Otherness and Gender Identity in Sara Suleri’s *Meatless Days*

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Abstract:  
This paper intends to explore otherness and gender identity in Meatless Days through the application of feminist theories of otherness. The theoretical frameworks of Kristeva, Beauvoir and Spivak have been applied to Suleri’s memoirs Meatless Days by taking the characters, like Mama and Ifat. Spivak’s theory of silence, Kristeva’s doctrine of otherness and Beauvoir’s sexual construction have been applied to migrant Mama, foreigner to Pakistan, and rebel Ifat. Both Mama and Ifat, characters straight from Meatless Days, are others in familiar settings. My objective is to trace the elements of otherness in these characters through the application of above mentioned doctrines.

Keywords: Otherness, displacement, exile, language, fragility, women

INTRODUCTION

Suleri maintains in Meatless Days that women are assigned different social roles in the third world. They live by those roles but still they are “others” as they do not belong to places, for they are not only different in their structures but also in their feelings, conduct, emotions and lives. Whereas men live in places women live in bodies and that differentiation is sufficient to mark their “otherness”

“I’ve lived many years as an otherness machine and had more than my fair share of being other” (p.158)

This statement reverberates the feminist theory of Kristeva (1981). She opines that to be named as woman means some kind of isolation .That name “woman “ in itself has that peculiar concept of otherness in it. Woman is “other” she lives no where but in her body. (Kristeva, Women’s Times: 223) In the same essay she maintains and questions the relativity of the term woman as this term is both symbolic and biological (225). While reading this line I asked myself what kind of otherness this possibly can be. The explanation for this I found in Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* (1953). Beauvoir, too, takes existentialist view on women. In her *The Second Sex* I found reiteration of the fact that men and women belong to probably the same world but with a difference, whereas men’s world is a self-defined and self-explained world the women’s world is defined and explained for the sake of men.

*She learned to live apart, then --- apart even from herself--- growing into that curiously powerful disinterest in owning in belonging-----She let commitment and belonging let my father’s domain learning instead the way of walking with tact on other people’s land”*(p164.19-----15)
Kristeva in her Strangers to Ourselves (1991), maintains that foreigner is the one who is estranged to one’s own body. Suleri reiterates the same idea. Mama is an Irish lady. She migrated to Pakistan through marriage. She learned to tread on other people’s land and in the process distanced herself with her body. The character of Mamma has the semblance of Kristeva’s foreigner “an enemy to be destroyed, he has become within the scope of religious and ethical constructs, different human being”(1991:2) So in the words of Kristeva Mama became an enemy to be destroyed because she was other as she dared to tread on other people’s land.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The type of methodology used for this research is qualitative, as this paper is based on the textual analysis of a feminist writer. Data selected for this research is from “Meatless Days”, memoirs by Sara Suleri. I have taken out different excerpts from this text to facilitate and support my stance about otherness as is perceived through the lens of Suleri.

WOMEN’S OTHERNESS AND DISPLACEMENT

The most immediate example of displacement and otherness that we see in The Meatless Days is that of Mair, Suleri’s mother. The Welsh woman, that her mother was, living in Pakistan, the other’s people’s land epitomizes women’s lack of place and otherness.

She let commitment and belonging become my father’s domain, learning instead the way of walking with tact on other people’s land. No it was merely devotion that makes my mother into the land on which this tale must tread. I’m curious to locate what she knew of the niceties that living in someone else’s history must entail, of how she managed to dismantle that other history she was supposed to represent. (p. 164. L-14__________20)

Repetition of otherness in the above mentioned textual quote has multifaceted dimensions. Mair, an Irish lady is a woman who learned to distance herself from her own body in the process of acclimatizing with new environs, queer land, novel demography and enigmatic puzzles. But, still, despite all her endeavours to fit into someone else’s history she, in the words of Kristeva, remained a “foreigner” In her “Strangers to Ourselves” she explains the definition of a foreigner. She says

‘the foreigner lives within us: he is the hidden face of our identity, the space that wrecks our abode, the time in which understanding and affinity founder.’ (1a) The ‘foreigner’ then is something hidden in ourselves, something with the potential to destroy ‘home’ and something that is beyond ‘understanding’ or relations with each other. One could argue that in relation to the Welsh poets studied in my thesis, the strategy of denying a Welsh selfhood has similar qualities. It interrogates the subject’s identity; it challenges the notion of ‘home’ and ‘belonging’; and it reaches towards the unspeakable, silence and the unsaid”(1991:45)

Apparently Mair belongs to the land of her husband, which to her is ‘other people’s land’. In this way, she is a homeless foreigner in the words of Kristeva, entailing others’ history and living others place. Kristeva’s foreigner challenges the notion of home and belonging and the same defiance is applicable to Suleri’s characters, especially to her Welsh mother.
Women will always remain a foreigner, sometimes even in their own bodies. But this idea of otherness is simply agonizing in itself. It depicts alienation, strangeness, and inability to be the part of the place where anybody and everybody else do belong to.

