

## **(MIS)USE OF RELIGIOUS IDEOLOGY FOR POWER POLITICS IN MOHAMMED HANIF’S A CASE OF EXPLODING MANGOES**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This research article aims to focus on Hanif’s narrative in the novel, A Case of Exploding Mangoes (2008) to analyze how the manipulation and politicization of religious ideology began in a totalitarian regime. Set in the time period of 1970s and onwards in the totalitarian regime in Pakistan, the research contends to analyze in depth through the micro-narratives in the novel that how the exploitation of religion as an ideology began under a dictatorial regime. As a way forward, it will also bring out the deradicalization efforts in order to resist against the totalitarian absolute power. Deradicalization of the radicalized, extremist and politicized ideological apparatuses to “prevent society from indoctrination” as well as to “enrich the knowledge of understanding comparisons” regarding what is right and what is wrong, or good vs. bad etc. (Rezan & Naupal, 2019, p.68) is one of the major aims of this research. Moreover, it intends to study in detail through Gramsci’s concept of Hegemony as well as Hannah Arendt’s political lens provided through The Origins of Totalitarianism (1973) that how and why the totalitarian regime uses terror, violence, extremism and power politics to establish its hegemonic rule. Arendt’s political philosophy on the totalitarian’s exploitation of people as well as social structures for its hegemonic rule and authority is an extensive study that will also be connected to Gramsci’s concept of Hegemony; in which he exposes the absolute power holders’ (mis)use of ideology in order to maintain their hegemonic rule. The use of terror and violence in a totalitarian regime is not only a means of power but it also leads towards the creation of social binaries like, power vs. powerlessness, dominance vs. subjugation, voice vs. voiceless etc. By employing*

*both Arendt's and Gramsci's concepts on the totalitarian evils the research will establish a critical backing of the arguments in the context of Zia's totalitarian evils as portrayed in Hanif's narrative.*

**Keywords:** *Politics of Religion, (mis)Use of Ideology, Totalitarianism, Deradicalization, Counter-fiction.*

## INTRODUCTION

Politicization, as defined by Michael Zürn (2019), means, “transporting an issue or an institution into the sphere of politics – making previously unpolitical matters political” (pp. 977-978). Religion thus, is rendered political by the totalitarian regime to not only exert its power through the (mis)use of such an ideology but also, to control the masses and legitimize the rule. Deradicalization on the other hand, defines Angel Rabasa et al. (2010) is “the process of abandoning an extremist worldview and concluding that it is not acceptable to use violence to effect social change” (p.1). The deradicalization will be studied through understanding Hanif’s narrative as a counter-fiction which defines Alaresi is “a constant fight against the centrifuge forces” through “a literary production without shackles” (qtd.in Videla, 2019). The literary narrative that is not shackled exposes the evils of the ruling elites as a way of deradicalization. Such a fiction employs literary devices like satire, irony, dark humor etc. to ridicule the “radical evil” (Rensmann, p.107) of the totalitarian regime and give voice to the voiceless through its characters in order to resist against the hegemonic rule. It also raises awareness among the oppressed masses by “re-educate[ing] ... [and] neutraliz[ing]” the extremism and politicization in the society (Rezan & Naupal, 2019, p.67). Hence, the deradicalization that is done through counter-fiction studies the narrative as counter-narrative to stress on how violence and terror in a totalitarian regime leads to an impediment in the growth of society. The use of satire to ridicule as well as expose the brutality of the totalitarian regime will further unmask how religion as an ideology began to be manipulated, leading to the oppression of the masses. The research will study through the characters like, the First Lady or the other marginalized voices like, the unnamed General Secretary of ‘All Pakistan Sweepers Movement’ in the novel, how Hanif as a part of deradicalization process shows that “social, political, and economic transformation will only occur slowly and in a pluralistic environment” by resisting against the totalitarian hegemony of the dictators (Rabasa et al., p.2).

Mohammed Hanif is known for his writings that provide “valuable insights into the complex cultural milieu of present-day Pakistan” (Bilal, p.115). Hanif

gives pertinent “social and political commentaries, interspersed with witty repartee” (Bilal, p.115) that are deep “contextualization and representation of Pakistan provid[ing] a remarkable insight into how it has come to be the nation that it is today” (Qureshi, p.186). The past and the present are infused together to bring to light the power structures and power politics that affected as well as continue to exploit the condition of the country. In this regard, *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* (2008) is an important writing of Hanif that is set in a particular time period and exposes “certain institutions” and their (mis)use of ideologies (Bilal, p.115). Being a novel belonging to the genre of Historical Fiction, it intermingles the facts with the fiction to “falsify reality” that has been preached by the totalitarians but instead, to “open people’s eyes and ears ... with [real] reality” it exposes the evils of the dominant dictatorial reality (Citton, 2012). The politics and evils of the totalitarian regime of Zia are derived from the real time period and regime (Bilal, p.122). However, Hanif fictionalizes the situation through the characters and the plot which is “all made up” (Bilal, p.122). It is done to satirize and ridicule the oppressive totalitarian regime as well as to demystify the totalitarian ruler’s character to expose how he manipulates ideologies and institutional support in order to maintain his hegemonic rule. The character of the totalitarian dictator named General Zia in the novel then, becomes a means to expose the tyranny of any totalitarian ruler and his regime that oppresses the people, abuses power and manipulates ideologies for political gains. Satire is an important means of counter-fiction that produces the counter-narrative through unveiling the reality of the tyrannical rulers in a subtle way. In this regard, Rosenheim (1983) is of the view that in a satirical narrative it is important to build the narration keeping in mind the real historical and social realities. He says:

