from among the multiple modalities of time known through the history of civilizations. On the one hand, there are cycles, gestation, the eternal recurrence of a biological rhythm which confirms to that of nature and imposes temporality whose stereotyping may shock but whose temporality and unison and with what is experienced as extra-subjective time, cosmic time, occasion vertiginous visions and unnamable jouissance.

(Kristeva, 1986, p. 191)

Sara in *Meatless Days* claims that, "My reference is to a place where the concept of woman was not really part of an available vocabulary, we were too busy for that" (Suleri, 1989, p.1) and further asserts that, 'there are no women in the third world' (Suleri, 1989, p.1). For her a meaningful existence of women in the third world postcolonial societies is a scarcity. A similar protest is found in the writings of Mariama Ba, an African novelist, where she too rejects this silence against the injustices done to African women and voices her anger as,

There is still so much injustice...In the family, in the institutions, in society, in the street, in political organizations, discriminations reign supreme...We no longer accept the nostalgic praise to the African Mother, who, in his anxiety, man confuses with Mother Africa. Within African literature, room must be made for women.

(Schipper, 1984, pp. 46-47)

She, being a postcolonial writer, is not just the narrator of the tales but she herself witnessed and experienced many aspects of the formative phase of newly established Muslim state, Pakistan. The 'I', the narrator of *Meatless Days* is not just a 'native' in a postcolonial society but also a woman who had to struggle in order to find space in an essentially patriarchal society. Nayar also affirms that "Women's writings in Postcolonial, theocratic cultures have often portrayed the link between patriarchy, religion, and oppression in great detail (2008, p. 142). Postcolonialism, in the memoir, is coupled with the lives of women in Pakistan which inevitably leads to the unthinking celebration of the oppression (Suleri, 1992, 75). This name identity of the author with the narrator and the protagonist guarantees author's intentions to affirm this identity in the text and to do justice to his or her signature on the cover of the book (Lejeune, 2006, p. 26). Sara Suleri, by adopting the roles of author, narrator and the protagonist, incorporates her experiences, reflections and reminiscences from the diverse cultural and

political landscapes of Pakistan, Great Britain, and the United States and raises some very important issues of cultural belonging and exile, identity and alterity, processes of identity formation and the production of 'otherness' (Oed, 2006, p. 36).

Mair Jones, Sara's mother, is one of the displaced and marginalized women in the memoir. A Welsh lady by birth; wed to Mr. Z.A. Suleri and settled in Pakistan, she finds herself displaced while being in Lahore and becoming part of a nation whose memories of a sour colonial past were still fresh and made herself feel an outsider and it becomes even more tragic when she leaves for Wales to see her mother. Sara speaks of her mother's decontextualized life in the chapter 'What Mamma Knew' as,

In the necessary amnesia of that era, colonial history had to be immediately annulled, put firmly in the past; remembrance was now contraband in a world still learning to feel unenslaved. What could that world do with a woman who called herself a Pakistani but who looked suspiciously like the past it sought to forget? Then my mother learned the ironies of nationhood-of what can and cannot be willed-when she had to walk through her new context in the shape of a memory erased.

(Suleri, 1989, p. 164)

In spite of her continuous efforts to become a part of Pakistani society she is always looked down on with suspicion and doubt which the once colonized Pakistani nation reserved for a woman, belonging to a colonizer race.

The touching good faith of her Pakistani passport could hardly change the fact that even as my mother thought she was arriving, she actually had returned. There were centuries' worth of mistrust of English women in their eyes when they looked at her who chose to come after the English should have been gone: what did she mean by saying. 'I wish to be part of you?' Perhaps, they feared, she mocked.

(Suleri, 1989, p. 163)

Her role in the family is also determined as that of an 'other'. Her character is set in contrast to Mr. Suleri, her husband, who being a man of authority and dominance throughout the memoir enjoys absolute control over the family. Mair Jones lives as an

assistant to Mr. Suleri and not as his life partner. For her, "Papa's powerful discourse would surround her night and day-when I see her in his room, she is always looking down, gravely listening" (Suleri, 1989, p.157). She has been helping Mr. Suleri in his duties as editor of various newspapers in Pakistan and even in looking after these newspapers while he was serving his sentence in jail apart from her own job at University of the Punjab and household duties. Moreover her identity for most of the part of the memoir is determined and defined through her role of a mother in the family. Men, in patriarchal societies reduce women to mere physicality. As compared to man who is a symbol of intellect, her image is constructed either in terms of body or functions to reproduce and nurture off springs. Nayar comments,

Women's literature from South Asia, Africa, South America, and African Americans in the USA see themselves as situated at the intersection of three repressive discourses and structures: racism, imperialism and sexism...Sexism, at the hands of an oppressive patriarchy even in native societies, reduced them to machines of reproduction and labour.

(Nayar, 2008, p. 120)

Even Sara, throughout the *Meatless Days*, calls her 'Mamma' and not as Mair Jones or *Surrayya Suleri* (the Islamic name given to her after her marriage with Z. A. Suleri) with few exceptions. Dalal in *I will not Grip, Writing Identity in Sara Suleri's Meatless Days* speaks of Mair Jones's displaced existence in the Pakistani society as,

"Suleri celebrates the inherent flux of diasporic identity, consequently rendering an unstable subject position empowering rather than debilitating. Pakistan's colonial history and intrinsic patriarchy makes Suleri's Welsh mother a marginalized entity in this country; yet, Mair Jones retains expressive potential in her dignified adaptability and her reproductive capacity. Through the linguistic medium of *Meatless Days*, the author seeks to emulate this fluid equilibrium of the maternal existence. She translates the generative flux of the female body into the male dominated inscriptive space thus recuperating women's latent capabilities despite their obvious repression."

(Dalal, 2007, p. 3)

Mair, Sara's mother, achieves a fluid equilibrium between "syntax" and "name", between social interactions and individuality. This continuous realization of being an outcast and an 'other' or not belonging to the Pakistani nation makes her resign from her claims of an individual identity or her deserved space both in the family and the society as well. She loses all her enthusiasm and joy she had in her mind when she came to Pakistan with her husband.

