

Blind Justice in the Land of the Pure: An Exposition of the Pakistani Hudood Ordinance in *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* by Mohammed Hanif

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Abstract

In Mohammed Hanif's *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* Blind Zainab is a gang rape victim who gets convicted of fornication and is then sentenced to death by stoning under the 1979 misogynistic Hudood Ordinance promulgated by the military dictator General Zia (1977-1998). This research study provides an in depth discussion and analysis of the Hudood Laws in Pakistan and the debate surrounding them. These laws have been a topic of increasing debate and scrutiny not only in Pakistan but also internationally for decades. Despite the fact that the Zina Hudood Ordinance governs both sexes, it has the potential to negatively affect the female citizens of Pakistan who form more than half of the population of the country. Hanif in the novel throws light on this national issue through the character of Blind Zainab who is victimised firstly by her attackers and then by the discriminatory and controversial Hudood Ordinance. He highlights how the victim is further victimised by these laws. This episode of Blind Zainab alerts us to the fact that enforcing gender discriminatory laws is in the interest of maintaining political power and keeping the subaltern entrenched in subalternity. The interpretation and analysis of Hanif's novel in this study explores the role of law and its implementation with reference to women in Pakistan.

Keywords: Hudood Ordinance, women in Pakistan, subaltern, Pakistani Fiction,

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Engagement with the infamous Hudood Ordinance in Pakistan, which is still an ambiguous area, can stipulate the drive for the reconsideration of law through a feminist lens. This paper intends to expose the actual state of subjugated women in Pakistan through Mohammed Hanif's debut novel *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* (2008). The whimsical story leaves us feeling disturbed concerning women who are warehoused within the confines of this ordinance. Hence, rather than determining the pragmatism of

women in prison, we observe the dialogical correlation between these depictions of women in prison and the mode in which official legal institutes and official legal representatives mark certain women "criminals." It is discovered that Blind Zainab bargains mean to visualise the vehemence of government and legal exercises and the mercilessness of overall establishments to imply bigger gender biases that render women in Pakistan more helpless to marginalisation and detention. We, therefore, discuss that A

Case of Exploding Mangoes, in particular, asks viewers to reflect through existing feminist interests around the outlawing of women. The passing of Hudood law has upraised extremely critical legal, political, and sociological concerns. The women associations, who did not wish such an ordinance and who were not asked, were not even summoned to retort to it.

The foremost focus of this research paper is rape and the state law that administers it, explicitly the Zina Hudood Ordinance of 1979 and the Law of Evidence of 1984, and how the unfair description of these laws functions as a controlling weapon in the hands of the patriarchal society of Pakistan to subdue women. These laws and their unyielding explanation in the name of Islam have not only helped cruelty and sexual violence against women to a frightening point in Pakistan, but similarly scoured women's possibilities of even justice. The aspects that directed to the execution and subsistence of such laws in the initial place, and therefore, how rape befitted a scary weapon against women, is conversed. The paper investigates the several political, social, cultural, and religious reasons that underwrite this situation, and the legal and social complications involved for women in getting justice in rape cases. In conclusion, the paper confers the need for Pakistani women's ascendancy in progressing and making a systematized struggle for the annulment of gender bigoted laws.

In *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*, Hanif narrates the events that led to the demise of General Zia ul Haq, the then president of Pakistan, in a plane crash in 1988. On board the president's plane with

General Zia were the US Ambassador Arnold Raphel, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, General Akhtar, and eight other generals from all three branches of the Pakistan military. General Zia's death ended his eleven-year military dictatorship of Pakistan during which the country became a key political and logistical ally of the US in the CIA's proxy war in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union. Hanif brings the tumultuous Zia era to the forefront. That time in the history of Pakistan is remembered often as a troublesome one and Hanif by using his talent of storytelling and inventiveness brings it to the scores of readers who are delighted and perhaps awed by its scope. This novel which is a political satire of the military regime in Pakistan explores different conspiracies in the Pakistani politics and military of 1980s and mocks hypocritical self-centred piety of General Zia. The novel features a dual narrative; one is the first person narrative of Ali Shigri, a raw, rakish junior under officer who sets out to avenge the murder of his father, Colonel Quli Shigri. The other is the omniscient narration of General Zia's military dictatorship in its last phase. This particular national past is revisited and re-imagined by Hanif in the novel and he presents a time with a wide range of variety. From the ISI headquarters to its interrogation centers, from the interior of General Zia's bedroom to the exterior of the Army House, from the US ambassador's residence in Islamabad to a church in Bahawalpur, the national past encompassed by Hanif covers a lot of geographical space in its expanse besides visiting various time frames. Towards the

last chapters of the novel, the two parts of the narrative join in a single ending.

