

Recreating History Through Language: Allegorical Significance of Suleri's Meatless Days

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Abstract

The study investigates the allegorical significance of Sara Suleri's Meatless days by examining how her personal story entwines with the political history of Pakistan. Qualitative analysis of the text views the use of language as a vehicle, which carries Suleri's notion of 'dislocation' to the readers' mind. As framework, it uses theory of 'constructivism' that focuses on the capability of human to interpret meaning by correlating the 'interaction between their experiences and their ideas'. Written within the context of the creation of Pakistan, the memoir piles up intimate memories of the author's personal as well as public life narrating the tales of food, love, home and belonging. Anecdotes about Suleri's family and friends narrating the major turning points in the history of Pakistan are given life through her unique play of language. The undercurrents of the author's life are historical and public events most significantly 'independence'. Her use of language re-creates that history, invoking the 'lost' through the tales of her mother, sister and friends. The study provides a profound knowledge of the political history of Pakistan through a woman's mind. It shows the character development through inner experiences of their lives. It can be viewed a landmark in the conscious raising of females in the subcontinent understanding their identity in the South Asian cultural context. It concludes by foregrounding Suleri's idea of displacement as 'subtle'. The memoir reflects the change in perspectives through literature.

Keywords: Intersection, Dislocation, Personal, Political, Re-making, Suleri

Introduction

Meatless Days (1989) is a delicately shaped memoir representing life in postcolonial Pakistan. Suleri interlinks the intensive historical facts of independence and her own personal and most cherished memories depicting characters of her Welsh mother, her Pakistani father who was a leading political journalist Z.A.Suleri, her five siblings and her grandmother Dadi. She gives an account of her own passage to America.

Language shapes our thoughts. We speak the way we think and hence create knowledge in order to construct the reality. Actually, this insight helps us in understanding the very essence of human beings. Individual perceptions create reality. It involves the whole process of cognition. Suleri, in *Meatless Days*, uses language to construct a world the way she perceives, categorizes and gives meaning to it. It is an attempt to re-make the family history, relationships, private and public events and significantly the historical facts after the creation of Pakistan. Ideas and stories are personal. These exist in the heart and mind in the form of energy 'that science cannot fully explain' (Dougherty, 2009). These are further transformed to people through language; oral and written. There cease to be a single story then. 'The personal becomes political' (hook, 1984). Suleri depicted an entirely changed picture of her family and public life. She writes as she sees but there are different ways of seeing (Roy, 2008). She shares her way of seeing with the readers. She re-writes the tale of nostalgia where

she hedges feminism. She is born when Pakistan is born. The undercurrent in her text is the turmoil in her family parallel to the situation in the country. Both ways she addresses the theme of dislocation. She is reworking it. She tries to find her place in the history. Her language work is so powerful that the ‘access is denied’ to everyone; readers have to develop a political and social understanding of the context Suleri wrote in. She chooses food as a fundamental nostalgic link for re-writing the theme of dislocation to smell original kitchens and households of homeland. She also discusses her life in America but not in terms of regionalism or racism. She looks at it from an outsider’s perspective. Sometimes she untangles the facts successfully. Many a times it is hard to interpret her language.

Suleri writes *Meatless Days* in the context of the creation of Pakistan. Turmoil and chaos is likely to run through the text. Her techniques of foregrounding and back grounding history of Pakistan help the readers to interpret the details she reveals by using language symbolically. Her stories are not actually stories of family relationships or mere history but implicitly indicate her notions of displacement and gender. That does not project by any means that she is an ‘ideologue’ (Roy, 2008). Undeniably, the language of her text portrays various aspects of her life; personal and public. She highlights the relationship of both.

There is a fusion of political with personal in *Meatless Days*. Like Mark Twain, Suleri does not intend to draw morals into her text. Instead, she wants the readers to interpret her text as it appears. She narrates her tales with multiple meanings-the literal story perceptible in the words and figurative story is constructed. Her text is context bound.

The above discussion leads the current study relies upon the philosophical standpoint on ‘the nature of knowledge’ termed ‘constructivism’ by Jean Piaget. Noah defines it as ‘an epistemological stance’ (2013). Constructivism has many ‘flavors’ (Piaget 1967). The theory focuses on the capability of human to interpret meaning by correlating the ‘interaction between their experiences and their ideas’. Piaget views the relationship in connection with the ‘genetic makeup’ of humans developing them ‘intellectually’. He focuses on the ‘development of human in relation to what is occurring with an individual as opposed to development that is influenced by other humans’ (1967). Fundamentally, the study investigates the recreation of history through language by correlating experience and ideas.

Genetically strong, Suleri’s personal experiences develop her intellectually into a powerful woman. She records her personal experiences of study. She also re-counts home environment, her mother, Mair’s marriage and her position in a Pakistani family, Suleri foregrounds development of each character in the text. Particularly relating the story of Mustakori, Suleri demonstrates that all these characters develop within their own personal experiences of life instead of getting influence from other individuals. Her characters speak and go through their individual experiences to construct the reality of their lives.

The current study discusses theory in relevance to text in detail.