**LANGUAGE AND OTHERNESS**

Language has a direct connection with power. The conflict of voices in these memoirs can reveal power structures. Women are bracketed as “others” in their own way as discourse is heavily tilted in favour of men. This is true especially in context of the characters of Papa and Mamma. The language of the powerful becomes the language of the homes. This is exactly what happens in Iffat’s case:

*Adrift from each familiar she had known what energies my sister devoted to Pakistan! First she Learned how to speak Punjabi and then graduated to Jhelum district, spoken in the region from Which Javed’s family came (P.141.L19-----22)*

As Fairclough mentions “Language is used as a form of social practice, rather than a purely individual activity or a reflex of situational variables (Discourse and Social Change, 2006:63) language has an important role in determining and shaping social character and standing. The more powerful, the more dominant a person is, the more eloquent they will be. Their language will become the language of the house. This is the case with Papa and Jawed. Mamma and Iffat had to learn Urdu and Punjabi, respectively, in order to have some respectful position in the houses of their husbands. This notion of linguistic incompetence of women can be ascribed to Jespersen’s views. Jespersen (1922) in his Language: Its Nature, Development and Origin narrated the difference between male and female languages. He, time and again, reiterates the fact that men’s language is normative or standard and women’s language is deficient or non standard. From Jespersen’s assumption commences the proposition of women’s language being language of the others.

If Jespersen’s insight into language is taken as a rule and it is applied on the women characters of Meatless Days startlingly shocking views will be perceived. Mamma, a Welsh lady, well educated and professional woman is perceived to be the most reticent woman ever seen. This reticence has much to do with the language system. If the above mentioned textual lines are analyzed where Ifat has learned Punjabi, a language quite different from her own mother tongue, in order to be able to live in her husband’s home, it can be understood how Suleri has established otherness of women through their own supposed linguistic incompetence.

Women characters in Suleri’s “Meatless Days” are stereotypical characters belonging to the typical third world. They are spokespersons for particular patriarchal society, where they are rendered speechless. Ironically, their mother tongues are the languages of their husbands. Ifat learned Punjabi, the language of her husband and Mama learned Urdu so that she could communicate with the servants of her husband’s home.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak published in 1988, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” Ten years later, in an interview at Columbia University (October 29 1993), Spivak reiterated her belief that it is impossible to hear the other since someone else always speaks on her behalf or for her. She says “So, the subaltern cannot speak”, (Landry and Maclean, 1996: 292)
Spivak maintained that the official version of history had excluded all the contribution of women in the Independence movement of India. The subalterns spoke but probably their voices were lost in the outburst of male noise. Suleri restated this stance of Spivak’s when she said a woman might have a voice, though feeble it might sound, but still she had got a voice but she is not heard. when the subaltern (woman) makes an effort to the death to speak, she is not able to be heard, and speaking and hearing complete the speech act. Reticence of Mamma and Ifat’s gimmicks of learning a new language are manifestations of subalterns venturing to learn to speak and to be heard in new vicinity.

Suleri’s Mama descends from the area which is the colonizer of Indo-Pak. But now when she enters into these areas she becomes “other” in the family of her husband. She has to learn the language of those who live here.

*She was the woman who loved to talk precisely; she must have hated her sudden linguistic incompetence* (P.163.L.16)

This “linguistic incompetence” is the result of that estrangement that is thrust unwarrantedly upon a woman from nowhere. This linguistic incompetence, resulting in alienation makes women guest in their own bodies. Thus, Suleri figures out the fact:

*My mother was guest, then, a guest in her own name, living in resistant culture that would not tell her its rules: she knew there must be many rules and, in compensation developed the slightly distracted manner of someone who did not wish to be breaking rules of which she was ignorant*(p.163. L19------24)

Mamma was an agent of otherness so are women in general.