General Zia came to power by toppling the democratic government of Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto through a coup d'état in the summer of 1977. He initially called himself Chief Martial Law Administrator, but assumed the title of President a year later when he got himself confirmed as President of Pakistan by a referendum that also provided him a mandate to Islamize the legal system of Pakistan. The Zia reign in Pakistan has been remembered in many ways; a troubling time in a dictatorship, a radically Islamized era, the time of Soviet-Afghan War and the dawn of jihadism. All these are significant in one way or the other. It was a perturbing time for a third world country like Pakistan. It is a past which is highly significant, symbolic and far reaching in its effects. Zia's efforts to Islamize the Pakistani society and involvement in the Afghan resistance against the Russian invasion resulted in a religiously radicalized, ethnically divided, fragmentized and a patriarchal Pakistani society.

Although the plot of the novel mainly focuses on the circumstances leading to the death of General Zia, Pakistan's third military dictator, but the narrative also highlights various details about the socio political milieu of the country back in the 1980s; Pakistan's role in the Soviet-Afghan war, influence of US in Pakistani politics, Pakistan military, condition of lower working classes of the society and Hudood Ordinance and its effects on women. This research paper mainly focuses on the last point, i.e., Hudood Ordinance, its promulgation and its effects on Pakistani women citizens over

the decades. Hanif highlights this aspect through the character of the gang rape victim, Blind Zainab in *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*. The paper places Pakistan in an historic outlook in order to familiarise the process of Islamization under the totalitarianism of General Zia-ul Haq (1977-88), and expresses how and why Islam was used as a political device to initiate gender-discriminatory laws which have completely undercut women's rights even further in a previously orthodox and patriarchal society. The paper assesses the Zina Hudood Ordinance and the Law of Evidence and their out-dated and stiff Sharia views that control sexual conduct and integrity under Pakistani law, and how the ambiguities within these laws can, and have, definitely invigorated violence and legal biases against women. We investigate the complications and convolutions for female rape victims in winning justice in Pakistan through the use of a particular case study i.e. Hanif's *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*. We discourse how patriarchy and vested political purposes in Pakistan united and used religion as an apparatus to support and fund each other.

General Zia's attempt to make the legal system of Pakistan more Islamic was based largely on political motives. One of the outcomes of his radical Islamization was the misogynistic Hudood Ordinance which was promulgated as a series of ordinances in 1979, in order to revolutionize the legal system of Pakistan. The years leading up to the withdrawal of the British colonialists from the Indian subcontinent in the mid of the twentieth century had been marked by the division of the Indian independence movement along religious

lines, where the Hindu majority was represented by Congress and the Muslim minority by Muslim League. The Muslim League demanded for the creation of an independent state for Muslims in the event of disintegration of British India as it feared that in a united independent India, Muslims would be suppressed by the Hindus in majority. In the 1940s public riots and communal tensions reached such a threatening proportion that the British colonial rulers eventually had no choice but to agree to the demand of Muslim League for a separate homeland for the Muslims. Resultantly in mid-August 1947, British India was divided into the dominions of India and Pakistan, the latter consisting of a western and an eastern part separated by more than a thousand miles. Decades later, it was Pakistan's failure to fully become an Islamic state which provided Zia with the justification for his coup d'état.

Since its inception, Pakistan has encountered a number of political upheavals including prolonged authoritarian regimes under the guise of democracy. Even with the dictatorial milieu of the country, women somehow managed to carve their place in the society. However, with General Zia's state imposed Islamization, a process began which would escalate the legal discriminations against women through the introduction of the Federal Shariat Courts and the proclamation of the Hudood Ordinance and the Law of Evidence. Lawyers Asma Jehangir and Hina Jilani explicate the complexities of the *Hudood Ordinances* as follows:

The *Hudood* laws, promulgated in 1979 and enforced in 1980, are a collection of five criminal laws, collectively known as

the *Hudood Ordinances*. The *Offences Against Property Ordinance* deals with the crime of theft and armed robbery. The *Offence of Zina Ordinance* relates to the crime of rape, abduction, adultery and fornication. The word *Zina* covers adultery as well as fornication. The *Offence of Qazf Ordinance* relates to a false accusation of *Zina*. The *Prohibition Order* prohibits use of alcohol and narcotics. The last is the *Execution of Punishment of Whipping Ordinance*, which prescribes the mode of whipping for those convicted under the *Hudood Ordinances*.

