



Waiting for miracles: A socio-political reading of Muhammad

Hanif's Our Lady of Alice Bhatti

Athar Farooq, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Hazara University, Pakistan, atharfq@yahoo.com

Imdad Ullah Khan (Corresponding author), Assistant Professor, Department of English, University of Swat, Pakistan,

Imdad.Khan@uswat.edu.pk, ORCID: 0000-0002-7933-901X

Manzoor Ilahi, Lecturer, Department of English, Hazara University, Pakistan, smanzoorelahi962@gmail.com

Ghani Rehman, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Hazara University, Pakistan, ghani.rahman@hu.edu.pk

Abstract- Throughout the world, states are expected to perform a significant function as the guarantor of law and order, economic opportunities, health services, education, etc. Whereas strong states fulfill most of these responsibilities, weak states struggle to develop and maintain a vibrant and functioning society in their polity. The text of "Our lady of Alice Bhatti" by Muhammad Hanif presents Pakistan as a weak state where citizens constantly struggle for survival and where they spend their lives one day at a time. There are varied parameters to judge the strength or weakness of a state. In this article, qualitative content analysis is used to frame data analysis. The text of Our lady of Alice Bhatti is analyzed according to the indicators provided by the model of Rice and Patrick to determine state stability. The textual analysis of the novel shows that it portrays the state of Pakistan as weak as it is unable to provide basic amenities of life to its people.

Keywords: fiction, survival, Pakistan, weak state, citizen, law and order, political indicators, lawlessness

I. INTRODUCTION

Under the traditional doctrine, every loyal subject was entitled to the king's protection. This doctrine received its classic expression in the writings of Sir Edward Coke. In Calvin's Case, Coke defined the relationship between sovereign and subject in terms of a mutual bond and obligation under which the subject owed allegiance or obedience, while the sovereign was bound to govern and protect his subjects (Heyman, 1991).

Modern social welfare states do not just provide protection but all the amenities that make life comfortable and easy for their people. It is the government's responsibility to ensure that people get the best health facilities without any strain on their purse. Education is free for all and parents do not have to worry about it. The government ensures that no one is discriminated against in any way and if so there is a reliable system of justice in place. Hence people live in peace and enjoy prosperity, without worrying about tomorrow or the day after.

On the other end of the spectrum are weak states like Pakistan. They are weak in the sense that they are not able to perform the basic duties that a welfare state is supposed to perform. People are left to fend for themselves, while the state watches the spectacle from a distance with no sense of empathy for its people. The absence of law and order is one symptom of a weak state. In a weak state, the whole society becomes vulnerable to all kinds of discrimination. When the state does not wield absolute power overall, this power is freely available for any individual or any group who wants to and can wield it. In such a situation weak are at the mercy of those who are powerful and like mighty predators, these power wielders can tear apart their prey any time they want. The prey lives its life in constant fear and uncertainty. For these people the sole purpose of living is survival. If they fall ill state is not going to come with a cure, if they want education the state is busy doing better things, if they want protection, the state again is indifferent. People are left to fend for themselves. They have to cure their disease, educate themselves and protect themselves and one important thing, keep waiting for a miracle or two until brutal death comes calling one day and the living proudly declare the deceased as martyrs and claim sainthood for them (Hanif, 2012, p. 328).

Our Lady of Alice Bhatti by Muhammad Hanif is a novel that realistically portrays Pakistan as a weak state if not a failed state. According to Khuman (2010), realistic fiction aims to present life without idealization or romanticization. This novel is set in Karachi, the largest city of Pakistan, and sometimes referred to as in-Pakistan. This city is a perfect microcosm of the entire Pakistani state as it has people living here from the

