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ANAND'S DUBIOUS ATTITUDE TOWARD INDIAN MUSLIMS IN *DEATH OF A HERO*

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Abstract

By using insights from the theoretical works of Amitav Ghosh and Gyanendra Pandey, this article analyzes Mulk Raj Anand's novel *Death of a Hero* (1964) with a special focus on the representation of the Muslim characters and argues that while the novel foregrounds Anand's perceived sympathy for the victim-protagonist, it fails to conceal his nationalist inclinations. The novel concerns the tough choice the Kashmiri Muslims had to make between India and Pakistan, which would label them as patriots or traitors. Drawing on the post-independence nationalist rhetoric, the author categorizes Muslims as pro-Indian or pro-Pakistani--the true sons of India or their opposites. His portrayal of the Muslim protagonist Maqbool as a "hero" because he fights against his own co-religionists, betrays Anand's nationalist agenda. Although the novelist neither shares the Hindu view of modern Indian History, nor uses explicitly what Gyanendra Pandey calls "the prose of otherness" in his representation, Anand implicitly questions the loyalty of Indian Muslims to India as compared to Pakistan thereby revealing his dubious attitude toward them.

Key Words: *Hindutva*, Otherness, post-Partition, nationalist rhetoric, hero, spectacle

Set in the beautiful but troubled valley of Kashmir¹ in the aftermath of the Partition of 1947, Mulk Raj Anand's² *Death of a Hero* (1964) deals with the conflict between India and Pakistan for the possession of Kashmir. It relates to one of the Muslim residents of Kashmir who confronts

Pakistani force to retain the state in the possession of India. The novel gives expression to Anand's views on heroism through Maqbool, a typical Anandian hero who possesses the qualities of atheism, secularism, altruism and humanism. Although not a formidable, dare-devil kind of personality, Maqbool

¹ A controversial state bordering India and Pakistan. Since Partition of 1947 did not clearly demarcate a boundary line between the two countries, both claimed their rights over Kashmir. Immediately after Partition, the Pakistani army attacked Kashmir to annex it. The residents of Kashmir, with the aid of Indian army, defended the state for India.

² Mulk Raj Anand (1905-2004), an internationally acclaimed Indian author, received wide recognition for his novels *Untouchable* (1935) and *Coolie* (1936), which portray characters from lower strata of

society, and examine the problems of caste and poverty in India. His major works include *The Village* (1939), *The Sword and the Sickle* (1942), and *The Big Heart* (1945). Anand also produced short stories, and critical essays, besides editing numerous magazines and journals. Often linked with R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao, he is considered one of the founders of Indian novel in English. Anand is a recipient of Sahitya Akademi Award, and "Padma Bhushan."

strongly resists his opponents, especially the Muslims secessionists, and emerges as a subaltern hero from the local mass. Love for his people, country, and principles lead Maqbool to his martyrdom, granting him the stature of a hero. While the novel foregrounds the author's perceived sympathy for the victim-protagonist,³ it can hardly cover-up his nationalist inclinations and reveals Anand's dubious attitude toward the Indian Muslims.

Death of a Hero recounts the tale of the life and death of Maqbool Sherwani,⁴ during the days of the bloody warfare in the valley. Maqbool, a sensitive young poet and a social reformer, flees from Baramula to Srinagar when Pakistani troops invade and occupy the place. As a member of Indian Kashmir National Conference, he is commanded by the higher authorities to return and help his people by organising resistance against the Pro-Pakistani antagonists. He re-enters the town of Baramula secretly, meets a few people there, and tries to inspire them to fight for the cause of Indian nationalism as against the invasion of Pakistan. In the process he meets Mahmood, a cook-shop keeper, Babu/Master Ishaq, a schoolteacher, Ghulam Ali Jilani, a big landlord, Ahmed Shah, a turncoat of a lawyer, and Muratib Ali, a factory owner, among others. Maqbool organizes many of his people and instils courage in them to fight against the Muslim separatist forces.

In his friend Ghulam's house, Maqbool encounters the former President of Indian Kashmir National Conference, Ahmed who has now, like Ghulam, sided with the opponents, and energetically advocates for the union with "Muslim brethren"⁵ from Pakistan. Thousands of Kashmiris have already joined the Pakistanis. During the meeting at Ghulam's house, Maqbool engages in a hot discussion on loyalty with the Pakistani troop

commander Khurshid Anwar, in which Maqbool is asked to renounce his membership of Indian Kashmir National Conference and join the "Muslim brethren." He refuses to do either inviting danger to his life. After the disturbing get-together, he manages to leave the place in a disguise, and meets in secret his parents and his sister, Noor.

However, Khurshid's people soon discover, chase, and arrest Maqbool to keep him under their custody. He is imprisoned in an old inn, charged of being "pro-Bharat [India]," and "pro-Nehru,"⁶ and asked to reveal the names of his accomplice, which he utterly refuses to do. Maqbool remains indifferent to the questions of both the Pakistani leader, Khurshid and his old nationalist friend Ahmed, by not responding to them for a long time. After much pressure, he speaks about his love for Kashmir, "which is like a poem to me,"⁷ accuses the invaders for defiling it and chides Ahmed for being treacherous and anti-national. Infuriated Khurshid and Ahmed ironically indict him for being a traitor to the Pro-Pakistani Muslim cause and shoot him down to death in the silence of the night. They hang his body on a pole with the word "*kafir*" (non-believer) written on his shirt.

