



RESEARCH PAPER

The Complexities of Inter-religious Courtship and Marriage in  
Hanif's *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti*

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ABSTRACT

The paper at hand focuses, through the close reading of Alice Bhatti – the central character in Mohammed Hanif's novel *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011), on inter-religious courtship dynamics as well as the complexities resultant to such marriages in Pakistani social context. The Islamic Republic of Pakistan, being a dominantly Muslim society, has often times occurrences of the instances of marginalization and 'Othering' of its religious minorities making vivid the crevices in its social stratification. Hanif's novel attempts to explicate the acute situations of inter-religious courtship and marriage vis-à-vis its fictive presentations of the characters of Alice Bhatti – a nurse in a hospital and Teddy Butt – a thug and a toady for Sindh Police. Drawing its theoretical framework from Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1953), particularly its section titled "Situations," the paper presents the complexities of courtship and marriage in inter-religious contexts: Alice Bhatti belongs to a low caste Christian 'Choohrah' community while Teddy Butt is a Muslim with no recognizable secure job. Marriage instead of giving respect to a low caste non-Muslim nurse becomes a torture and later ends in her tragic death. The paper concludes that inter-religious marriages in Pakistan, instead of giving shelter and respect to low caste non-Muslim women, rather become complicated as in the case of Alice Bhatti who is shown to have met a tragic death.

**KEYWORDS** Courtship, Inter-religious Marriages, Mohammed Hanif, *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti*, Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*

Introduction

Mohammed Hanif is a highly acclaimed Pakistani writer. His novels have the glimpse of real life characters. His first novel *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* was published in 2008. His second novel *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* was published in 2011. His recent novel *Red Birds* got published in 2018. *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* unveils a reality of an individual who, in search of her identity, suffers from many ups and downs and finally meets a disastrous fate. The novel is set in Karachi - a city clustered with different communities. *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* exposes a community of Christian faith living in French Colony. Hanif through the character of Alice exposes the reality that this specific community is entitled as 'Choohrah' by Pakistani Muslims and are socially categorized as low caste untouchables but when it comes to molestation or sexual abuse the 'untouchables' become 'touch-able'. This is a hard reality to swallow. With regard to the institution of marriage the Christian women have to convert their faith and identity to be acceptable to a Muslim man. Hanif highlights that untouchables are appropriated for social out-casting only.

## Literature Review

A lot of criticism has been offered to Hanif's *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti*. Shaheen et al (2014) highlight Hanif's technique of empowering women through magical realism (pp. 107-116). Mukherjee and Rath (2015) view the novel as desire and declassé: body and religion (pp. 22-38). Mirza (2015) utilizing Victor Li's theory of necroidealism exerts Alice Bhatti as a determined woman to survive and surpass her subaltern status through her father's efforts for her saintly canonization despite her brutal death. Mirza establishes that Hanif's *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* explicitly discards an idealization of both subalternity and death (pp. 150-163). Nazar (2016) discusses the silencing of the subaltern in the novel and shows how women are stereotyped. She highlights the instances of religious and cultural violence on women (pp. 268-280). Baig's (2017) paper excavates the techniques of realism and magical realism, in Hanif's *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti*, that going side by side throughout the narrative, help the broken Christian lady Alice Bhatti attain the status of 'Our lady' (pp. 87-102). Paul and Rai (2018) highlight that Hanif's *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* rediscovers the multifaceted strains of sexual violence in the backdrop of Alice Bhatti's sainthood. Though she executes saintly miracles, nothing can save her from being a victim of sexual violence. (pp. 121-127). Dasgupta (2021) explores the conditions of Pakistani Christian minority in Hanif's *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* by focusing the complex intersections of religion, caste, class, and gender (pp. 223-235). Bashir et al. (2023), using Foucauldian concept of textuality, show that Hanif portrays poverty stricken and gendered eccentricity, in terms of marginalization and dehumanization, of Christian minority whilst living in a Muslim society (pp. 1393-1405). The paper at hand, using Simone de Beauvoir's perspectives vis-à-vis married women's situations within and without the household, reads the novel in terms of courtship and marriage and the role played by patriarchy, highlighting how a woman of religious minority and low caste is treated when it comes to inter-religious marriage.