Ostensibly, the *Hudood Ordinances* were promulgated to bring the criminal justice system of Pakistan in conformity with the injunctions of Islam. Hence, the forms of punishment recognised by Muslim jurists are introduced in the *Ordinances*. Two levels of punishment and, correspondingly, two separate sets of rules of evidence are prescribed. The first level or category is the one called the *Hadd* which literally means the "limit" and the other "*Tazir*", which means "to punish". *Hadd* punishments are definitely fixed, leaving no room for the judge to take account of mitigating or extenuating circumstances of the crime... For rape or *Zina* committed by adult married Muslims *Hadd* punishment is stoning to death; for adult non-Muslims and adult single Muslims it is 100 lashes... *Tazir* is simply a fall-back position from *Hadd*. For instance, lack of evidence for *Hadd* does not exonerate the accused of the criminal liability. The accused is still liable for *Tazir*. (2003, pp. 23-24)

The process of Islamization reinforced patriarchal principles and practices in the country through its extreme

fundamentalist approach to religion. Ayesha Jalal in her article is of the view that the aim behind the promulgation of the Hudood Ordinance by General Zia was political. She while describing Zia's coup writes, "realizing that very few had been persuaded, the General, a wily social tactician, calculated that playing the women's card could confirm his regime's commitment to Islam and, by extension, its legitimacy" ("The Convenience of Subservience: Women and the State of Pakistan," 1991, p. 101). General Zia made use of the women's card as the main and most obvious symbol for his Islamization plans, for he knew very well that a large majority of the Pakistani male population would not have any difficulty in accepting its repercussions for an ethical and puritan Islamic society. In order to establish the legitimacy of his regime which he set up by usurping executive power from a democratically elected Prime Minister, Zia needed a powerful and an innocuous strategy. This according to Jalal he accomplished by, "making women the focal point of the campaign for an Islamic moral order" as such a tactic would not be, "unduly taxing the sensibilities of Pakistan's male dominated society" (*The State of Martial Rule*, 1990, p. 323). Khawar and Shaheed while commenting upon the promulgation of these laws write in their book titled *Women of Pakistan: Two Steps Forward, One Step Back*:

On 22 February 1979 (the Prophet's birthday), amidst much fanfare and media buildup, the first concrete step towards Islamization was announced by the military government. This took the shape of the Hudood Ordinance 1979, which covers theft, drunkenness, adultery, rape

and bearing false witness. The Ordinance makes Zina an offence against the state, unlike the British law hitherto in force which considered adultery a matter of personal offence against the husband. (1988, p.100)

Subsequently, the pronouncement of the Hudood Ordinance fortified the Islamic legal framework of the country, but damaged the judicial system founded on sectarian social principles. As part of its Islamization, the Zia regime started opposing the relatively lenient family laws of 1961 that provided at least some degree of protection and fairness to the women of Pakistan, predominantly concerning registration of marriage, the right to divorce, and inheritance, with inflexible gender discriminatory laws. Jalal further highlights:

A devout Muslim, Zia proclaimed himself divinely ordained to steer Pakistani society back to the moral purity of Islam. Pakistan and Islam, he argued, were inextricably linked, and the preservation of both had been enjoined upon the military establishment. In case the equation between Pakistan, Islam and the military failed to register, Zia appropriated the call for a *Nizam-e-Mustafa* (a way of life based on the teachings of Prophet Mohammad) --that umbrella term dignifying an ideologically and economically fragmented opposition--and tried turning it into a personal mandate from the people. ("The Convenience of Subservience: Women and the State of Pakistan", 1991, p.100)

According to Rahat Imran, "The Sharia laws are easily defended in an Islamic country, and any vocal dissent is seen as a detour from the path of piety, which can and must be met with exemplary

punishment” (“Legal Injustices: The Zina Hudood Ordinance of Pakistan and Its Implications for Women”, 2005, p. 86). Thereby, the Hudood Ordinance is generally supported by the largely sexist Pakistani male population since the law is of twofold advantage to them, firstly as a tool for terrorizing and suppressing women and secondly as it decides critical and controversial matters such as proving rape in the court of law in the favour of men. The critique touches the development of the gender-based investigation for eradication of judgement against women, as illustrations of the ways that feminists have been approaching wicked problems for years, and determines that women must continue to hold governments to account in executing regulations/policies that may bring Pakistan closer to the archetype of equivalence.