Like his famous novels, *Untouchable* (1935), *Coolie* (1936), and *The Big Heart* (1945), *Death of a Hero* depicts Anand's humanism, his sympathy for the subaltern, and his proletarian⁸ concept of heroism. As far as his treatment of the protagonist is concerned, Anand imbues an ordinary man with tremendous energy and courage to raise his dignity and grants him the capacity to engage in the daunting task of redeeming the society around him at the time of deadly conflict. However, the novel also reflects the author's cultural-political stand as far as the representation of the events, ideas and characters is concerned. The narrative point of view clearly betrays the novelist's politics.

³ In "Humanism in the Work of Mulk Raj Anand," Ruchi Uppal and Sheetal Bajaj rightly call Maqbool a victim as well as a saviour (82).

⁴ Maqbool Sherwani was a real-life hero who attained martyrdom fighting against Pakistani intruders in Kashmir during South Asian Partition of 1947.

⁵ Mulk Raj Anand, *Death of a Hero*, 89.

⁶ Anand, *Death of a Hero*, 113, 114.

⁷ Anand, *Death of a Hero*, 105.

⁸ Just as the protagonists Bakha in *Untouchable*, Munoo in *Coolie*, and Ananta in *The Big Heart*, Maqbool belongs to the lower strata of society.

The perspective of the novel reveals not only the strains of Indian nationalism vis-a vis Kashmir, but it also draws on the post-Partition rhetoric which maligns and abuses the Muslims for having caused the division of the country.

Despite the professed secularism of the country, the mainstream community victimized the Muslim minority in the post-independence India. As majority of Indians considered Muslims to be anti-national or anti-Indian, they could not live normal life as other citizens of India. Since they were doubted and questioned at every step, the Muslims found it difficult even “to breathe freely.”⁹ One of the most powerful leaders of Indian National Congress and the then Deputy Prime Minister of India, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, openly and rudely asked them to leave India. Patel blamed the Muslims for the division of united India and firmly stated that if the Muslims wanted “minority rights,” they should leave India because their rights may have “a place in Pakistan, not here [India].”¹⁰ He believed that the Muslim demand for minority rights was responsible for the “separation of the country.”¹¹ Blaming the Muslims as entirely responsible for India’s Partition, Patel further said that Indians were “laying the foundations of One Nation, and those who choose to divide again . . . and sow the seeds of disruption will have no place, no quarter here.”¹² Sampurnanada, the Education Minister in the Congress government of Uttar Pradesh (U.P), held similar views as Patel. He doubted the loyalty of Muslims towards India and argued that if there was ever a war between India and Pakistan, Indians will be greatly worried “for it is not impossible that the sympathies of our Muslim population will veer towards Pakistan.”¹³

Mohammad Ali Jinnah’s two-nation theory (dividing united India into two nations--India and Pakistan) was largely responsible for the prejudice

against the Indian Muslims. The majority Hindus accused the Muslims as the chief cause of India’s Partition, and seldom treated them as equal citizens in the aftermath of South Asian Partition. The Indians who believed in *Hindutva*¹⁴ (militant Hindu Nationalism), discriminated the Muslims more than anybody else. According to Gyanendra Pandey, unlike the text book history, the Right-Wing Hindu history views Muslims as foreigners and troublemakers and has persistently tried to tarnish the image of Muslims by reiterating about the pre-Muslim glory of India and the troubles that came after the Muslim arrival in the subcontinent. The Right-Wing historians blame the Muslims for Partition, seek to undo it and retrieve the ancient grandeur of India. In the undertaking, these historians have totally Othered the Muslims as the enemies of the Hindus. They have polarized the Indian citizens into “us” and “them,” consigning the Muslims to an outsider’s position. The Hindu history of India after Partition mixes myth and history, religion and spirituality, and fiction and reality to designate Muslims as “impure” and claims India or Hindustan (literally, a place for the Hindus) exclusively for the Hindus.¹⁵

The Right-wing Hindu leaders were not alone in doubting the allegiance of the Muslims to India. Secular leaders such as Govinda Ballav Pant, Congress Chief Minister of UP also demanded Muslim blood for India to prove their loyalty to the nation. Known as a man of large, secular sympathies, Pant remarked: “Every Muslim in India would be required to shed his blood fighting the Pakistan hordes, and each one should search his heart now, and decide whether he should migrate to Pakistan or not.”¹⁶ Majority leaders in India almost concluded that the Indian Muslims would owe their allegiance to Pakistan instead of India. They took it for granted

⁹ Gyanendra Pandey, *Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism and History in India*, 150.

¹⁰ Pandey, “Citizenship and Difference,” 108.

¹¹ Pandey, “Citizenship and Difference: The Muslim Question in India,” 110.

¹² Pandey, “Citizenship and Difference,” 110.

¹³ Pandey, “Citizenship and Difference,” 108.

¹⁴ Coined in 1923 by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, although “Hindutva” means “Hinduness,” and

stands for Hindu values of life, it has acquired a politico-cultural slant to denote militant Hindu Nationalism. It has even led to the thought that Hindus are superior in comparison to the racially “impure” Muslims.

¹⁵ Pandey, “The Appeal of Hindu History,” 373.