A Saga of Memory

Meatless Days is a saga of memory, food, history and nostalgia for homeland. It is not a seamless memory. She writes about ‘Excellent things’ in women, meatless days, friends, siblings, her father and most dominantly dedicates a whole chapter to her mother. She

sketches a wonderful world through letters. She is the ‘change’ she wishes to see in her world. Through language, she gives life to what she thinks. She constructs a world with the concept of woman ‘not really a part of an available vocabulary’ (1, p.1). It reflects Suleri’s thought and situation about women in Pakistan as she observed. Very few women in a conservative patriarchal society dare to challenge its notions and transfer their thoughts to the canvas inviting everyone to interpret in a scrupulous way. To call Suleri the flag holder of feminism in Pakistan is far from being debatable. She absorbed and shared. She was not ‘too busy for that’ (1, p.1). Her narratives serve as a mirror of the larger picture she wants to display.

Her memoir starts highlighting the position of women in the country she belongs. She uses symbolic language yet literal meaning is also scattered through the pages to reveal the proceedings as these are. The reader may question the credibility of Suleri’s account because if we critically look at the history of post-colonial literature, we find that writing autobiographies are dangerous to a certain extent. ‘How subjective structure can ...give birth to objective truth?’ (Spivak, 1999). Writing about the Muslim rituals of animal sacrifice, her tone becomes bitter. She becomes queer on the subject of Islamic rituals ‘chopping up animals for God’ (Suleri 1989 p.4). Being a native and Muslim, Suleri constructs a doubtful vision about her religion that may raise speculation in the minds of the readers to question the very doctrine of Islam and its believers. Moreover, offering sacrifice to God is not a fabrication. The Holy book reveals this fact to the followers of Islam explicitly in its second chapter. Suleri’s use of word ‘chopping’(Suleri 1989) denotes the brutality of act whereas Muslims observe it as a sacred religious practice to strengthen their belief. The choice of word misrepresents the world of Islam involved in butchery of innocent animals. Dadi’s pining for ‘choppable things’ (Suleri 1989) is another example to intensify the previous description. However, later, Suleri applauds the excitement and preparation for Ramadan. Dadi’s character is the embodiment of a conventional woman who can be located in every second household of Pakistan. Identities ‘are reconfigured’... ‘the moon had been sighted and the fast begun’ (Suleri 1989, p.30). The month of Ramadan reconfigures the identities. Month of Ramadan holds significance in the history of Pakistan. Pakistan came in to being in the month of Ramadan. Therefore, memories are closely associated to the month. Every year observes the celebration of independence twice that enhances the value of liberty and freedom reminding the great sacrifices Muslims offered for a new state. Suleri figures out the tragedies that lead afterwards. Bhutto’s regime presents a mournful picture of the chaos Pakistan faces. His regime is shaken, ‘Islam took to the streets’ (Suleri 1989, p.16). Suleri has recreated the situation for the readers and deplores the frenzied and unpredictable condition since creation of Pakistan. Suleri creates pathos by allegorically pointing to the sorrowful events in the history of Pakistan. She weighs on people’s emotion swaying their opinions in different directions. She refers to the burns of this land by illustrating the accident of Dadi and Irfan’s burning. ‘Dadi’s burns were slowly learning how to heal’ (Suleri, 1989, p.14). Analogy is created to foreground the contemporary situation of the country. Politically Bhutto’s regime was peaceful and democracy was at the horizon. But Fall of Dhaka created noise as a stone shatters the peace of the quite water. Dadi’s cotton garment (Suleri,1989, p.14) presents a beautiful allegory for the burns of West Wing of Pakistan that took fire and she was found ‘a little flaming ball’ (Suleri,1989,p.14). The ‘different plans’ of living through ‘her sojourn’ is parallel with the sustainability of the country. The country endures the tragedy. Suleri’s

language is denotative of the anguish in the history which reveals and conceals such tragic events from the human eyes. Her language is extremely critical when she narrates Dadi's forgetfulness of prayers 'for God could now leave the home and soon would join the government' (Suleri,1989,p.15).She points out institutionalization of religion which proves perilous. Reader's mind, sense and logic are besieged by Suleri's argument that religion must be separate from politics. Unfortunately, in Pakistan religion is politicized. It is the institution used to assert authority as well as patriarchy. 'Taken to streets and vociferate[d]' (Suleri,1989, p.15), it compels people like Suleri's father to pray and try 'to converse life back into a finished love' (Suleri,1989).

Suleri's theme is dislocation and through bathos and ethos, she depicts it in every episode. Muslim nationhood, the foundation for Two Nation Theory is pushed back and religion is dragged into the political houses. *Meatles sDays* is a remarking of history. Suleri draws situational analogy from the kitchen where Dadi's desire for tea at midnight entails the burring accident.

