

# **‘THE ETERNAL MOCKING GRIN OF ZIA-UL-HAQ’ PRESENCE OF ZIA-UL-HAQ IN PAKISTANI DISCOURSE AND DERRIDA’S HAUNTOLOGY**

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## **ABSTRACT:**

*Pakistani military dictator General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq who ruled from 1977-1988; struck his end in a fatal airplane crash. It has been twenty five years since but majority literary pieces emerging from Pakistan we look on, the presence of Zia-ul-Haq is unabated. From daily newspaper report to satirical columns to fictional novels Zia-ul-Haq confirms his ghostly presence. Jacques Derrida a French philosopher coined a new discourse Hauntology with help of works of Marx. Hauntology denotes the ghastly presence/absence of Specter in a literary text of social discourse as a whole. Derrida calls such specter a revenant, which comes back. Zia-ul-Haq whose era concluded with his death, nevertheless his specter –like the Derrida’s revenant –comes back instilling hope to some and creating unfamiliar adverseness for the others.*

**Keywords:** Zia-ul-Haq, Derrida, Hauntology, Pakistani literature

## **INTRODUCTION:**

Well I now prepared to accelerate the car once the traffic signal turned green. But not before I was mildly pulled back a bit by a bearded young man on a motorbike which zoomed across and in front of me, breaking his side of the signal. Late for prayers I thought. I was assuming this of course. But I was told by a traffic sergeant that this is what a lot of motorists and bikers said after he caught them breaking a signal: ‘I was late for prayers.’ So you see it’s not only the reactionary military dictators [Zia-ul-Haq] ... who exploit and use religion.<sup>1</sup>

Even if I had not used the parentheses, it was pretty clear whom the writer has been referring to, although there has been several military dictators ruling Pakistan, there is never a political or even social debate in Pakistani print or electronic media without raising the long dead Zia-ul-Haq.

Jacques Derrida a note worthy French scholar whose Deconstruction spilled over most of the English speaking world in the end of twentieth century became notoriously famous for his aim to deconstruct almost every concept of western metaphysics. For him western metaphysics has been standing on puerile grounds for too long, it has always assumed that it was based on the firm basis of some center, which Derrida asserts is not there, and he aimed to decenter that from the very beginning. Similarly he coined a term ‘hauntology’ contesting the presence of binaries in Western Metaphysics.

Jacques Derrida in his work *Specters of Marx* enunciates this new term ‘hauntology’, through this he defines the phenomenon of a specter lingering within a text, or in a social discourse as a whole. But this specter is not actually present, and is neither is absent. Like that of Zia-ul-Haq who relinquished to his end in the fateful plane crash on August 17, 1988, his specter keeps on coming back. In this article we are going to look through Derrida’s theme of hauntology along with resurgence of Zia-ul-Haq in different Pakistani

discourses. Concluding with the assertion that the duty to either praise or loathe Zia-ul-Haq comes with our present's inability to completely fulfill or satisfy our needs.

### DERRIDA'S HAUNTOLOGY:

Derrida initiated the debate of 'hauntology', in his book *Specters of Marx*; which as its title indicates talked about returning of specters of Marx. At the time when Soviet Union crumbled so did Marx and Marxism; Capitalism was celebrating its sole reign; Derrida prophesized that Marx cannot so easily be exorcized from politics. The ghost Derrida conjures up is the Marx of 11<sup>th</sup> Thesis of Feuerbach who urged that he not only has to interpret the world but also have to change it. Derrida by his resurrection of Marx also entails one's duty as to completely abandon the philosophical path of ontology, which is a discourse only related to the betterment of now.<sup>2</sup> Derrida in his work *The Specters of Marx* talked about resurrection of specter of Marx at the time Capitalism was the only recluse and shocked everyone. He was also creating a discourse on specter and hauntology.