*The dupes or victims of punitive satire are not mere fictions. They, or the objects which they represent, must be, or have been, plainly existent in the world of reality; they must, that is, possess genuine historic identity. The reader must be capable of pointing to the world of reality, past or present, and identifying the individual or group, institution, custom, belief, or idea which is under attack by the satirist. (p. 318).*

Hanif’s novel thereby, is a satire on the totalitarian regime of Zia in the 1980s and mixes the real with the imagined hence, blurring the line of fact or fiction. This infusion of reality and fiction not only reveals the reality of oppression in a totalitarian regime. However, it also makes the narrative a

counter-fiction that is “an ... answer to the oppressive society” by unmasking its politics and repression (Kropiunnigg, 2013, p. 100). As Hanif says in an interview to Natalie Sullivan that, “There’s a long history in Pakistan of making fun of stuff ... because we live in such troubled times. ... It comes out of despair. It comes out of a kind of oppression that people know they are trying to live with, but they can’t. [The books] are a way for people to relate to that” (Hanif, 2014). Hence, the literary narrative that counters the hegemony of the totalitarian rulers and unveils the (mis)use of religion and religious ideologies also becomes a way of deradicalization against the prevailing politicization and extremism under a totalitarian rule.

### **(Mis)Use of Religious Ideology for Totalitarian Authority**

Mohammed Hanif’s novel is a satirical as well as a historical fiction that critiques the totalitarian regime of General Zia and deconstructs the prevalent power structures that have fragmented the Pakistani society into social binaries of power vs. powerless, domination vs. subjugation etc. Saleem (2015) asserts that, “Hanif uses satire to construct his narratives and eventually to contrast the voice of the marginalized against the hegemonic and stereotypical discursive practices of Pakistan” (p. 202). Satire is one of the most important devices used by Hanif to expose how politics and religion join hands in a totalitarian regime to maintain the hegemony of the dictator. Northrop Frye in *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (1957) maintains that one of the main aims of satire is, “breaking up the lumber of stereotypes, fossilized beliefs, superstitious terrors, crank theories, pedantic dogmatisms, oppressive fashions, and all other things that impede the free movement ... of society” (p.233). In this regard, Hanif’s novel is a relevant narrative that heavily employs satire to unmask the politics of the totalitarian regime that has impeded the growth of the society. The novel is not written in a linear narrative but is structured in an episodic way employing mini narratives that expose through the individual experiences and sufferings the evils of Zia’s totalitarian rule that affects the individuals, institutions, ideologies and society at large. Furthermore, Hanif uses satire to delineate Zia’s character in the novel by exposing his self-created piety. At one instance in the novel, Hanif satirizes the totalitarian ruler’s abilities to rule the State and form his hegemony through an innocuous episode. He writes that one day General Zia personally requested the Saudi Prince Naif’s personal royal doctor, Dr. Sarwari to examine his worsening health conditions. Hanif portrays a scene in which Zia is bent with his face on the table and is standing trousers-less while the doctor is examining him. There at that ridiculously humorous

moment, Hanif writes that, Zia's eyes were fixed on the national and the army flags placed right in front of his table while he was reflecting on his political motives. Hanif (2008) goes on to write:

*He [Zia] looked at the army flag. Underneath the crossed swords was the famous slogan that the Founder of the nation had given this country as its birthday present and motto: 'Faith, Unity, Discipline.' Suddenly the slogan seemed not only banal and meaningless to him but too secular, non-committal, almost heretical. Faith, which faith? Unity? Discipline? Do soldiers need that slogan? (p.54)*

The totalitarian dictators' reflections at a crucial time when he is being examined thoroughly and that too, on quashing the homogeneity and unity of the nation through replacing the motto given to the whole nation by the Founder that stresses on uniting by erasing any divides, differences and discriminations. Zia's questions and critique to expunge the Founder's the quasi-non-committal motto exposes the brewing "political evil[s]" (Villa, p.2) in a totalitarian regime. Zia's questioning the motto and calling it "heretical" (Hanif, p.54) further unmasks his own political motives that are even standing against the nation's Founder. Hanif (2008) further maintains:

*[...] It also dawned on him that when the Founder came up with this slogan, he had civilians in mind, not the armed forces. This slogan, he told himself, had to go. His mind raced, searching for words that would reflect the true nature of his soldiers' mission. Allah had to be there. Jihad, very important. He knew it would please his friend Bill Casey. He couldn't decide on a third word but he knew it would come. (p.54)*

The motto that Zia himself thinks of, in order to replace Jinnah's version of homogenous and an all-encompassing slogan is not only rooted in his own ideological manipulations that gives birth to a nexus between politics and misconstrued religion to restructure the social stratification. However, it also shows how the totalitarians are gradually gaining dominance over the common masses and their ideologies through replacing a plural motto with religious elements that represent the instrumentalized and manipulated form of religion. Such religious ideas are only supposed to serve the totalitarians to maintain hegemony by demolishing the plurality from the society. Moreover, it also paves way for religious extremism which defines Astrid Botticher