Why does Suleri focus on food analogies? Food is a common need of all the human beings. Words used for desire of food symbolize nostalgia; longing. Suleri talks about her culture and food. She asserts the importance of understanding history and culture foregrounding food as the basic component of culture. Reference to government ban on meat for two days speaks itself of the irony of situation as the ban triggers up the desire for storage. Living in the 'expectation of threatening surprise'Suleri points at 'the hidden trickeries in the scheme of nourishment' (Suleri,1989, p.28) when commodities are missing from the markets most of the time. Suleri satirizes the government responsible for this saturation. As a common discourse, commodities such as flour, butter and tea suddenly disappear from the market and after a while these are returned in 'dubiously shiny attire' (Suleri, 1989, p.29). Prices are much hiked and the common person can 'barely stand to look at them' (Suleri, 1989, p.29). It is her logical application of evidence that Suleri appeals to the reader's sense or logic. Reader being a consumer is aware of economic crisis and hence absorbs the factual accounts given by the author. The text speaks of the pollution in food items. Suleri creates an image of pollution in food compelling these items to 'defy' in a manner 'of extreme belligerence' (Suleri, 1989, p.29). The undercurrent of these lines is that suppression coerces common people to revolt and raise their voices that can lead the country to another civil war. Tactfully Suleri shifts her argument from personal to national. Pakistani nation has internationalized its condition. The paradox is they are unable to see the flaws. 'Self – recovery' (hook, 1984) is possible only if one is able to see and describe one's own reality. Suleri has made the personal political' (hook, 1984) giving voice to her personal experience. She has determined the situation of her family as well as of country. Not an 'ideologue' (Roy, 2008) Suleri draws parallels between her family life and public life. She does this by highlighting the role of food to maintain the intimacy through taste buds. She presents a profound picture by evolving the dynasty of cooks referring to it as in the Allah Ditta era'... 'in the Qayuum days' (Suleri,19891, p.34) and their off springs. Through the tale of Allah Ditta She implicitly deplores the regime of General Zia-ul-Haq in Pakistan. 'we were always waiting for Allah Ditta to die' (Suleri,1989,p.34).The past decade has seen that regime of Zia pushed people of Pakistan in a great disorder and they literally wanted to get rid of his dictatorship. Allah Ditta 'was a good cook and mean man who announced the imminence of his death for years' yet he survived long. This text connotes

a reference to the announcement of poles and democracy denied to nation for years. Suleri's ethos depicts the disappointment and hopelessness of the situation of Zia regime to make her narrative credible. Although a good practicing Muslim, his policies led the nation on a blind route. Iffat's pregnancy draws another analogy of misery that Pakistani nation suffered. Suleri questions the vulnerability of nation by posing a question if they know the pain of being constantly kicked by something and realizing '[they] can never kick it back' (Suleri, 1989, p.35). Hence she merges the personal with public to construct the situation.

Living in Diaspora, Suleri writes about food, memory and longing. Her text is a reflection of it. Its allegorical signification finds roots in the themes of nostalgia and displacement. Suleri tracks down her childhood memory spent in Pakistan. Living in America, she longs for the taste of her traditional food that links her with her people and land. Diasporas always trailed of collective memory about another place and time and created new maps of desire and of attachment (Appadurai et.al.1989).

The context of *Meatless Days* is the new born state and unrest in her family. The dying experiences of Dadi, Iffat and her mother speak of the anxiety that her family feels. She calls the condition in Pakistan 'synonymous with grief' (Suleri, 1989, p.19). History never lends us comfort. We cannot get rid of our past because history records it. Episode of Iffat's death shows the intersection of person with political. Words of Shahid are further reassured by into a more confirmed 'loss' (Suleri, 1989, p.19).

Suleri's depiction of Pakistani society and its habitual norms sounds true as this nation forgets tragedies effortlessly. Bhutto, Iffat and Mamma become 'archaisms, quaintness on our lips' (Suleri, 1989, p.19). Writers have a future respective. Suleri's world is today's Pakistan where nothing is changed. Tragedy after tragedy occurs and diminishes from our memory. Thanks to history that keeps the sores alive. We have to keep stories alive. Like Leslie Silko, Suleri follows a non-linear structure to narrate her stories (1979). Her words contain a story of their own. Each individual character develops by experience life tragedies A great deal of her narrative is inside the reader. Stories depict genealogy and belief. Art of narration helps in creating the history for coming generation. Suleri's life is marked by independence 'the trying times' (1947, 1961& 1971) both personal and public. She is re-writing the past and therefore, it gets complicated sometimes. Her sister Iffat and her mother die in an accident shattering her life. Images of flesh and meat prevails upon text; the goat (Suleri, 1989, p.5), Dadi's burnt body (Suleri, 1989, p.14) Iffat and Mama's death (Suleri, 1989, p.19) signify the need and yearning for the physical presence that is lost.

The strange dream about her mother (Suleri, 1989, p.44) symbolizes her urge of unity with her mother. Vision of swallowing flesh of her mother's body brings a comparison to Eucharist, the Catholic notion of unity by drinking the wine and eating wafer in the memory of the blood spilled by Jesus Christ to save humanity. The dream implies her desire to be one with her mother. The whole narrative constructs a correlation between the idea to be one with her mother and individual experiences (Paiget, 1967).