## Theoretic Framework

The present novel is seen through the lens of Simone de Beauvoir who rightly says that 'woman' is associated with a womb and an ovary. When the word "woman" is uttered from the mouth of a man it is nothing more than an insult whereas for a man to be called a man is a matter of pride. (1953, p. 33). When Alice attains the status of a married woman, her dream to get the social respect shatters again when her own husband murders her in the end. When she learns about her pregnancy she starts thinking like a mother and tries to give her child a good future without disgrace which she herself had suffered throughout her life. It is in search of social status and respect that she marries and still to gain respect she dreams of motherhood but this respect goes far from her. Though she meets a tragic death but her father's letter to The Vatican albeit written for claiming justice confirms her saintly stature by addressing her as 'Our Lady Bhatti'. Her death makes her a saint and she will remain alive as a saint. Hanif ends the novel with the magic appeal of his language. This magic of words makes her existence alive. Alice instead of Alice Joseph Bhatti becomes "Our Lady of Alice Bhatti".

## Results and Discussion

Hanif begins his novel *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* with the scene of a job interview for the seat of a junior nurse at The Sacred Heart Hospital. The scene gives a glimpse of a real situation and the writer's style of writing this scene gives a visual effect to the readers. The interviewers in the interview room all belong to different religions with distinct personalities. When Alice appears before the interview panel she notices that "a man having grey-diamond shape mark on his forehead" shows that he prays five times

a day and is a true Muslim but his beard with a look of a “designer goatee” gives an idea of a ‘Kafir’ (Hanif, 2011, p. 2). Hanif through this scene gives the readers a necessary information regarding characters - their appearance, style, religion and their status in the hospital. The main characters include: Alice - a Christian girl and daughter of a sweeper; senior sister Hina Alvi; Ortho sir with a diamond scar; and Dr. Jamus Pereira, the chief medical officer. Later in the novel various other characters join Alice for further happenings.

Alice finally gets the job of a junior nurse. Hanif through Alice highlights the problems of molestation faced by women on a daily basis in hospitals. The nurse is given the title of ‘sister’ by the society to maintain the decorum of this profession but people molest them and disgrace the title of sister through their indecent behaviour. The environment of the hospital also sheds light on the corruption prevailing in Pakistani hospitals. Pakistani constitution gives agency to the minorities and gives them rights but when it comes to practice it becomes a myth. The minorities are hurled with titles of disgrace as ‘Choohrah’. The Muslims being in majority exert their political and social power on the minorities. The minority rights rest in papers only. The flag of Pakistan comprises of two colours: green and white. The green colour is in abundance which signifies the majority of Muslims in the country while the white colour is one third of the flag which signifies the minorities in the country. The moon and star of white colour in the middle of green signifies that Muslims of this country will give room and agency to the minorities that they will shine and sparkle in the form of star and moon. But all these hopes and wishes prove to be futile because people when gain power suppress their minorities. Especially Pakistan being a male dominated country where the females are treated as ‘others’ and especially if the female belongs to a minority and lower class people take her like a mere plaything without respect. Alice of *Our lady of Alice Bhatti* is an embodiment of such a character who belongs to a Catholic Christian family. Her father’s job of a sweeper is the ice on the cake. Alice faces many problems because of her being a member of a low class community.

Hanif, through the character of Alice, depicts a woman of strong will. She never accepts failure rather she rebels against the tyrant patriarchy. Alice, when taking training at the Nursing School, faces many problems related to her religion, her father’s status and her confident nature. The Muslim girls at the school criticize on the posters of Lord Yassoo. They throw ink on the posters and try to humiliate the other Christian girls. But Alice does not get afraid rather decides to rebel and retaliate. She stands firm against them. The Muslim girls call them “the kafir den” (infidel) and sing the rhythmic slogans “Who Belongs to Pakistan, Musalman, Musalman” (p. 172). Being a patriotic Pakistani she protests against them and hits them in their shins. Alice, in deep love for Lord Yassoo, could not tolerate if anyone said something against the Lord so when Muslim girls talk bad about her Lord she gives a severe reaction. She receives several warnings but whenever anyone disgraces her Lord Yassoo she turns into a soldier of the Lord and fights against them. In her fourth year of nursing course she meets another incident involving a famous surgeon. That surgeon puts his entire fault on her shoulders and leaves calmly. The school gets a chance to get rid of her so she gets accused of the crime she had not committed. Further her father could not arrange a good lawyer for her which ultimately lodged her in the jail. However, her good behaviour in the jail, gives her a chance for early release.