She learned to live apart, then-apart even from herself-growing into that curiously powerful disinterest in owing, in belonging, which years later would make her so clearly tell her children, 'Child, I will not grip.' She let commitment and belonging become my father's domain, learning instead the way of walking with tact on other people's land.

(Suleri, 1989, p. 164)

Her linguistic inability further marginalizes her in the society. Being a Welsh lady it becomes difficult for her to communicate even with her grandchildren in English because of their upbringing in Pakistan and an excessive exposure to Urdu. Ultimately she finds herself, unconsciously, adopting the role of a typical Indian family woman by accepting her fate and resigning quietly to her private self.

Her eldest son was in England by then, so Mamma found herself assuming the classic posture of an Indian woman who sends away her sons and runs the risk of seeing them succumb to the great alternatives represented by the West...and without my really noticing what was happening, she quietly handed over many of her wifely duties to her two remaining daughters-to Tillat and to me.

(Suleri, 1989, p. 10)

Sara has been a witness of her mother's alienation and resignation which haunts her throughout the memoir. Her mother's failure to find the expected energy of a newly liberated nation, her inability to bring about any change in her husband's thinking in spite of her repeated efforts and the impossibility to adjust herself in a nation of multifarious histories and languages makes her acquiesce to silence.

Mair Jones is not the only displaced female in *Meatless Days*. Ifat, Sara's sister, is another woman in the memoir who has to pay a heavy price for being a female in the patriarchal Pakistan. She is a combination of grace, arrogance and self-will like her father but she is always noticed because of her physical grace and beauty. Sara too has enunciated her apprehensions on her sister's being always (mis)judged on the basis of her physical attributes when she writes that, "Ifat's story has nothing to do with dying; it has to do with the price a mind must pay when it lives in a beautiful body" (Suleri, 1989, p.132). Kruckles in the article '*Men live in Homes, Women live in Bodies*': *Body and Gender in Sara Suleri's Meatless Days* argues how the importance of women's 'bodies' is forced upon them by the male members of the society who reduce and restrict them merely to their roles in the family and particularly bodies making them vulnerable to male violence. In Pakistani male-oriented society female images are constructed on the basis of their physical characteristics and roles where "mothers are nurturing, sisters sensual and fathers are the phallic bodies" (Kruckles, 2006, p. 173).

In Pakistan, mind always stays in the background when compared with the physical beauty, particularly in case of women. *Ifat's* physical beauty always mars her mental strength and qualities. She is always judged on the basis of her outward beauty and her mind lost its worth somewhere on the way. The presence of mind in that beautiful body is something that is not her own choice but in Pakistan she was still made to pay the price for it. Even it appears that her mother is aware of this fact from the very beginning and remains apprehensive of the uncertain future for her daughter.

It was as though Ifat's grace was frightening to her, as she watched her child and had to contemplate what the world could exact from grace.

How I must concentrate, she thought, in order to protect this girl from what could be the portion of such extravagance of face.

(Suleri, 1989, p. 134)

Ifat's mind and spirit resembles her own father. Like Z.A. Suleri she is never hesitant in expressing her point of view, even in the presence of Mr. Suleri. Sara speaks about her sister's inheriting the genes of Z. A. Suleri and the pride and arrogance he always keeps in his pocket. "For Ifat's habits were my father's. From him she learned her stance of wild inquiry, the arrogant angle at which she held her head" (Suleri, 1989, p. 139). But in spite of this resistance and strong personality traits she can not survive her father's authoritative and all powerful role in the affairs of home.

She chose to enter into the heart of Pakistan in the most un-Pakistan way possible: she ran away from Kinnaid and called home a few days later to say, bravely, 'Papa, I am married.' 'Congratulations' he replied, put down the phone, and refused to utter her name again for years.

(Suleri, 1989, p. 141)

Though she is the only one who had been showing some mild resistance to her father since her childhood but later in her life she too is made to succumb to her father's will and disallowed any contact with the family, because of her marriage against Mr. Suleri's will, for years. She leaves her family for her husband and more for the choice that she makes. But for that, she is more to pay yet. Women, in Pakistan, live by the roles assigned to them; the roles based on their relationships in the society; those of daughters, wives, sisters and mothers. Their existence is defined through their bodies. *Ifat* in order to adjust with her husband's family has to accept, internalize and become a part of an alien and strange world which is a complete contradiction with the life she has spent in her father's home. Sara speaks of this change in her life as,

What energies my sister devoted to Pakistan! First she learned how to speak Punjabi and then graduated to the Jehlum dialect, spoken in the region from which Javed's family came. She taught herself the names



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and stations of a hundred-odd relations, intuiting how each of them would wish to be addressed. She learned more than I will ever know about the history of the army and then she turned to polo's ins and outs.  
(Suleri, 1989, p. 141)

She had to lose her true self in order to become one with her husband and his family but nobody could understand the 'creature living inside her'. She once said to Sara about the jeopardy the women have to face in Pakistan that, "It doesn't matter Sara, she once told me, Men live in homes, and women live in bodies" (Suleri, 1989, p. 143). Women's existence in Pakistan had never been a matter of choice for them. They had been directed by the dominating male members in their families and those pursuing their will and making choices for themselves have to pay a heavy price for their decisions. Ray affirms Sara's views of female subjugation in Pakistani society that, "It appears that in modern Pakistan, women can be conveniently silenced or easily replaced, being just another wife, mother, or daughter (the adoption of *Shahida* by Mr. Suleri being a case in point)" (Ray, 1993, p. 54). *Ifat* chose her life partner against the will of her father; changed her life style completely and became a part of the regional culture and dialect of Jehlum which she could have never even dreamt of. So she too had to pay the price for taking the choices in her own hands and had to lose her life in a car accident. The case of her murder could never be resolved, even till date. Ray regrets the absence of any space for women in Pakistan,

*Ifat*, as adamant as her father, enters the heart of this Pakistan, where women are seen as disposable commodities (141-142), where tremendous value is placed on the 'utterance of name' (142), and where 'caste and all its subclassifications are recreated every day in the structure of conversation that knows which names to name' (142). Unfortunately for *Ifat*, her 'complete immersion into Pakistan' (140) results in her death, recorded in a police station Lahore as an unsolved murder from 1980, either ordered by her husband's family, or the husband himself, or perhaps perpetrated by *Ifat's* father's political enemies. It appears that in modern Pakistan, women can be conveniently silenced or easily replaced, being just another wife,

mother, or daughter (the adoption of Shahida by Pip being a case in point).