The world depicted in *Meatless Days* hedges feminism. Strong powerful expressions tend to make the 'personal political' (hook, 1984). Suleri internalizes the strong patriarchal system in Pakistan and discusses it in her own family context. She views her mother who is Welsh, dislocated from her homeland and creates her identity through her language. Her mother's life denotes a submissive stereotypical woman of Pakistani society. Her story

functions as ‘a maker of ... identity’ (Silko, 1979). Suleri defines her character correlating her experiences and notions of identity.

The way Silko moves from the idea of one’s identity as a tribe (1979), Suleri moves towards creating a national identity. It holds records of relationships in an extended family system as well as position of women in Pakistan.

Meatless Days is an attempt to voice the voiceless. The text starts with a feminist stance but it moves on losing and recovering during the entire course. Finally, the feminist voice becomes dominant in ‘What Mamma Knew’. For Suleri everyone is lost. ‘My audience is lost’ (Suleri, 1989.p, 2), ‘We are lost’ (Suleri, 1989.p, 19). The word ‘lost’ signifies her perception of displacement. She confesses missing ‘the absence of women’ [Suleri, 1989, p.19] and grows ‘nostalgic for a world where the modulations of age are as recognized and welcomed as the shifts from season into season’ (Suleri, 1989.p, 19). Much of her time is ‘lost’ (Suleri, 1989.p, 19) in explaining to her students at her university that ‘there are no women in the third world’ (Suleri, 1989.p, 20). A woman in the third world is a daughter, a wife, a sister or a mother. She is known by the relationships. She has no other identity. When Suleri wrote this memoir, it was a time when women were deprived of their position in Pakistan. The passing time has brought a consciousness to the woman of Asian region. Writers like Suleri are no doubt the flag holders to talk about the gender issues in the context of their patriarchal culture.

An expatriate, Suleri defines the inadequacy and alienation that she feels and observes in the situation of her mother. She addresses the theme of feminism but there is no projection of a ‘ruthless snatching of woman’s identity, name, home, social status, right of personal decision, and even children who are derivatives from her body’(Najma et.al 2012). There is a craving for identity in *Meatless Days*. The language of Suleri’s memoir depicts her identity as an Individual of elite class. If we contextualize her position, she belongs to elite class. To talk about politics was a luxury of elite class in the era she wrote this memoir. It was not everyone’s cup of tea in Pakistan. She could talk about politics, dictatorship and the details of 1971 war. If we draw a parallel between her character and her mother, we find dislocation configures both the identities. Her mother dislocated of Wales internalizes the South Asian patriarchy. Rather she ‘bargains with patriarchy’ in order to keep peace and harmony in her household (Kandiyoti, 1988). Her fondness for *Emma* depicts her nostalgia for her culture that she leaves behind. She may view Emma in her daughters or herself. Her father depicts a ‘patriarch’ depriving ‘his wife of her name and identity’ (Najma et.al 2012). The relationship of Z.A Suleri is not at all symbolic of sheer domination in the text, yet in contrast to Mair Jones’ character he appears to some extent the supporter of patriarchal notions. It is due to her marriage that Mair Jones leaves her homeland and embraces a foreign culture. She learns to submit and subdue. She is surrounded by the powerful discourse of her husband (Suleri,1989. p,157).She adopts the habit of ‘looking down’ and ‘gravely listening’ (Suleri,1989.p,157). Suleri Describes her parents ‘rhetorically so different’ (Suleri, 1989.p, 157) ‘always startling each other with the difference of their speech’ (Suleri, 1989.p, 157). It shows her father gave his wife freedom of speech. Suleri emphasizes ‘loss’ that gives her concept of dislocation (Suleri, 1989). Mair, her mother, lost so much because of this marriage. New world, new culture and new identify. She loses the status of woman and assimilates the role of a mother and submissive wife ‘bargaining’ (Kandiyoti, 1988) with patriarchy to survive in the extended

family system. Dadi's role as assertive lady is another reference to the bargain Kandyoti argued about (1988). The elderly woman in an extended household asserts her position to the children and daughter-in-law. Suleri's mother is difficult to be deciphered (Suleri, 1989.p.166) for the reason that she is not 'distracted' (Suleri, 1989.p.166) from one thing or in the direction of 'other'. In addition, Mair Jones takes up her new identity which the new culture has given her [Suleri, 1989]. She accepts the patriarchal design as a 'process of cultural assimilation' (Bhabha, 1989). She learns to change 'Why' into 'Let things be' (Suleri, 1989, p.167). Her tale of dislocation does not lead to open resistance. She is living in exile 'a jealous state' (Said, 2000). She has 'very little to possess... what (she) achieve[s] in exile is precisely what [she has] no wish to share' (Said, 2000). In other words, she does not take anything for granted. She focuses more on 'what is actually here and now' (Said 2000) rather than 'what has been left behind' (Said, 2000). Her dislocation makes her 'marginalized entity' (Said, 2000); 'her repudiation of race gave her a disembodied Englishness that was perhaps more threatening' (Suleri, 1989.p.163).