*Can I remember how they sat together in a room, the most reticent woman and the most demanding man. Papa’s powerful discourse would surround her night and day. When I see her in his room, she is always looking down gravely listening.* (P.157.L.22 &25------26)

“Other “is very different from those who matter in the real sense of the word. “other” is a person who has given a subject position “The example of silence suggests a close link between gender, the use of speech(or silence), and the exercise of power. But it also shows that link is not direct. On the contrary, it appears that silence, like any linguistic form gains different meanings and has different material effects within specific institutional and cultural contexts” (The Woman Language Debate a Source Book 1994 : 407)

Mamma's Urdu was an erratic thing, with sudden moments of access into idioms whose implications would throw her audience into gasps of surprise. When Barkat's recalcitrance kept her children denuded of clean white starched shirts and dresses to wear to school each day, Mamma's Urdu took a deep breath and opened the nearest idiomatic door, which sent her unknowing into the great precisions of classic amorous discourse. Barkat did not know where to look in his chagrin when Mamma gazed at him and said, her reproach as clear as a bell, “Barkat, how could you cause me such exquisite pain? *(41)

Edward W. Said, who does not fully share the met narrative of Spivak’s project, distinguishes two essentialist ways of justifying the approach to the other “The histories, traditions, societies, texts of ‘others’ are seen either as responses to Western initiatives –and therefore passive,
dependent— or as domains of culture that belong mainly to ‘native’ elites” (Orientalism,1989: 212). Both these positions are based on the isolation of the other. They reinforce the traditional mystery of difference. They construct unassailable walls between that which is known and that which is unknown, between the colonizer and the colonized.

Suleri, in her Meatless Days, combines doctrines propounded both by Spivak and Said. She has presented two characters, from two worlds—one is from the world of colonizer, and the second is from the world of the colonized. But interestingly both are “others”, for both were women. Though “histories and societies” play an important part in shaping otherness as Said portrays but Suleri’s position is that Mamma and Ifat were others though they belonged to different “texts and contexts”. They had different positions in their respective houses but both those positions were subject and silent.

The linguistic differences between men and women, even if they come from the same backgrounds come from different linguistic subcultures and probably because they learn to do different things with the same words (Maltz and Borker,1982) I applied this theory of language and gender to Mamma and came to the conclusion that she not only belonged to a different sex category that made her other but also to a different world of others. Perhaps this otherness, both as a female and as an alien to the land of strangers rendered her speechless.

Discourse of the powerful Papa and influential Jawed is the discourse of the house and both Mama and Ifat are rendered speechless and mute. The connection between language and power has strong but different dimensions. Woman’s discourse is her body. She, probably does not need words or expressions, intonations, pauses or stress patterns to convey her message, she is the “other” and instead of mouth full of words, her full lipped mouth conveys the required message. She is that subaltern who cannot or should not speak, she is not given the power to speak and though Suleri, nowhere in Meatless Days, brings home speechlessness of women still time and again she laments her mother’s reticence and Ifat’s efforts to learn an entirely new language. Probably, the idea of women, language and otherness can best be understood if the words of Anzaldua are taken into consideration: For silence to transform into speech, sounds and words, it must traverse through our female bodies (1990: 20) It is really surprising to witness two women belonging to two different parts of the world but still managing to think on the same lines.

FRAGILITY AND OTHERNESS

Women are others because they are fragile, delicate physically and emotionally. This novel notion of otherness has been delineated in “Meatless Days”

One day, standing in the dining room, Javed suddenly began to describe what he had felt during his first killing. I stopped still, and my head swam at the thought of what come next. Overwhelming me with images of what he must have seen (P144.L.27---31)

These lines show that women will always remain an isolated entity. They will always be assigned a subject position, in which they have quite different roles assigned to them, from that of their male counterparts
Shahid is also smaller than you” I reminded her once when she seemed to be slipping from my grasp. “That’s different, he’s a boy”. But when I sought to question her on why my girlhood mattered to my size, she had passed away from listening. “Sara”, she said firmly “I can’t explain what you are too young to see (133& 134 .L 36---37&1---5)

Men and women are two different categories, categorically divergent from each other. But whereas, men think of themselves as superior they catalogue women as “others

Years later when Richard X swept into my home with his dog Lulu by his side, something of his buoyancy made me tell him cautiously,” you can remind me slightly of my sister” intended to be the highest compliment that I could say , not realizing it that time that to a man so conscious of the peculiarities of manhood such an analogy could only perplex (p.137. L28----34)

To Suleri, this was the highest praise because she was identifying that man with her sister, Whom she admires and adores, but to Richard this analogy evoked perplexity, for he brackets women as others and he does not want to be likened with someone who is “other” Here Suleri endorses the views expressed by Beauvoir that the anti feminists have argued that women are simply not men. They are “others” (Beauvoir, 1953, The Second Sex,) and like Beauvoir, Suleri also celebrates this concept of otherness.