(Ray, 1993, p. 54)

Afterwards when Sara's mother died, followed by her grandmother and sister, she and her family believed that they were lost. Sara even becomes relentless when she expresses her frustration that there are no women in the Third World. The word Pakistan, for Sara, was not just synonymous with absence of women but also with absence of any identity or meaning for women.

Parallel to this absence of identity and meaning for women, Sara in *Meatless Days* is also unable to find any definition for Pakistan. Though many years have passed since independence but, according to Sara, no ideological and intellectual identity could be formulated for the country. The idea of being 'lost' in *Meatless Days* is reminiscent of Z.A.Suleri's book *Pakistan's Lost Years*. Sara takes a step deeper and suggests that it is not just as a nation that we are lost but on a personal level too. This loss of identity, on both personal and political levels, has resulted in dissatisfaction among the people of Pakistan and Sara expresses this anger in the words that, "Formulating the definition is about as impossible as attempting to locate the luminous qualities of an Islamic landscape....My audience is lost, and angry to be lost" (Suleri, 1989, pp.1-2). She further aggrieves Pakistan's inability to fulfill the demands of the time. Though won in the name of a very strong religious ideology, "but Pakistan increasingly complicated the question of context, as though history, like a pestilence, forbid any definition outside relations to its fevered sleep" (Suleri, 1989, p. 8). The issue of decontextualization and namelessness arises right from the very early days of inception of Pakistan and remains parasitic ever after, drawing blood from the national pride and integration of the country. It is not just

the loss of identity that Pakistan is suffering from but a lot more than that. Rapid changes in the political and social milieu of Pakistan and consequent instability in the country intensify the problem further and, "there was no longer any need to wait for change, because change was all there was, and we had quite forgotten the flavor of an era that stayed in place long enough to gain a name" (Suleri, 1989, p. 15).

Pakistan loses its eastern wing, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto has been hanged, General Zia-ul-Haq has initiated the process of Islamization of Pakistan and all this makes Pakistan nothing but an unstable and wayward state that has lost its identity. Rushdie, who shares a colonial past and dissatisfaction with Sara Suleri over the ways the things were handled in Pakistan after independence, expresses disappointment over the issue of loss of identity in his novel *Shame* as,

Pakistan, the peeling, fragmenting palimpsest, increasingly at war with itself, may be described as a failure of the dreaming mind. Perhaps the pigment used were the wrong ones, impermanent, like Leonardo's; or perhaps the place was just *insufficiently imagined*, a picture full of irreconcilable elements, midriff-baring immigrant saris versus demure, indigenous Sindhi shalwar kurtas, Urdu versus Punjabi, now versus then: a miracle that went wrong.

(Rushdie, 1983, p. 87)

Soon after the establishment of Pakistan, two days, Tuesday and Wednesday, of the every week are designated as the meatless days. The idea is to conserve and protect the national live stock. Though on the ordered two days butcher's shops remain firmly closed but,

as a principle of hygiene I suppose it was a good idea although it really had very little to do with conservation: the people who could afford to buy meat, after all, were those who could afford refrigeration, so the only thing the government accomplished was to make some peoples Mondays very busy.... And so, instead of creating an atmosphere of abstention in the city, the institution of meatless days rapidly came to signify the imperative behind the acquisition of all things fleshy.

(Suleri, 1989, pp. 31-32)

#### 4.4. Discourse of Deception:

Sara selects an apparently meaningless and unimportant event from the history of the country, of prohibiting the sale of meat on every Tuesday and Wednesday, and turns it into a very strong symbol of the losses this nation is suffering from. Talaat and Ghani write in this context,

The meaning of *meatless days* extends beyond what is already known to us. An ordinary event becomes a symbol. The word *meatless* becomes synonymous with motherless, fatherless, sisterless and brotherless. In short it is loveless, homeless and finally lifeless. This extension of meaning is also a compression – since so much personal emotion, grief and sorrow has been thrown into it. The significance of a public ‘funeral game’ comes home through private deaths of so many loving bodies.

(Talaat & Ghani, 2004, p. 8)

The issue of taking up of intellectual crisis like those of gender differences, religion or history is normally conditioned with and comes after the fulfillment of basic needs and utilities in any society including food as the foremost and the vital of all. Food in Pakistan has never been a guaranteed luxury for the ordinary population. Basic food items like sugar, wheat etc. has been disappearing from the market during almost all the political and military rules in the country. Moreover the chances of food being contaminated and impure are very high in Pakistan. Flour, spices, sugar, milk and even meat are some of the examples of such cases. One can never be sure in Pakistan whether whatsoever s/he is eating is pure or not. Deception through food is the major irony that happens in abundance in this country. That might quiet possibly be the reason because of which Sara chooses the term ‘meatless days’ and the deception it implies, as the title of the memoir.

Deception through food being very much a part of the social apparatus of Pakistani society is a recurrent issue, in the memoir, emerging from the memories of Sara Suleri. Sara herself becomes a victim of such a deception in her childhood and remains one since long. Second chapter of *Meatless Days*, named after the title of the memoir, begins with the episode when *Tillat*, her sister, discloses the reality of 'kapuras' as testicles and not as sweetbread. Sara is made to believe, by none other than her mother, that *kapuras* were sweetbread. The true nature of *kapuras* being testicles of animals was neither ever mentioned to her nor she could think of such deception on the part of her mother. Deception speaks in terms of misrepresentation and in case of Sara and her encounter with food, it speaks through name games. Things, events or persons, in Pakistan, are never known by the names they should be as is suggested by the name 'meatless days'. It has been implied that, like Sara, Pakistani people have been fed through deception. Meatless days, supposed to be one devoid of meat, becomes affluent with it, making other days spent in preparation of filling refrigerators. Meatless days have deceptive connotations and show how people delude their very own nature too.