We can well understand Suleri's text by beginning to 'think of the process of reading and remembering the text of a life in terms of reading a recipe of the self' (Warley1992). It is true that Suleri's 'recipe of the self' (Warley, 1992) is rich in ingredients; her memories of childhood, student life, life with parents, Dadi, sisters and sisters' children. She talks about the cooks and servants of the house in a preoccupied way that her identity. Like Kamila Shamsie (*Salt & Saffron* 2004), Suleri's dominant metaphor is food. She reveals her idea of dislocation embedded in the childhood memories and recollection of the history of Pakistan and descriptions of the intimate relationships. Albeit her language often gets bitter particularly when she talks about women as she herself suffers the anxiety of being an outsider and other in America.

Dislocation is the 'flavor' that Suleri brings forward to construct identity of characters and the development during the course of action (Paiget, 1979). Bharti Mukerji and Jhumpa Lahiri view the problems of dislocation faced by immigrants in United States or the western world. They depict the 'rootlessness' and adaptability to the new environment marked by anxiety and alienation. Suleri highlights her anxiety by depicting the memories of her homeland. Her 'inner alienation' (Riaz&Babae2015) shapes an identity grounded in diverse experience of tales of 'endurance and overcoming' (Boehmer1995). Expatriate writer Monica Ali encounters the theme of dislocation by frequent descriptions of places. Unlike her Suleri and Shamsie finds solace in constructing food correlations. Suleri reference to era of cooks is comparable to Shamsie's 'Tamarind sound[ing] like Taimur Hind (*Salt of Saffron* 2004). Ruzy Suliza Hashim points out the distinct notion of homeland presented by female writes. Their memories depict a strong nostalgia for homeland (2009). Readers interpret the text in the milieu of all these relevant situations.

Mukherjee (1988) represented term 'dislocation' not as a failure but an expansion of culture and aesthetic experiences of those dispersed. Suleri provides a unique perspective and piquant examination of Pakistani culture from a native point of view. Her rigorous words raise the voiceless as she relentlessly pursues personal and political tensions. For Salman Rushdie hybrid identities arise from cross culture migration. Suleri's notion of identity arises from patriarchy as well as migration. Like Ibsen's *A Doll's House* before everything else she is 'a wife and a mother'. Suleri's culture also defines woman with relationships.

Independence in 1947 is a century long struggle. It signifies the dawning of a new age. Its contemporary political situation is replete with turmoil and so is the private family life of Suleri. People in Pakistan with a strong belief wait for the 'trying times' to over. Suleri draws remarkable parallels to show the depth of her grief. Her sister Iffat's accidental death is parallel to the tragedy of Fall of Dhaka in 1971. 'Grave autumn colors to those days' (Suleri, 1989, p.67). Use of language enhances the bewilderment of Pakistani nation on this great tragedy. It is hard for them 'to determine who the cause was and who the effect of that somewhat sorrowful parting' (Suleri, 1989.p.67). For Suleri 'pains' never subside. These have their own unique form such as David pain, Iffat pain...For her 'Iffat still felt unburied...still was warm, (Suleri, 1989.p.67). Suleri's notion of dislocation is grounded in nostalgia and memories of homeland; yet there is a vibrant and diverse view of not putting back 'her body where (her) life belongs' (Suleri, 1989.p.67). She is contended and joyous 'to let life and body go grazing off to their own sweet pastures' (Suleri, 1989. p.68).

Like Ibsen's Nora Suleri does not believe that any longer. She believed that before everything else [she is] a human being (*A Doll's House*). Suleri's bitter tone defines the status of females in Pakistan by relating tales of her mother and sister Iffat... 'one makes the bed, the other lies in it, and so are one's household duties appointed' (Suleri,1989. p.68). Completion of her graduate studies compels her to 'stave off marriage' and 'keeping it at bay' (p.58), she gets admission in the university. Marriage although a sacred institute, puts strong cultural barriers around females in South Asia. Elite class women afforded taking refuge in studies during the past decades in Pakistan. For the common women, education at a university was a luxury at the time when Suleri wrote her memoir. She talks about the sacrifice of Pakistani woman who mutates under various language situations specifically in the name of marriage through the character of Iffat. Iffat devotes 'energies' to Pakistan by learning to speak Panjabi after her marriage and 'then graduate[s] to the Jehlum dialect, spoken in the region form where Javed's family came' (Suleri, 1989, p.141). In Asian norms, normally woman changes her identity after marriage. Through Iffat's husband family, Suleri figures out the violence committed in the name of religion, honor and culture. In most cases the victims are the poor females. The traditional goat sacrifice on the spot where Javed's great grandfather had slain his infant daughter is a demonstration to stick to tribal conventions. One can never evaluate '... so aggrieved was he to have a female as a child' (Suleri, 1989. p, 141-2). This description is Suleri's attempt to point out the ancient Arab tradition of burying a female infant. Islam clearly denounces it. The holy prophet (SAW) proclaimed a girl child, as is a symbol of pride and blessing from Allah Almighty. The holy Quran says 'On the Day of Judgment when the infant girl buried alive is asked, for what crime she was killed'. (Quran, 81:89). Suleri recreates the cruel tradition that in spite of religious sayings is still alive. Ironically, Pakistan came into being in the name of Islam, a religion that ensures legal rights to men and women. Suleri questions the culture and its unjustified norms. Bhabha (1988) uses the term 'rethink [ing] for something repeated in the name of tradition; it is not the sign of being faithful to the history. Rather it shows revival of representing authority. In *Meatless Days* Suleri is 'Rethink [ing] the situation of her county, culture and her family. She represents the authority that natives depict by describing their culture. Iffat's daring venture of elopement and marriage to Javed against the will of her parents earns exile and her father never welcomes her. In Suleri's culture, rebellion to norms pushes the individual to isolation.