Hudood Ordinance has been a topic of increasing debate and scrutiny not only in Pakistan but also internationally for decades. It is relevant to begin the discussion and analysis with an introduction of Hudood Ordinance, its promulgation and salient features. Hudood Ordinance was an innovative experiment blending Pakistan Penal Code crimes based on Common Law Jurisprudence and criminal procedure with Hudood Laws founded on Hanafi jurisprudence. The ordinance included punishments as specified by the Islamic law of Shariah for extramarital sex, prohibition and theft. Since its implementation the Ordinance has been a subject of controversies. It has been criticised severally and some have even termed it as a black law. It was welcomed by some people but mostly it has been

questioned and criticised with reference to the punishment of *Rajm* (stoning as punishment), ambiguity about *Zina* (adultery or fornication) and *Zina bil Jabr* (rape), the recommended discriminatory criminal procedure and definition and identification of Hudood crimes. In a report titled “Hudood Ordinance. 1979 (Pakistan)”, Muhammad Khalid Masud discusses in detail the Ordinance, its background, various discourses and viewpoints of different factions of the society about it. He writes:

In media, opinions about the Ordinance have been divided into three groups: those who wanted status quo, those who wanted it to be repealed and those who wanted necessary amendments. The opinion in favour of status quo argued that Hudud laws were divinely revealed and only the Westernized segments of Pakistani society were calling for its repeal. Others argued that Hudud laws were not divine, they were laws framed by the jurists. (Masud, 2006, p.1)

The ones criticising the Ordinance do not necessarily belong to the legal community but others such as human rights activists, thinkers and people in general regard it as being discriminatory and unjust. A number of Islamic scholars and clerics also uphold that these laws are an incorrect and faulty interpretation of the Shariah and do not fulfil the requirements they set out to. Zina Ordinance (which covers rape, adultery and fornication) is believed to be the most controversial part of the Hudood Ordinance. It is a law that is openly misused, commented upon and condemned. The law does not differentiate between *Zina* (adultery or fornication) and *Zina bil Jabr* (rape), “Most Islamic scholars are of the opinion

that the Zina Ordinance misinterprets the injunctions of the Quran and Sunnah, therefore, must be corrected to bring it in conformity with the principles laid out for us by our religion” (Masud, 2006, p. 73). Its critics claim that it equalizes extramarital sex and rape. The Hudood Ordinance and its rigid religious explanation are responsible for facilitating and escalating sexual violence against women to an alarming degree in Pakistan, besides seriously eroding chances of equal justice for the women of Pakistan.

Law of Evidence introduced in the legal system in 1984 is another measure for watertight male control. A woman who was raped ran the risk of being imprisoned or punished physically if she was not able to provide the required number of witnesses to the act of sexual penetration and the subsequent rape. A woman alleging that she was raped needed to provide the testimony in her favour of four adult upright Muslim male eyewitnesses, failing which she ran the risk of being prosecuted on the charges of either fornication or adultery in accordance with her marital status. Feminist scholar, Shahnaz Khan elaborates, “the onus of providing proof of rape rests with the victim under the Hudood Ordinance... if she is unable to convince the court, her allegation of rape is in itself considered as confession of Zina” (*Gender, Religion, Sexuality and the State: Mediating the Hadd Laws in Pakistan*, 2001, p. 3). A number of women who filed rape cases were mostly convicted under the new laws as their saying that they were raped was taken as proof of their committing Zina. So it happened that many victims of rape preferred not to report their cases and to

suffer in silence, other than taking the risk of more undeserved punishment and social ostracism. People like Blind Zainab are the direct target of this devious regulation. Women like Blind Zainab are the subalterns addressing from a system that obviously spreads cruelty in a free country, where democracy has been ruined and Hudood law has been enforced, ripping women off their fundamental rights and refusing them justice and choice. Ranajit Guha describes the subaltern generally as somebody who is subordinated “in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way” (1988, p. 35). In “Postcolonial Criticism”, Homi K. Bhabha discusses that, “...it is from those who have suffered the sentence of history--- subjugation, domination... that we learn our most enduring lessons” (2014, p.116).