The 'parable' of *kapuras*, as Sara herself called it to be, is treated as an important example of deception in Pakistan. The surprise divulgence of the real nature of *kapuras* being testicles, the naked meat instead of sweetbreads, comes to Sara during her sister's visit to her in New Haven. The revelation of the news appalled her because the prior information comes from her mother and made her felt deceived and cheated. It remains an unpleasant surprise in spite of her later efforts to readjust the new information with her previous knowledge. Everything and information which she had previously believed to be true, once, now becomes doubtful for her.

Yet I was shocked. It was my mother, after all, who had told me that sweetbreads are sweetbreads, and if she were wrong on that score, then how many other simple equation had I now to doubt? The second possibility that occurred to me was even more unsettling: maybe my mother knew that sweetbreads are testicles but had cunningly devised a ruse make me consume as many parts of the world as she could before she set me loose in it. The thought appalled me...Gosh, I thought, to think that my mother could do that to me.

(Suleri, 1989, p. 23)

This deception on such trivial issues makes her suspicious of many such deceptions. The idea terrifies her 'what else I have eaten on her behalf' (p. 23). Food and the act of eating is a very dominant metaphor in the story. Sara does not just eat *kapuras* on her mother's behalf but also shares a complete system of trust and a code of life transferred to her through her mother. Everything she gets from her mother is believed to be pure and without deception. This deception in simply hiding the reality of and misnaming an insignificant food item shatters the basis of previously gathered whole information structure.

Sara is not the only one to be a victim of this deception through food but she herself later becomes an accomplice, once, with her sister *Ifat* in making *Munni*, her cook's daughter, eat a fake 'pan' (betel leaf) back in Lahore. While recalling the stories from her childhood, she talks about this game of guile and trust,

Ifat, my older sister, would fold such beautifully simulated *pan* triangles that Munni would thrust them into her mouth each time – and then burst into tears. I find it odd today to imagine how that game of guile and trust could have survived a single repetition, but I recollect it distinctly as a weekly ritual.

(Suleri, 1989, p. 24)

Food, apart from being used as means of deception, has been a thing to be stolen and a tool for punishment as well in Sara's life. Sara's mother makes the children attend the milking time of the water buffalos at their native home in Lahore but she herself always

abstains from attending the whole process. Sara is caught stealing cauliflowers and radishes from the garden and later made to eat kidney as a punishment. It is difficult to find baby food in Pakistan; items of security like flour, butter and cigarettes are disappearing from the market without any prior warning from the government; a crow dies in the water tank and the whole family drinks dead crow water unaware of the situation. Moreover the supply of milk, one of the most basic of all the food items, in Pakistan usually remains diluted with paraffin.

For Sara, food and politics in Pakistan share certain similarities. Food does not just remain a need but becomes a yardstick to measure history in the country for her. In *Meatless Days* various eras in the history of Pakistan are named after the cooks who have been serving in Sara's house as if all the political leaders have been cooking their own dishes and adding their flavors and spices to the fate of the country and the countrymen.

Sara says,

Just as Papa had his own yardstick—a word he loved—with which to measure history and would talk about the Ayub era, or the second martial law or the Bhutto regime, so my sister and I would place ourselves in time by remembering and naming cooks. “In the Qayyum days”, we’d say, to give a distinctive flavor to a particular anecdote, or ‘in the Allah Ditta era’.

(Suleri, 1989, p. 34)

She further adds,

After General Ayub came General Yahya; after the Bhutto years came General Zulu Haq, but can also add, Qayyum begat Shorty and his wife; and they begat the Punjabi poet only called Khansama; he begat Ramzan and Karam Dad the bearer; Ramzan begat Tassi-Passi; and he begat Allah Ditta, meanest of them all.

(Suleri, 1989, p. 34)

Speaking on the same issue Ray comments that Sara,



... traces the passage of history vis-à-vis the different cooks that paraded through the kitchens of Suleri household. The easy reference to 'the Quayyum days' of 'the Allah Ditta era' definitely make the reader aware of the relatively comfortable existence of the Suleri family. But the manner in which the two – the leaders of the nation and the cooks working for the Suleris – are jarringly yoked together suggests the impossibility of the existence of the one without the other.

(Ray, 1993, p. 50)

Parallel to this deception through food, Sara incorporates in her narrative various political deceptions on the part of the political leaders of the country. Though at some points, in the text, it seems that she becomes unduly harsh, particularly while talking about Jinnah, the founder of independent Muslim state of Pakistan, but for most of the part she had been very vocal while expressing her views quite ruthlessly. To talk about Jinnah, rest of the political leaders left aside, one single line from the chapter 'Papa and Pakistan' sets the image of his personality and the place assigned to him in *Meatless Days* that he 'manhandled the country into being' (Suleri, 1989, p. 113). Manhandling on the part of any individual involves a dictatorial role with a sense of absolute authority, which according to Sara Jinnah practiced freely and unquestionably on the people of the subcontinent. This manhandling and exercise of power on his part was nothing but a deception which transformed the lives of the millions of the people of the subcontinent overnight on 14<sup>th</sup> of August, 1947. Jinnah's popularity, for Sara, is more because of his magical posture that he assumes and maintains on the political scene of the country rather than because of his political insight and vision. Jinnah's focus is more on his personality and posture<sup>9</sup> instead of the aspirations and betterment of the Muslims of the area. Sara speaks about Mr. Jinnah's ability of being a successful actor in the polity of the subcontinent when she says that, "Jinnah was an actor, certainly the most aware of all the politicians of India at that time of how to maintain a poetical posture in its history" (Suleri, 1989, p.113).

Jinnah being an actor, in Sara Suleri's words, is the most successful of all the politicians of the Subcontinent in maintaining the posture that history demanded and required of him. Actors perform the roles what they usually are not in their real life and Jinnah, being the best aware of all the political actors, had whole of the subcontinent as a stage to perform. Z.A. Suleri, Sara's father, was also one of the audiences who became spellbound by the wonderfully incredible performance that Jinnah staged to amuse his viewers. The aura of Jinnah's personality and the charm he had on the Muslims of the subcontinent and Z.A. Suleri in particular is further highlighted by Sara as,

But what an odd man to make familial: gaunt with elegance and intellect, the discourse of a barrister imprinted on his brain, Jinnah the maker of Pakistan was hardly an easy idea to domesticate-and yet Pip did it. He loved everything about that man: his design, his phrase, his clothes.