entire country and it has the lawlessness reflective of the entire country. Nearly every character in the novel is a victim of, “weak state”. With other characters in this novel, it is primarily the life history of, “Alice Bhatti”. The story of the protagonist Alice Bhatti like most women from lower strata of society is that of constant struggle against all kinds of threats. She is born to Joseph Bhatti a Christian sweeper who works for a local Municipal Corporation and lives in French Colony, a place that always gives forth a constant stench, the “French Perfume” (135). A woman born to a Christian Chooria in a society where the state is not the protector of the weak she is most likely to live a life that Muhammad Hanif makes her life and very likely to die a death that Hanif has destined for her. When the story begins Alice has just been released from Borstal prison and she is applying for the post of a nurse in the Sacred Heart Hospital for all Ailments. She gets the job and so begins a tale of trials and tribulations. Many predators attack her during her life. The Musla girls of her dorm (253), the VIP Junior in VIP room (88), the charyas of Charya Ward (51), people who always stare (139), the famous surgeon (259), Ortho sir with his tongue rolling around his gums (14), stately grandpa who has a robust heart (141), and Teddy Butt whose honor is at stake (327). Teddy Butt finally manages to kill her in the end (Hanif, 2012).

The point we want to make in this research paper is that Alice Bhatti is left alone in her struggles by the state. She represents all the weak of Pakistan who move from one cruelty to another brutality, trying to find some solace, struggling all their lives, fighting against all odds, in the hope of a better future but they always lose in the end because they are weak. The state that should be their protector is always indifferent when it is most needed and all the weak are fair game and predators run amuck, tearing apart any creature that they can catch. Summary of the article...

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

One notch up the food chain from failed states are the numerous “weak” or “failing” states, which together constitute much of sub-Saharan Africa, significant chunks of central Asia, and parts of Latin America and South Asia. These “weak” states are tremendously varied, and may in some cases combine fragile governance structures with substantial regional influence and wealth consider Indonesia, Pakistan, and Colombia-but they all teeter in common on the precipice, at seemingly perpetual risk of collapse into devastating civil war or simple anarchy (Brooks, 2005).

Pakistan has plenty of regional influence. It is a country of 20 crore people, the majority of whom are young. This young population gives this country a great edge in the ever-growing and expanding world market. Pakistan is also rich in natural resources. Besides, it is a nuclear power and boasts one of the world’s largest armies. All these factors combined must make Pakistan a powerful country, not a weak one. But despite these strengths, some very important ingredients are needed to make a country part of the group of strong states that Pakistan does not have. It is difficult and ill-advised to lump together different states of the world under the umbrella term of weak states but for the sake of categorization itself, some parameters must be met by a state to attain the status of a strong or stable state.

According to Rice and Patrick (2008), the earlier efforts to define weak states tend to:

- characterize weakness using more extreme cases of failed or collapsed states while underemphasizing the many states that exhibit various forms of weakness short of outright failure;
- concentrate on one or two of the core functions of statehood—security and political legitimacy, for instance—without fully capturing other areas of state responsibility;
- use metrics that lack full transparency to rank weak states, hindering replicability; and
- focus primarily on the present, failing to capture recent historical trends.

If we look at these elements closely Pakistan does not seem to be a weak state. Pakistan is not a failed or collapsed state but does it have those other forms of weaknesses or not? What about those other areas of responsibility? As discussed before, Pakistan has many areas of strength that might be enough to exclude it from the group of failed states but does it fulfill all the other requirements that can exclude it from the category of weak states too. The following table shows the indicators as defined by Rice and Patrick (2008).

Table 1: Description of the 20 Indicators

ECONOMIC	POLITICAL	SECURITY	SOCIAL WELFARE
1. GNI per capita, 2006 (World Bank, World Development Indicators)	6. Government Effectiveness, 2006 (World Bank, Governance Matters VI)	11. Conflict Intensity, 1992-2006 (Center for Systemic Peace, Major Episodes of Political Violence)	16. Child Mortality, 2005 (UNICEF, State of the World's Children)
2. GDP growth, 2002-2006 (World Bank, World Development Indicators)	7. Rule of Law, 2006 (World Bank, Governance Matters VI)	12. Political Stability and Absence of Violence, 2006 (World Bank, Governance Matters VI)	17. Primary School Completion, 2005 (World Bank, World Development Indicators)
3. Income Inequality, 2006 (World Bank, World Development Indicators)	8. Voice and Accountability, 2006 (World Bank, Governance Matters VI)	13. Incidence of Coups, 1992-2006 (Archigos 2.8 and Economist Intelligence Unit)	18. Undernourishment, 2004 (Food and Agriculture Organization)
4. Inflation, 2002-2006 (International Monetary Fund, International Financial Statistics)	9. Control of Corruption, 2006 (World Bank, Governance Matters VI)	14. Gross Human Rights Abuses, 1992-2006 (Political Terror Scale)	19. Percent Population with Access to Improved Water Sources, and with Access to Improved Sanitation Facilities, 2004 (World Bank, World Development Indicators)
5. Regulatory Quality, 2006 (World Bank, Governance Matters VI)	10. Freedom Ratings, 2006 (Freedom House)	15. Territory Affected by Conflict, 1991-2005 (Political Instability Task Force)	20. Life Expectancy, 2005 (World Bank, World Development Indicators)

