

## South Asian Literature as a Medium of Socio-Political Satire: A Case Study Analysis of Moni Mohsin's *The Diary of a Social Butterfly*

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### Abstract:

*Moni Mohsin, in her recently published collection of monthly columns, very humorously, reinforces the serious issues of the political world by juxtaposing them with the trivialities of life. Butterfly, the protagonist, begins each entry of the diary by first mentioning a major political development followed by another event which plays a major role in her superficial world. The period in which these columns were written was the one that saw, among other things, 9/11, a very real threat of nuclear war between India and Pakistan and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.*

*This is satirized and mocked at by the author through the powerful use of droll localized version of English language which has also become a mean to sentimentalize literature in Mohsin's *The Diary of a Social Butterfly* (2009). The "chutneyfication of English language", in Salman Rushdie's words, lends a light tone to this otherwise critical commentary on the social animal which is indifferent to what is happening around.*

*This research paper aims to study this book as a political and a social satire, and will provide scope for further research and studies.*

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*It will also accommodate and acknowledge the already published work in this regard.*

**Key words:** Moni Mohsin, The Diary of a Social Butterfly, Political and Social Satire, Droll Localized Version of English Language

## **Introduction**

Moni Mohsin has reproduced the life of a married woman belonging to the elite of a politically shaken country. It does not matter much for her whether it is dictatorship or democracy for nothing interrupts her social activities. She criticizes Al-Qaida not because she wishes the war on terrorism to end but because she believes that the “mullahs” will ban all her wishful activities. As much as this book makes us laugh, it also makes us cringe while looking at the shallow life of someone who is everyone among us.

Moni Mohsin is an acclaimed columnist and wrote in many newspapers including *Friday Times*. She along with her sister Jugnu Mohsin is the pioneer of political satire in Pakistani literature. Her sister is still the managing editor of *The Friday Times*. Moni Mohsin has also won Pakistan's National Literary Award for the best work of fiction in English. She has written for various journalistic publishing including, *The Times*, *The Guardian*, *Boston Review*, *Prospect*, *The Nation* and *Vogue*. (n.pag.)

This research paper aims to study this fictitious diary in terms of political satire keeping in view the tradition already in practise in the Pakistani English contemporary literature. It will analyze the various characters as portrayed symbolically by the author. Even the names of the characters reflect the fact that these characters are not individuals and stand for the archetypes prevalent in our society. The activities of each one of them makes us laugh and ironically, we laugh at ourselves which is the main concern of a satirist. Hodgart in his book

*Satire* says, "I would suggest that true satire demands a high degree both of commitment to and involvement with painful problems of the world, and simultaneously a higher degree of abstraction from the world." (11) By abstraction Hodgart means representation of the contemporary social and the political scenario with which he can relate to.

Trivialization of the various major events that took place during the course of the novel will also be studied. For this, the entry of each diary plays a vital and a significant role. The seriousness of the first mentioned issue is mocked at by the mentioning of another problem or an event in Butterfly's world. Later in that entry, the serious event is either not mentioned at all or if so, it is only ridiculed. For instance, her diary entry of February 2001 mentions the political event in where the assemblies are being restored but Butterfly has nothing to do with that. She is happy to attend six parties in two days. (04)

Another manner in which these events are reduced in their proportion is that they are discussed quite confidently through the "all knowledgeable" Butterfly. She tries to put in her own perspectives and 'professional' views and understandings of politics which only makes the reader laugh. She attends a ball with her husband and there she sat in the company of his friends who were all class fellows at Oxford. One of them mentioned his bicycle once being stolen during the student life at which Butterfly starts the story of her own maid's son who had lost one a couple of days back. The author notes the reactions of others as, "They all stopped talking and stared. I suppose they hadn't been expecting such a clever response. I just smiled serenely at all the losers," (93)

Satire is generated through the use of some technical literary devices. In the case of this book, wit is used along with a bilingual mode of speech. It might be referred to as the "chutneyfication" of the English language. Another reason why the author might have used Urdu diction imbued in English might be that the essence and the connotations attached to

certain modes of speech cannot be translated into another language. But the main reason of using such language is of course to highlight the pretensions and the affectations of a materialistic society which idealizes the West to such an extent that they feel bound to speak English even if they aren't able to. Butterfly constantly speaks such English and feels superior when she has "chup karaomed everybody" (73)

Thus, this research aims a descriptive study of this book as a political satire which is embedded in its bilingual structure full of irony, wit, sarcasm and parody.

## Literature Review

In Pakistani-English literature, the genre of political satire is a relatively new introduction. It started almost a decade ago with writers like Mohsin and Nadeem F. Paracha. These writers set a tradition through their inspiring yet light depictions of who we really are. They wrote eminently and effectively in newspapers such as *The News* and *Friday Times*. Young artists, like Ali, Daniyal and Hamza of the "Beygairat Brigade" have now joined this procession which is yet progressing on a slower rate than it should, but nonetheless taking up a pace. Last year their single "Aalu Anday" hit the internet and gained a lot of popularity. DAWN wrote a review about their video which was based purely on political satire, "...it mocks the raft of political leaders many Pakistanis despair over but breaks ground in daring to lampoon army chief of staff General Ashfaq Kayani...Kayani is rarely the subject of public mirth in a country where the military is feared and revered in equal measures. But for three singers from Lahore... there were no holds barred." (n.pag.)