Hanif through the character of Alice presents a bold lady who fights against all the odds. He also sheds light on the disgrace minorities have to bear in a country with Muslim majority. Islam doesn’t force anyone to change the religion rather Islam being a religion of peace and tolerance gives rights to minorities but when it comes to practice

the disgrace minorities have to bear in their lives leads to a mental disaster. Alice fights against these malpractices. When it comes to physical oppression the Muslim community takes these untouchables as an easy catch.

As the paper focuses on the role of patriarchy with reference to courtship and marriage so a brief personality analysis of Alice Bhatti helps to understand her as a person. Alice feels disgust when people molest her by touching her intentionally like she was a mere mannequin. Alice discusses this problem with Noor - a ward boy and good friend of Alice. Noor remains in ward because his mother Zainab was lying on death bed. He suggests her to get married. Meanwhile an incident shakes her completely and her mind moves like a milk shake in a shaker machine. Alice gets a duty in the VIP ward where a madam, battling for her life, was laying. Her two sons wearing starched cotton suits were there for her care. When one of them tries to molest Alice by asking her to give him a blowjob, with a pistol in his hand, Alice cuts his member with a razor blade and as he bleeds and shouts she calmly tells him to go to the Accidents Ward of the hospital as they were used to such incidents at night shifts. She forbids him from crying and shouting lest his mother, lying on the bed, may awaken. This incident disturbs Alice and Hina Alvi suspends her for eight weeks.

Hanif introduces the character of Teddy Butt - the loony hero of the novel. He is a body builder and has won the title of junior Mr. Faisalabad, who works as a tout for the police. He gets utilized on various matters as proxy court witness, crime scene cleaner, proxy prisoner and much more. Teddy Butt falls in love with Alice Bhatti at The Sacred Heart Hospital when Alice was to give lithium sulphate to the mental disorder patients. But these patients create a situation for Alice in which she could not even breathe. Teddy Butt comes to rescue her and moves her out of the ward in his arms with the national song playing in the background: "Ic percham k saye tale hum aik hain hum aik hain" [we all are one under the shade of one flag] (p. 36). Teddy falls in love with Alice then starts to follow his love by false actings. He gets admitted in the hospital and gives Alice the reasons like that of being unable to sleep at night and having dreams. Alice understands but pretends to act innocent. Teddy Butt's courtship pursuits continue and he starts visiting Alice by making various false excuses. He even injures his thumb and comes for bandage. Alice notices the pistol on him which somehow gives her the clue to his personality. Teddy gets fed up of withholding his feelings and wants to express them finally. He reaches Alice and puts the gun on her temple. She cannot understand his act but tries to remain calm. Hanif's description of this scene is so vivid that the readers can visualize it. All the movies that Teddy has seen in his life time and all the rehearsals to propose Alice evaporate instantly. Teddy tries to gather his words and proposes her in a clumsy manner. As he expresses his love for Alice, she is relieved of the fear of the gun on her temple. She gathers herself and harshly commands him to never show his face to her. Teddy vanishes before she finishes (pp. 66-70). Soon after she too starts thinking about Teddy. The VIP room incident and her suspension from work for eight weeks give her time to think seriously about Teddy and his feelings for her. Finally one day Noor watches Teddy and Alice hand in hand.

Hanif, through 'Teddy/Alice Courtship', tries to reveal certain harsh facts that occur in Pakistani society. Alice belongs to a low class untouchable Christian community. In Pakistani society Muslims being in majority treat Christians as low caste and further because mostly Christians belong to the profession of sanitary and cleaning jobs so they address them as 'Choohrahs'. So being a daughter of a 'Choohrah' and living in a small house at French Colony, Alice was well aware that no one from a well reputed family will knock her door for marriage. In such a social context of inequality and the incidents of harassment occurring in her life on daily basis the thought of getting married and