Nevertheless, learning is limited if the dominated and controlled barely ever voice in the plots of postcolonial text. In Hanif’s novel under dialogue here, a persistent parallel marks the depiction of subjugated Pakistani women--- however they are not chiefly invisible and unvoiced entities in his story about politics. Hence, Blind Zainab is only blind physically but she does realize and recognize reality. Hanif pens actual Pakistanis rather than stereotypes; however, he has consigned Blind Zainab to a distinctive stereotypical person. His ‘actual Pakistanis’ are the everyday people, and his focus of argument is how the histrionics of political drama going on around them disturbs them.

The word *subaltern* has been drawn from Gramsci. He used this word as a substitute to “subordinate” and “instrument”, however Spivak added to

the meaning, and used this word for those governed and oppressed factions who do not hold a common class-consciousness. Hanif has transferred this subaltern class to the periphery as their depiction is suppressed by his description. Agreeing with Spivak, "To ignore the subaltern is, willy nilly, to continue the imperialist project" ("Can the Subaltern Speak", 1994, p.102). In my opinion, to some extent Hanif continues ensuing the imperialist mission. Hanif does not allow the subaltern bubble up to the top to express its tortured forms. Frantz Fanon, in *Black Skin White Masks* articulates:

...there's an absolute reciprocity which must be emphasized. It is in the degree to which I go beyond my own immediate being that I apprehend the existence of the other as a natural and more than natural reality. If I close the circuit, I prevent the accomplishment of movement in the two directions, I keep the other within myself. Ultimately, I deprive him even of this being-for-itself. (1967, pp.154-155)

To Fanon, "the concept of recognition is essential" (1967, p.155). However, this recognition factor is discovered deficient in Hanif's *Blind Zainab*. The character he creates is not just a viewer, but moreover a target; she does not stand to look, but also suffer. She suffers physical violence. She is amid those who bleed in the fierceness or lose near and dear ones in it. Subaltern here has been given voice by the author, however the basic irony is that the subaltern's enunciation does not accomplish the dialogic level of expression.

In *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*, Robert Young explicates on the silent subaltern, "The problem is not

that the woman cannot speak as such, that no records of the subject constitution of the woman exist, but that she is assigned no position of enunciation" (2004, p.164). Young calls moment of subaltern disappearance as "an *aporia*, a blind spot where understanding and knowledge is blocked" (2004, p.139). The subaltern will persist as a banished place, an *aporia*, a blind spot, till the "reciprocal recognitions" will not voice (Nayar, 2013, p.46).

The dual combo of the Zina Hudood Ordinance and the Law of Evidence have been framed to favour men over women i.e., the rapist over the raped. Despite the fact that the Zina Hudood Ordinance governs both sexes, it has the potential to negatively affect the female citizens of Pakistan who form more than half of the population of the country of 202 million. Rahat Imran is of the view that the very rigid so called Islamic legal framework inside which the Hudood Ordinance and the Law of Evidence have been carefully and protectively put are overtly gender biased in nature and have the potential to approve and sanction male violence against women ("Legal Injustices: The Zina Hudood Ordinance of Pakistan and its Implications for Women" 2005, pp.78-100). Hudood laws are supposedly made according to a very rigid interpretation of the Wahhabi Islam but that too has been contested and criticised by a number of religious scholars and clerics since the laws have been introduced. Nevertheless, these laws have continued to exist unscathed and unchanged by succeeding democratic governments as their appeal lies with patriarchal male citizens of Pakistan who made them in the first place and are still

in the majority as decision makers and law makers. According to the Law of Evidence the testimony of two women is accepted as one reliable source. In clear terms it simply means that in a Pakistani court of law the testimony of a woman is half to that of a man. Tariq Rehman in one of his news articles, notes:

What happened under Zia-ul -Haq was that if a woman delivered it was considered proof enough, and she could be given the maximum punishment for adultery. This could mean, in a Kafkaesque reversal, that raped women could be punished, while rapists went scot-free. Moreover, as the evidence of women was not admissible, a rapist could rape a girl in a girl's hostel and still not get the maximum punishment, while the girl stood guilty. (2004, n.pag.)

The rape case of a thirteen year old blind peasant girl Safia from Sahiwal, came to the forefront in 1983. It gained a lot of limelight in regard to the Hudood laws. Safia was raped by her employers, and as a result fell pregnant but the court convicted her on charges of fornication. Her inability to recognise her rapists and ensuing pregnancy was seen as proof of her extra marital sex as under the new Hudood laws and so she was sentenced to public whipping, three year imprisonment and a fine all on the basis of her own evidence as her family had reported the rape. This case clearly highlights the pitfalls for a woman seeking justice in a rape case, besides exposing the suppressive gender discriminatory Hudood Ordinance and the Law of Evidence.