¹⁶ Pandey’s “Citizenship and Difference,” 109.

that Indian Muslims had more affinity with the newly created nation rather than India itself. The Muslims had no confidence in political leaders including Gandhi whose legacy, being remote, distant, and steeped in the Hindu traditions,¹⁷ would not help their cause. Although they placed some hope in the post-Independence democratic and secular structures perceived to be created by Nehru,¹⁸ they could not sustain their hope for long because Nehru could not control the anti-Muslim waves that came after 1947.

Since discrimination against the Muslims was writ large almost everywhere in free India, while redefining nationality and citizenship in Post-partition India, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Anglo-Indians, Parsis and other minority groups were defined fully as Indians, the Muslims were relegated to the status of non-natural, hyphenated Indians. In independent India, they became the targets of severe persecution - of harassment and physical and mental torture. Many of their villages were razed to dust. The harsh and cruel treatment at the hands of the Hindus made their life intolerable. Consequently, millions of Muslims turned away their eyes from India and fled to Pakistan. Even those who supported the Indian cause could not stand the hatred of the majority and left the country. In Oct 1947, Chaudhary Khaliquzzaman, an important Muslim League leader in the Indian Constituent Assembly and a long-time friend of Nehru, "unexpectedly and abruptly migrated to Pakistan."¹⁹ Educated in Urdu, he found it unbearably difficult to learn Hindi which had now been made the official language in India. Similarly, Z. H. Lari, the deputy leader of Muslim League in U.P. Legislature, left for Pakistan in 1949, despite being a strong advocate for "one nation" theory as opposed to Jinnah's proposal of two nations.

¹⁷Mushirul Hasan, "Adjustments and Accommodation: Indian Muslims after Partition," 118.

¹⁸ In "Methodological Worlds: Partition, Secularism, and Communalism in India," Shankaran Krishna observes that only Nehruvian secularism seemed to give some hope to the Muslims, the "impure citizens," in India (199).

Along with physical and psychological pain, the Indian Muslims had to undergo the tragic experience of displacement and forced migration. Besides, they suffered from their religious and political identity. Creation of Pakistan neither helped them live a satisfactory life across the border nor allowed them to live in peace in India. In this regards, Ayesha Jalal writes, "The most striking fact about Pakistan is how it failed to satisfy the interests of the very Muslims who are supposed to have demanded its creation."²⁰ Many Muslims who did not even understand the cause of Partition became its victims. Mushirul Hasan avers that most Muslims neither understood nor approved of Pakistan because it was the decision of a very few powerful individuals: "Never before in South Asian history, did so few divide so many."²¹ Yet the vast majority had to undergo immense hardship in the pretext that they had been the cause of the subcontinent's split. Ayesha Jalal convincingly remarks that, instead of resolving the Hindu-Muslim conflict, Partition "accentuated the problem of identity for Muslims"²² in India.

The Muslims were constantly required to prove their Indian citizenship due to the negative image created and disseminated by Hindu historians, and the inimical attitude shown by the general Hindu masses. They had to face several tests to pass as Indian citizens. They had to swear oaths of loyalty towards the Indian nation to reassure the hard-line Hindus that they did not owe any allegiance to Pakistan. To shed blood for India and against Pakistan veritably became a password for Muslim citizenship in India. As a result, a few Indian Muslims who readily maligned Pakistan and showed inclination to fight against it, were considered the true sons of India as opposed to the millions of Muslims who were demonized as the Other, or, the traitors. Therefore, as Amir Mufti rightly observes,

¹⁹ Pandey, "Citizenship and Difference," 124.

²⁰ Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League, and the Demand for Pakistan*, 2-3.

²¹ Mushirul Hasan (ed.), *India's Partition. Process, Strategy and Mobilisation*, 43.

²² Jalal, *The Pity of Partition: Manto's Life, Times, and Works across the India Pakistan Divide*, 4.

since the arrival of Islam has always been experienced as “trauma to the nation,”²³ the Muslims had the most unenviable position after 1947 because they had to remain in India as Muslims and not Muslims or as citizens and not citizens at the same time.

In such a circumstance, the Muslims of Kashmir had a difficult choice to make--whether to support Pakistan or India. Before 1947, Kashmir had been a Princely state ruled by a Hindu Maharaja Hari Singh, and in which Muslims constituted more than two-thirds of the population. When the British raj ended, Kashmir had the freedom either to join India or the newly created Pakistan, but the Maharaja refused to join either of the countries. Although he declared Kashmir as a separate independent nation after Partition, Pakistan immediately sent its military to free the majority-Muslim region from Hindu rule. The Maharaja appealed to India for aid, signed an agreement in October of 1947, and acceded Kashmir to India. War²⁴ took place between India and Pakistan leading to an intervention by the UNO in 1948. A cease-fire was declared on the condition that Pakistan withdrew its troops and India called a referendum of Kashmir's people to determine whether the majority wished to join Pakistan or India.²⁵ However, neither of the things have happened so far²⁶--Kashmir has remained a bone of contention between the armies of the two nations and many Kashmiris still face the limbo of choice.

²³ Amir Mufti, in “Secularism and Minority: Elements of a Critique,” (88).

²⁴ The Pakistanis claim to have fought the war to liberate *their* Kashmir from India whereas from the Indian perspective, it was a war fought to protect *their* land from the Pakistani invaders.