(Suleri, 1989, p. 113)

Though Jinnah had been and is still recognized as the most popular of all the political leaders in the history of Pakistan and honoured and recognized as the Quaid-i-Azam and father of the nation yet Sara in *Meatless Days* does not consider him to be a completely honest player in the game of politics. With all his elegance, grace, intellect and matchless personality in the polity of the subcontinent Jinnah makes the Muslims of the subcontinent to worship him as their sole savior. Sara recalls from her childhood,

I grew up in a world that had only a single house hold god, called the Quaid ... it is a curious epithet, the Quaid, that - after her had manhandled the country into being - Pakistan adopted to call the leader ... nothing other than the Father.

(Sara, 1989, p. 113)

Sara wishes for her father to be present in the subcontinent at the time of partition so that he could see the outcome of Jinnah's political vision. She says,

Today I often regret that he was not in Pakistan at the time of the partition, to witness those bewildered streams of people pouring over one brand-new border into another, hurting as they ran. It was extravagant, history's wrenching price: farmers, villagers, living in some other world, one day awoke to find they no longer inhabited familiar homes but that most modern thing, a Muslim or a Hindu nation. There was death and panic in the cities when they rose up to flee, the Muslims travelling in one direction, the Hindus in the other. I wish, today, that Pip had been a witness of it all: surely that would have given him pause and conferred the blessing of doubt?

(Suleri, 1989, p. 116)

Z.A. Suleri is also one of the millions who are simply entranced by Jinnah's unmatched role and tried to follow his footsteps. Sara claims,

So Pip became a person swamped in the devotion of his soul, working in the service of what he could only name perfection. And he named it, constantly: he saw to it that I grew up in a world that had only a single household god, called the Quaid, so that even today I feel slightly insolent to my upbringing when reality prompts me to call him by his real name, Jinnah.

(Suleri, 1989, p. 113)

This obsession of Z.A. Suleri with Jinnah and his sublime role for the Muslims of the subcontinent is situated in the text that can be seen parallel to Z.A. Suleri's dictatorial role and posture in his home in his dealings with his wife, mother and children. Jinnah has whole of the subcontinent as a stage for his performance as an actor and Mr. Suleri replicates this same role on the stage of his own home. In Sara's perception, Jinnah is the political man handler and Z. A. Suleri on the personal scale manhandling his family was the one playing the role of god at his home.

Sara, speaking of her father's authoritative posture in home recalls the episode when he decides to turn to God, says that, "My father's sudden hungering for God, which was added to the growing number of subjects about which we, my mother and her daughters, silently decided we had no conversation" (Suleri, 1989, p.16). This is the absolute and unquestionable authority of Mr. Suleri that makes his wife and daughters remain silent

even during a major shift in his behavior. In Pakistan, in many families, women are not given the freedom to question or seek explanations from the male members of the family who enjoy remarkable freedom and authority. Mair Jones and her daughters though take a decision but ironically to remain silent for they had no other option but to succumb before Mr. Suleri's authority. Silence is the only available option to them. Though Mair Jones is a Welsh lady but once married to Mr. Suleri she also had to resign to the role of a Pakistani woman by losing her identity. So much so Mr. Suleri is in the habit of gathering the whole family in his room and reads his articles to them as they are his audience gathered there to appreciate his accomplishments. For Sara and other children there was no respite from this.

We of course could only listen, with loyal cells producing their precious moisture almost at the pace at which that large voice was speaking, suspecting itself, and then dismissing suspecting to talk on and on. How was it possible for us, chosen audience of those locutions, not to listen with our spirits on our lips, thrilling with compassion?

(Suleri, 1989, p. 109)

Sara's sister *Ifat* is the only daughter in the family who defies her father by marrying an army man against the will of Mr. Suleri but she has to pay a heavy price for making her choices and challenging his authority. She becomes a sour memory in the family as Mr. Suleri simply could not digest the thought of his daughter's taking control of her own life and . Though later in life they have their reconciliation but their relationships remain bitter ever after.

He still believed he had a veto power over his children's lives but Ifat was hardly a woman to veto, even when she was six. After Ifat went and married the man, Pip would not let her name be mentioned in his presence, so total was her banishment. They came to an uneasy reconciliation some two years later, but for a while we missed her sorely, hungry for her presence in our lives.

(Suleri, 1989, p. 121)

Nobody can convince Z.A. Suleri of letting his daughter see the family or vice versa. She is declared an outcast from the family and rest of the members are supposed to obey the decree. There is no other option for anyone from the home but to obey Mr. Suleri's verdict.

Mr Suleri wrote a biographical account of his leader Mr. Jinnah named *My Leader* which gave him less fame but more ideas to steer his life along with taking control of the lives of those persons existing within the sphere of his influence. In response to this book he receives a letter of praise and thanks from Mr. Jinnah himself, applauding his efforts. Sara mentions Jinnah's words as, "I congratulate you on marshalling facts so well and giving a clear picture of the seven years of our struggle" (Suleri, 1989, p. 115). The influence that Jinnah's words has on Mr. Suleri was everlasting and makes Sara recall the memory quite scornfully,

Years later I would think reproachfully about that phrase and the ideas it put into Papa's head, because he has been marshalling facts ever since. He would forget that we weren't facts and would marshal us too, up and down the nation.

(Suleri, 1989, p. 115)

Ray comments on the same issue as,

His journalistic construction of the great history of the genesis of Pakistan is reduced in the end to an involuntary spasmodic movement of the fingers imitating the act of writing, because living 'in the now' could be only accomplished by 'marshalling' facts and forgetting details.

(Ray, 1993, p. 53)

Z.A. Suleri assumes the role of an undeniable and unquestionable leader in his home. He is and always remains the central and most important character in the story and life of the Suleri family. The whole family and their lives revolve around him or were made to

revolve around him just the way the fate of the Muslims of the subcontinent revolve around Jinnah.