(2017) is “an ideological position ... that seeks to conquer [the] center through fear” as well as by employing “dogmatism ... [which is] intolerant” of diversity in practices and beliefs of the society (p.74). Zia’s reflections on replacing Jinnah’s motto in the novel further also shows how the totalitarian ruler is thinking more about pleasing and serving the foreign agents like Bill Casey, the CIA agent in the novel, in order to gain their support for his political purposes that center on an absolute gain of power even at the expense of exterminating the homogeneity of the State. Hanif continues to satirize in order to demystify Zia’s character as well as to expose his self-created piety and pseudo-religiosity which is nothing more than a means of religious manipulation and ideological politics to control the masses and propagate his rule. He writes in the novel that Dr. Sarwari tells Zia that his innards are being eaten by worms (p.55). The worms are thus killing his insides. These worms are a metaphorical representation of the “political evil[s]” (Villa, p.1) brewing inside a totalitarian ruler that explodes his regime by exposing the “exploitation of religious passion for their [totalitarians’] own [political] benefit” (Shah et al., 2016, p.264). Hence, it reveals that the totalitarian ruler misuses ideologies that lead to the “radicalization” of the society and strengthens his absolute authority (Shah et al., 2016, pp.264,266). Hanif paints the picture towards the end of the novel, when Zia is about to die in a plane explosion, as, “Tapeworms are eating through General Zia’s heart now. ... he can feel his innards being torn apart. He inhales the cold air-conditioned air in an attempt to hold on to life” (Hanif, p.179); however, nothing can stop the impending disaster. Hence, like the explosion of his innards and the explosion of the plane, the totalitarian ruler and his tyrannical regime is all exploded leaving behind the “evil as polic[ies]” (Villa, p.2) that will continue to haunt the country till date. Like the flesh that scatters all over the place when the plane explodes as writes Hanif that, “the flesh; all kinds of flesh: brown melting into white, ligaments, cartilages, flesh ripped from bones, parched flesh, charred flesh; body parts strewn around like discarded dishes at a cannibals’ feast” (Hanif, p.179). Similarly, the totalitarian regimes misconstrued religious as well as other national or political ideologies continue to spread, mar, and rot the people of the State and the institutions.

Totalitarianism, writes Villa in “The Development of Arendt’s Political Thought” (2000), is a ““novel form of government” ... one built entirely on terror and ideological fiction and devoted to a destructive perpetual motion” (qtd. Arendt, p.2). This radically new regime that comes to power through terror, violence and “propaganda” which is “the most important, instrument

of totalitarianism for dealing with the nontotalitarian world” (Arendt, p.344) finds its strength in politicizing the ideologies and institutions to establish its hegemony. Hence, Villa (2000) quoting Arendt maintains that the manipulation of religion to extremist form is one of the “appeal[s] of totalitarianism” as well as the “basis of its mass appeal” (p.2). The masses are oppressed through politicizing religion which means, using religious extremism as an indoctrination to snub the freedom and gain power through inculcating religion in politics for totalitarians’ personal and political vendettas. This political evil of totalitarian regime that Hannah Arendt talks about is shown throughout Hanif’s *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* (2008) which keeps its focus on the politics of the totalitarian Zia to unmask his personal and political motives in manipulating religion in his regime. As part of deradicalization, Hanif’s counter fiction propagates “anti-systemic narratives whose aim (or effect) consists in giving a glimpse of another possible world, in order to detach us from the false evidence ... which blind[s] us” (Citton, 2012). The other world is the real reality that the author intends to expose in order to unveil the totalitarian evils. Hanif through Zia’s decision to abolish all the names of God except Allah from the “national memory” (Hanif, p.25) further reveals the power politics of the totalitarian regime that takes the strength from “homogeneity” by “denying the space of freedom” for plurality (Arendt, 1973, p.340).

The totalitarian ruler’s decision to eliminate all the names of God except the name Allah is deeply related to the identity politics that is played through Zia’s parochial and extremist religious views. As Kingston (2019) writes that the extremists “in trying to make religion ... the basis of national identity are promoting an agenda of intolerance that defies the pluralist realities” (p.2) that prevail throughout the society. Hanif exposes that the totalitarian ruler’s act of abolishing all the names of God from everywhere in the country is deeply rooted in Othering the religious minorities. As Zia iterates that only Allah is Muslim and Muslims hence, are the only Pakistanis (Hanif, p.23). The religious identity is intermingled with national identity and the extremist approach of religion is taken to exclude and other all the Other-s in the nation. Zia asserts that except the name of Allah all the other names to remember God are “a Western concern, an easy way to confuse who is the creator and who the destroyer” (pp.23-24). He believes any other name of calling Allah is either, Christian, Jew, or Hindu’s way of addressing God. Hence, it is non-Muslim and should be eliminated because there is no space for those who aren’t Muslims. Achille Mbembe (2003) states, “Violence and sovereignty ... claim a divine foundation: peoplehood itself is forged by the worship of

one deity, and national identity is imagined as an identity against the Other, other deities” (p.27). This is clearly the case with totalitarian’s regime in the novel who Other-ed all the minorities on the basis of religious politics for his sovereignty and absolute control.