²⁵ Kallie Szczepanski, “What Are the Origins of the Kashmir Conflict ?” (<https://www.thoughtco.com>) [See the full details of this and other websites in the list of Works Cited]

²⁶ On Aug 5, 2019, Indian government ended the semi-autonomous rule of India Occupied Kashmir and took it under the direct federal control of India while Pakistan Occupied Kashmir still awaits its fate.

²⁷ Pandey, in “Citizenship and Difference,” observes that the Hindu view looks at India as a synonym of

Death of a Hero deals with the times when both India and Pakistan vied for the possession of Kashmir, and when Pakistan sent its troops to annex Kashmir by force. The novel concerns the tough choice the Kashmiri Muslims had to make between India and Pakistan, which would label them as patriots or traitors. Anand, as my analysis of *Death of a Hero* will show, believes in the two categorizations of Indian Muslims. His portrayal of Maqbool, a Muslim, as a man who fights against his own co-religionists, and describing him as a “hero” betrays Anand's nationalist agenda. However, it will be wrong to say that he shares the Hindu view of modern Indian History.²⁷ He does not either participate in the explicit use of the prose of otherness²⁸ in relation to the representation of the Muslims. Nevertheless, Anand does covertly question their loyalty to India as compared to Pakistan. The author's categorization of pro-Indian or pro-Pakistani Muslims in the novel beckons towards his questionable attitude towards the Indian Muslims.

In *Death of a Hero*, Anand compromises his objectivity a little because he moulds his hero Maqbool after a nationalist Muslim as opposed to the villains--the pro-Pakistani lawyer, Ahmed and the Pakistani army commander, Khurshid. He lavishes all the desirable qualities on the protagonist, Maqbool and his friends. Like his creator, the hero possesses aesthetic sense, poetic sensibility, warm humanism, and secular values.²⁹

Hindu and polarizes the Hindus and Muslims in terms of “Us” versus “Them,” 116.

²⁸ In “The Prose of Otherness,” Pandey explains the phrase as the tendency of disparaging the “enemy” nation and its people and somehow or the other presenting his/her own community or nation in a better light (188-221).

²⁹ In *Apology for Heroism*, Anand explains his position as a humanist as follows:

“I believe, first and foremost, in human beings, in Man, in the whole man... The humanism which I prefer does not rest on a Divine Sanction... but puts its faith in the creative imagination of man in his capacity to transform himself, in the tireless mental and physical energy with which he can, often in the face of great odds, raise himself to tremendous

Anand also endows the hero with qualities of friendliness, filial attachment and steadfast loyalty to his nation. Maqbool grants his country a higher place than anything else. For instance, he asserts his strong sense of patriotism toward India in the following dialogue with Khurshid (my parenthesis):

[Khurshid]: I give you a choice: You can have as honourable a place in the brotherhood of Islam as Ghulam Jilani and Ahmed Shah here. Or you will be handed over to our forces to meet the justice due to spies and traitors!

[Maqbool]: I am neither spy nor traitor! I put Kashmir above everything. I have some principles.³⁰

Maqbool puts the cause of Kashmir "above everything." His patriotism leads him to make the assertion that he is neither a spy nor a traitor, but a man of principles. In fact, he is depicted as an educated, brave and intelligent freedom fighter bubbling with vibrant imagination and reformist ardour.

For Maqbool, his motherland is above Islamic religion and *jehad* (holy war). He asks his friend Ali: "Do we believe in Kashmir first, or religion first?"³¹ clarifying the priority he gives to the nationalist cause of Kashmir than the religious solidarity of Muslims.³² His love for India and Kashmir makes him encourage his friends to draw their sword against his own people and religion, i.e., he fights against Muslim rule in Kashmir. Like the other people of Baramula, Maqbool is a victim of communal violence instigated by the "Muslim Brethren," who dream of uniting Muslims to form a

central Muslim state in Pakistan. However, unlike many of his Kashmiri people including Muratib and Ghulam, who surrender to the assailants, he fights unto death. His nationalist fervor and moral courage enable Maqbool to counter the terrible opponents such as Master Ishaq, Ahmed, and Khurshid, and to boldly face the punishment they sanction.³³ Placing his country and humanity above religious sentiments, Maqbool fights unto his last, and dies the death of a martyr, trying to save his people from internal divisive forces as well as intimidating foreign foes.³⁴

Maqbool shares atheistic tendency with his creator because he neither believes in religion nor has affiliation with any institutionalized religions such as Islam.³⁵ According to the narrator, he is only a born Muslim; he has not said Friday prayers for a long time, and he does not keep fast during *Ramazan*.³⁶ In a conversation with his parents, Maqbool clearly states that he believes not in divine dispensation but in human action.³⁷ Skeptic of the existence of God, he considers Jesus Christ as a real individual: "But is there Allah. . . . Yessuh Messih was a real person and suffered for mankind--was crucified."³⁸ Maqbool's religion is his love for Kashmir and its people, or to put it in other words, his religion is humanism, or service to humanity, for which, like Christ, he can willingly bear the cross.

As Anand has moulded the protagonist in his own ideology, Maqbool uses Marxist rhetoric rather than religious discourse to understand the problem of society, and to act. He disagrees with Begum Jilani who considers feudal structure to be a "god-given order," and that the masses need a

heights of dignity and redeem the world from its misery and pain" (137- 41).

³⁰ Anand, *Death of a Hero*, 74.

³¹ Anand, *Death of a Hero*, 21.