Rice and Patrick (2008) give a detailed list of indicators that according to them are essential for a state to be considered stable. They give four broad divisions or areas of a state's responsibility, economic, political, security, and social welfare. They point out twenty such indicators. One may include or exclude any of these indicators as necessary or not so important but consensus can be on the point that these are the minimum requirements for a state to be considered a stable state. The index developed by these researchers keeping in view the above-mentioned indicators puts Pakistan at number 33 in the category of 141 weakest states.

Pakistan might not be a failed or collapsed state but it is by no means a strong state either. It is one of the weakest states of the world which is unable to fulfill its political, economic, security, and social welfare responsibilities.

Other organizations and researchers have come up with their indexes of weak states and their criteria of making those indexes but when we compare these different studies it becomes apparent that broad categories of state responsibility that a state must meet to be considered a stable state are similar if not the same. For example, the USAID (2006) report titled Fragile States Indicators a Supplement to the Country Analytical Template gives its categories or broad areas to define fragile states (Table 2).

Table 2: Broad Categories of Fragility Indicators

Economic Effectiveness	Economic Legitimacy	Social Effectiveness
Macroeconomic performance	Government effectiveness	Education and Health
External sector performance	Horizontal equity	Demography and employment
Poverty	Business environment	Military

III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

“Index of State Weakness in the Developing World” by Rice and Patrick (2008) will be used to provide the conceptual framework for this study. The indicators provided by their model outline broad areas in which it is expected that the state fulfills its due responsibilities to serve its citizens. The focus of these indicators is on security, education, health, poverty, and social welfare in general. The text of the subject novel will be analyzed against the backdrop of these determinants as propounded by Rice and Patrick.

IV. ANALYTICAL CODES

The indicators provided by the index developed by Rice and Patrick will be used as analytical codes for this research. These codes are as under. a) Social indicators

- b) Political indicators
- c) Security indicators
- d) Poverty indicators

This provides the researchers of the current article analytical orientation to look for these indicators in the text. Failing to meet these indicators shows that the characters in *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* suffer primarily because the state in which they are living is weak and unable to fulfill its responsibilities.

V. DATA ANALYSIS

Our Lady of Alice Bhatti – A reflection of Pakistan

Our Lady of Alice Bhatti by Muhammad Hanif is a novel that is set in Karachi. However, the problems of this city are typical of the social problems of Pakistan. Through the protagonist, Alice Bhatti the writer gives a representation of the plight of ordinary citizens. Based on Rice and Patrick (2008), This current article claims that there is ample evidence in the text of *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* that presents Pakistan as a weak state.

Social Indicators

Social welfare is the primary responsibility of a state. A welfare state endeavors to that its population gets all the basic amenities of life such as health, education, and nourishment. It makes sure that people get these facilities at the lowest possible cost and without any economic, psychological or physical strain. It is important because once people have access to these necessities of life they can have peace of mind and pursue their collective and personal goals. The states that are unable to provide welfare for their population become home to people who are frustrated, dissatisfied, and always on the edge. Such a population becomes a nursing ground for all sorts of social problems.