Stephen Wagg in his article "Comedy, Politics and Permissiveness: The 'Satire Boom' and its Inheritance" says, "The mode of address that today characterizes the relationship between the state, the political media and the citizen bears almost no resemblance to the mode adopted 40 or more years

ago.” (01)

In the recent Karachi Literature Festival, the young Saad Haroon shares his views about the point in literary history from where actually the interest in political satire gained its popularity. He says, “Pakistanis have always gravitated towards political satire right before ‘Humsafar’ started. Till then we all lived in this world of infotainment where the gossip was always ‘what’s happening in the country,’” (n.pag.)

*The Diary of a Social Butterfly* (2009) is a realistic but humorous representation of life in a politically destabilized country. Moni Mohsin has created a persona which can be spotted quite easily anywhere around us; even within us. About the protagonist, she says, “The Butterfly is the embodiment of my own ‘hidden shallows’...the Butterfly is a true expression of my *Hello*-reading, self-absorbed, frivolous side, exaggerated manifold and unredeemed by any hint of self-doubt and unburdened by any desire for a more meaningful existence.” (225) Although this character might reflect some part of the author’s desires but we cannot ascertain the fact that she is the embodiment of all of her desires. About the creation of personas, Peter Dixon in his book, *The World of Pope’s Satire*, says, “It is true that the concept of *persona*, a fictional character through whom a satirist can speak but with whom he is not to be equated, has recently been applied with great profit to the study of Swift.” (06)

Looking at what satire actually is, we can date back to Mathew Hodgart’s definition which he shared in his book titled *Satire* published in 1969. He says,

To respond to the world with a mixture of laughter and indignation...is the way of satire. Satire, ‘the use of ridicule, sarcasm, irony etc. to expose, attack or deride vices, follies etc.’ (as the dictionary defines it), has its origin in a state of mind which is critical and aggressive, usually one of irritation at the latest examples of human absurdity, inefficiency or

wickedness. (10)

This aggression and irritation is toned down through the use of technical devices, "...wit and other technical devices are the means by which the painful issues of the real life are transmuted." (12) In her columns, Mohsin produces this wit through the localized version of English and making it a mean to critique the workings of the elite. Mohsin is not the only one writing in this manner. Nadeem F. Paracha also writes in this strain. He wrote an article titled, "Fashion under Fire" in the *Friday Times* criticizing the superfluous obsession of the elite regarding the fashion industry. He, too, does so in a mocking tone and yet, not sounding rude or harsh- traits traditionally associated as a must with satirical works. He writes, "Perfect. Because it seems in fashion there are neither men nor women, just battery-powered mannequins receiving awards by bulimic soap-making companies for turning anorexia nervosa into a fashion statement!" (n.pag.)

Satire, especially political satire is necessarily based on a purpose- a purpose of correcting the follies that are ridiculed by the satirist. Robert Harris in his article, "The Purpose and Method of Satire" says, "Inseparable from any definition of satire is its corrective purpose, expressed through a critical mode which ridicules or otherwise attacks those conditions needing reformation in the opinion of the satirist. I believe there is no satire without this corrective purpose." (n.pag.) Charles R. Gruner in his research article, "An Experimental Study of satire as Persuasion", quotes various critics that signify the purpose of satire. In his abstract he says,

To entertain is no doubt a prime purpose of satire, but writers also have to it persuasive power. "the purpose of satire is, through laughter and invective, to cure folly and to punish evil," says Gilbert Highet. Marie Collins Swabey puts it another way: "To ridicule the vices and follies of mankind is the business of satire...satire by its imaginative eloquence excites anger at human misdeeds and cruelties." (01)

By mentioning these follies the implied purpose is always to

correct them for they are a cause of anger and frustration for the satirist. Charles A. Knight in his book, *The Literature of Satire* says, "The use of local stereotypes to represent what the satirist claims as large cultural threats has a long (if not distinguished) history. The most familiar classical example is Juvenal's description of Greeks as fast-tongued rhetoricians, effeminate actors, shameless flatterers, sexual virtuosi, blackmailers, and spies." (59) On the NKU educational web page, Juvenalian satire is defined quite aptly. It is inspired by the satirist Juvenal and is defined as, "Formal satire in which the speaker attacks vice and error with contempt and indignation." (n.pag.)

Horatian satire, inspired by the Roman author Horace, is another popular form of satire. The same web page defines it as, "Satire in which the voice is indulgent, tolerant, amused, and witty. The speaker holds up to gentle ridicule the absurdities and follies of human beings, aiming at producing in the reader, not the anger of a Juvenal, but a wry smile." (n.pag.) These two were the most popular forms of satire during the 18<sup>th</sup> century where we have a number of significant satirists producing their works. Among them are Pope, Swift, Johnson and Dryden. At that time, satire and wit was at its peak along with reason for which this age is known.

In the article titled, "Satire in 18th Century British Society: Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* and Jonathan Swift's *A Modest Proposal*", the author, Jonathan J. Szvec, summarizes this issue in these words by giving us example from Pope and Swift, "Pope, in his *The Rape of the Lock*, is Horatian in tone, delicately chiding society in a sly but polished voice by holding up a mirror to the follies and vanities of the upper class. Swift's *A Modest Proposal*, however, is a quintessential Juvenalian satire, shockingly revealing an often-overlooked dimension of British colonialism with regards to the Irish through savage ridicule and disdainful contempt." (n.pag.)