Derrida articulating the need of revoking Marx's thought, mysteriously plays around Marx's own use of ghost and specters. Derrida stresses that there are chunks in Marx works that seem to be under a sway of ghosts. The very first line of the communist manifesto, "A specter is haunting Europe--the specter of communism" starts with a mention of ghost. Secondly the paragraphs in *Eighteenth Brumaire* deal with the old concepts of recurrence of history and rising of the dead. In *The German Ideology* Marx has a discussion with Max Stirner in The German Ideology on the incorporeal aspect of human that is his spirit. Additionally discussing commodity fetishism of Capitalist system Marx sees a spectral linkage of human relations to material things. Derrida shows in his work that Marx has a constant fixation with the spectral. But on the same token Derrida is also cautious of Marx's bent on rejecting ghosts. He characterized the insurrections of 1789 and 1848 as mere duplications of older revolutions. Marx pleaded for a kind of revolution which will not owe anything to the older revolutions. He demanded that everyone must be completely done with what is dead. Ironically Marx declares a resurrection of specter of Communism; he bans exorcism of other dead. Derrida suggest that though Marx talks of a possibility of politics of ghost and haunting, when he try to expel ghosts that of past revolutions, he is also being like those thinkers who say that Marxism is dead.<sup>3</sup>

Writing about ghosts lays Derrida against basic Ontology. Ontology works along binaries like present, absent and man, woman etc. A ghost is neither completely present nor fully absent. Ghost in this regard stands out from the vicinity of ontology. Derrida on line of Nietzsche's philosophers of future, call upon his own scholars of future who will take ontology less seriously and try to believe in a certain specter; of Marx for example. Deconstruction aims to deconstruct western metaphysics; by invoking ghosts Derrida attempts to subvert ontology and thus the purpose of philosophers. The incomplete presence and absence of ghost assumes an undetermined expanse which Derrida calls Hauntology. Derrida uses this coinage to play with its homonymy with Ontology stretching out the spooky manifestation of the silent h. Ontology reverberates in the word hauntology. Ontology would succumb to the logic of haunting itself, because Derrida has not gotten complete rid of ontology but it is always present beneath, when hauntology is pronounced.<sup>4</sup> Hauntology contrastingly substitutes the priority of being and presence –which is the subject of ontology –to that of a ghost 'whose intrusion in our world is not comprehensible within our available intellectual frameworks.'<sup>5</sup>

Wendy Brown elaborates haunting of a specter in hauntology as follows:

*The phenomenon remains alive, refusing to recede into the past, precisely to the extent that its meaning is open and ambiguous . . . To be haunted by something is to feel ourselves disquieted or disoriented by it, even if we cannot name or conquer its challenge. Thus logic of haunting is thus a logic in which there is permanent open-endedness of meaning and limits of mastery. Paradoxically, these features of haunting will turn out to constitute the site of intellectual and political agency within 'hauntology.'*<sup>6</sup>

Frederic Jameson argues that Derrida's hauntology is about the existing present being scarcely self-sufficient and it has a density and sturdiness which might betray us.<sup>7</sup> Similarly to conclude, Derrida's hauntology talks about a specter that is out of material grasp of any one being and it consistently haunts the present time.

*[T]he specter is a paradoxical incorporation, the becoming-body, a certain phenomenal and carnal form of the spirit. It becomes, rather, some "thing" that remains difficult to name: neither soul nor body, and both one and the other.*<sup>8</sup>

Jacques Derrida's 'specter' which is the fundamental part of his hauntology leads us to Sigmund Freud. His *das Unheimliche*,<sup>9</sup> translated in English as *the uncanny*, finds some parallels with Derrida's specter. The entity that provokes fear taking the person back in the past "to what is known of old and long familiar," is Freud's uncanny.<sup>10</sup> Freud also asserted that this uncanny shows itself truly in the written text than anywhere else.

Mladen Dolar in an exhaustive research on uncanny historicizes this concept pointing out that modernity engendered specific forms of the *uncanny*. For Dolar, the uncanny in pre-modern societies was largely covered by the sacred and the untouchable, and it is only in modernity that the uncanny became "uncanny in the strict sense."<sup>11</sup>

Taking cue from Derrida's specter and Freud's uncanny, the next section is going to elaborate the same features Zia-ul-Haq has taken in newspapers, blogs, books and even fiction in Pakistan.