Beauvoir (1953) says that women who deny their femininity evoke the distrust and disrespect of their male counterparts. More or less the same notion has been brought home by Suleri in “Meatless Days” Otherness is the fundamental category of human thought. In the contextual comparisons it is very convenient to divide comparative relations among different categories, like God and Lucifer, virtue and vice, day and night, Sun and moon, Uranus and Zeus etc. But when we say women are “others” it means that they are not what men are. The same idea has been expressed and explained by Butler in her “Gender Trouble” and “Body that Speaks”. Women are “others” as men do not like to be likened with them as has been mentioned by Suleri in the above mentioned lines.

The feminist theorists like Beauvoir and Butler are of the view that women are considered to be respectable only when they highlight their femininity but Mary Wollstonecraft opines that physical appearance or timidity apart , women can still create a difference, they can make still a very valuable contribution to alter this world through their freed sensibility (Alexander, M 1989, Women writers, Women in Romanticism)

The theory of otherness and fragility of women can be traced back to Freud (1920) who “struggled to resolve the differences in female anatomy and different configurations of the young girl’s early family relationships (Gilligan, C, In A Different Voice, 1993:7) . The biological and physical differences among men and women lead to psychological differences as Suluri has pointed out in her description of Jawed. The mention of size and discussion on physical acts of bravery suggest that men are differently able than women but at no point Suluri suggests physical frailty of women leading to mental vulnerability as well.

The difference is gender identity can be construed through physical differences as is suggested by Suluri, through the description of her male and female characters, but at the same time this difference can be constructed through early “individuation and relationship” as is implied by
Gilligan (1993:8) But again the point to ponder is that the sexual, physical, natural or biological differences “does not mean lesser capability. However, these differences have been used to create barriers between man and woman and to push women further to the brink of otherness.

WOMEN, OTHERNESS AND EXILE

“A woman can’t home”. Her face was clouded then, making me watch intently the way that meaning shadowed itself came and went around her eyes. “Why Ifat” I finally asked ”Oh home is where your mother is one, it is one when you are mother, two and in between its almost as though your spirits must retract”

(P.147. L.15---------------------21)

Suleri brings home the concept that women are “others” because they expect things far different from men. They are never deeply rooted, firmly established, the above cited lines are an anguished cry of an “other” displaced person.

“Oh, I am a Wednesday’s child” she would exclaim “Wednesday is full of woes”(P.138. L36)

Now the question arises, why women are “others” if they are socially different. It has got a very simple answer, because the duties delegated to them are dissimilar to what have been assigned to men. This can be surmised from the fact that in any discourse men are construed as the effective managers of things and women are relegated to effective support function and this can be understood as the appropriation of women’s ascribed otherness. Placelessness is correlated with women being “other”. Men are deeply rooted within their own spheres and circles where they belong but unfortunately this is not the case with women. They do not live in places, not even homes, which they make, they live in their bodies. Suleri conveys the same idea on her sister’s death

Let us wash the word of murder from her limbs, we said; let us transcribe her into some more seemly idiom. And so with painful labour we placed Ifat’s body in a different discourse. Words as private and precise as water when water wishes to perform both in and out of light. (148.L.15-------------------19)

Home, to Suleri, is a spatial metaphor to transmute an abstraction like feminist thought into something concrete. The implication of homelessness and lack of discourse for women might have severe repercussions. Suleri’s women characters, however, want to have their own homes as well as their own discourse to transform their mute inexplicable desired into something explicable and concrete and they are, thus different from the adherents of aggressive feminism mentioned by Kristine. W. Shands, “It is hypertansgressive feminism that suggests we must keep running. Being anchored or settled is negatively associated with consistency and coherence, with absolutes and closures, with linear time and limitations” (Embracing Space, Spatial Metaphors in Feminist Discourse,1999: 22)
Suleri’s Ifat or Mamma are not hypertransgressive feminists, they do not want to run away, instead they want to settle down but then closures and limitations, absolutes and inconsistency are imposed upon them without their will.