Mohsin feels that Pakistan has experienced a great deal

of political and social upheaval, and this is sure to find expression in Pakistani fiction and so, we can understand why this book gained popularity and proved to be a trend setter among the satirists. About political satire Hodgart says, "There is an essential connection between satire and politics in the widest sense: satire is not only the commonest form of political literature, but, insofar as it tries to influence public behavior, it is the most political part of all literature." (33)

Although, Mohsin's main focus is the social life of a Pakistani citizen, it can very well be taken in the category of politics as the protagonist makes herself indifferent to what goes about in the country. She likes General Musharraf as a president not because of his political reforms, but because of social freedom which allows Butterfly to have the time of her life at parties. She says, "I really think that they should have a little bit of lehaaz for a man who's allowed us fashion shows and satter-light TV and New Year Eve's parties." (195) To reinforce this issue effectively, the author keeps nothing to herself and says all by poking fun at such matters. James Forrester in his book, *The Polite Philosopher* says, "nothing is more unpolite than to be obscure." (16) *Get-togethers* and parties remain her only concern. There is a reason why Mohsin added a political touch to her work. London-based author Nadeem Aslam says, "Pakistan seems to be at the centre of some of the world's problems right now and Pakistani writers and artists are actually trying to explain this mess. And the world is interested also because some of the problems of nations like India and America are rooted in this mess." (n.pag.)

Satire is always accompanied with laughter but this laughter is full of seriousness. The main purpose of poking fun at serious issues is to reinforce its complexity and its need for resolving those conflicts for in Dixon's words, "The satirist is a friend to good men, to Truth and to Virtue." (119) Patrick Ebewo in his article entitled, "Reflections on Dramatic Satire as agent of Change", says, "The combination of jokes with



seriousness is a permanent mark of satiric writing-this is the central method of satiric technique...it is a powerful instrument of criticism and self examination.” (01)

Political satire also includes things which are at times out of the ordinary. In this case, the language that is used by the characters; especially Butterfly, is not what one often expects of the elite class. She makes use of bilingual mode of speech which is not only hilarious but also reveals the superficiality and the hollowness of the human nature. When in July 2007, the whole country came out in streets so that the Chief Justice of Pakistan is reinstated, Butterfly describes Janoo, “Pehlay he was so excited, so excited keh pooch hi na.” (204) When Butterfly’s maid goes on a leave, she exclaims, “Now look at my sweeprress. On Monday she maaroed another chutti.” (43) John Snyder wrote an article about *The Good Soldier Svejk* and he talked about political satire in its context. He wrote, “The satirist “wins” over a target rhetorically manoeuvrable into the position of apparent inferiority because it represents values that are not only opens to criticism but is also pervasive in society...” (289) This is revealing in the sense that although the language seems at times out of place but it is nonetheless present in society and used by the class which is obsessed with the idealized versions of West.

Muhammed Hanif has also explored a set of similar themes of politics being used as an exploitation of the masses that are unwilling to understand the game played by the politicians. Both the books, *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* by Hanif and *The Diary of a Social Butterfly* (2009) by Mohsin talk about Mullahs, Al Qaida, and dictatorship and of course, America’s involvement in our national affairs. *New York Times* talks about the character of General Zia as portrayed by the author, “Hanif summons all his satirical disdain for this pious and violent man, whose years of power have left him “fattened, chubby-cheeked and marinating in his own paranoia.”” (n.pag.)

Both the books also reveal hilariously the ostentation of

human nature. Butterfly is “set to conquer the world”, as the book cover says. General Zia too has the same ways and airs about him. About him, very humorously, Hanif says in the novel, “The other worshipers continued with their prayers; they were used to General Zia crying during his prayers. They were never sure if it was due to the intensity of his devotion, the matters of state that occupied his mind or another tongue-lashing from the first lady.” (43)

Moni Mohsin’s sister, Jugnu Mohsin has also used the same mode. Although it was also fiction and built up on fantasy but the difference was that the protagonist was a man from the real political world-Mian Nawaz Sharif. “Ittefaq Nama: A fictitious diary of Nawaz Sharif” is an article which was published in *Friday Times* as a regular feature and is a similar experience of a political satire. Sharif sahib is also shown using the same language as by the Butterfly. He says, “Rice should have been standing. Chaaval kharay honay chahiye thay. Shorba was too long.” (n.pag.) This shows us that although the leaders should be the ones who should maintain their personalities for they are looked up to by their followers, they make a show of themselves by trying to imitate the others. This is especially satirized within the domain of Pakistani politics. In other countries, we have examples where leaders feel no shame in communicating through their own national languages. China is the most significant example.

Matt Sienkiewicz talks of this same issue of presenting politics along with comedy. In his article, “Out of Control: Palestinian News Satire and Government Power in the age of Social Media”, he quotes Sorenson, “Describing the potential for comedy in places of conflict, scholar Majken Jul Sorenson (2008) observes that “political humor needs some incongruity and absurdity in order to thrive---if things are as the politicians say they are, then there is almost nothing on which to build satire, parody, and irony” (174)

*The Diary of a Social Butterfly* (2009) encapsulates all

the major political universal events that took place from January 2001 till September 2008. It talks not only of natural disasters and worldwide infotainment news but also shows the shifts that the Pakistani politicians take. The killing of Akbar Bhugti is mourned by Janoo, peace talks are made without any significant result, workers go on a strike and suicide bombers invade the country. Although through all this, Mohsin is showing the different and diverse reactions in the form of Butterfly and her husband Janoo, but this is also a harsh critique on the Pakistani politics. Charles A. Knight in his book titled, *The Literature of Satire*, says, "...it scrutinizes national claims by shifting the levels on which they are regarded or by revealing the poses of political self-interest masquerading as morality." (80)

It was the political chaos in the country that moved Mohsin to write these columns and then to, later on, compile them in the shape of a book. She feels such reactions cannot be avoided and end up being portrayed in literature, especially fiction. But she also says, "But that is not to say that Pakistani writers are stuck in that groove..." (n.pag.)