In such a world ‘a woman can’t come home’ (Suleri, 1989, p.147). Suleri also questions the reproduction rights of women in Asian culture. She depicts the gender supremacy of her society by talking about her ‘mother’s laborious production of her five... sisters’ (Suleri, 1989, p.148) of ‘their seven’ (Suleri, 1989, p.148). Talking about women, her language has a swing and flow that adds flavor of interpretation to the readers.

Suleri defies hypocrisy of the mourners and stages some ‘half sisterly fights for the benefit of the visitors’ (Suleri, 1989, p.149). This depicts the inquisitiveness and interference of the people whose purpose to visit the bereaved family is to enjoy the situation. Suleri is critical of her mother’s submissive attitude. She represents nineteenth century image of ‘locked woman’. The difference is that she bears both joy and shame. She is also a representation of ‘a caged woman’ (Binns, 1997). She is dislocated from her homeland. She is a completely transformed woman. Her role as a teacher strengthens her character. Both mother and daughter are ‘border crosser’ (Yancovitz, 1997). Like Spivak, Suleri points out the Diaspora identify of women represented in a single woman (Yancovitz, 1997). Suleri dedicates a whole chapter to her mother ‘What Mamma knows’. She describes her mother’s face like ‘the binding of a book... knowing better than openly to announce its title (Suleri, 1989, p.151). She is the epithet of a perfect mother. A dislocated woman, Mair Jones teaches her children perfect manners. She has assimilated the identity of a typical eastern mother, striving to fulfill the children’s needs. Being a university lectures, her character is the reconstruction of Anarkali, a dancing girl that the Mughal emperor Jahangir loved and she was ‘bricked alive into her grave as punishment for having solicited a prince’s love’ (Suleri,1989, p.153). Mair also left Wales for Z.A Suleri and embraced a life within walls like a Pakistani woman where she met compromises at every step for ‘having solicited [Z.A Suleri’s] love’ (Suleri, 1989, p.153). Suleri finds an unpredictable ‘gravity... weightless ness [her mother] carried with her (Suleri, 1989, p.154). It was only after Suleri adopted career (teaching) that revealed to her the ‘sobriety’ (Suleri, 1989, p.154) of her mother whose ‘step was always measuring out what she [saw]’ (Suleri, 1989, p.154). Incarcerated, her mother’s movement was in ‘observation’ to a degree that held Suleri’s breath (Suleri, 1989, p.154). These notions of feminism underline the theme of *Meatless Days*. It also denotes how individuals develop through what their inner experiences are.

Images of feminism, dislocation and memory are constructed using metaphors and figurative language abundantly. A synthesized meaning is constructed through analogies because language as an abstract concept is constructed in the minds of readers. Suleri has absorbed the external world; public and private. She tried to create ‘a new kind of historical writing, whereby [she] give[s] no introductions whatsoever. [She]I use [s] the names, the places, but [she]I won’t stop to describe them’ (Suleri,1990). Comparable to Slaman Rushdie, she weaves her private life history into the public affairs of Pakistan. Her inner life experiences develop the political history of Pakistan. She thinks that ‘these two entities are inextricably connected to each other’. One’s private life is affected by public life and vice versa. Her mother ‘now... has no secrets’ (Suleri, 1989, p.156). Dislocation has taught her ‘to live increasingly outside the limit of her body’ (Suleri, 1989, p.156). For her the household and ‘all the duties it implied’ gave contentment. She is the most ‘reticent woman’ in contrast to Mr. Suleri the most demanding man (Suleri,1989, p. 157).Suleri creates a world of chauvinism where her father’s ‘mode of fearsome inquiry’ was married to ‘Mamma’s