Our Lady of Alice Bhatti by Muhammad Hanif portrays such a state. In this fictional work, Karachi represents Pakistan, Alice Bhatti represents those citizens of Pakistanis who bear the consequences that result from the fragility of the state. There are many instances in the text that prove Pakistan to be a state that has failed to provide basic needs to its people. It is not a social welfare state. The Sacred Heart Hospital for All Ailments is referred to as a slaughterhouse very early in the novel (Hanif, 2012, p. 16). Painted ironically as a hospital that is sacred and oozes divinity, it is clear even from its name that patients in this hospital rely less on medical procedures and practitioners and more on miracles and miracle makers. The word slaughterhouse may be a bit harsh and unfair but we can find plenty of people in Pakistan giving the same title to their hospitals. The state oblivious to the need of the people for a proper healthcare system spends a negligible amount of its yearly budget on health. Under the head of Health Affairs and Services, a total allocation of Rs 12,108 million has been made in the budget estimates 2016-17 (Federal Budget, 2016). Most patients who come to hospitals also seek help from spiritual healers. This lack of trust in hospitals is a reflection of the state’s apathy towards the most basic needs of the people. Because people do not get the proper treatment they are left to rely on esoteric means of treatment. If they are cured, blessed be the saints who gave them health. If they are dying, at least the cross gives a reason to die in peace. What does a hospital have to offer? Not even a bed. “There are hundreds of patients who are envious, who are eying that bed” (Hanif, 2012, 37). Zainab is a patient in “The Sacred” who is incurable and waiting for her death but she is very lucky because she at least has got a bed. Hundreds of patients are waiting for one and are unlikely to get it unless Zainab dies. These patients do not even look towards the state for any help because due to the state’s apathy

towards these issues people have grown quite used to the state's indifference. Therefore, no character in the novel ever protests against the government and its machinery.

The characters in the novel frequently encounter such situations where they seem helpless and confused. The questions they seem to ask are simple enough. 'Why can't they live a bit longer? I mean not forever, nobody lives forever, but if they are given the right medicines, if they are given the right diet, they should have a few more months at least.' (56). This query of Noor is a critique of the state of Pakistan. In any developed country, such questions hardly ever come up because states provide the basic welfare amenities to their citizens. But Noor and most of his countrymen cannot comprehend the cause of their pathetic condition. Protecting the lives of its citizens and providing them health facilities should be the primary responsibility of the state. But weak states have weak government structures that cannot fulfill this basic responsibility. Hence most of the patients in *The Sacred* die because they don't get the proper medicine and treatment well in time.

When Alice returns home from the Borstal her father Joseph Bhatti who is also a spiritual healer gives her news that he found a baby girl in the main drain at the Ideal Housing Society and that it was a sign (72). Alice's reply is a scathing criticism of the state's apathy towards its citizens. 'Sign of what? I think it's a sign that there is no place a woman can go and deliver a baby, that there is no place for her even when her water is breaking. It's a sign that human life can be flushed down the toilet. It's a sign that nobody gives a fuck about signs.' (73). These words of Alice are pungent, sharp, and direct because the incident they are trying to make sense of is a slap on the face of the state. When a state cannot even make sure that its newborns are not being flushed down the toilets and that women can give birth in the safety and comfort of a hospital, it can surely be called a weak state.

Alice Bhatti's experience in the Charya Ward in chapter four is an episode in the tragic life of a girl struggling to survive against all odds (41). But the story that is left untold is that of the Charyas themselves. In a way, they represent the forgotten masses of this country who live their lives on the margins. Nobody bothers to enquire about their plight. Does nobody ask why they have gone Charya? No psychiatrist is at hand to investigate their diseased minds and find a cure. The best that can be done is to let these Charyas rot in their closed cells and keep them as far away as possible so that the stench may not be perceptible to the honorable VIPs.

The state of Pakistan has failed to fulfill the requirements of this indicator. The text of the novel under discussion is full of instances that bring to light the fact that social welfare is not the priority of the state. The hospital, the jail, the court, the stench-infected French colony, and the whole city as pictured by the author tries to prove the point that the state is not ready to perform its primary duty of taking care of its citizens.

Political indicators

Under this broad category of indicators come five subcategories, Government effectiveness, rule of law, voice and accountability, control of corruption, and freedom ratings. It is a comprehensive list of responsibilities of a state. Government effectiveness is a broad term and it encapsulates the performance of a government in social, political, economic, and administrative spheres. The rest of the indicators in this category are directly related to the government's effectiveness. There are many examples in the text under discussion that implicate the state of Pakistan is not fulfilling its political role.