Instead, Pakistani writers are using this genre as a means as a platform through which they can play their part in liberating themselves and the society which is suppressed and abused. While speaking in the Karachi Literature Festival 2012, where most of social and political Pakistani satirists were gathered this year, Nadeem F. Paracha remarked, "And so we shall start calling the Karachi Literature Festival the Karachi Liberation Front." This remark was clearly a pun on the numerous emerging liberation fronts in the country and the positive role that Pakistani satirists have to play in correcting the ills of their society.

## Data Analysis

In her book, Mohsin combines political and social satire along

with her critique on the patriarchal society, the way people take serious events and above all their attitude towards their own lives.

In the introduction, the Social Butterfly introduces herself with reference to the whole world and makes it acclaimed that “half of Dubai, half of London, all of Khan Market” knows her very well. (vii) Through this assertion, although she is talking about her being famous and well known, metaphorically, it might refer to her character being symbolic of representing the unnamed desires and wishes deep inside all of us. Through this introduction, she has also reduced the world by mentioning the halves of the most famous cities along with the “Khan Market”. The places she mentions also reflect her longing for shopping. She visits England each summer not only to avoid the heat but also for her annual shopping; not that she shops only during that time, but that the visit is especially made for the purpose.

She then goes on to describe her household which consists of three family members including herself and ten servants. This shows the extravagance and the attempt to put an impression on the society for society is an entity feared the most. She has guards not for protection but because their entire well settled acquaintances have guards. Although all they do is “carry Kalashinkovs, wear khaki uniforms and play Ludo around the clock at the gate.” (vii) This is full of irony as whiling away time becomes the mere purpose of the two guards.

She begins the introduction of her family with Kulcho, their son who might either be thirteen or fourteen clearly indicating her lack of interest in the family affairs. The word Kulcho itself is hilarious. It is a corruption of the word ‘Kulche’, (yeasty bread) which gives the image of an obese brat. It is quite “natural” that the son goes to Aitcheson School where the children of elite study. Thus, making her status and social class well acclaimed wherever she finds an opportunity for that is an obsession with her. The second family member we are

introduced to is her husband Janoo. According to her he is a complete bore. Here we need to look at the definition of boredom according to Butterfly. He likes reading, watching documentaries and taking part in activities of social welfare and this is regarded as dull for Butterfly. His interest and information about the contemporary politics becomes a defining feature of the protagonist as he is the foil to the Butterfly. His immense information is juxtaposed with her immense ignorance of what is taking place around her in the political world. The last sentence of the introduction also throws a light on the husband wife relationship. She says, "After all, it can't be easy knowing me..." (ix) This clearly foreshadows the impatience we witness in Janoo when he has to deal with Butterfly.

She also has an "Old Bag" for a mother in law and "Gruesome Twosome" as sisters in law whom she avoids as much as she can. But that does not mean she has no sympathetic feelings for humanity as a whole. Her numerous visits to designers, beauty therapists and jewellers are her "selfless little way of supporting Pakistan ki economy." (ix) This is highly satirical as she tries to rename her desires so that she can be portrayed well in the canvas of the society she so loves to impress with her ways. This can be seen in the light of political satire as this is the only way she could come up with to help boost up the economy of the country. The author highlights our indifference to the needs and requirements of our country and the ways we adopt to satisfy our own hungers in the name of helping the nation. The type of friends she has also reflects her sense of responsibility. Mullo, Flopsy, Furry and Twinkle have husbands who are "bank defaulters" and at the same time very "religious and upright." (ix)

Names play a very significant and an important role in this diary. Moni Mohsin has deliberately used names which do not possess individualistic traits. She plans to reform a society where everyone is to be held responsible for the society which is

collapsing and so she uses characters that stand for the society on the whole. Her choice of names has more to do with the qualities associated with those characters than to make them idiosyncratic. Butterfly gets the name for her restlessness when it comes to parties and socializing, and so she flutters from one event to another without getting fatigued. Janoo is used more as a nick name by the Pakistani wives, which makes him a husband who does not possess qualities that make him unique and different from the husbands we have in our society. Kulcho, as already discussed, is metaphorical for a child who is pampered by his parents. The names of her friends also do not stand out as they can be anyone in the society with affectations and pretensions.

In the first entry, she gossips about the scandalous affair between Floozie and Boxer. Through the narration of this event, Mohsin very subtly comments on the patriarchal society. Everyone blames Floozie and nobody talks about Boxer because he is a man and men are always innocent caught in the web of an enchantress. Tonky, Floozie's husband, is also pitied by all. But in this entry, we see a different perspective in the character of Butterfly. When Boxer was asked about the scandalous affair, he had said that his earlier marriage was empty which made him do it and on that Butterfly reflects, "As if marriages are thermoses, empty or full." (03) This shows that she had in her a consciousness of right and wrong although she herself wasn't much happy with Janoo because of the clash of interests. Till the end, Mohsin decides to keep Janoo and Butterfly together and there is a reason for that. There must be something in her that had kept her going with him. She is the product of a society and she is a representative of what happens when priorities and interests shift so she should not be solely blamed for her activities.