³² In "Characterization of Mulk Raj Anand's Novels," Shashi Yadav comments rightly when she says, "the nation is his (Maqbool's) God" (337).

³³ In *Mulk Raj Anand*, Krishna Nandan Sinha makes a convincing statement that Maqbool, who considers Jesus to be a real person, is "singled out for crucifixion like Christ" (76).

³⁴ Priyanka Singh, in "Mulk Raj Anand: A Messenger of Humane Sensibility," rightly argues that Maqbool's character acts "as a missionary of the religion of humaneness who willingly accepts martyrdom for the propagation of that religion" (6).

³⁵ Talat Ahmed, in "Mulk Raj Anand : Novelist and Fighter," observes that Anand had always been disgusted with and opposed religious sectarianism, communalism and caste society. (<http://isj.org.uk>)

³⁶ Anand, *Death of a Hero*, 104.

³⁷ Anand, *Death of a Hero*, 88.

³⁸ Anand, *Death of a Hero*, 39.

“gentle, wise father” to rule them.³⁹ He does not concede with her idea that they must obey the Pakistani attackers, or accept their rule. Having equated the Pakistani troop with death, Maqbool comments, “When death is opposed to life, then life must oppose death.”⁴⁰ In line with Marxist ideology, he believes in human spirit of revolt, and goes against the feudal notion of obedience to masters and elders. He stresses on the need to break the “chain of humiliation”⁴¹ in the hierarchic order of feudal society.⁴² Believing poverty--bred and sustained by feudalism in Kashmir--to be the root of all evil, Maqbool prefers to fight for freedom from all sorts of oppression despite the risk of much bloodshed and ruin.

Death of a Hero shows the protagonist to be a staunch nationalist, who is ever willing and ready to sacrifice his life for the sake of his country.⁴³ Firmly determined, he dares to challenge the foreboding Pakistani aggressors, and remarks: “on principle, we must struggle . . . If we believe in freedom from these ‘Muslim brethren’ as we believed in freedom from the British and their friends.”⁴⁴ Freedom from the fanatic Muslims is as important to him as freedom from the colonial rule of the British. Without falling into the trap of jingoism, Maqbool’s strong nationalist zeal expresses itself in his disposition and mettle to fight the supporters of Pakistan. A man of humble background, he works relentlessly for establishing peace and harmony among the locals of Baramula, and as a champion of the cause of Kashmir, he

inspires and leads thousands of Kashmiri people to become their hero.⁴⁵

Anand represents Maqbool as a strong advocate of secularism, which believes every citizen to have the same duties, rights and privileges, and obligations as any other, and which grants every citizen the full freedom to profess and practice his or her religion.⁴⁶ Although it respects all religions, Nehru’s idea of secularism has no place for a religious state, and despite its respect for spiritual values, it does away with religious dogma and ritual.⁴⁷ Cast in these ideals, Maqbool’s broad secular beliefs enable him to transcend communal and religious interests and fight for the national cause.

The discussion above makes it clear that Anand portrays the character of the protagonist almost in his own image by investing in him the author’s Nehruvian secular, humanist, and nationalist ideals. In doing so, he mars his objectivity to some extent, which becomes more visible when we examine characters who have very little role to play in the novel. Anand imparts positive traits of humankind such as the quality of friendship, fidelity, loyalty, trust and bravery to some of the very minor characters who support the protagonist but denies the same to the characters who belong to or stand with the other side.

In the dreadfully violent times, the author shows some characters putting their life in peril for the sake of others. For instance, the shopkeeper

³⁹ Anand, *Death of a Hero*, 81.

⁴⁰ Anand, *Death of a Hero*, 80.

⁴¹ Anand, *Death of a Hero*, 81.

⁴² In “Mulk Raj Anand : Novelist and Fighter,” Ahmed writes: In 1935, Anand set up the All-India Progressive Writers’ Association (AIPWA). This literary association was also a socio-political movement closely aligned to the Communist Party of India and influenced by Nehruvian nationalism. Though Anand never joined the Communist Party, he was very much a ‘fellow traveller,’ aligning himself with the best elements of the left tradition in India. (<http://isj.org.uk>)

⁴³ In “Humanism in the Work of Mulk Raj Anand,” Uppal and Bajaj rightly observe that Maqbool’s “nationalism is unquestionable and legendary” (82).

⁴⁴ Anand, *Death of a Hero*, 54.

⁴⁵ Sinha, in *Mulk Raj Anand* (1995), observes that Maqbool’s political zeal makes him work with “a mission to fire the imagination of whole people” (76).

⁴⁶ Yadav, in “Characterization of Mulk Raj Anand’s Novels,” calls Maqbool a “patron saint of secularism” (337).

⁴⁷ In “*Independence and After*,” Jawaharlal Nehru declares: “We are building a free Secular State, where every religion and belief has full freedom and equal honour, whose every citizen has equal liberty and equal opportunity” (123).

Mahmdoo, his son Gula, aunt Rahti, uncle Salaama, Ghulam's old servant Ibil, and Ibil's wife Habiba help the hero in his cause despite death threats. Ibil and Habiba risk their life to escort Maqbool in *burqah* (veil) to his parents' house.⁴⁸ Positive portrayal of these minor characters in the novel undoubtedly exemplifies Anand's⁴⁹ sympathy with the underdogs, but at the same time, it also indicates his allegiance to the nationalist politics. On the other hand, most characters from the other side are merely caricatured. Even the major characters such as Ahmed, Ishaq and Khurshid, who play much significant political role, do not get serious attention, and thus become the victims of the author's nationalist predispositions.

