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## ‘Diaspora within Diaspora’: A Study of Sara Suleri’s *Meatless Days*

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The article ‘Diaspora within Diaspora’: A study of Sara Suleri’s *Meatless Days* throws light on the Diasporic experiences of Sara Suleri as well as her mother and it is an amalgamation of two different diasporas. The major focus is given to the language, religion, gender and the concept of home with respect to the memoir *Meatless Days*. Sara Suleri describes her mother’s life in Pakistan, the woman from Wales who had to get accustomed to the conservative society and family. Diasporic features are discussed in the light of the Diasporic experiences of Sara Suleri’s mother Mair Jones and also the concept of home of Sara Suleri in a compact manner.

The writer Diaspora Sara Suleri, originally from Pakistan, has depicted her memories of home in her memoir *Meatless Days*. Her voracious readings and her academic backgrounds all set in to her choosing the profession of a Professor and the intellectual journalist father Zia Ahmed Suleri and Welsh mother Mair Jones who is a teacher has also created an impact in the life of Sara. Her strong vocabulary and her flair for description have made the memoir rich. The highlight of the novel is the concept of Diaspora within Diaspora i.e. through the Diasporic memories, Sara Suleri voices the Diasporic experiences of her mother. Also she shares her own experiences as an expatriate. In this work Sara Suleri deals with multiple concepts like Post colonial impacts, gender, religion and law of Pakistani society, here the focus is given to the Diasporic experiences of Sara’s mother and how Sara portrays the experiences through her memories.

Diaspora the term has its origin centuries back when there was a dispersion of Jews from Judea in 580 BC. Also it refers to the historical movements of the dispersed ethnic population of Israel and their cultural development. The present meaning of Diaspora is a minority living in exile. The common feature of a person in Diaspora, who is de rooted from the homeland and is re rooted to the host land, is that he/she remembers their past. If there is no traumatic past, they long to go back to their homeland. Sara Suleri’s paternal roots are in Lahore and she is relocated to New Havens for her higher education. Thus she is dispersed from her homeland. Similarly her mother Mair Jones has re rooted to Pakistan after she got married to Zia Ahmed Suleri. Sara Suleri, the writer in Diaspora speaks about the Diasporic experiences of her mother in Pakistan. Thus it becomes Diaspora within Diaspora.

There are certain common features of Diaspora according to Joseph Chariandy. It goes like this:

1. Dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically to two or more foreign regions.
2. Alternatively or additionally, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions.
3. A collective memory and myth about homeland, including its location, history sufferings and achievements.
4. An idealization of the real or imagined ancestral home and a collective commitment to its maintenance or restoration of the original homeland its safety and prosperity and

5. They continue in various ways to relate to the homeland and their ethno communal consciousness and solidarity are in an important way defined by the existence of such a relationship. (Chariandy: 4).

These features are embarked upon the umbrella term 'memory' and how the identity of the individual is constructed through the same. Sara Suleri's mother Mair Jones, a woman from Wales has come down to Pakistan after her marriage. She has renamed herself to Surraya Suleri as per the norms of the society and the religion the family followed. Often she feels alienated in the settled land and that makes her say, "child I will not grip." (MD 164). This lack of grip makes her reminisces about her own culture that is of English. Sara Suleri speaks about the culture of Surraya Suleri has been imparted to her children and that is the reason why Sara is able to analyse the world around her in a critical way. In the chapter 'What Mamma Knew' she gives a clear picture of the collective memory of the Wales (of her mother).

Sara Suleri has used the technique memoir to explain the past. Memoir can be a factual or autobiographical description and also it has the benefit of saying partially or completely imaginary situations. Sara has taken the advantage of this partial imagination technique in describing the past life of her mother and father. Her father has reported the conversation between Jinnah and Gandhi and she has quoted it in this way:

"In 1930 the poet Iqbal's Allahabad's Address to Muslim League could contain visionary reference to the idea of a separate Indian Muslim nation. Jinnah was more pragmatic, however when he turned to that opinion. Gandhi declared, "To me, Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Harijans are all alike. I cannot be frivolous when I talk of Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah. He is my brother." Jinnah replied, "The only difference is this, that brother Gandhi has three votes and I have only one." " (MD 114).

Also she imagines the memories of her mother about her mother's home land and her feelings being in Diaspora in Pakistan. Again Sara creates a vicious circle of the memories of Diaspora within Diaspora. Also Sara jumps from present to past and vice versa. This is the technique of telling the memories whether real or imaginary, a kind of non original stream of consciousness. In fact she tries to create the feel of the interrupted flow of thought. Also Sara hides various elements in the memoir. It can also be justified since it is not an autobiography. One instance is the lack of verbal communication between Sara's grandmother and father Zia Ahmed Suleri.

In this exploration of the past the highlight is the mother, an elegy for her mother. She gives the readers a picture of the mother who suffered in the Diasporic existence in Pakistan. She has not got any sort of support from the new society, the settled land nor from the family she come to. She has become a "white legged woman" for her mother in law and a representation of coloniser for the nation. Also Sara makes a comparison of herself in the Diasporic existence in New Havens as a Professor in Yale University. She used to take up women writers for her classes and once a student asked her about the women in Pakistan she retorted "there are no women in the third world." (MD 20). The reason could be that she has not considered her mother as a woman in the third world and she is not happy with the way of treating women in the third world especially in Pakistan. She is quite unhappy with what her mother has gone through. Sara Suleri also faces the problem of being an expatriate in New Havens, but she has not given much thrust on her problems.