In spite of his reverence for the democratic Jinnah, Mr. Suleri had been a vehement supporter of military rulers in Pakistan including President Ayub, Yahya and Zia-ul-Haq. This is perhaps the biggest irony in the case of his political role in Pakistan. He is one of the few intellectuals who criticized Miss Fatima Jinnah for contesting the presidential elections against Ayub Khan. Ayub writes in his diaries about Suleri that, "Though an opportunist of the first order and a thoroughly unreliable and ungrateful man, he writes well" (Baxter, 2007, p. 365). General Zia-ul-Haq's military regime is a dark era in the history of journalism in Pakistan when the newspapers and magazines were made subject to pre-publication scrutiny and newsmen flogged by martial law courts. The Zia government issued many directives and regulations in order to curb the freedom of the press in any possible way he could imagine and Z. A. Suleri, even at this moment was supporting Zia's media policy. Niazi speaks of Mr. Suleri's justifying these ominous restrictions on the press during a welcome dinner address in the honour of the president as,

The press freedom allowed by the regime during its three years had never been enjoyed in the last 33 years of the country's life, and if the press is under some curbs for some time now, there must be some serious reasons which you may not be able to ignore.

(Niazi, 1987, p. 186)

Hassan, a senior Pakistani journalist and writer, had been very critical of Z.A. Suleri's support for all the military governments in Pakistan. Khalid, in his review of Sara Suleri's book *Boy Will be Boys* entitled 'ZA Suleri: A Daughter Remembers' voiced his views about Mr. Suleri as:

The fact is that Z.A. Suleri remained closely aligned with almost all governments, just and unjust, military, quasi military or civilian dictatorial. He passionately supported every martial law, every imposter, every strutting general from Ayub onwards. Had he been alive today, he would without doubt have been the greatest of Musharraf's supporters. I always wondered how he was able to act cheerleader to every dictatorship and still keep writing about the Quaid-e-Azam and his concept of Pakistan. Nothing could have been more abhorrent to "my leader" than military rule, which always found in Suleri it's most ardent and enthusiastic justifier.

(Hassan, 2005, p. 3)

Mr. Suleri's unconditional support of almost every ruler, particularly the army men, and his ability to find justifications for his stance as well are discussed by Ray. She believes that Sara during her last few months in Pakistan had realized this tendency of her father and comments that, "Sara Suleri recognizes the negative implications of her father's desire to theorize every new crisis perpetrated by a leader in the name of Islam in the pages of yet another newspaper" (Ray, 1993, p. 53).

Z.A. Suleri's role in the politics of Pakistan had been pretty strange and paradoxical. Though he had been a very energetic and vocal spokesman for the freedom of the nation but once the nation got its freedom from the British rule, Mr. Suleri's actions never justified his pre-independence stance. His open justifications of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's arrest, favouring the most notorious verdict in the legal history of the country that of the hanging of Bhutto and then actively supporting and assisting all the military rules in the country denies his publically claimed posture. He had been in charge of leading English newspapers of Pakistan and used his position of authority even to justify dictatorial governments' illegal actions. Quizzically, Sara in *Meatless Days* presents a totally different picture of her father. For her Mr. Suleri is a champion of the freedom of press and her family has to suffer because of his criticism, on the policies of the government, in the newspapers he worked for. Mr. Suleri's hatred for Z.A. Bhutto is extreme and later on

this hatred gets its expression as well in Mr. Suleri's columns and editorials when Bhutto is accused of misuse of power during his rule in Pakistan and later sentenced to death.

Hassan comments on the situation as:

Suleri did more harm to a free press in Pakistan, to civil liberties and the idea of a representative government in all the years he was in positions of editorial authority than any other individual one can cite. Every authoritarian government needed a Suleri and every authoritarian government got him.

(Hassan, 2005, p. 3)

Coming from the pen of a writer who claims to be judging her father, it strikes as ironic that Sara misrepresented Suleri's dubious and controversial role in Pakistani politics. Instead Sara has over eulogized it while presenting the idea as if he was the only successor to Jinnah available to the nation. Even though she complains of her father's obsessed involvement in the politics of the country but she herself turns out to be a cunning politician in presenting her father what he was not. Sara highlights her father's injustice done to the family through his dictatorial posture and manhandling abilities but either chooses a conscious ignorance over true representation of Mr. Suleri's political role in post-independence era or is willing to temper with the details of his injustice done to the nation and the country.



## NOTES

1. The literature on Nietzsche is enormous, and it is beyond the scope of this study to survey the works on Nietzsche. However, for interested readers, the following studies are noteworthy: Walter Arnold Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Anarchist* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974); R.J. Hollingdale, *Nietzsche: The Man and His Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Lou Andreas Salome, *Nietzsche* trans. and ed. by Siegfried Mandel (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001); Rudiger Safranski, *Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003). For an analysis of Nietzsche's discourse on historical consciousness and criticism of conventional historical thought see Manual Dries, ed. *Nietzsche on Time and History* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008); Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1973).
2. There is near total consensus as to the controversial nature of the judicial sentence awarded to Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto. Most of the lawyers and jurists are of the view that the murder trial was not only politically motivated but it also violated some fundamental norms of the law which cost Bhutto his life. Several works have highlighted the circumstances of the trial and bias engendered by anti-Bhutto regime. Among these are: Harbans Singh Bhattai, *Portrait of a Political Murder* (New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publications, 1979); Jagdish Chandar Batra, *The Trial and Execution of Bhutto* (Bangalore: Arnold Publishers, 1979); Victoria Schhofield, *Bhutto: Trial and Execution* (London: Cassel, 1979); T. W. Rajratnam, *A Judiciary in Crisis? The Trial of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto* (Lahore: Classic, 1989); M. Dilawar Mahmood, *The Judiciary and Politics in Pakistan: A Study* (Lahore: Idara Mutalia-e-Tareekh, 1992).
3. General Zulu is the derogatory name that Sara Suleri has used on many occasions in *Meatless Days* to express her hatred and contempt for the third Chief Martial Law Administrator and ex-president of Pakistan General Zia-ul-Haq.
4. Scores of books have analyzed the circumstances of the breakup of Pakistan in 1971. Historians and writers of India, Bangladesh and Pakistan have their own versions of origins and events of the disintegration of Pakistan. For an Indian account of events see Lt. Gen. JFR Jacob, *Surrender at Dacca* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1997); for a Bengali viewpoint see A. M. A. Mohit, *Bangladesh: Emergence of a Nation* (Dacca: Bangladesh Books International, 1978); for Pakistani version see Amir Abdullah Khan Niazi, *The Betrayal of East Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1999), for a balanced analysis of event see Richard Sisson and Leo E. Rose, *War and Secession: Pakistan India and the Creation of Bangladesh* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