living a happy and respectable life is altogether enticing for her albeit with a common goon like Teddy Butt. Moreover Alice is a lady of composed nature. She never gets frank at work place, never eats in public and never looks straight in the eyes of males. All these acts reveal her composed nature. In spite of all this, she faces many unbearable actions of males. So when Teddy expresses his love for her and wants to get married to her she gives it a very serious thought and tries to be considerate. But she knew very well that the society will not accept her easily so she accepts Islam as a religion and converts although a Muslim man can marry a Christian woman without converting her to a Muslim first. Laws pertaining to marriage and family in Pakistan, dictated by Islamic injunctions, allow Muslim men to marry a non-Muslim woman of a 'revealed religion', without requiring her to convert to Islam. According to Sardar (2002), in case of inheritance, Christian wife cannot inherit the property of husband and in the case of divorce she cannot own her children (pp. 44-48). Because of these issues Pakistani Christians often change their religion to Islam before marriage. Similarly Teddy asks Alice to convert to Islam which she agrees and names herself as Aliya (Hanif, 2011, p. 88). But this conversion is in name only because still in her heart lives Yassoo and she strongly follow Him. In case of Alice being an independent lady she doesn't have to suppress herself under the patriarchal pressures. Her father's status of being sick and not very active does not prove to be a hurdle in her marriage as she herself arranges her marriage with Teddy Butt. Beauvoir (1953) rightly notes that the social dynamics of love are not the same for both the sexes (p. 608). She further suggests that love is more of a social construct rather than an emotional experience. Love for women has always been a means of salvation unfortunately (p. 632). Alice, being tired of harassed on daily basis just because she was a low caste Christian 'Choorhah' woman, finds an opportunity of gaining respect in society in the shape of Teddy Butt and marries him. Therefore love with Teddy Butt, as according to Beauvoir's observations, is more of a salvation for Alice than an emotional experience in the true sense.

Alice reaches the tailor shop for measurements. Alice being the native of French Colony was treated as an untouchable even by Christians as well because of her father's 'Choorhah' identity. This identity has created a sense of disgust for Alice and her father. Her father sometimes expresses his disgust by observing that Muslims treated them as shit because they were the cleaners of their shit. Alice wants to get far away from this disgrace. The decision of marriage to a Muslim is the first step that she takes to gain respect. The tailor while taking her measurements pays compliments to her figure: "By Lord's grace many rich Christian ladies starve themselves to acquire this kind of figure" (Hanif, 2011, p. 94). Alice wonders that this figure which she gets praises for was a symbol of real starvation. Being a daughter of a poor 'Choorhah' she could enjoy meat only on the occasions such as marriages or deaths. Otherwise she feeds herself with vegetables and pulses and sometimes wheat bread soaked in water. Alice thinks that throughout her life she had borne the disgraces for touching the water tap or drinking water from a glass whereas these people never hesitate to touch her body parts without shame. Hanif through these observations and incidents shows, in an ironical manner, the mind set of people in Pakistani societies vis-à-vis Christian 'Choorhah' communities. They are not really following their religion but to show themselves superior and to disgrace the subalterns as untouchables they perform such acts.

Through Alice's experiences at the Accidents Ward in The Sacred Heart Hospital, the readers know that "not a single day passes without [Alice's] watching women shot or hacked, strangled or suffocated, poisoned or burnt, hanged or buried alive" (p. 96). Women have to suffer this fate because of male patriarchs i.e father, brother, husband and sons - the reason being their honour at stakes. The same honour issue is the subject

for critical reflection vis-à-vis the patriarchal oppression in Pakistani society in the novels like Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride* and Qaisra Shahraz's *The Holy Woman*. In *The Pakistani Bride*, when Zaitoon's father took her to the mountains where from she ran away for survival, her husband went to search her because the clan demanded her dead body to preserve their honour. Although he couldn't kill he gave the news of her death to preserve his honour in the clan. This honour issue has remained a bone of contention for male patriarchs as in *The Holy Woman* Zarri Banno has to accept the status of 'Shahzadi Ibadat' without her will because her male patriarchs i.e father and grandfather had decided it for her. Similarly Hanif shows in this novel that male patriarchs are so strong that they put the responsibility of their disgrace or loss of honour on the shoulders of their women. Although Alice doesn't suffer from severe patriarchal pressure in her decision of marriage because of her father's belonging to a low caste community of untouchables she has to bear this patriarchal burden of honour, however, from her husband's side.

Alice's marriage with Teddy is not a traditional Pakistani marriage with 'barat' (wedding procession) as Teddy picks Alice from her home and both go to sea in a boat to tie their marital knot. The boat cannot be called a traditional boat but a kind of boat and Teddy and Alice's marriage in the boat signifies that their relationship is not grounded and also lacks the grip of traditional marriage since as their married life too will keep on floating like a boat in water. After the boat trip, Teddy takes Alice to his flat where Alice meets Teddy's friends, playing cards, cracking regular jokes and drinking alcohol.