expression of secret thought' (Suleri,1989,p.157). Still there is dignity in that incongruous union (Suleri,1989, p.156) and her mother has learnt to follow the principles of compromise for the sake of man to whom she yields and submits. 'Enduring' Mr. Suleri is her greatest triumph. She guards her husband's ego and pride and finds solace in describing the greatness achieved during the struggle of Pakistan. It also denotes that home is where heart is. Miles away from Wales, Mair Jones is contended with her children. Her contentment lies in dislocation. Indirectly Suleri expresses her notion of displacement. Her relationship with husband is a stereotypical husband- wife relation in the patriarchal society of Pakistan where wife consoles husband at every step of life and thereby saves his honor. She has lost her identity and her name. She has completely transfigured into an eastern stereotypical woman 'naming Ranjha so many times that she has become his name...he has become him by herself (Suleri, 1989, p.162). Suleri recreates the famous romantic folklore Heer Ranjha. She questions the identity of woman who loses herself for the sake of man. Whether Heer or Mair both lose their identities and reconstruct their 'selves'. Mair Jones is transformed into Surryya Suleri '... she had to re-distribute herself through several new syllables, realigning her sense of locality' (Suleri, 1989, p.163). Suleri highlights the position of woman in this region fixed for decades. Married to a Pakistani, she surrenders her actual identity and is ready to 'assume the burden of empire... to let her [husband] colonize her body and her name (Suleri, 1989. p. 163). Suleri artistically brings the theme of colonization appealing to the sense of the readers through bathos and ethos. She defines the disposition of her father as a colonizer whose 'desire for [Mair] was quickened with empire's ghost'. It tells the tale of suppression. Mr. Suleri's wish 'to possess was a clear index of how he was still possessed' (Suleri, 1989, p.163). The ghost of colonization influences the people once subjected to it. Probably Mair's bargain is the discovery of 'an ancient landscape' (Suleri, 1989, p.163). She faces barriers of culture, religion and language. Suleri depicts through metaphorical language a world where her mother enters to explore and finds 'a living place' (Suleri, 1989, p.163). Dislocation gives her new insight to break the barriers and find out new avenues of life. She adapts a careful disposition of 'someone who did not wish to be breaking rules'. She reconciles with her present situation. For her survival, she succumbs to the new culture and land.

Suleri's notion of feminism, memory and dislocation find another perspective represented through the character of Mustakori. She is yet another interpretation of immigrant characters. 'her very route from East Africa to Ireland to Lahore' maps her identity (Cook, 1997). In Pakistan, she meets a dislike for her scripted role as a 'brown European' (Suleri, 1989, p.49). For her 'returning is somehow sweeter, less dangerous, than seeking out some novel history' (Suleri, 1989, p.49). Suleri's perception of dislocation is thus less dangerous. Except her father, all other characters find solace by reconciling to their situations. Her father felt as a 'minority' (Suleri, 1989, p.119). Return ensures relief instead of wandering around. Mair Jones and Mustakori learn to live a life of assimilation through performance; performance at home and in theater. It entails the argument if identity and role can be easily chosen and adopted. If it is optional then dislocation will never be the undercurrent of anxiety. It means Suleri advocates speech and thought are 'gold', body 'interiorize nothing by virtue of biology' (Cook, 1997). It also invokes the thought if internal body has no significance; if that is so it is only the mind that has the superiority. The mind decides to change the identity and so is done. In reality these questions are not as simple as these appear to be. Living a life

of assimilation could be the option for survival but not a voluntary choice ‘somewhat sweeter’ (Suleri, 1989, p.49) but ‘disappointed’. Mustakori does not let herself ‘understand the principle of double occupancy’ (Suleri, 1989. p.49-50). Her identity has been deconstructed many a times since her childhood. Her personality is an amalgam of multiple identities. Her schooling in English boarding deprives her of her African identity and wrings ‘the Swahili out of her inside’ (Suleri, 1989. p.52). The image of her growing up as a ‘solitary mountain’ out of ‘East African terrain’ (Suleri, 1989.p.52) implies Suleri’s concept of dislocation and the colonization of English around the worlds. Mustakori urges to ‘grope for the shadow of a perfect mountain’ (Suleri, 1989. p.52). ‘All she could find of her voice was its fault’ (Suleri, 1989. p.52). The language symbolizes the people cut from their roots develop hybrid personalities. The rhetoric of hybridity emerged as result of postcolonial discourse. With a ‘D-status British passport’, Mustakori travels around clearly depict the restlessness in her personality (Suleri, 1989. p.53). Her dislike for the ‘most colonial school’ in Kenya indicates her rebellion against English domination. The family earning in Ireland by the brand name ‘Curry in Hurry’ made public by Mustakori embarrasses Suleri. It foregrounds Suleri’s elite attitude towards language use. Dislocation makes Mustakori bold because she learns to yield to circumstances where Suleri’s conscious is marked by colonization bestowing upon her ‘ambivalence’ (Bhabha, 1990). Mustakori struggles to understand the geography of Lahore that puzzles her. She finds the ‘city’s habit’ to behave ‘like a mirage... its ability to disappear’ (Suleri, 1989. p.54). Her situation parallels Lahore and one always anticipates ‘to find Lahore without quite locating it’ (Suleri, 1989. p.54). Various places earn her different names- Congo lise, Faze Mackaw, Fancy Musgrave. She has drifting interests which are hindrances in determining her identity.

People around Mustakori and Mair Jones do not take pain to understand their situations and feelings. Their identities construct through inner conflicts of their lives. Suleri displays beautiful image to describe the idea of dislocation by calling it ‘an aura of anticipation’ (ps.54). Mustakori and Mair Jones settlement relates to Lahore ‘that has built itself upon the structural disappointment’ at the heart ‘of pomp and show and circumstance’ (Suleri, 1989. p.54). The ‘structural disappointment’ is a reference to the city’s situation after 1947 showing it as ‘an edifice of crude modernity’ (Suleri, 1989. p.54).