Ifat was murdered while groping for her own identity as a person, her own self, as a woman. When she cried “I am Wednesday’s child; Wednesday is full of woes” she displays her desperate feeling of being lonely as a woman. The whole phenomenon of the third world’s woman search of own identity as a female is confounding and difficult to understand. However, Suleri has described the traditional dilemmas skillfully. She creates a web of woman characters, their desires and expectations, their ambitions and requirements and their beliefs in themselves. These third world moral confusions have been discussed by Gilligan when he approves of Suleri’s findings in these words, “She holds her identity in abeyance as she prepares to attract the man by whose name she will be known, by whose status she will be defined, the man who will rescue from emptiness and loneliness by filling the inner space, while for men, identity precedes intimacy and generativity in the optimal cycle of human separation and attachment, for women these tasks seem instead to be fused. Intimacy goes along with identity, as the female comes to know herself as she is known, through her relationships with others” (1996:12)

Women like Ifat and Mama lose their identities for the sake of men like Jawed and Papa and here the doctrine of Gilligan seems to be endorsed by Suleri.

WOMAN AND WOMEN AS OTHERS

I have lived many years as an otherness machine, had more than my fair share of being other

(p.158)

Suleri in “Meatless Days” has opined that in the third world women can or cannot be “others” depending upon their social stature and economic standing. She thus any ideological bracketing of women as “others”. A woman can stand amid the mainstream male domination alone, as Dadi did, or can become a victim of “otherness” like Mamma or Ifat.

Leaving Pakistan was, of course, tantamount to giving up the company of women. (P.1L.1)

Then for her readers’ sake she goes on saying:

My reference is to a place where the concept of woman was never really a part of an available vocabulary: we were too busy for that, just living and conducting precise negotiations with what it meant to be a sister of a child or a wife or a mother or a servant (P. 1. L10-----------15)

Here Suleri reconstructs the identity of women and make a lone woman compete with an array of women in their different roles. In the third world, according to Suleri the roles and positions assigned to women are more important than their singular identity as a woman. For women in the third world subject positions and subservient roles are more vital than any illusion about a woman’s identity.

When I teach topics in third world literature, much time is lost in trying to explain that the third world is locatable only as a discourse of convenience ------- and then it happens. A face, puzzled
and attentive and belonging to my gender, raises its intelligence to question why, since I am teaching third world writing, I haven’t given equal space to women writers on my syllabus. I look up the horse’s mouth a foolish thing to be. Unequal images battle in my mind for precedence – there’s imperial Ifat, there’s Mamma in the garden and Haleema the cleaning woman is there too, there’s uncanny Dadi with her. Because, I’ll answer slowly, there are no women in the third world

Here Suleri, unlike her previous assertions on “otherness” makes another criterion for otherness for the third world women. “There are no women in the third world” is an avid reaction to the western feminism or feminism for the sake of feminism. To Suleri every woman in Pakistan or in the third world, for that matter, is entirely different from rest of the mainstream women everywhere. That is why, perhaps, we see that she occasionally reject ideological cataloging of women as “others”. Suleri’s woman sometimes stands firmly like Dadi sometimes uncertainly, shakily and silently like Mamma, and sometimes defiantly and rebelliously like Ifat. But whatever position she might take, whatever ground she may choose to tread on she is always a woman and not women in general. That is why she says there are no women in the third world only positions and roles and rights and duties.

Suleri’s view on otherness of third world women seems to be self-contradictory, for she, time and again, through her characters robustly had tirades of outbursts of being other and of having more than her fair share of being other. But somehow or the other this denial of otherness has echoes of Toril Moi says “But simply to equate women with otherness deprives the feminist struggle of any kind of specificity. What is repressed is not otherness, but specific historically construed agents. Women under patriarchy are oppressed because they are women and not because they are irredeemably other. The promotion and valorization of Otherness will never liberate the oppressed. It is of course, hopelessly idealist to assume that otherness somehow causes oppression. The fact that oppressors tend to equate the oppressed group with ontological otherness, perceived as a threatening, disruptive, alien force, is precisely an ideological maneuver designed to mask the concrete material grounds for oppression and exploitation. Only a materialist analysis can provide a credible explanation of why the burden of otherness has been placed on this or that particular group in a given society on a given time” (1993:14)