Teddy being affiliated to a job of a thug and involved in various crimes was advised by his co-workers that new life and wife should not affect his old work. Teddy feels himself like a pendulum dangling. Finally he has reached the destination of a marital status that he had longed for all his life. But he cannot leave his life of a thug too. Alice on the other hand feels delight in a new familial set up that she too had yearned for. Her main concern was respect and in this society a woman gets respect only when she gets married otherwise society takes a woman as an easy prey to molest anytime. Teddy's discussions with his wife on various issues after their marriage highlight many important facts. As Teddy asks Alice about her experience and knowledge regarding sexual relationship to which she answered that being a nurse it is a part of her knowledge. Alice wants to know about Teddy's job and work but Teddy does not reveal it because he remembers inspector Malangi's advice: "This is not the kind of work you discuss over a family meal" (p. 107).

On the whole, Alice and Teddy start their married life with lots of dreams, hopes and pleasures. Both of them feel solace and happiness in each other's company. As marriage brings responsibility and one reschedules all one's personality for upcoming events. Similarly Teddy feels mesmerized by Alice and doesn't want to leave her alone. But Malangi's call disturbs him and he moves to resume his work. His work was to catch a criminal which he has done successfully and when he was in the company of that criminal he remembers Alice there. Next morning Alice goes to French Colony for taking some of her things and clothes. When she reaches there all past memories get stuck in her mind and her disgust for that place increases more. The place looks filthier to her than before. But the memories of her mother's death fill her with grief. Joseph Bhatti comes in the meanwhile and Alice comes out of her memories. Joseph Bhatti senses about his daughter's marriage and asks her to take him along with her. Joseph tells her that he knows that his son-in-law was not a 'Choohra' rather a Muslim. Though Alice feels disgraced because of her identity, Joseph seems to have pride in his identity and he exclaims that just because his son-in-law was a Muslim doesn't mean that he was better

than them. But Alice leaves the place without answering or commenting on her father's views.

Alice feels happy attaining the status of a married woman. She visits Sister Hina Alvi with a box of sweets. Hina Alvi feels happy for her but also shows her concern for her as she has seen Teddy Butt with Malangi in police vans which make his character suspicious. As Hina has married thrice and twice to the same man but concludes that life had become more difficult after the second time. So she decided to live alone. Hina congratulates her but also opines that being a Christian married woman "you just become a slave multiplied by two" (p. 132). Alice appreciates Hina's concern for her but tells her that she too thought that she could live a life alone without a man with a good job but that VIP Room incident had made her rethink. Hina Alvi sums up Alice's case by saying that she "got hitched to the first piece of trash [she] came across" (p.133). Alice's discussion with Hina on the issue of her marriage gives her mixed feelings but at the same time she realizes that she should not go into details or speculations. Marriage gives people a new topic to talk about and everyone gives his/her own opinions and rather than making the new journey easy they complicate it. Like Hina Alvi discusses all the dark areas of her marriage and concludes Alice's marriage as a trash. Alice's father Joseph Bhatti also gives his mixed feelings. He does not like it too but does not say it openly. On the other side Teddy too has been advised by Malangi not to discuss about his work to Alice. Inspector Malangi, at the same time, misguides Teddy regarding women. He says: "Women make you weak and impotent because they make perfectly normal men feel they are fools" (p. 161).

Hanif through the marriage of Alice and Teddy depicts the real life situations both male and female face after marriage. Further the change in their daily routine and the inclusion of other persons in their lives change the scenario with new experiences. When Teddy comes home after losing the criminal although he was stressed but on seeing Alice all his tensions evaporate. Teddy exercises with his dumbbells with her and teaches her breathing exercises. On the other hand the patriarchs which include acquaintances at work place as well react differently. Noor, Ortho sir and Dr. Pereira all comment on Alice's conversion and her marriage. Alice gets a strange feeling that why everyone was worried about her life. She changes the topic and tries to get busy in her work. Alice and Teddy's married life has several incidents which show that it is not very simple to live together with different religious and cultural backgrounds. Alice is advised by Teddy about personal hygiene to which Alice reacts humorously. Teddy gets serious. Although he is not a very religious person he does not like Alice to make fun of his religion. Alice asks Teddy about his work and advises him to manage his duty hours. Teddy doesn't like Alice's intervention in his life. Teddy feels bad and disgusted at Alice being very liberal. Teddy doesn't feel comfortable when Alice moves naked in the home. All these incidents make their house environment muggy and compressed. Their professional lives also suffer from upheavals. Alice faces a situation in the hospital regarding a delivery case in which the lady gives birth to a dead baby but soon Alice's prayers are responded by Lord Yassoo and the baby gains consciousness. Since the baby was unwanted by the lady's parents so they declare the baby dead and Alice adopts the baby not informing Teddy. On the other hand Teddy suffers from the problems of searching the lost criminal which has completely occupied his mind.