Borrowing vocabulary from the nationalist historians, Anand calls the Pakistanis as intruders, marauders, looters, butchers, robbers, crooks, and *shaitans* and represents them as such. A few Muslims across the border and their allies in Kashmir, such as Khurshid, Ahmed, Ishaq and the soldiers in the novel are a case in point. Anand portrays Khurshid as an evil being who not only tries to force Maqbool to recant by saying "I give up membership of the Kashmir National Conference,"⁵⁰ but also to admit that he is a "traitor."⁵¹ Having failed to make Maqbool retract, Khurshid declares him to be a "self-confessed rebel,"⁵² and commands his men to kill him in the old caravanserai. Throughout the novel, Khurshid is portrayed as a menacing villain who at any moment would be pronouncing death judgement on the protagonist. Additionally, Anand

describes Ahmed and Ishaq as deserters, opportunists, and betrayers; he also shows them betraying contemptuous attitude and involved in lowly activities. At one place, Anand makes his hero remark, "They took the shame of the women,"⁵³ a statement which echoes Hindus' Othering of the Muslims as hyper-muscular and hyper-sexual males.⁵⁴ Utterly lacking the sense of human values, these characters are almost always shown to engage in plunder, rape, arson, and murder.

Undoubtedly, there is some sense in what Ahmed says in relation to his integration with Pakistan on religious ground; however, Anand does not allow him to present and explain his case in a fair light.⁵⁵ In *Remembering Partition*, Pandey writes that in the 1940s, "to be a true Muslim in India . . . was to be prepared to lay down one's life for Pakistan. Anyone who was incapable of such sacrifice for religion and nation was no Muslim at all," but a *kafir* and a traitor.⁵⁶ So, in line with the necessity, compulsion, and desire of many Muslims in India, Ahmed says: "I want union with Pakistan. . . I believe in a central Muslim state."⁵⁷ As a Kashmiri Muslim, Ahmed's desire to have a union with Muslim Pakistan does not look as absurd as Anand's text makes it to be, more so considering the political status of the state around 1947. Likewise, while the narrator curtly dismisses the war tactics of Ahmed's group as "sudden invasion and murders,"⁵⁸ his viewpoint about Kashmir attracts no attention.

Reacting to the charge of murder and invasion, Ahmed, the former president of the

⁴⁸ Anand, *Death of a Hero*, 83.

⁴⁹ Although he did not formally "belong to any party," Anand had a long association with left wing politics in England; he was closely connected with Marxist intellectuals in India and abroad and wrote several essays on Marxism. In an interview with Amarjit Chandan, Anand remarks that his "ideology remains a commitment to the oppressed people everywhere specially my own people." (<http://www.apnaorg.com>)

⁵⁰ Anand, *Death of a Hero*, 111.

⁵¹ Anand, *Death of a Hero*, 114.

⁵² Anand, *Death of a Hero*, 116.

⁵³ Anand, *Death of a Hero*, 17.

⁵⁴ Pandey, in "Hindus and Others," observes that the Muslim male is stereotyped as a hyper-muscular,

hyper-powerful, hyper-sexual, "sister-fucker" and "mother-fucker." He is considered a threat to Hindu women's honour (242-243).

⁵⁵ It is another matter that Pakistan could not much fulfil the promise. In this regard, Jalal maintains that Pakistan did not cater to the needs of the subcontinent's Muslims. In *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League, and the Demand for Pakistan*, Jalal questions: "How did a Pakistan come about which fitted the interest of most Muslims so poorly?" (4).

⁵⁶ Pandey, *Remembering Partition*, 29.

⁵⁷ Anand, *Death of a Hero*, 72.

⁵⁸ Anand, *Death of a Hero*, 75.

Kashmir Movement replies: "This is a war of liberation! . . . A war! An historic event! We are passing through times which will decide our destiny forever. And everyone has to choose now!"⁵⁹ From the viewpoint of Ahmed and his friends, they too are freedom fighters waging a historic war of liberation. Therefore, it is imperative for them to make a choice and unite with Pakistan because their decision will ultimately determine their destiny. With earnestness and urgency, Ahmed speaks these words, but the hero does not show any disposition to listen to him, considering Ahmed's argument and the fire in his voice to be those of an agitator seeking to bully him. Thus, the other perspective--different from the nationalist one--goes undiscussed in the novel.

Amidst the same line of argument, when Khurshid butts in and says: "Islam is a brotherhood in which there are no distinctions, such as [those] the Hindus make," indicating that Pakistan will be a better choice to make for the Kashmiri Muslims, comes a pert reply from Maqbool in a very sarcastic tone: "All one happy family in Pakistan! . . . Mr. Jinnah and the refugees and all!"⁶⁰ The hero makes an offhanded mockery of the secular ideals of Jinnah and the Pakistani government together with the idea of a caste-less Islamic society. Against the arguments of the opponent, Maqbool has only bitter and acerbic readymade statements: "Allah has sent his apostles, the Pakistanis, our 'Muslim brethren,' to liberate us by depriving us of our breath!"⁶¹ Like many other Indians, Maqbool looks at the pro-Pakistan Muslims merely as senseless fanatics and killers, ignoring the fact that Pakistan was carved out of India as a response to the "call for a complete separation of the religious communities,"⁶² or that Pakistan was created to satisfy religious-minded

Muslims by accommodating them in a newly created nation. The indifference of the protagonist toward the thoughts and acts of the pro-Pakistani characters indicate that Anand's nationalist leanings make him unable to do full justice to them.⁶³ Anand could provide some more space for their voice and Maqbool could at least listen to them patiently.