Police or executive is one arm of the state. Its main job is to ensure the rule of law. But the police department in Pakistan is quite rudimentary in functioning. People who are supposed to enforce the writ of the state mostly impose their writ on whomsoever they think to be the criminal. Their methods and procedures of nabbing, prosecuting, and executing the criminals are discussed in detail in the novel. Inspector Malangi and his Gentlemen's squad is a case in point. This squad of like-minded policemen is not commissioned by any law enforcement authority (20). Extrajudicial murders or killings by the police are a common practice in Pakistan. People are abducted and never produced before a court of law. Instead, they are killed in fake police encounters and their case files are closed forever. The way Inspector Malangi tasks Teddy Butt to injure himself and then lay the blame on the suspect Abu Zar is a description of how the state's authority is abused by the law enforcers themselves (18). Similarly, when Teddy Butt tries to convince Inspector Malangi that the boy in their custody they are about to murder is not Abu Zar and that real Abu Zar is in Sweden, Malangi's replies, "What do you think we should do? Raid Sweden? Our jurisdiction ends at that bridge over there" (168). Police or any state institute is least bothered about following the procedural requirements of the law. Anarchy seems to provide an abiding code of conduct for law enforcement officials.

And then there are Pakistani jails. Jails are supposed to be reformation centers where people can enter criminals and come out as responsible citizens. In the novel *Noor*, a young boy realizes that sexual

molestation may not be the state's authorized punishment for inmates but it is a common practice in jails for juveniles and perhaps it is part of the reformative process (34). The state is least bothered about finding out why a person is in jail in the first place and did he/she get a fair trial or not. It has little time to investigate the petty issues like how many Noors are being buggered by other inmates and law enforcers in Borstals around the country. "It is an unfortunate reality that Police in Pakistan have mostly been used as an oppressive instrument of the State. Often a nexus develops between compliant and corrupt Police commanders and political leaders who do not care for public concerns, rule of law and real democratic aspirations of people." (PILDAT, 2015, p. 23).

Corruption is another indicator to judge the weakness of a state. The ability of the state to control corruption gives it a place among the category of stable or strong states. The text of *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* is full of instances that prove that corruption of one kind or another is rampant in Pakistan. The episode where a famous surgeon's negligence is the cause of a patient's death is one such example. The relatives of the patient pay money to the police to get a case registered, the famous surgeon pays money to a lawyer and gets bail. Alice Bhatti cannot pay any money to anyone so she goes to jail.

This absence of efficacy of public institutions is not limited to the executive branch. Sacred Heart Hospital is an example of a corruption-ridden system. The corrupt doctors find a way to make death moneymaking business. "Look, we live in a city where you can get someone cut up for a thousand rupees. What is wrong with charging them half that money for not cutting them up? (Hanif, 2012, p. 38)" Dr. John Malick takes five hundred rupees each from the relatives of the murdered for not performing post-mortems.

Chapter seven of the book begins with a stark example of disregard for rule of law (78). The VIP culture represented here speaks volumes about the effectiveness of the government. It also says a lot about the corruption that is rampant in this society. The mighty arrive in the hospital in a brand new Surf. There is nothing wrong with it but the Surf has a number plate that reads, "Devil of the Desert" and bears no number. The law is enforced on the weak if at all. Characters like Alice Bhatti, Noor, Abu Zar find themselves on the wrong side of the law quite often. On the other hand, the VIPs follow their law. They do so because the state is unable to enforce it on them. The strength of these select few is at the cost of the state's authority. It is as if a vampire sucks the lifeblood out of the jugular vein of its victim and with every gulp becomes stronger as its prey becomes weaker and weaker.

Another interesting incident in the text is a painful reminder of the chaotic world that Pakistanis live in. When Alice Bhatti repulses the Mauser involved the love of Teddy Butt with an insulting, "fuck off", he rushes out of the hospital and fires a bullet in the air. All hell breaks loose as the bullet hits a truck driver, the truck rummages a rickshaw carrying five children, and then the whole area erupts into violence. Bullets fly, people die, shops and buses burn, ambulances struggle to evacuate the dead and injured until normalcy limps back to the city after three days as if normalcy had gone for a picnic (106). The government's ineffectiveness is evident in this episode. One bullet is enough to stop the biggest city of Pakistan for three days. The law enforcers who are quick to put Bhattis and Noors behind bars, suddenly become extinct. Ordinary citizens suffer for days as the enforcers of rule of law keep a good distance and wait for things to calm down.