Hanif (2008) further writes that, “all God’s names were slowly deleted from the national memory as if a wind had swept the land and blown them away” (Hanif, p.25). He goes on to assert that “Innocuous intimate names” were all wiped out and through this, he highlights how single indoctrination of an ideology prevailed in the State in order to gain the absolute totalitarian power. Hanif goes on to explain that, “Persian Khuda which had always been handy for ghazal poets” as well as the name “Rab, which poor people invoked in their hour of distress; Maula, which Sufis shouted in their sessions. Allah had given Himself ninety-nine names. His people had improvised many more. But all these names slowly started to disappear” as a result of the totalitarian ruler’s strict orders (Hanif, p.25). Zia’s restriction on even pronouncing any other name of God except Allah reveals the heightened tyranny of a totalitarian regime in which religion was not only used as a political weapon to hunt down the non-conformists. In fact, it was also manipulated to be used as an ideology that was supposed to strangle the diversity by prevailing homogeneity that denied religious or national freedom to the people. In *On Violence* (1970) Arendt asserts that in a totalitarian regime “the extreme form of violence is One against All” (p.42). This is depicted through Zia’s absolute power and tyranny with which he alone stands against all the masses, abolishing the diversity, through the use of violence. The fascist ruler under the cover of spreading the true religious beliefs by replacing God with Allah erases all the diversity in beliefs and practices. Hence, in real reality he is strangulating the syncretism in the society. Saleem (2015) further writes that, “this [aforementioned politicized religious] practice would only result in the rise of religious extremism and would ultimately lead to social and ethnic divide” (p.110). The totalitarian dictator’s politicization of religion into an extremist and misconstrued form of religion that not only erases the plurality and syncretic traditions from the country but under such an ideology the dictatorial regime also establishes its hegemony and terror by socially, religiously, as well as nationally dividing the people. Hanif further narrates in the novel the incident when Zia once took an advice from the Romanian dictator named Ceausescu on establishing the hegemony in the regime. Ceausescu advised that, “The key is that they [the masses] should either love you or fear you; your decline starts the day they become indifferent to you” (Hanif,



p.137). Ceausescu's tyrannical rule which he established through absolute subservience of his people was termed as "a national nightmare" (Hoagl, 1989). Zia following Ceausescu's hegemonic ideology made sure that he is feared more than loved or forced to love more than feared for which he always took abode in politicizing the religious discourse and ideology to make people his subjects through making use of an ideology that is held sacred by the people. Hence, maintain his power as a tyrant. "In the name of God, God was exiled from the land and replaced by the one and only Allah who, General Zia convinced himself, spoke only through him" (Hanif, p.25). Arendt (1973) writes, "the totalitarian movements asserted their "superiority" in that they carried a *Weltanschauung* by which they would take possession of man as a whole" (p.336). This superiority and '*Weltanschauung*' is depicted through Zia's fascism in his regime when he abolishes all the diversity and stresses on accepting a single ideology through pronouncing only one name of God. Moreover, by propagating among the masses that the God he is talking about operates through him alone, the totalitarian ruler himself becomes the Sovereign on Earth and takes religion to manipulate as well as to establish his hegemony. As one of his officers says in the novel, "A country that thinks it was created by God has finally found what it deserves: a blabbering idiot who thinks he has been chosen by Allah to clear his name" (Hanif, p.24). Zia's manipulated religion to not only maintain his dominance by (mis)guiding the people into believing that he was chosen by God but also subjugates the people through rendering them powerless.

Stressing on the power politics that relies on the (mis)use of ideologies Antonio Gramsci asserts that, "Power ... resides in ideology" (qtd. in Daldal, 2014, p.149). He saw "ideology among the masses as largely serving the interests of the ruling class" (Kertzer, 1979, p.324). The ideology hence, is an important instrument in the hands of the totalitarian rulers which is manipulated to oppress the masses and establish the hegemonic rule. Gramsci's concept of hegemony is linked to the power politics and the ideological manipulation whereby he asserts that, hegemony is "an order in which a certain way of life and thought is dominant, in which one concept of reality is diffused throughout society in all its institutional manifestation" (qtd. in Woolcock, 1985, p.204). This particular thought that dominates the masses, establishes the hegemony of the ruling elites and strengthens their rule. Analyzed in the context of Hanif's narrative, this hegemony and ideological manipulation is evident through the character named, General Zia in the novel who establishes his power through not only politicizing the religious ideology but also by

giving birth to the “power relations in terms of binary oppositions such as, the leaders and the led, the rulers and the ruled etc” (qtd. Gramsci, 2014, p.149). ‘The led’ and ‘the ruled’ are rendered powerless by the power holders like, Zia which becomes evident when one of the characters named, Ali Shigri, a junior officer, is held accountable by the tyrant for being considered a threat to his life. He is severely tortured for days in the dungeon. Powerless in the face of the totalitarian’s absolute power he suffers in agony. As a voice of the voiceless who are made the subjects in a totalitarian regime and controlled through violence, Shigri unveils the hegemony of the totalitarian which is maintained through oppressing the masses. He tells his prison mate that, when “You want freedom ... they[will] give you chicken korma” (Hanif, p.83). The demand for freedom is compensated through an everyday need which vivifies that the totalitarian regimes exploit the masses not only ideologically but also through oppressing them socially as well as economically.