Thus, the Pakistani angle receives neither adequate space nor convincing treatment; it is given a short shrift. The narrator/author does not grant any voice to the egalitarian ideas of Jinnah, the founding father of Pakistan; instead he highlights the fanatical opinions of petty religious factions. In his famous speech at the opening session of the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan on 11 August 1947, Jinnah said:

You may belong to any religion or caste or creed—that has nothing to do with the business of the state . . . We are all citizens and equal citizens of one state . . . You will find that...Hindus would cease to be Hindus and Muslims would cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense, because that is the personal faith of each individual but in the political sense as citizens of the state.⁶⁴

Death of a Hero does not allow characters to discuss the secular ideals of the *Quide-Ajam* (great leader), which ignore the religious identity of citizens, declare that that Pakistani citizens could be Hindus, Muslims or Christians, and announce all citizens to be politically equal. The narrator rudely dismisses the great leader as a nasty villain interested only in tearing the subcontinent in two. Jinnah is asked to "keep off Kashmir,"⁶⁵ conveniently ignoring his political stature and the fact that he was not the only culprit of Partition.⁶⁶

⁵⁹ Anand, *Death of a Hero*, 75.

⁶⁰ Anand, *Death of a Hero*, 73.

⁶¹ Anand, *Death of a Hero*, 89.

⁶² Pandey, *Remembering Partition*, 32.

⁶³ In *So Many Freedoms: A Study of the Major Fiction of Mulk Raj Anand*, Saros Cowasjee rightly states: "though Anand does concede to Maqbool's opponents some valid reasons for the invasion of Kashmir, he is not altogether fair, and his portrayal

of these characters shows a strain of caricature" (164).

⁶⁴ See Pandey's "Citizenship and Difference," 103-104.

⁶⁵ Anand, *Death of a Hero*, 16

⁶⁶ In *Remembering Partition*, Pandey claims that although the two-nation theory was initially proposed by Jinnah and his Muslim League, ironically, it was Congress --Sikh Mahasabha--that actually demanded and made it a reality later (32).

Anand's objectivity further weakens by the way he shrinks from granting psychological depth to Muslim characters. Influenced by the language of Indian nationalists, the author simply lumps them together as rioters and looters. None of the Pakistani soldiers--neither the sentry nor the ones at the tea shop--obtains an individual identity at the hands of the narrator or author. They are represented as faceless tyrants and embodiments of terror. The novelist describes the Pakistanis and their supporters as irreverent monsters who "set fire to a holy place,"⁶⁷ and who reported have killed the little mother and sister Teresali, and "murdered not only Christians, Hindus and Sikhs, but also Muslims," proving themselves to be "the sons of *Shaitan*" and "the sons of Iblis."⁶⁸

Following a common trait of the Indian writers of Partition violence, Anand stereotypes the Pakistanis in derogatory terms in *Death of a Hero*. He refers to the people from the other side of the border collectively as fundamentalists and fanatics, bent on annexing and merging secular Indian Kashmir with the theocratic nation of Pakistan. For the protagonist of *Death of a Hero*, the Muslim "invaders are essentially gangsters, killing and looting in the name of religion and Islamic brotherhood and depriving the people of Kashmir of the right to determine their own destiny."⁶⁹

Although Anand grants some individuality to the Pakistani leader, Khurshid Anwar, and the fifth columnist, Ahmed Shah, the portrayal of these characters helps expose their opportunism, greed, and savagery more than the political cause of the Muslims of Kashmir. The author represents Khurshid as a mean, callous, cruel, and greedy person, unscrupulously indulged in barbaric acts of violence, such as the burning of a local carpet factory, as well as in pillaging and plundering. He is shown asking for two lakhs as "conscience money"

from Ghulam.⁷⁰ Ahmed receives portrayal not only as a turncoat, an opportunist, and a selfish creature, but also as a religious bigot who has no place in his life for friendship and love. The novelist describes him as a cruel monster who will not be satisfied unless Maqbool is murdered. Represented as a traitor himself, Ahmed calls Maqbool by that name and wants to punish him by death. When Maqbool refuses to repent or recant, Ahmed orders his warders, including the tall Pathan, Zaman Khan first to murder and then "lift his corpse and tie it to the pole behind him. And write the word 'Kafir' on his shirt with his own blood."⁷¹ In this way, Anand shows Maqbool's old friend, Ahmed as a disgustingly cruel man, a sinister figure, who invariably "speaks the [violent] language of the raiders."⁷²

Designating pro-Pakistani people as senseless criminals, ruthlessly slaughtering and destroying human life, Maqbool emphasizes the need to combat and defeat them by resorting to violence itself. However, he justifies his use of violence as "human response of pity," and argues: "We must fight against the violent destroyers of life—with violence. . . . ours is the human response of pity for those whom they have despoiled!"⁷³ Here, Anand not only represents the Indian side as that of innocents but justifies the use of violence of his hero as counter violence,⁷⁴ like the scores of writers with a nationalist agenda.