### ZIA'S APPARITIONS:

Within the layers of narratives of rift between fundamentalists and moderates, illegal tenants and land grabbers, a pack of advisors and un-fathoming dictator; the Red Mosque incident took place in heart of Pakistan in July 2007. Protesting students for the legalization of their madressahs turned into radical mob trying to implement Islam, the incident ended with several deaths. The judicial procession of the incident makes headlines every now and then; never letting that specter fade away. Don Belt's article –published in the National Geographic one month after the incident –mentioned Red Mosque's female students' inability to comprehend the fact that the founder of Islamic Republic of Pakistan Muhammad Ali Jinnah had a secular demeanor. And Belt related this present rift to the time of "A Punjabi general with a pencil-thin mustache and raccoon circles under his eyes," i.e. Zia-ul-Haq. He asserts that for Zia, Pakistan's foundation through secular basis and emphasis on Muslim culture was completely wrong and Zia set out to align an Islamic disposition towards Pakistan,<sup>12</sup> which has become the reason of confusing mindsets of later generations.

In mid 2011 then Interior Minister Rehman Malik was awarded an honorary doctorate by Governor Sindh Ishratul Ebad. Commenting on criticism of one newspaper editor, a columnist and Islami Jamiat-i-Talaba's (IJT) disapproval; an article was published with a glaring heading *Did someone say "Dr General-CMLA Zia-ul-Haq" too?* Although the writer was correct in his diagnosis that 'someone holding an honorary doctorate does not become a doctor in the academic sense.'<sup>13</sup> But his argument that why IJT did not condemn when its parent Jamaat-i-Islami conferred such doctorate to Chief Martial Law Administrator Zia-ul-Haq only becomes a case of exorcising phantoms. Furthermore a senior journalist, media critic, researcher, writer and people's rights activist Mazhar Arif feels that 'mergence of hypocrite, obscurantist educated middle class, which showers flower petals on killers and has been nurturing fascistic tendencies, is a byproduct of Ziazation.'<sup>14</sup>

The blurb on Azhar Sohail's book "Eleven years of General Zia?" reads that this book is an appendix to the period which began on 5 July 1977 and became defunct (*fanaa*) on the evening of 17 August 1988. The Urdu word Azhar Sohail uses for the end of Zia's decade is *fanaa* which implicates that the era is finished and evaporated, never to come back. But quite ironically Sohail only adds to the vast textual remains which serve as an addendum to creating the Specter of Zia.<sup>15</sup>

Various English texts; articles by Nadeem F Paracha in Daily Dawn<sup>16</sup>, various English newspaper editorials, English Fiction by Kamila Shamsie,<sup>17</sup> Salman Rushdie,<sup>18</sup> etc are generally a critical commentary on policies of Zia's time.

Let me take you through the other story Don Belt narrates about Pakistan to assert my point that the urge to raise the dead Zia comes with our present's inability to fulfill our demands. It is a story of Najma, a rape victim done so because of a land feud. Rashid Rehman a human rights lawyer tries to help the girl, but the powerful oppressor had sabotaged the case and evidences. And the victim's family could but only take back their case and remain in silence. Rehman tells Belt that:

*"When government fails them, people get angry," he says. "They lose faith in the system and look for alternatives. Think how easy it would be for the Islamists—or Taliban or al Qaeda—to go to the brothers of this girl now and say, 'What happened to your family is not justice. This man dishonored your sister, he dishonored your father and your family name. Join us and we will help you get justice. We will make him pay.' When citizens are denied their basic human rights, they become radicalized. When people are powerless, they are easily manipulated."*<sup>19</sup>

The radicalization by Zia is a debated fact but today government's inability to provide justice feeds extremism and grounds for manipulation. And this cannot be undone by simply blaming that on Zia.

On the other hand major Urdu newspaper and books discussing the subject of Zia finds him a true politician of Pakistan and Islam. Shaheed Islam (Martyr of Islam) is an Urdu language book comprising of various articles by journalists like Z. A. Sulehri, Zahid Malik, Ibn al Hasan, Muhammad Salahuddin; military men like General Rahim uddin Khan, General K M Arif, Major Muhammad Aamir and Islamic scholars like Muhammad Taqi Usmani and Mian Muhammad Tufail. It also included International authorities on subject of Zia like Zbigniew Kazimierz Brzezinski an American political scientist, geostrategist, and statesman who served as United States National Security Advisor to President Jimmy Carter from 1977 to 1981; Aisha Limo president Muslim Nigerian women's association and Hasan Altal editor of a Jordanian newspaper.<sup>20</sup> The book enunciated Zia as a leader 'west is indebted to'.<sup>21</sup> There are scores of Urdu language books hailing Zia while Azhar Sohail's Urdu book was probably only of the few which criticized Zia's time.