Muhammad Hanif (2012) also brings to light the issue of honor killing. Through the experiences of the protagonist, the book goes into the details of this devilish practice. The women are often the victim in such cases. It seems as if every man's honor can only be satisfied by slaughtering the closest female relative. But lamenting about the practice of honor killing is not the motif of the writer. It seems that Hanif is angry at the apathy of the state. Again it is a question of rule of law.

"And what she learned was that nobody was surprised; no police detectives were sitting around matching clues, no parliamentary subcommittees discussing ways of saving this endangered species" (143). Alice in these lines speaks volumes about the real issue. Two arms of the state turn a blind eye to the plight of women. The law enforcement agencies do not try to prosecute the killers because honor killing is part of the culture. The parliament that is supposed to be the place where strong laws are made to stop such atrocities is not doing its job.

When governance is not effective, rule of law is replaced by lawlessness and when those who break the law are not held accountable, the obvious result is "a weak state". When corruption is rampant, the criminals are free, the innocent are in jails, the sick are dying for want of treatment then it only means one thing, the state has failed to do its job. Hence such a state is a weak state.

Security indicators

This indicator to measure the strength or weakness of a state includes various aspects like conflict intensity in a state, incidence of coups, territory affected by conflict (Table 3). But for this research, the two

subcategories of this indicator, the absence of violence and gross human rights abuses are more relevant as the text targets the issues or problems directly affecting the common man. No doubt coups and conflicts-internal and external- have an impact on every member of society but this is not the subject of the novel.

Every citizen of a state has this fundamental right that he/she is protected from the violence of all kinds, physical, economic, or psychological. If a state is unable to check the human rights abuses, it means that it has failed to fulfill one of its basic obligations. Citizens of a state must be able to live a life in which there is peace of mind and a sense of satisfaction. This is only possible when people know that the state is always there to protect them. If a state is indifferent to the plight of its citizens and cannot stop violence, if weak are left to the mercy of the thugs, if murder, torture, and hooliganism are widespread, if women in the streets are ogled at by hoards of rapacious vultures then people live in a constant state of fear.

The life of Alice Bhatti is an example of such a citizen. From the first page of the novel to the last, she is an image of the prey constantly on the lookout for countless predators lurking all around her, waiting to pounce. Though she does not give in without a fight and struggles throughout her life to fend off these tormentors in this game of survival, the prey seldom wins. The words of the narrator are pertinent in this regard,

"Her twenty-seven-year-old body is a compact little war zone where competing warriors have trampled and left their marks. She has fought back often enough, with less calibrated viciousness maybe, definitely never with a firearm, but she has never accepted a wound without trying to give one back. And like all battle-hardened warriors, she has managed to preserve her gift for the fight but forgotten why she became a fighter in the first place" (256).

The author gives his answer to the question that why she became a fighter in the first place. But another answer is because she had no other choice but to fight back. She was left alone by the state to fight her own battles. When she was taking all those marks on her body the state was standing far away looking at the events like an indifferent spectator. And whenever the state did interfere it was only to help her oppressors. When she slashed Junior's cock it was to protect herself (89). Why was Junior able to wave his cock in the face, Alice? Because he was a VIP and could do whatever he wanted to do. And he did not go to the police because he did not need to. Powerful people prefer to take care of their own affairs because state procedures are complicated and tiresome. And why did she not go to the police? The words of Sister Hina Alvi will suffice,

'In our VIP room, you had to deal with one man. In the police station, there will be a room full of them in your face. You'll need a chainsaw.' (114).

So Alice Bhatti fights throughout her short life to protect herself from physical and psychological violence. She fights ogling doctors, crazy Charyas, Borstal wardens, penis waving VIPs, and finally her husband Teddy Butt's acid attack that defeats her and she dies a painful death (329). Her story is a scathing satire on the utter failure of the state to provide security to its citizens.