In one of her entries in February 2001, while the country is trying to restore the assemblies, Butterfly attends six parties in two days because of the adventurous event of basant. These

basant parties were previously attended by celebrities and fashion icons but there has been a slight addition lately. The apparently serious law abiding politicians of the country have now a good time at such extravagant lavish get-togethers. The "Yusuf Salli's tamasha" at his haveli is a must go for her as it will be aired on the country's national channel although Butterfly preferred that it should have been broadcasted on BBC as if that channel had nothing better to show other than a "tamasha". The politics aired on PTV is regarded as "bore politics" by Butterfly not that she has any interest in the politics shown on other channels.

And then she relates an incident which explains her lack of interest in politics. She finds it unworthy of having personal concern attached to it. She narrates about Janoo who was flared up because of an event that took place on 30th January 2001 in NWFP. A web page published on Paklink states the reason, "A letter degrading the Holy Prophet Muhammad PBUH written (by) a Jew was published in the English daily on 29th January, stating the Holy Prophet as "the first Nazi". Even though the paper staff apologized through all other major newspapers, it could not save the office from being burnt down." (n. pag.)

Janoo was not only angry at this but also had his say by writing letters to the concerned authorities. For Butterfly, Janoo's actions were inexplicable and hard to digest for how can a person be so involved in such political activities when he has other important matters to take care of. She tries to calm him down by saying, "Why are you taking it so personally, baba?" (05) Through this the writer is criticizing the society which deems it unnecessary to take political issues seriously and actually do something to make things right. This is a major reason for the downfall witnessed in Pakistani politics lately. Butterfly's knowledge related to politics is also quite partial. In 2001 when Benazir's exile was being discussed by the friends, Janoo gave his opinion that a two party system cannot be

substituted and at this Butterfly gave a meaningful response, “Bilkul theek. As long as one party’s in the morning and the other in the evening. Otherwise one gets very tired showing places at two-two places in one night.” (09)

The interests that keep her busy are not rare at all and are considered a forte for the elite. She idealizes and has a romanticized version regarding life which makes the realistic picture of politics all dreary and too harsh to take in. She hopes to write a novel named *My Urban Fraud* in which she decides to relate the story of a young maiden who is “innocent and trusting and religious.” (10) A person preferring to live in the imagined world where everything horrible is happening to a helpless woman only so that she can gather sympathy and attention will not be able to absorb politics and will only find it tedious. Peace treaties, war against terrorism, democracy, invasions etc. hold not the power to enchant the viewers or readers as much as such glamorized stories full of self pity do. The author condemns our priorities and preferences in this time of great political needs. She then asks an author, a friend of her mother’s, to give an advice on how to write such a novel to which the author retorts, “Write about something you know.” (11)

Butterfly, the “talent-free zone”, as Janoo calls her, exhibits her indifference when her mother-in-law suffers from an angina attack. She pities herself because of her “old bag” she had to leave her strawberries and her favourite T.V program. This episode clearly is an indication of the shift in priorities that has taken place with the change in the customs in the social order. In olden days, family unit was considered a very strong entity and the author through this family is showing the gaps that are making their ways through. Butterfly has no respect for her in laws at all.

The wedding of the Kasuris is a very important socialite event for Butterfly which she cannot miss at any costs. She goes on to give a list of guests that will be coming to the wedding



and she chooses to place the religious leaders, Qazi Hussain Ahmed and Nawabzada Nasrullah along with the fashion designers Deepak Parwani and Tariq Amin. Positioning the two polarities regarding professions, together, says a lot about the so called religious party leaders who have everything in common with others except for their appearances. They too enjoy all the glamour the feat and the zest of such a “tabahi shadi” (21)

In September 2001 the most shaking event in the history of terrorism took place. The twin towers were blown allegedly by the Al-Qaeda. Such a disaster takes place and still Butterfly remains unconcerned. The reason might be her lack of knowledge of the consequences that entailed the situation and the effects it was going to have on the future of the Muslim world. The disastrous after effects were limited not only to the states but the whole world was engulfed in a war of terror which continues till date. Even after an incident of such magnitude, Butterfly is not moved and sympathetic at all. She gets all fed up by Janoo who spends his time in front of the T.V to get updates related to the catastrophe. She helplessly pleads to him, “What’s so interesting now? Twin Towers have gone, Pentagon has gone, please switch to B4U.” (24) Her only regret about this is that she won’t be able to visit U.S.A that year. She listens to everybody who gossip about and try to guess who might have caused this blowing incident. Masood, Bush and Pal Gore all are blamed for this. India is regarded as jealous because of the ironical Pak-U.S political ties which took a drastic turn after the 9/11. She compares India to Basheeraan, her wax girl, who got jealous of her neighbour when Butterfly employed her instead. This comparison reflects her enormous lack of vision and her ability to reduce affairs into such trivial issues. This trivializing of events of huge proportions is highly satirized by the author.

As a result of 9/11, NATO forces invade Afghanistan in November 2001 and so Janoo refuses to attend any sort of a

party as solidarity to the innocent citizens being bombed down there. But Butterfly cannot leave parties at any cost for the bombing is taking place in Afghanistan and not in Lahore. She shows her interest in the issue related to the Talibans who she thought will fight courageously and defeat the Americans. This might also be related to her fantasized local version of the reality that the Afghanis will fight till their last breadth.

But when Mullah Omar flees Kabul, she is disappointed. Her disillusionment is not as a result of her interest in political events; rather it was more a result of a bet she had settled with Janoo.