Human rights activists, feminists and women held protests and rallies against the sentence nationwide raising their

voices in opposition to the controversial law which punished the victims while acquitting the offenders. The Hudood Ordinance is an important part of Pakistani legal and national history which has had far reaching effects on our society and on the citizens of Pakistan especially women. Hanif in the novel throws light on this national issue through the character of Blind Zainab, a victim of gang rape who is convicted of fornication by the courts and sentenced to death by stoning as she cannot identify her attackers. The case of Safia Bibi might have served as an inspiration to Hanif for the character of Blind Zainab. The basis might have been factual but from there Hanif spins a fictitious tale of a blind woman who is victimised firstly by her attackers and then by the hudood laws of General Zia.

In the narrative there are protests by women and human rights activists against the sentence of Blind Zainab. General Zia also faces one such angry protester when he is distributing money to a group of poor widows. The President's Rehabilitation Programme for Widows is ordered by Zia to be organized as a prime time television line-up to keep him in the news headlines. As the general is busy playing the image of a generous head of state distributing alms to the deserving widows a woman in her early thirties shuns the envelope containing rehabilitation money and, "instead removed the dupatta from her head and unfurled it like a banner before the camera. Free Blind Zainab, it read... I am not a widow, she was shouting over and over again. I don't want your money. I want you to immediately release that poor blind woman" (Hanif, *A Case of*

Exploding Mangoes, 2008, p.121). Not only is Blind Zainab getting support at the national level but also at the international level much to the dismay of the general. Western press also keeps publishing about Blind Zainab and her impending sentence of being stoned to death. Zainab is blind and so cannot recognise her attackers by face but the hudood laws do not take into account her blindness and so she is charged for fornication and is sentenced to death by stoning. The following dialogue between 90 year old Qazi in Saudi Arabia whom Zia calls whenever faced with a legal dilemma and Zia highlights the faulty logic as used in Blind Zainab's case:

The law doesn't differentiate between those who can see and those who can't.

Let's assume for the sake of legal argument that the rapist was blind in this case, would he be entitled to any special privilege? So the victim, blind or not, is entitled to the same scrutiny, same rights.

How will she recognise her rapists and the other people who held her down?

It can be done in two ways: if she is married, her husband will have to establish in the court that she is of good character and then we'll need four male Muslims of sound character who have witnessed the crime. And since rape is very serious crime, circumstantial evidence wouldn't do... witnesses will be required to have witnessed the actual penetration. And if the woman is not married she'll have to prove that she was a virgin before this horrible crime was committed. (Hanif, *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*, 2008, p.139)

Through the above quoted dialogue between Zia and the Saudi Qazi, the novelist wants to bring into light the

faulty and preposterous logic behind these laws. As Aroosa Kanwal remarks, "Hanif exposes the ignorance and buffoonery of his fictionalised mullah dictator Zia, through his telephone conversation with the 90-year-old Qazi who has served as a judge of the Saudi Shariah Court" (2015, p.47). Qazi's frenzied replies to Zia's questioning about the details of the Blind Zainab case are a vivid mockery of the loopholes in the misogynistic Hudood Ordinance and also of the way that General Zia, "play[ed] out his dictatorial politics in the guise a fundamentalist Wahhabi model of Islam" ("Legal Injustices: The Zina Hudood Ordinance of Pakistan and Its Implications for Women", Imran, 2005, p.84).

According to Ania Loomba in "Situating Colonial and Postcolonial Studies", 'Human beings internalize the systems of repression and reproduce them by conforming to certain ideas of what is normal and what is deviant.' (41) Blind Zainab is the silent character of the novel, who hardly speaks (2015, p.58).

The undeserved charges on Blind Zainab hence diminish her to an exclusively unequal being than the one she might categorically hold. Her truth thus *suffers an erasure* at the hands of miscellaneous views delivered on her character. Nonetheless, to the readers, her silences are significant with a forceful message. She speaks in her silence. Hanif permits Blind Zainab not merely select dialogic space but furthermore the space that Spivak calls Ethical responsibility/ Ethical singularity. The expression has been defined accordingly:

It signifies not only the act of response which completes the transaction of speaker and listener, but also the ethical

stance of making discursive room for the Other to exist. In other words “ethics are not just a problem of knowledge but a call to a relationship” (Landry & Maclean, 1996). The ideal relationship is individual and intimate...The ideal relationship to the other is an ‘embrace, an act of love’ (ibid) Such an embrace may be unrequited, as the differences and distances are too great, but if we are ever to get beyond the vicious circle of abuse, it is essential to remain open-hearted; not to attempt to recreate the Other narcissistically, in one’s own image, but generously, with care and attention.