Many other incidents in the text show state's inability to provide security to the people. In the novel, there is an episode that hints at random terror attacks on ordinary civilians in Pakistan. In this country people do not die just from old age, accidents, or innumerable diseases, they can die because they were out shopping and somebody came along and sprayed bullets on them. "Garden East Attacks" is an incident in the novel that is a scathing criticism of the state's inability to protect its people. "For the cause of death is death; they died because death arrived in Garden East and they happened to be buying vegetables there" (38). Pakistan has been a scene of countless similar incidents where thousands of people have lost their lives. Murderers roam free on the streets and kill at will. The images of masked target killers stopping cars and hitting their targets before riding casually away have become too common.

The courts of law which are supposed to provide justice to all irrespective of their position in society become a tool for the oppressor. The weak who are looking for a blessed hand to protect them find themselves behind bars instead. The court clerk's announcement, State vs Alice Bhatti, when she is called to appear before the judge, is quite ironic (70). The state should be with her not against her but the state is not going to side with the weak, as it should. It sides with the mighty and protects their interests. The words of the lawyer to Joseph Bhatti, when Alice is found guilty and sentenced to eighteen months in jail are a harsh reminder to the reader that the law in a weak state is mostly with the mighty. "Law is the eternal whore for those who can pay for its upkeep" (72).

Judiciary is an important part of the security apparatus in any state. A justice system that is the independent influence of any sort and is free from corruption is a necessity to protecting the citizens. The depiction of

the judicial system in Pakistan in the text through Alice's trial and conviction speaks volumes about the inefficiency of this pillar of the state. This factor further pushes Pakistan into the category of weak states.

Poverty indicators

Income inequality and inflation are those aspects of an economy that push the poor to the margins and even make it difficult for the middle class to remain in this income group. The causes of income inequality are myriad and complicated but again the target of blame is the state. Ultimately it is the job of the state to make policies that help bridge this gap.

The text makes obvious the contrast between the rich and the poor. French colony is a symbol of the poverty-stricken wretched of the country. The poor live their pathetic lives in stench-infested sewer barfing, shabby slums. Alice asks a simple question when she reads a poster advertising the arrival of a preacher with miraculous powers, "How about real miracles, like the drains shall remain unclogged? Or the hungry shall be fed? Or our beloved French Colony shall stop smelling like a sewer?" (169). French colonies exist because there is a wide gap in the income of rich and poor. As the rich get richer the poor are further pushed to the limits of destitution.

Alice Bhatti is a symbol of poverty. She tries hard to get out of this poverty-stricken life. She goes to the nursing school, gets a job at Sacred, and marries Teddy Butt, all to leave French Colony way behind. But she is unable to break the chains. Class difference is one reason, she is the daughter of a Chooria, but her pathetic income is another. "Do you know how much I get paid in this hospital?" (58). Alice replies when Noor asks about her feelings when a patient is dying in her hands. Alice is a kind woman but poverty sometimes can compel even a kind person to do unkind things. The way she ignores two hungry children wearing no trousers, sitting outside the canteen, and ravenously eats a bun kebab proves this point (261).

Alice realizes the fact that her fortune is not going to change when she is thinking about disclosing the news of her marriage to Joseph Bhatti, "But always remember wherever you go you won't be very far from French colony" (154). She is a fighter and a survivor, but that is her only success in life. She is born to a choora of French Colony, she becomes an underpaid junior nurse in a welfare hospital and dies a destitute (271).

All the places where the novel is set to symbolize extreme poverty. The Sacred Heart Hospital for All Ailments, where most of the action takes place is a miniature picture of the entire country. Except for VIPs, people coming here are having all sorts of ailments but the biggest ailment that they come with is poverty. Most of them spend hours, even days before they can get a chance to see the doctor. The tree, The Old Doctor, is their favorite place to lounge and yawn away their miserable wait (39).

Noor and his mother Zainab are portrayed as a symbol of poverty early in the novel. They look like vagrants when they first appear before the gates of Sacred. Their condition is so pathetic and miserable that people at the gates offer them chunks of rotten fruit in pity. A beggar gives them a piece of advice considering them novices in his profession (37). Noor manages to crawl up the economic ladder and becomes an unofficial ward boy in the hospital. He gets a bed for his mother where she lies half-dead and often unattended. People around him think about this and pity him. He does not want their pity because he has survived and became a man who provides for himself and his mother. Just like Alice he too is a survivor, but again this concept of survival points to the responsibility of the state that it forgot to fulfill. Why is it that a child has to become a man before his time? Why is it that he has to merely survive and be thankful for that? Why can't people like Noor, Zainab, and Alice live their lives to the full? All these questions point only in one direction, the state. They are in this miserable condition because the state did not make such policies that would bridge the gap between the rich and the poor.