Hence, the totalitarians are able to maintain their hegemonic rule by depriving the masses to see and comprehend the reality. Arendt asserts in this regard that, totalitarianism employs “Ideologies-isms which ... can explain everything and every occurrence ... in political life. Only with the wisdom of hindsight can we discover in them certain elements which have made them so ... useful for totalitarian rule” (Arendt, 1973, p.468). Hence, as Arendt maintains that, totalitarian rule finds its strength in ideologies that are used by the totalitarian rulers for establishing their position. This also gets evident in the novel when Hanif writes that the totalitarian ruler, General Zia comes to power through force overnight and later, gathers all the totalitarian members around “finding legal cover for the coup” (Hanif, p.25). Hence, he uses the power of religion which is misconstrued by the totalitarian ruler and is way too oppressive, as it denies space to any religious or ethnic minorities as well as the pluralistic practices in order to establish his hegemony through extremist intolerance. The religion thus is politicized for his political motives in order to let the masses believe that Allah chose him to rule the people (Hanif, p.24). At the first meeting called in by Zia, the totalitarian ruler, told his members, “should we not start the meeting with a recitation from the Quran?” (Hanif, p.23) At this the members “shifted in their seats, not knowing how to deal with this. They were all Muslims and they all knew that the Chief had a religious bent ... But a meeting was a meeting and mixing religion with business of running the country was a concept not comprehensible to them” (Hanif, p.23). The totalitarian ruler’s sudden and unexpected decision to intermingle religion and politics came as a surprise to the official members

in his regime. In order to legitimize his rule and authority, he took the refuge in religion which the generals thought was not a thoughtful verdict (Hanif, p.25). Although Hanif does not seem to be explicitly exposing the religious extremism that the totalitarian ruler used in his regime however his critique of Zia's religious manipulation reveals the politicization of religion for the power politics that paved way for religious extremism.

Mohammed Hanif gives minute details of the totalitarian Zia's life to describe his character as a totalitarian ruler who politicizes religion for his motives and to exert his authority. For the violence that he commits, the hegemony that he maintains and the terror that he disseminates, religion becomes a tool of politics with which he strengthens his power and position. Hanif through Zia's personal life and routine leads towards his political views and intentions. As Margaret Conovan in "Politics as Culture: Hannah Arendt and the Public Realm" (1985) quoting Hannah Arendt writes that "in modern times the boundaries between private and public had become distorted, and that within the all-pervasive realm of 'society' many things which ought properly to be private had been made public, while others that ought to be public had been taken over by private interests" because the private and the public realms in the modern times under the totalitarian regimes have both become political in nature (p.618). Therefore, it is through the political conducts in private realm that the political vendettas to be carried out through exploitation of the public realm are better understood. For instance, Hanif writes that for Zia reading Quran was like reading "his daily horoscope" (Hanif, p.21). This personal conduct of Zia defines his political life. He read out of context verses' translations to justify his fascist decisions. Hanif writes, "moments before ordering his [Zia's] troops to carry out Operation Fairplay that removed Prime Minister ... and [installed] him [Zia] as the head of the country, he had opened the Quran and found He it is who hath made you regents in the earth" (Hanif, p.21). He further writes, "General Zia sometimes liked to seek divine opinion ... he picked up another volume of the Quran from the shelf ..., closed his eyes, opened the book at random and moved his finger on the pages in front of him with his eyes shut" (Hanif, p.20). For him religion was an instrument to justify his tyrannical actions as well as to control the masses. He maintained his hegemony in the country by entangling his politicized and misconstrued form of religion, that was not only prone towards extremism but also asserted tenaciously in the political affairs of the State, with the true syncretic religious beliefs and values that nurtured plurality (Khan et al., 2020, pp.116-118). His (mis)use of the Holy Book

for justifying his tyrannical actions is an exemplary way of understanding his conduct of religion in the public realm. Arendt writes in *On Violence* (1971) that, "power ... is an instrument of rule, while rule, we are told, owes its existence to "the instinct of domination"" (p.36). Hence power followed by domination comes from ideological control which along with Arendt, Althusser (2008) also asserts that, "no [ruling] class can hold State power over a long period without at the same time exercising its hegemony over and in the State Ideological Apparatuses" (p.81). Hence, the manipulation of ideology especially the religious ideology in the totalitarian regime becomes an important source of power and domination. By presenting himself as a pious and a righteous man to the masses, Zia instilled his fear in people and justified his tyrannical rule as a man chosen by God to be his representative (Hanif, p.24). Zia's use of religious ideology to exercise his hegemonic rule is similar to the religious extremists' manipulation or politicization of religion to serve for their personal and political benefits (Khan et al., 2020, p.116).

In the novel, Hanif (2008) in his subtle expression once again exposes the politics of religion in a totalitarian regime by showing that the religion is manipulated to work the way the totalitarian ruler desires. He writes that at one instance Zia got late for his prayers "He looked at his watch and realized that if he started changing into his uniform he would be late for his prayers. Not that it mattered, because the imam would wait for him to turn up before starting his prayer" (Hanif, p.21). The regime where the imam calls to prayer according to the totalitarian ruler's will is a deeply oppressed and tyrannical regime that fears the totalitarian ruler more than any other entity. Hence, as Arendt quoting Sartre writes in her book *On Violence* (1971) that a totalitarian by such control "feels himself more of a man when he is imposing himself and making others the instruments of his will" (p.36). The religion in the aforementioned incident thus becomes a tool to exert his will and is politicized to cater to the totalitarian ruler's desires. Hannah Arendt (1973) asserts that, "It is in the very nature of totalitarian regimes to demand unlimited power. Such power can only be secured if literally all men, without a single exception, are reliably dominated in every aspect of their life" (p.456). Arendt's views are equated in the novel through General Akhtar's character, who like all the other people, who are dominated under the totalitarian rule, is completely a subject of Zia's power. Hanif (2008) writes that even when Zia came to offer prayers "General Akhtar, stood on his left, his movements a fraction of a second slower than General Zia's, as if, even when prostrating himself before Allah, General Akhtar wanted his cue to come from his boss" (p.22). Totalitarian

ruler is the ultimate power and authority. At one hand, Hanif exposes the sovereignty of a totalitarian ruler who exploits the individuals through his ultimate power. On the other hand, General Akhtar's attention towards his master instead of being involved with Allah while praying unmasks the terror that the totalitarian ruler demands from his subjects. Thus it also unveils the politics of religion whereby, religion is only a means to show piety when in fact underneath the pretense of being religious, the reality is political subjugation which is demanded even while praying and kneeling before Allah. Arendt (1973) posits that, "Wherever totalitarianism possesses absolute control, it replaces propaganda with indoctrination and uses violence ... to[not only] frighten people ... [but also] to realize constantly its ideological doctrines and its practical lies" (p.341).