5. There is considerable literature available on the Islamization process initiated by General Zia-ul-Haq in Pakistan and its consequences on the religious milieu of Pakistan. Rubya Mehdi contends that the Islamization process has not only been superficial leaving much of the Anglo-Muhammadan law intact but it was ineffective and incoherent in practice, for details see Rubya Mehdi, *The Islamisation of the Law in Pakistan* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1994); Also see "Pakistan: The Many Faces of an Islamic Republic" in John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, *Islam and Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Martin Lau, *The Role of Islam in Legal System of Pakistan* (London: Martinus Nijhoff, 2006).
6. Religious nationalism rather than any other consideration was the basic premise which was at the heart of the struggle of the Muslims of the subcontinent, see, for instance, Hafeez Malik, *Moslem Nationalism in India and Pakistan* (Washington DC: Public Affairs Press, 1963); Khalid B. Saeed, *Pakistan: The Formative Phase, 1857-1948* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968).
7. The word Pakistan was originated by Choudhary Rehmat Ali and is translated, literally, as 'land of the pure people'. The thought behind opting for this name was to unite the Muslims of the Subcontinent for the struggle for independence. The name also symbolizes a promise for land or country for spiritually pure people.
8. For a study of Mohammad Ali Jinnah's personality and politics see Sharif-ul-Mujahid, *Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah: Studies in Interpretation* (Karachi: Quaid-i-Azam Academy, 1981); Stanley Wolpert, *Jinnah of Pakistan* (New York: Oxford University Press; 1984); Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Saad R. Khairi, *Jinnah Reinterpreted: The Journey from Indian Nationalism to Muslim Statehood* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1995); Ian Byrant Wells, *Ambassador of Hindu Muslim Unity: Jinnah's Early Politics* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2005).
9. Z. A. Suleri, apart from his editorials and columns in the newspapers, had written many books with a particular focus on Islam as a dominating religion of the world, politics of the subcontinent during the pre and post-independence era and unqualified support for the various military regimes of Pakistan. His books include *The Road to Peace and Pakistan* (Lahore: Sheikh Mohammad Ashraf, 1946); *My Leader, being an estimate of Mr. Jinnah's work for Indian Mussalmans* (Lahore: Lion Press, 1946); *Pakistan's Lost Years* (Lahore: Feroze Sons, 1962); *Politicians and Ayub: Being a Survey of Pakistani Politics from 1948-1964* (Rawalpindi: Capital Law and General Law Book Depot, 1964); *Masla-i-Afghanistan* (Lahore: Jang Publishers, 1981); *Al-Quran* (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 1989); *Shaheed-E-Millat Liaqat Ali Khan, Builder of Pakistan* (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 1990); *Influence of Islam on World Civilization* (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 1994).

10. For a study of working and impact of Hudud Ordinance see Tahir Wasti, *The Application of Islamic Criminal Law in Pakistan* (Lieden: Brill, 2009); Charles H. Kennedy, "Islamization in Pakistan: Implementation of the Hudud Ordinance", *The Muslim World*, Vol. 96, No. 2 (2006); Martin Lau, "Twenty Five Years of Hudud Ordinances-A Review", *Washington & Lee Law Review*, Vol. 64, No. 4 (2008).
11. For a comparative insight into Jinnah's phases of political life and his strategy see. S. M. Burke and Salim Al-Din Quraishi, *Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah: His Personality and His Politics* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1997); Rafiq Zakaria, *The Man Who Divided India* (Mumbai: Popular Prakashan, 2001).

## Conclusion

The major objective of the research was to highlight the parallel existence of the personal and political spheres of life in Pakistan as depicted in *Meatless Days* and point out the impact that the larger political context extends on the individual members of the society. For this purpose the research was aimed at revisiting Pakistan's socio-political past through Sara Suleri's critical lens and not at re-narration or re-interpretation of the country's bygone eras. Neither did this research intend to answer the conflicts provoked in the previous chapter rather it tried to make people think of their past as a constructed reality of the controversial episodes of Pakistan's history.

Studying and analyzing a memoir with such overt political connotations and allusions was an intriguing task. What seemed simple and smooth in the beginning turned out to be a demanding and strenuous effort with exploration of relevant political, historical, social and literary texts. Life narrative with lots of embedded memories of Sara Suleri and her ideological standpoints made the whole exercise of this research complicated and intriguing. Apart from studying literary texts, theories and critical reviews on *Meatless Days*, exploring vast political and historical literature and then synthesizing the relevant points made this research a very challenging task. Searching for decades old newspapers, reading about important events from the history of Pakistan and sifting the libraries was nerve breaking. Moreover talking about some very controversial and sensitive issues and maintaining an objective stand point, that research demands, was also not easy.

The research proves that, in *Meatless Days*, it is hard to tear apart and disintegrate the personal from the political because Sara ventures on her non-linear reminiscences which seem to be inevitably overlapping with the history of her country. It is left to the

imagination of the reader to determine whether she intended to write her personal tales or the history of Pakistan as witnessed and analyzed by her. The current research attempted to detach her personal history from that of her nation's so that each might be put in its right place; a complete and a coherent picture presented; parallels drawn and the lens understood through which she interprets Pakistan's political past.