Blind Zainab is portrayed by Hanif as a woman of substance, “who had spent her life thanking God and forgiving His men for what they did to her” (Hanif, *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*, 2008, p.169). She is portrayed as a strong woman who is at the receiving end from the misogynistic society. Blind Zainab is contented in her circumstances. Even after she is punished to death by stoning she is calm and comfortable in her cell in jail. Fortitude, politeness, compassion, consideration and tolerance are the words which encompass her character in the novel. While in prison:

Zainab didn’t feel like the other inmates on death row; they prayed, they cried, they obsessively followed the progress of their petitions for mercy, and after their last appeal was denied, they turned their attention to the afterlife and started seeking forgiveness all over again. Zainab had committed no crime and she was comfortable in her cell - called the black cell because it accommodated death row-prisoners – and she lived in it as if it was her home (Hanif, *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*, 2008, p.165).

The comparison of Zainab with other prisoners in the above quoted passage brings out the sharp contrast in their behaviour patterns and their outlook on their positions. Zainab is free from guilt and self-pity, moreover she exhibits calm in the face of most unsuitable of conditions, “she had shown a puzzled fortitude that baffled women activists who were fighting her case in the courts and on the streets” (Hanif, *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*, 2008, p.166). She spends her days in the prison by helping other inmates, teaching their children to recite the Quran and feeding birds from her leftover bread. The novelist depicts her as someone who has accepted her fate without any remorse or hopelessness but when the presidential orders of her removal from the jail, which she considers her home, are issued her calm breaks and the result is, “Zainab screamed and Zainab cursed.” Her curse is for General Zia, “May worms eat the innards of the person who is taking me away from my home. May his children not see his face in death” (Hanif, *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*, 2008, p.169). The sombre news of her removal from the jail is brought to her by the jailer who respects Zainab because of her conduct at the prison. The city jail superintendent tells Zainab sadly, “Your picture was printed in America. Apparently, the orders have come from the very top to take you to a place where you can’t give interviews” (Hanif, *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*, 2008, p.169). This final act of cruelty and injustice is why blind Zainab screams and curses Zia. Zainab’s existence is diminished to the boundary of the whole discourse. In his essay “Representing the Colonized:

Anthropology's Interlocutors" Edward Said writes:

It was only when subaltern figures like women, Orientals, blacks and other 'natives' made noise that they were paid attention to, and asked in, so to speak. Before that they were more or less ignored like the servants in nineteenth-century novels, there, but unaccounted for except as a useful part of the setting. To convert them into topics of discussion or fields of research is necessarily to change them into something fundamentally and constitutively different. And so the paradox remains. (1989, p.298)

A number of religious clerics and scholars have been clearly stating that the Hudood Ordinance does not comply fully with the Quran and Hadith. Therefore, partial amendments to it cannot bring it in conformity with the letter and spirit of the Quran and Sunnah. Consequently, a thorough revision of the Hudood Ordinance has been termed as necessary in order to make it more responsive to the philosophy of crime and punishment in the Quran and Sunnah as well as more effective in a modern judicial system (Masud, 2006).

Conclusion

In Anglophone fiction by Indian and Pakistani authors the death of the woman subaltern is a fairly common phenomenon, where very few narratives allow a life after rape or an illegitimate pregnancy resulting from an extramarital affair. This death can be physical or social or both. For example in Bapsi Sidwa's *Ice-Candy Man* (1988), after Ayah's brutal gang rape she leaves Pakistan permanently and forever; in Shashi Deshpande's *The Binding Vine* (2001),

Kalpana who is raped by her uncle, is in a coma when the novel ends, with no chances of survival; Rani, in Moni Mohsin's *End of Innocence* (2006), is killed by her stepfather when her illegitimate pregnancy comes to light. Blind Zainab too, does not feel pity for herself after her horrific gang rape. She silently listens to her death sentence by stoning because she feels she has committed no crime and so is free from any guilt for she, "had spent her life thanking God and forgiving his men for what they did to her" (Hanif, *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*, 2008, p.169).