In the process, instead of rendering scenes of violence without taking sides, Anand resorts to what Pandey calls the prose of Otherness. According to Pandey, most of the Partition literature suffers from the tendency of "othering" the enemy community because the writers from rival countries compete to disparage and demonize one another.⁷⁵ In *Death of a Hero*, to some extent, Anand also paints the two communities—Kashmiri Muslims supporting India or Pakistan—in black and white,

⁶⁷ Anand, *Death of a Hero*, 34.

⁶⁸ Anand, *Death of a Hero*, 38.

⁶⁹ Anand, *Death of a Hero*, 165.

⁷⁰ Anand, *Death of a Hero*, 76.

⁷¹ Anand, *Death of a Hero*, 123.

⁷² Sinha, *Mulk Raj Anand*, 77.

⁷³ Anand, *Death of a Hero*, 93.

⁷⁴ South Asian Partition writers such as Chaman Nahal, Bapsi Sidhwa, Raj Gill and others have usually been found to present scenes of "retaliatory violence" to justify their community's violence against another.

⁷⁵ Pandey, "Prose of Otherness," (188-221).

and attributes the latter with evil qualities. Hence Anand's discourse is laced with the terms "we" and "they," or "us" and "them," whereby "we" constitutes the class of innocent victims and "they," the barbaric Other.

The conversation between Maqbool and Ishaq shows distinct polarity in the use of language as well as differing values of the pro-Indian, Maqbool and the pro-Pakistani, Ishaq. If the one upholds the values of patriotism, fraternity, and humanism, the other supports religion, the Prophet, and the Holy Scripture. Ignoring commendable aspects of religion and faith, the hero grants only the objectionable quality of fanaticism to the school teacher and assesses him as "a fanatical pro-Pakistani."⁷⁶ The narrator/author downplays the image of Ishaq by resorting even to physiognomic description: "squint eye," "yellow teeth," "snake" and so on.⁷⁷ Both the author and his protagonist evade the fact that violence was everywhere, and that even Hindus and pro-Indian Muslims were involved in it. The nationalist hero's "sense of chivalry" is pitted against the "tribalism" of the other group.⁷⁸ His violent thoughts receive a persuasive justification, whereas similar tendencies among the opponents get outright condemnation. The hero's preference for Nehru remains uncensored from the side of the narrator/author when he states: "Nehru can be trusted more than Jinnah"⁷⁹ undermining the very status of the *Quid-e-Azam*, the sole spokesman of the entire Muslim community.

Admittedly, Anand invests much of his energy and time to mould his hero to perfection and ignores the important task of providing psychological depth to other characters. However, he does not fall from his high stature as a writer because he lends certain redeeming qualities to some of his anti-nationalist characters, too. Muratib Ali's monetary help, Ghulam Jilani's hospitality and comradeship as well as Begum Sahiba's help to Maqbool in a most terrible situation serve as important examples of love and kindness. Such little

acts of charity, if accommodated within the text of violence, help the writers serve humanity by remaining true to their craft as they accommodate "both violence and civilised, willed response to it."⁸⁰ Additionally, Maqbool's letter to his sister in the last pages of the novella, in which he writes about his love for his "lovely land," his faith in the continuation of life after death, his dreams about working for the new life, and his optimism that her child will continue his task in the future, do not allow Anand's text, culminating in the death of its protagonist, to reduce Indo-Pak violence "to a mere spectacle."⁸¹

To sum up, despite the accommodation of charitable acts amidst the scenes of violence, the depiction of human love and charity, sympathy for subalterns, and patriotic proclivities, Anand's prose in *Death of a Hero* suffers from its use of Otherness. Through characterization, events, dialogue, and narration, the author presents a much better case for the Indian side. Neither Anand nor his protagonist stop to think seriously about the other side's logic or try to understand their opting for Pakistan. The stereotypical language used for Pakistani and pro-Pakistani Muslims betrays Anand's nationalist preferences particularly vis-à-vis Maqbool, who lives up to the expectations of the majority Hindus by shedding his blood for the sake of the Motherland--the Bharat *matribhumi*. In *Death of a Hero*, Anand dramatizes the common Indian attitude that considers a Muslim to be an Indian only when he or she condemns a Pakistani Muslim.

Death of a Hero reveals a rare image of Anand as a nationalist writer who paints Indian Muslims in dubious colours. This kind of biased representation has the propensity of triggering further violence between the members of the two communities and nations. Although the tendency seen in the novel merely marks a particular moment in his trajectory as a writer—just when he writes about Kashmir violence after the painful Partition of India--and in no way does it infiltrate Anand's entire corpus of writing, novels like *Death of a Hero* might

⁷⁶ Anand, *Death of a Hero*, 20.

⁷⁷ Anand, *Death of a Hero*, 20-23.

⁷⁸ Anand, *Death of a Hero*, 9.

⁷⁹ Anand, *Death of a Hero*, 22.

⁸⁰ Amitav Ghosh, "The Ghosts of Mrs. Gandhi," 62.

⁸¹ Ghosh, "The Ghosts," 60.

be instrumental in obstructing the much sought after peace and harmony in the subcontinent. Besides, such one-sidedness might stain the reputation of a writer of Anand's stature, who has produced great novels such as *Coolie* and *Untouchable*, and has been admired for his humanism, his sense of justice, his sympathy for the minority, and his love for the voiceless people at the margins of society.

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