Another strong metaphor used for dislocation is ‘moon’ in the text. Suleri refers to Ramadan as a ‘lunar thing’ coming always with ‘an aura of slight and pleasing dislocation’ (Suleri, 1989. p.29). It refers to the religious history of Muslims and indicates the ‘slight’ pleasure Suleri takes in displacement.

The contemporary situation of the newborn country throughout her narrative disappoints Suleri. She points at the immigrants’ struggle with language to find ‘vocabulary to do justice’ to it. Using words for Pakistan’s geography as ‘subtle and slim’ in contrast to Indian vocabulary calling it ‘as mean and skinny’ display her affection for the country. She has developed an ‘individualistic mode of communication’ (Neoenglish 2010) to assert her authority. Her concept of dislocation is equally ‘subtle’ (Suleri, 1989.p.55). Illustrating the political scenario of Pakistan, the question ‘What next?’ disturbs her mind. Her feelings of committing disloyalty by playing the death scene in the Caravan (Suleri, 1989. p.61) suggest her sensitivity for the historical national tragedies after its creation ‘she had witnessed three years ago, in the winter of the 1971 war’ (Suleri, 1989. p.61). She refers to the day of ‘cease

fire’ as’ trying times’ when her friend’s brother is killed an hour before ceasefire. She refuses to plagiarize her own ‘experience’ (Suleri, 1989. p.61-2). For Mustakori, acting is ‘always drawn from life’ replicating accidents (Suleri, 1989.p.61). Suleri calls it plagiarism and plagiarism is disregarded as it deprives others from their due credit. The paradox here is that Suleri herself is replicating her nation’s history by making it parallel to her family life story. Or she denounces it in the form of acting and performance. She performs an O’ Neil death scene in ‘unconscious imitation’ three years later; yet she wishes to give that ‘spectacle better respect’ (Suleri, 1989. p.62). She sounds Aristotle concept of tragedy that invokes catharsis or pleasure in audience. Suleri’s language sways her reader’s opinion, backward and forward. Her language is persuasive to the extent to invoke contrary thoughts in readers’ mind. Her diction depicts the use of language for specific purpose.

Sometimes logical fallacies in her arguments serve her purpose of persuasion to the extent that reader agrees with her point of view. Many a times there is a hasty generalization; an example of logical fallacies. She reaches a conclusion. For example, she calls mourning simply a procedure to ‘prolong a posture of astonishment’ (Suleri, 1989. p.172). It may not be true for the situation of all mourners.

With the help of post-colonial rhetoric, Suleri discusses her mother’s relation to Pakistan. An immigrant in America, she feels the ‘unloveliness of New Havens’ (Suleri, 1989. p.132). Her observation of the people ‘shoveling hateful snow’ suggests the coldness of temperature and her mood as well. Asked by her friend Jonathan to write Iffat’s death story makes her hostile, as it is the bitterest part of her life. Iffat’s memories are source of turbulence in her mind. Her characterization of her mother ‘a woman so disinterested’ whose actual identity is transfigured and a ‘new’ emerges because of social and cultural displacement. Suleri challenges the norms of her own culture many a times (Ashcraft et.al. 1989).

Conclusion

This study has explored the volatile connection of personal, historical and cultural histories. It has recreated tales through the secrets a family may hold. Suleri through power of written words has enlivened the history both her personal and political. This analysis attempted an exploration of the nature of truth, the resolution of myth. It has highlighted the extensive ability of that art and storytelling has. The memoir constructs the political history of Pakistan through the inner conflicts of a family where different characters develop and create an identity throughout personal experiences.

Meatless Days is a memoir intricately woven through language devices used for inference and implicit meaning. Suleri remakes her private and public life through figurative language. She draws parallel between her family life and the contemporary situation in Pakistan. Through female characterization she foregrounds the position of Pakistani women. Her accounts of food and festival depict the struggle of an expatriate to restore the cultural pride. Sketches of her family, friends and situation in Pakistan, she treads the path of self-discovery. She expresses her ‘inner’ life by providing details of time and place. She has given an essential ‘and palliative product to be consumed’ (Tudor, 2011). In fact the important people in her life reveal her ‘self’ to the readers. Seeing it from various perspective, dislocation for Suleri is ‘slightly pleasing’ amalgamated in memories of past. Her lines are

delicate but create curt and heavy stories. She celebrates not only what is lost and destroyed but works to reclaim it through her language. Her voice has confidence. She is certain of the value and authority of her own voice. She creates a world through language to save memories, histories and dreams. Her memoir explores a woman's struggle to shape her idea of dislocation; alienated in a foreign land or displacement of female in a patriarchal society. *Meatless Days* is her-story. She provides various 'flavors' to her readers and allows them to interpret the meaning of her text by correlating the 'interaction between [her] experiences and [her] ideas' (Paiget 1967).

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