Janoo's habit of reading the newspaper is described in a humorous manner by Butterfly. She approaches him one morning with her complaints regarding her sweepress but he is all involved in the news and does not lend an ear to her. He read that newspaper as if reading a novel for that is interesting for her. She cannot read a newspaper without any fashion news, gossip or scandalous affairs. According to her *The Daily Times* talks about "bore-bore countries like Middle East and bore-bore things about Musharraf's Prefrendum." (45) Although Musharraf's Referendum which had taken its preparations in April 2002 was a significant occurrence in the political history of Pakistan but Butterfly feels that this does not affect her directly.

As the country is threatened by the nuclear war, Butterfly, in order to safeguard herself, tries to convince Janoo to flee the country. This will not only help them shut their eyes in the face of the war but will also help Butterfly fulfilling her cosmetic supplements. But Janoo shows his fearless patriotism and moral courage of sticking with the country in its hour of need. Butterfly, of course, is not convinced with this clarification and so Janoo suggests that a bunker be built for her in the backyard where she can do whatever she wants all day long "while planes zoom overhead." (47) But since its Butterfly he is talking about, she needs a fully furnished

bunker with A.C, generator, T.V and of course, telephones, that too three in number. And she wants her bunker to be located at the front; not in the back yard where nobody can see the makeup she applies and designer dress she wears. This was such a crucial time for Pakistan as India had given her only a two month deadline and anything could happen as a consequence; but Butterfly is not afraid of what might ensue because of the war, its atrocities and after effects, but, the truth that she will no longer be able to go on with her routine, makes her terribly anxious. This is the height of her unawareness as to what she is going to get through in the future.

In June 2002, there is a very attention-grabbing entrance in the shape of Butterfly's nephew, Asghar or Oscar, as he now likes to be called, after living years of his life in America. Butterfly and her mother are not fascinated by his ways or charms, rather his money and the fact that he is "a millionaire I don't know how-how many times and that too in dollars, not stupid rupees." (49) The hypocrisy of this superfluous society is also noticeable for when Oscar's father, Ayub, initially began his business he was just 'Mayub the butcher' (49) according to Mummy but now that they are rich, and have invited everybody over to their house in U.S.A, their standards have changed drastically and the same Mummy "says she's going first, because she's always respected Ayub bhai from the bottoms of her heart." (50) This society full of double standards is disparaged by the author in quite a faint manner so as not to emerge as an impolite author. This duplicity is also evident from the incident when Butterfly buys fake Rolex watches for Janoo's niece who recently got married. Just to take revenge for the fact that they were informed late about the wedding, and also because of an innate hatred women have towards their in laws, she gets her friend to buy fake watches worth 10 dollars each from Bangkok and tricks Janoo into gifting those to her niece and her husband.

In September 2002, plans of another major political

event start to formulate for America decides to go at war with Iraq. In the same month, Butterfly wants peace with India which at first glance makes the reader pleased with her decision for this will be a great political come back for the subverted country. But later, as the motives for her want of peace become known, the reader is infuriated as is the satirist. She aspires for peace for she aspires for Indian dresses, jewellery, cheaper servants and even Indian parties. She thinks moving to India might change Janoo as well for she believes that he is more of a crack than an intellectual. But we, as readers, grasp the irony of the situation. Her notion that things will change on the other side of the border (border being both literal and metaphorical), isn't true. Indian people face the same problems and issues we have in our country. It's just that we crave for things we don't have and the craving lasts only till we have it. Our perception that an escape from the present reality might bring us better prospects is only deceptive.

Butterfly writes a very captivating diary for the month of October in 2002. Apart from the title of the diary, there are only eleven words written in three sentences. The lesser the author says in this entry, the greater is the effect of satire produced. Pakistan and India, both, test nuclear missiles and Butterfly goes to sleep. In this writing, the writer can literally be imagined as an angry one for going to sleep is the height of indifference. This sleep does not refer to be a factual one, but can be taken into account as a figurative one. For Butterfly, if nothing takes place within the social circle, nothing takes place in life and her existence becomes stagnant irrespective of the fact that a lot, at the same time, is happening in the political world.

Moni Mohsin also talks about another practice of the Pakistani people who play blame games whenever something crucial or disturbing takes place. For that, Al Qaeda has become the scapegoat lately especially after the 9/11. Anything distressing happens, and Al Qaeda is sure to have been

involved. In a particular occasion, a member of the Kasuri family was returning from London when because of a technical fault, they were stranded on the airport for two days. The nose of the plane had fallen off while the plane was about to take off. This falling off of the nose is taken metaphorically by the author for it is a matter of shame for the PIA that such events take place on a daily routine basis now. But Butterfly sympathizes with the PIA and brings in Al Qaeda. The real mastermind according to her is either Al Qaeda, RAW or Masood who allegedly blew up the Twin Towers.

While America had planned a war with Iraq, Butterfly had, for her own reasons, planned peace with India. But now in March 2003, that the soldiers enter Baghdad, Butterfly comes out in the streets and joins a protest that takes place in Gulberg-for how can she be left out when all of her friends are going. So, she makes full use of the social event and takes advantage of the opportunity to show off her new cotton dress, sunglasses and new Nike shoes. She is pleased to death that she appeared on T.V. When she shares this with Janoo, he looks down at her and wonders why she attended it, to which she replies, "Because mai Iraqis keh liay feel karti hoon." But he is not a child not to know her real intentions, and so he gives an ironical remark at her dressing and says, "Marching against American imperialism in your new American shoes," (74) Our lack of sympathy for the larger part of humanity leads us to exploit any event that takes place so that we may achieve and fulfil our desires and longings. Such actions move the satirist to write against the norms of the society.