The terror, violence and indoctrination hence, exerted by the totalitarian ruler also becomes evident through the case of blind Zainab that centers the narrative of the novel. Blind Zainab who was physically assaulted by the people who she can't recognize is a metaphorical representation of the blinded masses who are oppressed through indoctrination of extremist and radicalized form of religion and cannot recognize the tyranny of their rulers. Moreover as Achille Mbembe (2003) maintains, "sovereignty ... is not the struggle for autonomy but the generalized instrumentalization of human existence and the material destruction of human ... populations" (p.14). The way Blind Zainab is exploited, represents the exploitation of the masses in a totalitarian regime where the laws are manipulated under the cover of reviving lost true religious values and laws. The misinterpreted form of religion is used to oppress the case of Zainab who demands justice for the exploitation done to her. General Zia, writes Hanif, when realized that the case of blind Zainab has got international highlight, he "shouted at the Information Minister: "What are you waiting for? Put out a press release and tell them all this fuss about that blind woman is Jewish propaganda. And next time we go to America invite Sulzberger (the publisher of the news) for lunch. Take a large Persian carpet for him"(p.85). The totalitarian ruler who wears a mask of being pious, religious and chosen by Allah to provide justice to its people is in fact, a tyrant who manipulates situation through using religion. By telling the people that blind Zainab's case is a Jewish propaganda, he tries to suppress the voice of the powerless Zainab who is being denied the justice for the crime committed against her. In fact, his act of suppression also exposes the general conduct of a totalitarian regime that marginalizes the voiceless and the powerless to assert its power. Hanif mocks the religious

and judicial systems of the State in a totalitarian regime when he writes that, Zia gets into contact with “a ninety-year-old Qadi” and discusses the case of Zainab with him (p.86). The Qadi tells him that, “The law doesn’t differentiate between those who can see and those who can’t ... So the victim, blind or not, is entitled to the same scrutiny” (pp.86-87). Hanif satirizes the situation by revealing that the Qadi’s advices are ridiculous as well as suppressive. He writes that the Qadi asserts that if blind Zainab is raped it is her own fault and if she can’t produce witnesses she is to be stoned to death (Hanif, p.86). Saleem (2015) writes, “Instead of recognizing the loop holes in the judicial system, they [the totalitarians] insist on the misuse and exploitation through the wrong interpretation and implementation of the [religious] principles” (p.225). Hence, Zia decides to turn these misinterpreted laws and principles into a speech which The First Lady will deliver “at the annual charity bazaar” to instill the terror of the tyrant and his tyranny.

The First Lady’s character however, is a means of deradicalization who not only opposes the tyrant ruler at home but also in the public realm to expose his misconstrued use of religion and to bring a sense of rationality in an otherwise propagandized situation. Deradicalization which is “a re-understanding ... in a critical and integrated manner” (Rezan & Naupal, 2019, p.60) is portrayed through the character of the First Lady when Zia asks the First Lady to make a speech that will “establish a legal precedent” to punish Zainab for demanding justice for a crime that was committed because of her own fault. The First Lady “interrupted him” inquiring “But how is this woman supposed to prove” her innocence? (Hanif, p.87) For the First Lady the totalitarian ruler’s manipulation of law and blaming the victim is an irrational attempt of controlling and exerting fear in the masses which is critically questioned by her. Her inquisitive voice is Hanif’s way of exposing the “radical evil” in the totalitarian regime (Rensmann, 2014, p.108). Moreover, as Alaresi defining the counter fiction, which is a means of deradicalization, writes that the characters in such a narrative don’t “follow the function of perpetuating the status quo, allowing that those in power, stay in power, dictating the cultural norms that tell us what’s accepted, what can be said, and ultimately, what can be thought” (qtd. in Videla, 2019). This resistance is chiefly shown by Hanif’s character The First Lady and later, by the General Secretary to some extent who do not take the dictations of the totalitarian dictator. Instead, their narrative is Hanif’s way of countering the radical evil as well as deradicalizing the minds through “reeducat[ing] and ... reorient[ing]” (Rezan & Naupal, 2019, p.67). Blind Zainab is, however, first put “behind iron bars of the cell” (Hanif, p.103)