Hanif's portrayal of subaltern women in his first two novels namely *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* and *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti*, also makes use of the postcolonial narrative approach, magical realism. In this context, magic realism is considered capable of possessing a natural affinity with subalternity which Jeanne Delbaere calls as the "energy of the margins" (1992, pp.74-104). Magic realism is employed in the text to reinforce Hanif's satire of the escalating gender based violence in Pakistan. It stresses upon his rejection of magic and religion as appropriate and suitable means of resistance to subaltern suppression.

A Case of Exploding Mangoes makes one think if Hanif is proposing that these patterns will never culminate? The lower classes, the subjugated and dominated will permanently stay demoted, for it is transcribed in their fate? Is it difficult for a writer to cater for a class that he/she does not belong to? Instead of disseminating completely "subalternism", what appears more central is the requirement, for intelligentsias who write, to focus on relations, and to reflect on

approaches to figure out associations between various classes of society.

The brutal death of Alice Bhatti in *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* highlights the immortalization of the dead subaltern and its purpose of serving subaltern theory and subalternity in general whereas on the other hand *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* takes into account the living or the live subaltern. As in the words of Jim Masselos, “the dead subaltern has value and serves a purpose, but what about live subalterns?” (2002, p.210). Significantly death seems to be the price for idealization when it comes to the gendered subaltern. But then what about the living subaltern? This question seems to very relevant to the character of Blind Zainab. As discussed earlier death of the subaltern woman, especially after rape, is a common feature of fiction written by Pakistani and Indian authors. Hanif does not adhere to this feature in the case of Blind Zainab. The narrative sees her being transported to the Lahore Fort from her prison cell as her interviews in national and international print media have become a headache for General Zia. She is left to languish in the Lahore Fort under strict ISI surveillance, “a hand gripped her arm firmly. Where do you think you are going, old woman? We are taking you to the Fort. The press won’t be able to bother you there” (Hanif, *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*, 2008, p.170). That is where the narrative leaves Zainab and then somehow forgets about her. Although Hanif allows Zainab to live on in the novel but her life, bereft of any hope for survival or a normalcy at life, is as bleak and dark as the dungeon where she is imprisoned. The life she is allowed in the narrative is a physical one which

will pass on into oblivion and mere disappearance without any knowledge of it in the outer world. Perhaps the only saving grace that Hanif allows the gang rape victim Blind Zainab is in the form of a magical realist revenge on her part taken by the crow that she feeds to a stomach full and that which eventually strikes Pak One down consequently killing General Zia. Magical realism is employed in *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* by Hanif in regards to Blind Zainab. In the novel the curses of the blind woman reach the crow which is fed by her. The crow carries those heartfelt curses with him for many days and finally hits Pak One which is carrying the general, top rank Pakistani army officials and US ambassador to Pakistan. Hanif makes use of this narrative technique with reference to a woman. In both Alice Bhatti and Blind Zainab’s case it is a satire on the failure of society and law to protect its women citizens and apprehend the perpetrators of gendered violence. Both the women are wronged but their offenders go scot free.

Hanif’s women characters are built around various aspects of gendered violence like rape, acid attacks and sexual harassment in Pakistan. His portrayal draws quite a sombre and bleak picture of women and their lives in everyday cosmopolitan Pakistan. It is his ability to apply logic to absurdity that allows him to compose such characters out of a frothing, stirring sea of rage in an excessively dysfunctional society. And then the life stories of these women are not those inspiring, life-affirming narratives of love, salvation, and the characteristic dignity of the human condition amongst suffering and

humiliation. No, here the ritual of innocence is officially drowned. Drowned in the tsunami of an over bearing and catastrophically male dominated society where according to the author women are merely playthings. Hanif's sharp, bitter and cutting critique of the apologetic state of women's rights in Pakistan comes through very vividly in his portrayal of gendered subaltern citizens in his novels. His comical colloquial tone and his dexterity at juxtaposing brutality and farce are his prime gifts as a writer and so his novels do not run the risk of turning didactic and self-righteous. Hanif's piercing wit and his acute journalistic intellect of observation constantly shine through the narratives which are completely shorn of sentimentality and exoticism, and are driven by an anger or cynicism born of deep compassion as Kanwal remarks "Many second-generation Pakistani writers and readers who grew up in the late 1970s - arguably the most difficult period in Pakistan's history - can relate to Hanif's cynicism" (2015, p.48). *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* deals with select thoughts that may have an exceptional charm for Pakistani scholars as well as for Pakistani readership in general in aiming at the focus on the ethic of the marginalized.

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