After the death of General Zia; there were vast numbers of obituaries published in newspapers around the world. Quite distinguishing were the words he was described in; Edward Behr called him a military man raised in the times of Kipling's India, who was an admirer and critic of his times at the same time. For Behr, Zia considered himself Charles De Gaulle of his times –only personality who could assemble back his disjointed nation –and probably Zia was right.<sup>22</sup>

The phenomenon of Zia-ul-Haq has also made its impact in Pakistani English Fiction too. The era of Zia-ul-Haq is meta-historicized in the works of Kamila Shamsie<sup>23</sup>, Mohammed Hanif etc. The depiction by Zia by Hanif's *The Case of Exploding Mangoes* of a leader that his information minister stood still in front of the typo error on a banner in a ceremony that Zia might not see, paints that uncanny picture of Zia whose specter is seen in awe of his tendencies. Consequently when the plane crashes and from the rubble as hopeless as that of burning airplane crash a soldier nevertheless finds remains of Zia-ul-Haq whose 'lips and chin melted away to reveal a set of shiny white teeth, frozen in an *eternal mocking grin*'.<sup>24</sup> The same eternal mocking grin of Zia-ul-Haq is that hauntological specter that reverberates again and then in Pakistani discourse.

Like the specter enunciated by Derrida, Zia-ul-Haq is a subject of mixed anticipation, Aaker Patel a writer across the border feels that the writers blaming so called Islamization which has reduced the state of being in Pakistan are themselves unable to grasp the reality –that Pakistani present has failed to fulfill its own requisites and to complete this gap the specter of Zia rises out. He says that 'There is no silent majority [self assumed name of the part of the media which thinks Zia was the main corruptible body] in Pakistan, only a minority that doesn't grasp reality'. Patel acknowledged Quaid-e-Azam and Zia-ul-Haq as the only rulers who gave majority Pakistanis (Muslims) what they wanted. Patel asserts that almost every Pakistani leader has run the course like Zia did, it was only Zia who was less hypocritical of all, so gets the blame.<sup>25</sup>

The legacy the specter of Zia-ul-Haq has left behind has become a follow-to guide for politicians and military rulers to come, even if they acknowledge or not. Mumtaz Ahmad in his journal article *The Crescent and the Sword* has shown how Zia was the first to manipulate the Shia – Sunni strife in Pakistan in his own favor.<sup>26</sup> Musharraf's support to George Bush on War on Terror was his act to duplicate Zia and US program which rid then USSR out of Afghanistan. Like Zia-ul-Haq, General Musharraf was also able to pool billions of US \$ in aid.<sup>27</sup>

Zia-ul-Haq baited on the Afghanistan issue of his time and considered Pakistan's presence in Afghanistan vital for nation's safety. Similarly the last Chief of Pakistani army General Kiyani's policy of 'strategic depth in Afghanistan' much discussed in news reports on finds its foundations in former general's time.<sup>28</sup>

## CONCLUSION:

Although Zia-ul-Haq is considered the reason of rising extremism in Pakistan, the unresolved issue of Afghan refugees, the unabated supremacy of military in Pakistan, he has become the cornerstone of what has to be done by leaders and consequently criticized by critics. Similarly writers criticizing from banning of food outlets in Ramadan to recitation of holy Quran in the beginning of every ceremony to every other feature attributed to Zia's time; are unconsciously only adding to the spectralization of Zia-ul-Haq. Similarly instead of loathing Zia of all ills, the need to correct our present should have been the priority. In essence the specter of Zia-ul-Haq has become the case of Freud's uncanny the sacred and untouchable for a certain portion of the society, it is only when the Urdu letter is converted into English that the uncanny Zia-ul-Haq becomes uncanny in the strictest sense.



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