The present study also shows that Sara's life during her self-willed exile made her understanding of her past quite complicated, which is clearly evident in the complex structure of her writings. She rejected a traditional linear and chronological narration of many tales in the memoir, by adopting postmodern narrative strategies, and intermingled apparently disjointed episodes with each other in such a manner that their placement in the text is overlapping. Sara Suleri opts for measuring the past of her nation from an alternative yardstick i.e. the lives of common individuals instead of a timeline study of major political events from the history of her country. Sara Suleri has consciously intermingled various incidents from the lives of the individuals with the major episodes from the politics of her country which denies a simple description of events; rather this intermingling is a lot more suggestive in nature and implies many questions.

The research further proves that individuals may think that they live independently but their existence is certainly rooted in and defined through a relationship they share with the society and the nation they are a part of. Individual and the nation have a cause and effect relationship with each other. They both affect each other and are affected by each other. Any change, however insignificant it might appear, always carries along a significant impact on the other. None of the two levels, personal or political, can be studied and analyzed in isolation. In order to grasp the true nature of anything on the

personal scale of existence, it is necessary to make sense of its parallel counterpart taking place on the political scene of the country at the same time. The memoir at hand draws some important parallels where personal and political are intertwined and wed in such a manner that interpreting any of the two without taking other into consideration is almost impossible. They trigger each other's existence and complement each other's nature of existence. In *Meatless Days*, be it the issue of existence of women in Pakistani patriarchal society or the process of Islamization in Pakistan, be it the problem of deception, either by the individuals or the political leaders of the country, or traces of amnesia both in the lives of the individuals as well as in national history; Sara Suleri has incorporated them in her text in such a manner that these tales from the lives of the individuals raise some very serious questions about the whole of Pakistani nation and intelligentsia in particular.

An important part of the research focused on Sara's views regarding the exploitation of the Pakistani nation on the basis of religious ideology. Whether it was the issue of constitution making, government's seeking public support during various military or non-military regimes, defining cultural boundaries or social issues and roles of individuals; Islam was manipulated as the sole guiding principle. Sara particularly highlights and criticizes Zia-ul-Haq for using Islam to strengthen his control over Pakistani society. Zia's self-imposed mission to Islamize the whole nation and the country was not just a political venture but it affected social and individual spheres of life to a large extent. It was not just Sara's family's tales where people were made to change their course of life but this politically motivated Islamic renaissance in Pakistan had its impact on society at large. *Meatless Days* is one of the very few literary writings/memoirs in English coming

from the pen of a Pakistani writer with an effort to discuss and analyze that era disapprovingly.

The current research further highlighted the dissatisfaction and anger that Sara Suleri expresses with the social strata of Pakistan for denying its women any space or significance. Probing into her treatment and reaction to this injustice was quite interesting as she reverses this situation and gives them a lot more space in her memoir as compared to the male characters. Four chapters out of a total of nine are named after women and rest of the five chapters also tell many tales and carry many references from the lives of the women close to Sara. Sara, in this patriarchal Pakistani society, was unable to get hold of any definition for women's identity or existence. Along with the women the nation also shares a loss of identity. A country without ideological and intellectual identity, Pakistan has become not only lost to its own people but also to the rest of the world. Sara believes that the political and intellectual *crème de la crème* also failed to deal with this problem of de-contextualization and namelessness. The analysis indicates that such socio-religious tragedies and deceptions that the nation had to face during the formative years of Pakistan ultimately resulted in disinterestedness on the part of the people. The memoir supports Nietzsche's thesis that forgetting the past is an act of will and at times the only available solution to get rid of the bitter memories of the history. Pakistani nation also consciously opted for forgetfulness after a continuous exposure to many tragic moments, both personal and national, and became amnesiac. The people of Pakistan preferred to forget rather than to remain a victim of grief and agony.

Sara believes that the history of Pakistan had been narrated misleadingly and this tampering and misrepresentation, according to Sara, has been done intentionally to serve

the ends of the politicians and the establishment. Sara Suleri's dissatisfaction with the narration of history of her country is extreme and her ruthless sarcasm asks for the rejection of misrepresented past. The decisions taken by some of the major political giants during the various eras of the Pakistani history had far reaching consequences on the lives of the individuals. The general public of Pakistan had to suffer a lot because of the shortsightedness and mistakes of their political leaders. The real tragedy lies in the fact that there is no mechanism for the accountability of corrupt political elite.

The research concludes that literary writings like *Meatless Days* which deal with the past of their countries possess a significant place in the literary heritage as they present an alternative analytical view about national issues. National histories should be revised and re-narrated and an effort should be made to fill the previously left over blanks in order to make a coherent whole of the past.

The parallels, along with other indicators, leave no doubt in realizing that Pakistan is a politically unstable country. The mistakes of the past and their continuity in the present have left Pakistan in a sorry state of affairs. Despite the rigorous claims of the political elite of the country that Pakistan is not a banana republic; the country has come on the verge of disastrous situation. There had not been a single decade in the history of the Pakistan which can be called a stable era either speaking in terms of politics or economy. With a dark and difficult past, full of mysteries, unanswered questions and a confused and victimized present, the future of the country faces a big question mark. The inception of Pakistan has been called a miracle by some intellectuals and historians and the fact that Pakistan had been incredible in having been able to survive through all the tough times in



its history might not be negated but this may not be expected to become the story of future as well.

Summing the findings of the research all up, it can be safely commented that Pakistan being a young nation-state is still going through cultural and political construction. Various military rules have interrupted the process of attaining political maturity. Pakistani writers, by adopting postmodernist narrative techniques and strategies, are not only trying to fill the blanks in the history of the country but are also contributing a lot in the formation of national literary tradition. Texts like *Meatless Days* become very significant as part of the literary culture of any nation for they not only combine the aesthetic with historic but also point towards the inevitability of future. *Meatless Days* is not a narrative with some specific origin and a clear ending as there are many voices in the memoir which keep on bouncing back throughout the text, trying to find their origins from the past and locate the place of their identities in the future.

However, due to constraints of time, the study was limited only to highlight the parallelism in personal and political spheres as presented in *Meatless Days* and to harmonize the literary and historical versions regarding the past of Pakistan. There is still a vast scope for future researchers to probe into and explore some other very important aspects of *Meatless Days* from postcolonial and feminist perspectives.

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