Strangely enough Suleri and Moi seem to see eye to eye with each other in regard of the matter of otherness in women. But scenario is not as simple as it apparently looks at first glance. Women are others, this is what Suleri establishes throughout her memoirs Meatless Days but towards the end she realizes that there are no women in the third world and that identity in the third world is construed through social standing and not thorough binary divisions between man and woman. However, I can easily understand Suleri’s position on gender identity and marginalization of women if I consider above mentioned statement of Moi about the otherness of women. If women are regarded others they would be repeatedly tormented and otherness will never liberate the oppressed. Suleri, perhaps wants to float the same idea about women’s otherness. In a third world society, women are perceived as others but still if they have a social standing and strong financial position, they are “less others than the others”
GUEST-HOST RELATIONSHIP AND THE CONCEPT OF OTHERNESS

My mother was guest, then, a guest in her own name, living in resistant culture that would not tell her its rules: she knew there must be many rules and, in compensation developed the slightly distracted manner of someone who did not wish to be breaking rules of which she was ignorant (p.163, L19------24)

The above mentioned lines have some resonance of Hegel’s theory of master-slave relationship as is suggested by Beauvoir in her The Second Sex (1953). In the part 2 of her The Second Sex Beauvoir asserts that just as a master-slave relationship occurs between an employer and employee, in the same way a kinship exists between man and woman. Suleri’s mother, the Irish lady, the foreigner in every sense of the word, was then a guest even in her own body and in alien resistant cloture

But this relation is to be distinguished from the relation of subjugation because woman also aspires to and recognizes the values that are concretely attained by the male. He it is who opens up the future to which she also reaches out. In truth women have never set up female values in opposition to male values; it is man who, desirous of maintaining masculine prerogatives, has invented that divergence. Men have presumed to create a feminine domain – the kingdom of life, of immanence – only in order to lock up women therein. But it is regardless of sex that the existent seeks self-justification through transcendence – the very submission of women is proof of that statement. What they demand today is to be recognized as existents by the same right as men and not to subordinate existence to life, the human being to its animality. (64:1952)

Whereas, Suleri emphasizes her mother being a guest in her own body, Beauvoir (1953) insists on host-guest or master-slave relationship between men and women. However, when I tried to read between the lines the message Suleri is trying to bring home becomes explicitly clear. Just like Beauvoir, Suleri also feels that because of this peculiar master-slave relationship between men and women, a woman becomes guest even in her own body.

CONCLUSION

Suleri amalgamates feminist theories of “otherness” along with her own conception of it in the particular context of the third world. She speaks of Beauvoir and Spivak, talks about Said and Butler, thinks about oriental and western philosophies and comes out with her own version of women in the rather mysterious part of the world. Her work is unique as it combines different theories with her own account and her own perception of the agency of otherness and how does it work it the particular surroundings. Her characters are living, breathing realities and are not based on myths or fiction that is why the reader is able to analogize with them. She begins with rejecting binary divisions and towards the middle admits its existence and then again moving towards the end she regains the lost thread and claims “there are no women in the third world”. She is fully aware of subject position a woman is assigned and reconciles herself with it, though sometimes she laments that position but on the whole she gracefully walks through that.

As a researcher investigating otherness in Suleri’s Meatless Days at the very beginning of my research I asked myself two basic research questions that will enable me to find out some truths about otherness of women in this work. Women are bracketed as others and we can easily observe that in the female characters of Meatless Days. Women are others because they are
physically different as Sara witnessed, women are others because they are rendered speechless, despite having most eloquent speech style as Mamma suffered and Ifat experienced, women are others because they are homeless, they do not have home of their own as Ifat mused and surmised. In general, women are labeled and marginalized as others because they are supposed to be frail, fair sex.

The second question on which I focused was the construction of gender identity through otherness. I observed that a lot of work has been done in this regard by renowned feminist writers like Beauvoir, Spivak, Butler and Kristeva. These feminist writers have raised the issues of gender construction, marginalization and identity of women. I have applied the theories formulated by these famous theorists on Meatless Days. I have applied a number of feminist doctrines to Meatless Days. On the female characters of Ifat and Mamma and Sara I applied the theory of power dynamics suggesting the pillar of power lies with the economically affluent, or that of linguistic competence of marginalized and suppressed women as has been formulated by Spivak, on the characters of Mamma and Ifat. I, therefore, came to the conclusion that it is difficult to isolate gender identity of women and their otherness from each other. Both, identity and otherness are dependent factors and one big independent variable is gender. Because of their gender, women’s identity is construed differently and because of their identity as women they are pushed to the brink of otherness.

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