Hanif peeks in the personality of Alice and tries to discuss all the good and bad aspects of her personality. He even discusses the harsh realities or the battles going on in her mind which she undergoes but doesn't dare to reveal to others or not even to her own self. Hanif exposes those harsh battles of mind that were disturbing Alice. Alice's marriage makes her life more difficult. Teddy, despite being a tout and involved in many

illegal acts has changed after becoming husband of a low caste lady. He has become more conscious of his religion which was shut in his mind prior to his marriage. Now he questions Alice on Muslim practices of hygiene and tries to give her sermons. A person like Teddy with no Islamic practices both in ideology and practice dares to question his wife on the grounds that she belongs to a low caste. This highlights the fact that in marriage man exerts his pressure on woman because of the privilege of upper caste. Hanif also exposes that Alice does not reveal all her life's secrets to Teddy. When Alice realizes that she was pregnant with Teddy's child, Hanif reveals it to the readers that it had not happened to her for first time and narrates her sexual experiences with a doctor at a nursing school. Her relations with the doctor had advanced to her getting pregnant. This episode of Alice's pre-marital pregnancy also exposes Pakistani society's dualism. When she tells the doctor about her pregnancy he takes it very lightly and discusses about the child's name, gender and future. Then he doesn't show his face to Alice for nine days and after nine days tells her that his mother was ill so he couldn't come. Further he tells her that as he belonged to a Shia sect which did not allow him to marry anyone outside the sect so marrying Alice who was outside his religion was a sin which he could not dare to commit.

Hanif through this incident reveals the problem of sexual exploitation of women in Pakistani society. A question surfaces in the minds of the readers that when that doctor was having sex with Alice which was illegal and irreligious, no religious scholar's words or sermons came to his mind? Rather he bravely and shamelessly engages himself into a relationship with Alice which results in her pregnancy. Alice, when tells him about her pregnancy, is dragged into a long conversation at first related to their child's future and then suddenly the doctor disappears, leaving Alice alone to fight with her mental and physical state. This is the strong irony on the personality of that Islamic doctor. Every religion teaches harmony, humanism and balance. No religion gives liberty to go to any extreme and Islam is a very strict religion with strict moral codes. A person who is not pious in his character is awarded with punishment not rewarded with crown of upper caste or religion. The Holy Quran says: "Don't go near adultery, surely it is an indecency and an evil way [of fulfilling sexual urge] (17:32). And again if a man or woman involves in adultery Islam gives strict punishment. The Holy Quran says: "The woman and the man who fornicate scourge each of them a hundred whips; and in the matter of God's religion, let no tenderness for them seize you if you believe in God and the Last Day; and let a party of the believers witness their punishment" (24:2).

The Holy Quran being the first and the foremost source of Islamic jurisprudence has strong influence and no law in an Islamic country can be made against the injunctions of the Holy Quran. So Alice being the Christian and that doctor being a Shia Muslim has done a big crime to commit adultery. The doctor doesn't find him-self guilty while having sex with Alice but with regard to marrying her he remembers his Shariah. This incident is itself a strong irony on the Muslims of Pakistani community. The doctor gives her injections and tablets and remains there until he made sure that she had got rid of the baby. Alice shouts with pain and asks him to get lost, never to show his ugly face to her. Alice, after learning about her legal pregnancy, result of her wedlock with Teddy is clouded by confusion. She analyses that may be Teddy will dislike having kids with her and even after being a father he will treat her kids differently or make their lives hell. She knows that being a mother she might not be able to tolerate all those cruelties. So she decides to leave Teddy. She says to herself: "shouldn't a baby be a blessing and not some kind of half-baked deal? What kind of life begins with a compromise?" (p. 181).