and later, at the totalitarian ruler's orders is shifted to a dungeon before she is stoned to death. On being informed that Zainab has been proven guilty for the crime that has been committed against her, she iterates, "Stoning? ... Like they do to the Devil in Mecca during Haj? They have been doing it to him for centuries and they haven't been able to kill him. How are they going to kill a healthy woman like me?" (Hanif, p.103) In *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1973) Hannah Arendt asserts that, "What totalitarian ideologies ... aim at is not [just] the transformation of the outside world or the revolutionizing transmutation of society, but the transformation of human nature itself" (p.458). Human nature hence is transformed through instilling fear using the indoctrination of misconstrued and politicized ideologies. Hanif uses satire to call the good as bad and vice-versa thus he exposes how the totalitarian ruler who is hailed as "Mard-e-Momin, Mard-e-Haq" (p.92) makes the innocent masses believe that their nature is impious. Hence, like the Devil they are also condemned to hell and punishment. Zainab although has accepted her fate and is powerless in front of the tyrannical rule of an absolute sovereign however, deep down she hopes that the totalitarians won't be able to kill her spirit for justice, virtue and innocence. Blind Zainab's demand for justice, which caught the attention of international and national human rights forums, posed a threat as well as fear to the totalitarian's tyranny. In the novel, one of the jailer comes to Zainab to inform her that "Zainab, your picture has been published in a newspaper ... 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" (p.104).

As for Zainab she didn't know it was an interview because she had only told the truth to those people about "what had happened" to her (Hanif, p.104). However, the support and call for 'Justice for Zainab' put the hegemony of the totalitarian ruler at stake by exposing his misconstrued use of ideologies to control the masses and keep them blinded. Hence, he resorted to violence to put his fear and terror among the people when he orders that Zainab will be stoned to death and puts her in a blinding dark dungeon for torture, on speaking against the totalitarian regime. Hannah Arendt (1973) writes, "the totalitarian regimes, so long as they are in power, and the totalitarian leaders, so long as they are alive, "command and rest upon mass support" up to the end" (p.306). Hence, as soon as the masses start becoming a threat, they exert their control through silencing, exerting power through violence and propagating the politicized ideologies that favor their rule. Arendt (1973) further maintains, "The destruction of a man's rights, the killing of

the juridical person in him, is a prerequisite for dominating him entirely. And this applies not only to special categories such as criminals, political opponents ... but to every inhabitant of a totalitarian state” (p.451). This is seen through the oppression of the common masses in the novel. Arendt goes on to state that, “Free consent is as much an obstacle to total domination as free opposition. The arbitrary arrest which chooses among innocent people destroys the validity of free consent, just as torture ... destroys the possibility of opposition” (p.451). Hanif’s novel is an eloquent representation of the totalitarian regime’s evils and vivifies through the satirical narrative as well as characters how “dominating ... every inhabitant” (Arendt, 1973, p.451) of the state by psychologically and ideologically manipulating the minds to ward off free will is the aim of such a state. Not only Blind Zainab’s case reveals the politics of the religion through unveiling the power politics behind the manipulation and misconstruction of laws and religious ideologies but it also shows as Althusser (2008) asserts that, “there is no ideology except by the subject and for subjects” (p.84). Hence, the manipulated and misconstrued religious ideology in the above instances shows the totalitarian’s power to distort the ideology as well as laws in its favor. The ideology thus makes the masses striving to get justice the subjects of the rulers.

Similarly, at another occasion Ali Shigri, the junior officer, in the novel is put in the dungeon and tortured to death for he is considered a threat to the totalitarian ruler’s regime. Hence, it once again brings to light the tyranny of a totalitarian state that can employ terror, violence and absolute power to mar the freedom of an individual subject. Moreover, all this becomes all the more possible through the misuse and misinterpretation of religion that is politicized for maintaining power and control. One of the important incidents in the novel is when Ali Shigri is put in a blinding dark dungeon and he makes acquaintance with an unnamed person. The unnamed individual who is victim of the tyrant’s (mis)use of power is Hanif’s way of generalizing the violence exerted against not only any specific individual but against any of the subjugated subjects. The unnamed General Secretary tells Shigri that he is the General Secretary of “All Pakistan Sweepers Union” (p.82) and has been imprisoned for raising voice as well as creating awareness among the people of his union to stand against the atrocities of the totalitarian regime. The General Secretary is a voice from the margins that resists against the oppressive hegemony of Zia and is a means of deradicalization employed in Hanif’s counter-fiction “in order to scramble, block or re-route the systemic reproduction of our reality” (Citton, 2012). The General Secretary tells Shigri. “Every member of the



Pakistan Sweepers' Union believes in political struggle" (Hanif, p.82). This political struggle that gives power to the powerless becomes a threat to the hegemony of the totalitarian ruler. He further states, "They [totalitarian rulers] tried to infiltrate it [the protest] with mullahs like they have done with every single trade union. They even tried to hijack Cleanliness Week with their slogan: Cleanliness is half the faith" (Hanif, p.83). The General Secretary tells Shigri that the totalitarian ruler tried to suppress their voice and their political struggle of freedom against "his coup d'etat [which] was a historic setback for the workers' struggles against the nationalist bourgeoisie" (Hanif, p.82) through infiltrating the struggle with the extremist religious ideologies. These ideologies as Nayar (2008) also points out are, "often ... [misconstrued] religious doctrines and theology... deployed to justify ... unfair social structures" (p.142). She goes on to assert that in order to keep the masses at their regressive condition and to stop them from the political struggles the totalitarian regimes use misconstrued and malformed ideologies to refrain the voiceless as well as socially marginalized people from becoming aware of the real totalitarian realities.