Another habit which Mohsin disapproves of is the tendency to be influenced and persuaded by other people's customs. When Indians visit Pakistan for cricket, she quickly decides to adopt their ways. She goes through a whole transformation-wears cotton saaris, eats soup-like daal while sitting on a dastarkhan instead of a dining table, fasts for her husband; but abandons all of the customs when she could not

bear the prospect of being burnt with her Janoo's dead body. This took place in 2004 when Indian soaps were at the peak of their popularity among the Pakistani public. That is one reason why they were so glamorized by Butterfly. Glamour and alluring charm is one thing that fascinates Butterfly. While Pakistan settles an arm deal with Pentagon in order to enhance national security, Butterfly wastes extravagantly on a designer dress she wears to a ball. Ironically she does not even know what type she is wearing and calls a Suzy Wong dress a Suzy "Wrong dress" (92) the same passion to compete others, drives her into the idea of opening an art gallery by the name of "Art Attack" by an "expert in modern art and pictures and all" (97) It is also a clear jibe on the various people who out of sheer boredom and want of excitement get into things they know nothing about.

All these issues are approached by the author in a very subtle and a light hearted amusing manner. We can find very patent traces of the burlesque in this diary. The NKU educational web page defines it as, "A serious subject may be treated frivolously or a frivolous subject seriously. The essential quality that makes for burlesque is the discrepancy between subject matter and style. That is, a style ordinarily dignified may be used for nonsensical matter, or a style very nonsensical may be used to ridicule a weighty subject." (n.pag.) This definition fits in quite smoothly when we take a look at the language employed by the author. Moni Mohsin is deriding a society on the basis of their ignorance regarding politics which is a very serious and a grave issue. To alleviate the effect, the writer has used a version of English language which throws the readers into fits of laughter.

Butterfly speaks a language which is localized by using the narratives of our own culture. She frequently makes use of Urdu words and makes up new words which are a combination of both languages. For instance, "charrhoing on my nerves" (118), "I've chup karaomed everybody" (73), "khilaowed-pilaowed"

(185) are only some of the many localized phrases of English that she uses. This not only makes this comic but lends an interesting hue to Butterfly's character. She makes grammatical errors and spelling mistakes, puts one word in place of the other and the result is a hilarious account. She mistakes her mother-in-law's angina attack with a vagina attack (14), spells stupid as "stupid" (144), mispronounces divorce which is evident through the spellings "die-voiced" (ix) and uses the word "infiltration" in place of inflation. (218)

This use of language is a great achievement by the author in an attempt to influence the readers. Peter Dixon in his book titled, *The World of Pope's Satire* says, "The wit resides in the transparency, in our seeing, quite unmistakably, the courageous and outspoken satirist through the timorous words." (06) Dr. Fawzia Afzal in her play "Jihad Against Violence" takes up the same mode of this bilingual language and also explores similar themes related to political happenings in her own unique manner.

As the reader reads more and more of the diary; the fact dawns upon them that Butterfly is not to be blamed solely for her actions. She is only a product of the society and the society has moulded her into that character. Janoo who appears to be the intellectual and the wise man, although has coped up with her through all those years, but he did not try much to change her and her short comings. The instance provided in the previous paragraph illustrates this quite unmistakably. These household matters are of significance to women folk and her wish to share her problems with her husband are left unresponsive. Most of the times, the replies she gets, are either retorts or ironical statements. When the newspaper office in NWFP was burnt down and Janoo took it all serious that Butterfly asked him why he was being so personal. In response, "He gave me a nasty look and said, "Why don't you go fly a kite?" (06) Getting such a behavioural response from the other person will never have influenced Butterfly into taking any sort

of interest in the game of politics; instead she got more irritated than before.

Another reason why she was not able to get along well with politics is that she was brought up in a society where the narrative regarding politics had always been that it is a thing to be discussed in the drawing rooms by the adult male members of the family. It is rare that families include politics in their dining room discussions where all the members are gathered. If a person is not familiarized with the basic jargons of politics from the very beginning of their conscious lives, how can we expect that person to take interest in it?

Butterfly's lack of knowledge is pitched against "Mr. Know-All", as Butterfly calls her husband. His manner of trying to make her understand things does not seem quite fit for her for she must be handled with care while talking politics with her. He never gets down to her level to make things easier for her. He is always impatient for her not being able to get what he is saying. He does not understand that if he knows about world politics, the reason might be that he has more exposure since the beginning than his wife. He was a student at Oxford while she studied at Kinnaird. The brought up and the difference in education matters a lot; which Janoo does not consider for once. When she asks him the mentality of the suicide bombers and what prompts them into taking such big decisions regarding the lives of not only theirs but others as well, "He muttered something about cultural animation and economic delusion and political powerlessness and other bore-bore, stupid-stupid things like that," (144)

In November 2004, according to Butterfly, Janoo needed a psychiatrist as he had gone into depression because of politics. All day long, he would just sit right in front of the television watching news and getting angry at the world. George Bush being elected as the president, Yasir Arafat going into comma and the Americans starting their bombings all had such an impact on Janoo that he reserved his life to news



channels, newspapers and the “Inner Net.” (125), He takes no interest in either his household matters or in his family. This not only infuriates Butterfly but makes her anxious because, “Janoo depression main chala gya. Sat in front of T.V all day, na kaheen aana na jaana, na kisi se milna...I wanted to tell Janoo it’s all very sad...” (125) But she kept her quite regarding this issue because she did not want to have a look at his red hot glaring eyes and gritted teeth and instead of talking to her husband about matters, she contacts a psychiatrist in hope to get things right.