Teddy visits his flat after four days and goes straight to the cupboard to get his things. He makes it clear to her that he was not interested in knowing about the



fatherhood so Alice does not tell him this news. Moreover she has speculations that this child of hers may not meet the similar fate as that of her previous child. So after Teddy's departure she gives her speculations a serious thought and decides to leave Teddy and his place. This time she is stronger than ever in her decision because the child she is carrying is Teddy's and a legitimate child on that so the society cannot shame her with the charges of adultery. Before departure Teddy had told Alice that he had lost a prisoner and a very dangerous one. Alice finds a sketch of a boy from his pocket. Alice realizes that Teddy was trapped in some crime and it will lead to disaster. So she decides to leave the place for her child's sake because she doesn't want to lose the child at any cost.

Alice has yet another situation at hand at her workplace. She has to hide the hospital baby because that baby is dead for the hospital staff and only Hina Alvi and Alice Bhatti know about his existence. Alice leaves her home and goes to Hina Alvi's home with the child. There she is muddled by the reality that Hina Alvi is also the follower of Lord Yassoo and Alvi is her husband's name which she borrows. She hides her real identity knowing well enough that what kind of treatment people bestow upon the persons belonging to a low caste. Hina Alvi reveals her true identity to Alice. Her actual name was Hannah Massey. Her estrangement to her previous name is so full that she utters her own name as if she was uttering someone else's name. Her own identity for her own self becomes ambiguous. Alice's knowledge about Hina confuses her about her decision regarding the coming child. Being a mother, she realizes, she should go back to Teddy - her child's father. At this moment she does not think about herself but for her child. She couldn't bear to give the child similar fate and life as she has lived herself through. If Teddy becomes responsible person then all their problems can be solved. Alice realizes: "The only thing marriage is good for is children. Men change after they have children" (p. 204).

Teddy under the complete spell of Malangi couldn't even think otherwise. Teddy, when visits his flat, learns that Alice has left with her things. This made him more annoyed. Inspector Malangi knows it before Teddy tells him that Alice and Teddy are no more together. Teddy then realizes that he loves her madly because he could not banish her out of his mind for a single second. Inspector Malangi apprehends Teddy's fixation with Alice so he plays a game with him. He excites anger in him and finally drags him to a conclusion of punishing Alice by throwing sulphuric acid on her face. After this she would never be able to show her face to anyone. She would never be able to marry anyone else. He leaves to search Alice. On the other side Alice goes back to Teddy's home and waits for him but he does not come. So Alice gets frustrated and leaves for her duty. There she goes to Noor and finds him with a bandage on his eye. She inquires and knowing the reason ends in a laughter she couldn't control. Noor was beaten by Teddy because he thinks that Noor and Alice were lovers. Alice realizes that Teddy loved her madly and his jealous nature makes her feel happier. Alice leaves the place immediately and searches for Teddy at all the places she knows. But she cannot find him. In the meanwhile, Noor's mother Zainab, who was admitted in the hospital, takes her last breath and Noor learns that she had gone. He covers Zainab with a white sheet and goes for documentation. He doesn't even know how to react. When he sees Alice he at once waves his hand towards her. Alice couldn't guess what this waving of hand meant. At the same time Teddy comes there and throws sulphuric acid on Alice which later causes Alice's death. Hanif ends the novel with epilogue in which Alice's father writes to The Vatican for justice. Alice death is not a death in the eyes of her father. Unlike other usual novel endings this sort of death is not a mere fatal ending but a case of empowerment. Joseph Bhatti says: "My daughter did not suffer the pain that her estranged husband

meant to cause her by pouring half a litre of sulphuric acid on her angelic face. Instead, she ascended to heaven with our Holy Mother" (p. 223).

### **Conclusion**

Hanif through the character of Alice Joseph Bhatti exposes the cruel realities and problems faced by a women belonging to a minority religion and a low caste. Throughout her life Alice tries to raise her status so that people take her as an individual, a human being and not an untouchable. The insults, she has suffered throughout her life by people just because of her identity of being a 'Choohrah' have filled her with anger to turn her into a reactionary. She feels a lot of disgust when people treat her badly or molest her. Finally she ties her marital knot with Teddy just to get respect of a married woman in the society. But fate jokes with her and laughs at her destiny. She meets a tragic death by her own husband. The shelter she tries to take refuge in turns to be a disaster. Thus Hanif through Alice/Teddy courtship and marriage projects the complexities of inter-religious marriages in predominantly Muslim Pakistani society.

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