Moreover, Sara Suleri also notes that the religious maneuvering in the totalitarian regime affected the nation. She writes in *Meatless Days* (1989) that, "We dimly knew we were about to witness Islam's departure from the land of Pakistan. The men would take it to the streets and make it vociferate, but the great romance between religion and the populace, the embrace that engendered Pakistan, was done" (p.15). Suleri (1989) not only posits that religion as an ideology was misconstrued and used as a tool to maintain political and social hegemony. However, she also witnessed that the totalitarian dictator was misusing religion by instrumentalizing it to strengthen his regime by psychologically and ideologically controlling the minds of the people. The manipulated/politicized ideologies that Othered the minorities were (mis)created only to favor the political motives of a totalitarian dictator. This mis(use) of ideology, that benefits the political elites of the regime underneath, was a matter of protest for the Hindus and Christian sweepers, in the novel, who in fact, represent the injustices against the marginalized minorities. The totalitarian ruler, in the first place, put the General Secretary of this union in the dungeons and later, with all his might enforced the radically religious people in the systems to break and suppress them. This instance is Hanif's sharp critique on the involvement of an extremist and politicized form of religion in every institution of the country that makes the people the subjects of the totalitarian regime.

The General Secretary further tells Shigri that, “All the sweepers are either Hindus or Christians. And you people thought you could send in your hired mullahs and break our union” (Hnaif, p.83).

The General Secretary of janitors exposes the power politics of the totalitarian ruler that is threatened by the unity of ordinary and common people. Gramsci asserts that, “man is not ruled by force alone, but also by ideas. The foundation of a ruling class is equivalent to the creation of a *Weltanschauung*,” (qtd. in Bates, 2007, p.351) through which a single ideology is preached to control the masses. Thus, they tried to infiltrate the institutions by politicizing the situation through the power provided by radical religious ideology which the totalitarian uses to suppress, break and silence the marginalized voices. By telling Shigri that they are Hindus and Christians, the General Secretary further brings to light the Othering of the minorities. He unmasks the totalitarian regime that uses religious extremists and their extremist beliefs as indoctrination to eradicate the united resistance against the totalitarian rule. The General Secretary’s “constant fight against the centrifuge forces” (Videla, 2019) in order to expose their evils is a consistent means of deradicalization that attempts to “prevent society from indoctrination” (Rezan & Naupal, 2019, p.68) by unveiling the oppression of the totalitarianism. Shigri at first expresses a concern saying, “The image of bearded ones trying to infiltrate the ranks of the nation’s sweeping community. OK, not a very bright idea ... but do you really believe Zia and his generals are sitting there worrying about how to break the power of the janitors?” (p.83) Shigri’s question shows how the totalitarian ruler has the support of the masses that are not really prepared to believe that any such politicization happens. However, the General Secretary tells him that any threat, as major as planning to kill Zia or as minor as the marginalized masses getting together to protest against his regime are a threat to the totalitarian ruler whose entire support lies on suppression of the people and getting their blind support (Hanif 88-89). As Gramsci asserts, “the State functions so as to create “conformist” citizen who internalize the most restrictive aspects ... and accept them as their natural “duties” without having any resentment” (qtd. in Daldal, 2014, p.242). Therefore, the totalitarians rush to abolish such a threat either by exerting violence and terror through physical means or by indoctrinating the misconstrued form of ideologies to control the minds of the individuals making them the conformists of the totalitarian’s rule. The General Secretary continues to tell Shigri that “there is no difference between a sweeper and a soldier ... These are both forms of exploitative labor that

the military-industrial complex thrives on” (p.89). Hanif’s critique here is not only on the totalitarian regime that propagandizes the underlings that has been discussed above through various incidents in the novel. However, it also depends on the capitalist owners who support the totalitarian rule by oppressing the masses. Therefore, the soldier and the sweeper are alike for the General Secretary because both represent the voiceless and powerless strata of society who become the subjects of the ideologies propagated by the fascist governments through manipulated radicalized religion. The totalitarian regimes are “scared of even the poorest of the poor who clean ... [the] gutters” (Hanif, p. 89). This is because the regime is created totally on the blinded mass support as Arendt (1971) asserts that, in a totalitarian regime “It is the people’s support that lends power to the institutions ... All political institutions are manifestations and materializations of power; they petrify and decay as soon as the living power of the people ceases to uphold them” (p.140). The gain of the masses’ support by keeping them blinded of the real realities is the primary aim of the totalitarian regime. However, once the masses start revolting against their conditions and oppression it becomes a threat to the tyrannical power of the regime built entirely on the “practical lies” (Arendt, 1973, p.351) and subjugation of the people. Hence, the tyrants then retort to violence and extremist ideologies in order to control the masses and put them back in suppression.

### CONCLUSION

Hence, the research as an original contribution has done an in-depth analysis of the politicization of religion using Hanif’s narrative from, *A Case in Exploding Mangoes*. It is deduced that the power politics, which is the political act of maintaining hegemonic rule, is held by the totalitarian dictator through manipulating the religious ideology in order to legitimize its unlawful rise to attain sovereign authority. Religion hence, is politicized into an extremist form to let the masses blindly subjugate by believing that the totalitarian ruler is the only sovereign chosen by God. Thus, the blinded people unable to see the religion being discredited accept the hegemonic rule and the sovereignty of the totalitarian dictator by subjecting to even his unlawful claim to authority. This research has focused mainly on the politicization of religion and its exploitative effects on the masses both socially as well as ideologically. However, the economical, psychological etc. effects that occur due to the politicization of religion and the tyranny of the totalitarian dictatorship that causes an impediment in the growth of society can be taken up either by the researchers who encounter in the future.

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