Language is the major factor that makes the Diasporic individual gets into a different status. The natives of the host land treat them as inarticulate and incomprehensible according to Vijay Mishra. Sara Suleri has portrayed her mother to be inarticulate in the family as the language spoken by the family members is Urdu. It has become a difficult task for a woman from Wales to learn the language quickly. Sara often translates Urdu to English and English to Urdu for her mother. Thus she comments that most of the time she lived in translation. It is one of the main factors that Surraya Suleri becomes grip less in the new society. Sara Suleri is highly influenced by her mother or in fact the mother has imparted knowledge about life to her children and Sara has implemented the same in her life. So Sara, in her Diasporic existence has not faced many problems with the language. It is not only the British colonialism but also the mother's colonialism in the family that made all the children of Suleri household speak the language of the coloniser.

In Sara's memory her mother's guidance has a very good impact on the children and the girl children; they become independent in their thought processes and actions which are slightly different from the normal process of the society. Thus the language part becomes bilingual for the children. They manage to speak both Urdu and English. Sara considers English to be the mother tongue and Urdu is the language of father land. Now in her Diasporic life she analyses that her language skills are developed because of the English mother and her flair for writing from the journalist father.

Sara clearly reminisces about her mother's difficulty in accepting the new religion that demands many things like the attire that she wears should cover her completely and the celebration of Eid wherein the animal is domesticated and killed to be fed on. Sara quoted: "Following Eid prayers the men come home, the animal is killed, and shortly thereafter rushes out of the kitchen steaming plates of grilled lung and liver, of freshness quite superlative." (MD 4). This 'freshness' she could not digest. But she had to get adjusted to the same; melting into the pot. Sara herself notices and mentions that her mother had empty sleeves. The literal meaning of it clearly unveils the fact that she wears sleeveless clothes, even though the religion has restrictions. Also the expression "empty sleeves" has a connotation of her helplessness in the settled land. Also Sara mentions her style of dressing in Yale University. "I always wear Salwar kameez" (The Tribune). Again the religious norms what has been imposed on her in her childhood made her wear the traditional attire even though she is in a different nation. Thus she faces various stares from people and she likens the same to her mother. On close examination it can be read that Sara Suleri has made an indirect comparison between her mother and herself.

Gender identity is the other issue in Diaspora. Sara Suleri has described the Pakistani society as a male dominated one and in fact her father is a representation of the same. Certain impositions have been made by him in the life of his wife and children. Zia Ahmed Suleri had the capacity to suppress the women whoever she may be. His mother has been suppressed by him. In a way he has silenced his mother for an untold reason. He divorced his first wife for an unrevealed reason. He made his wife Mair Jones change her identity by changing her name, the primary identity. He has not given any freedom to maintain the identity of her. But as a wife she has adjusted herself to the new circumstances which naturally lead to suppression. She has succumbed herself to the family and she made it a point to emerge herself out of all the unfavourable circumstances. Sara's grandmother used to make the statement that supports women, the power of women, "Men! There is more goodness in a women's little finger than in the benighted mind of man. "And heaven," she grimly added, "is the thing Muhammad says (peace upon him), lies beneath the feet of women!" (MD 7).



All the above mentioned factors are some of the issues faced by the people in Diaspora. It is because of these factors that cause tensions in the mind make people recollects about what they had in past. They tend to have a double consciousness as mentioned by Vijay Agnew, "living here and remembering there." Thus Sara Suleri says that her mother also recollects her childhood memories. It goes like this "back to home Welsh moment that served to succour her when duty felt too great." (MD 161). Sara Suleri in Diaspora also has the double consciousness and that is the reason why she has written a memoir about her mother. She portrays her mother as her guide and teacher who taught her to be a perfect woman and also to have a strong self identity. Sara Suleri, through this memoir, carves out her mother's identity as a unique one and also her identity as a daughter of the rare combination of Pakistan and Wales. She indirectly appreciates her mother for she dares to get amalgamated to a new nation out of her love towards a man whom she met during his talks on Islamization and his impetus to speak on the religion.

The style of Sara Suleri is slightly different since she has made it a little complex by making it a pot pourry of characters and incidents that make the reader gets attracted to the magic conundrum of Diaspora within Diaspora. The comparisons and contrasts in the Diasporic lives of mother and daughter which are the indirect ways of portraying the two women in Diaspora and how they have emerged out to be in the current status. She has given the pictures of different women in the memoir who have supported her and also given her room to understand the significance of home. Home or the memories of home is one of the prominent features of Diaspora and Sara Suleri has something different to say about home. Through the character of Ifat, her sister, Sara Suleri describes home as "the place where your mother is." Thus Sara's home is Pakistan, since her mother lived there. In fact home is the metaphor for mother.

Thus the memoir gives the picture of Diasporic experiences of two generations or the descriptions of two types of Diasporic lives. The focus is more on the Diasporic experiences of the mother and also the self realization of Sara that she always empathises with her mother and she has got the self of her mother. Whatever her mother did and taught her has a left a strong impression in the mind of her and she believes that the very impression has helped her in leading a smooth life in New Havens with her husband Austin Goodyear. In fact Diasporic experiences of her mother has made her understand the difficulties of Diasporic life and that made her cope with the new circumstances in the United States when she set her foot to the place for higher studies and for the profession later. Thus the memoir is the feast of various aspects of Diaspora and its features of both mother and daughter.

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