The contrast between rich and poor becomes obvious within Sacred itself. The VIP room where Begam Qazalbash is admitted is fitted with a heavy-duty air conditioner. The sweet scent of many bouquets caresses the senses. Coffee cake and green tea are delicacies on offer (84). Zainab on the other hand is found covered in swarms of flies by Noor when he goes to check on her. There are no fans here, let alone air conditioners. He uses a hand fan to shoo them away but one manages to get in her mouth anyway (54). Begum Qazalbash and Zainab are perfect examples of the great divide between rich and poor in this society. One wears shatoosh shawls that are of the same price as two-bedroom houses and the other has a piece of white gauze to cover her face. Similarly, the contrast between the VIP entourage and the ordinary patients of the sacred is telling. They have accepted their lowly place in the food chain and mill about the ward as the owner of the double-cabin surf comes out of it wearing, Rolex, Ray-Bans, Bally, Montblanc (79).

The state cannot make everyone rich but it is its responsibility to try to lift the poor out of extreme poverty and close the gap between rich and the poor. The text of this novel is the story of the curse of poverty itself. The entire novel is a tale of woe of the poor of this country, who look around for help, finding none, look up for a miracle, and every once in a while see the likeness of the Virgin Mary, taking the scorched soul of a

perished body to the heavens with her (329). This gives them hope for a better future. A future they must die for.

VI. CONCLUSION

After analyzing the text based on four indicators, security, social welfare, economic and political we can see that the state of Pakistan does not score very high when it comes to performing its duties. Sacred Heart Hospital for all Ailments is a symbol of the broken health system of Pakistan. Borstal Jail is not a reformation center, but a center for physical and psychological abuse. A police station is a place where people are scared to go for help. Court of law gives no solace to the victim. Streets are not safe and people become a casual target of randomly fired bullets. Hence, people do not trust the state, rather put their faith in miracles. It is an obligation on the part of the state to provide all the basic amenities of life to its citizens and make their lives comfortable and peaceful. It must protect the weak, provide better healthcare, quell corruption, control lawlessness, reduce income inequality, check human rights abuse, in short, to fulfill all of its responsibilities. The above analysis of *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* shows that the state of Pakistan has failed to fulfill many of its responsibilities therefore it is a weak state.

REFERENCES

1. Brooks, R. E. (2005). Failed states, or the state as failure? *The University of Chicago Law Review*, 3(6), 1159-1196.
2. Federal Budget. (2016). Budget in Brief (2016-2017). Government of Pakistan Finance Division Islamabad. Retrieved from, [www.finance.gov.pk/budget/Budget in Brief 2016 17.pdf](http://www.finance.gov.pk/budget/Budget_in_Brief_2016_17.pdf)
3. Hanif, M. (2012). *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti*. Delhi, India: Random House Publishers.
4. Heyman, S. J. (1991). The First Duty of Government: Protection, Liberty and the Fourteenth Amendment. *Duke Law Journal*, 41(3), 507-571.
5. Khuman, P. (2010). *Social realism in major novels of Mulk Raj Anand*. Retrieved from, <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/709>
6. PILDAT. (2015). Police, Politics, and the People of Pakistan. Citizens' Periodic Reports on the Performance of State Institutions. Retrieved from, [http://www.ypa-punjab.pk/Publications/publication/Democracy&LegStr/PerformanceofPolice PoliticsandPeopleof Pakistan CitizensReport.pdf](http://www.ypa-punjab.pk/Publications/publication/Democracy&LegStr/PerformanceofPolice_PoliticsandPeopleofPakistan_CitizensReport.pdf)
7. Rice, S. E., & Patrick, S. (2008). Index of state weakness in the developing world. Global Economy and Development. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press
8. USAID. (2006). Fragile States Indicators; A Supplement to the Country Analytical Template. Washington, DC: US Agency for International Development.