Looking at the book structurally also gives the same impression of Butterfly’s innocence, for she is not what she was at the beginning. She is not that hopeless as she appears to be in first glance. In May 2007, she takes part in rally against the terrorists but this participation is a lot different than the one she participated in at Liberty, Gulberg, regarding American imperialism against Iraqis. Here we see some consciousness and a sense of possessiveness in her personality. She herself refers to a change that has taken place in her. Previously, she had ignored all of their activities thinking “Mera kya jaata hai?” (198) But now she knows she must stand against them for she along with her family cannot be controlled and dictated by those who have no right to do so. This shows that developing a conscious state is an issue which requires a lot of time and patience.

It is also very interesting to note that Butterfly is condemned for not being the “good” housewife because of her social activities but on the other hand, Janoo is admired because of his knowledge. The author has very cleverly left it to the understanding of the readers where she has made everything obvious about Butterfly but leaves a lot of things unsaid about Janoo. He is a rich man with a lot of lands in his native village where his family lives. It is important to note that throughout the diary, it is never mentioned that he has either gone to work or is busy in his business, job etc. He is

almost always glued to the news channels and newspapers or busy in his own activities. We never see him actually doing something practical for his family. It is not that he has no concern for the family but he just does not try to make things right. It will not be wrong to even say that at certain moments he emerges as an anti-feminist looking down upon the opposite gender especially his wife. When their friend Tonky's wife runs away with another man, Janoo comforts him by saying, "The best revenge on a man who runs off with your wife...is to let him keep her." (03)

In spite of all her faults and short comings, at the end of the diary, we not only admire her ways but also feel sympathetic towards her. The frequently asked question that why did, till the end, Janoo stick to Butterfly should have been the other way round: Why does she stick with Janoo till the end? That is because, being a satirical work, the author's intentions are to bring in a consciousness that is lacking in the society as whole. She places the seed of this realization in the colourful character of the Butterfly and maybe that is the reason the reader falls in love with her. The last entry of the diary is very significant as it seems as a beginning of change. Benazir Bhutto is assassinated in December 2007 and in her January 2008's entry, Butterfly emerges out as a different person. It can be said that for all that she does, this last entry and a very short one too, redeems her character. She genuinely feels the death of a leader although she clearly mentions that she did not love Benazir but the death of a strong political leader is the death of a political party and so she mourns it. It is not at all like the death of Princess Diana she mourns by shopping more and more to keep the princess's memory alive. It is heartfelt and earnest.

## **Conclusion**

This research paper aimed a study of the contemporary

Pakistani society which is experiencing a gradual downfall in terms of knowledge and information as regards politics. The descriptive and interpretive study was based on Moni Mohsin's collection of columns published in the *Friday Times* and compiled under the name of *The Diary of a Social Butterfly* (2009) in which the author alludes to the numerous political events that were taking place. The author expresses her anger and fury at such a superficial society by poking fun at them. They are ridiculed, mocked at and painted in a burlesqued picture. The purpose behind, as is in the case of satire, was to create an awareness in a society where ostentatious show of wealth is held more momentous and interesting than a piece of news related to political principles.

By approaching this research in terms of political satire, a point is reached where it is important to note that where the fault lies with the individual, it is not the only singular body of imperfection; for the society is equally to be blamed. The nature and temperaments of these characters are relational to the attitude of the society towards them and the narratives formulated by the society that influence the minds of these characters. These characters are the by-products of a society which gives more weight age to social activities like get-togethers and balls rather than promoting activities of social welfare.

The purpose of this research was to verify the effects of political ignorance on the society at large. Satisfying the conscience by giving justifications of our ignorance will not help the dire situation prevailing in the current state of the affairs. Lack of interest is not a valid reason for not taking things sombrely for our daily lives are directly or indirectly relying on the ongoing political beliefs in our country. What happens inside the walls of assemblies and governmental institutions affects our lives spent within the walls of our houses. Policies being agreed upon, bills being passed and peace treaties being signed determine the value of an individual in the eyes of our

leadership.

This change will come as a consequence of the apprehension of the truth that priorities need to be rearranged. This internal transformation will then lead to an external change for our actions are a result of the choices we make. Bringing a change in the priority of choices does not mean abandoning a life of social interaction; it only persists us to shuffle things which should be given due importance. A more serious outlook on life and a broadening of vision will surely help us in accommodating new ideas and ways of leading a stabilized political life in this country.

In this research paper, ways of making these grave subjects lighter to handle, were revised in which language played an important role. The protagonist-the fictitious character of Butterfly who writes the diary- uses an adaptation of the English rhetoric which is sure to put a smile on the readers' lips. She mixes in the colloquial Urdu speech along with the English which is also not perfect. The application of this language does not merely play a comic role but it also helps us to visualize the character which is so important to envision as all of the events revolve around her personality.

The research paper made an observation on how people trivialize and belittle happenings of such great magnitude. Butterfly shows exaggerated reactions on petty occurrences and indifferent reactions on significant incidents. This is typical of burlesque comedies. This makes this diary full of elements of political satire and the notes of sarcasm are toned down through an exceptional use of drollness and hilarity employed.

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