



Elucidation Of State Apparatus In Anita Rau Badami's *Can You Hear The Night Bird Call?*

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Abstract: The ability to control the policies and culture of a society can be considered as power politics. The political power has the power to implement their laws and regulations. This article analyses the political issues that lie deep-rooted in the novel *Can You Hear the Night Bird Call?* by Anita Rau Badami. This analysis is done with centring Louis Althusser's theory of State Apparatus. The novel explores power politics as a powerful means of producing power relations. Badami through her work highlights the marginalised Sikh Community focusing on Sikh women who become the victims of the state. *Can You Hear the Night Bird Call?* expresses the repression of the Sikh community through various historic events. Many religious conflicts become the source behind the brutality where human kill each other with no sagacity of compassion. A study has been made at how the identity of humans gets modified through different expression legitimated by the state at the social level.

Index Terms: State, Power, Politics, Ideology, Repression

State Apparatus is explained in such a way that the capitalist ruling class maintains their dominant position. Althusser argues that the State consists of two elements such as Ideological State Apparatus and Repressive State Apparatus. The Repressive state Apparatus maintains the dominance of the ruling class by force or threat. The Repressive State Apparatus includes Police, courts, army when necessary. The dominant power uses the force to repress the working class; whereas the Ideological State Apparatus maintains the dominance of the ruling class by controlling people's ideas, values, and beliefs. The Ideological state apparatus includes religion, media, and the educational system.

Badami in the novel explores the personal desolation of the protagonist Bibiji and Nimmo. This desolation is expressed through a series of historical events signifying political power. The novel explores power politics as a powerful means of producing power relations. Badami through her work highlights the marginalised Sikh Community focusing on Sikh women who become the victims of the state. *Can You Hear the Night Bird Call?* expresses the repression of the Sikh community through various historic events such as *Komagata Maru* episode to the 1947 partition of India, the 1984 massacre of Sikhs in India, and the 1985 Air India bombing that resulted in the deaths of all 329 people on board. Throughout the novel, Badami provides us opportunities to explore new understandings and interpretations through the idea of State Apparatus.

Badami deals with the political issues which became the reason behind provoking violence among the people. The novel explores subsequent viciousness that bound to happen due to dominant political interventions. The wild historical incidents that occurred due to the political and religious conflicts bring out the worst situation that India has gone through with the havoc of communal harmony. As per the belief of the Ideological State Apparatus, the ideas and thoughts projected by the dominant class have resulted in the partition of India, the time when people were forced to move from the place where they were living for a generation.

One of a small cluster of Sikh and Hindu houses, it was separated from the Muslim homes by fields of swaying sugarcane (3). Badami in her novel represents that people lived with communal harmony without religious conflict. The Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims lived with peace and harmony. Badami's central characters Kanwar and Nimmo become the victims of India and Pakistan partition. The Hindus, Muslims and the Sikhs were burned to the ground during the riot of partition. Badami while discussing the subjugation of women and Sikh community through the historical period of the twentieth century have elucidated the fact that neither memories get erased from the collective memory of a community or a race nor do they get removed from the memories of victims - the women and the minority. For example, Nimmo in Badami's novel is reminded of her mother's murder during the 1947 partition riots.

Her mother's voice grew higher and more angry it altered and became pleading, and then abruptly she uttered a single scream, which turned into a sound like the one a stray dog had uttered when they found it dying behind the gully behind their house. Then it ceased, that quivering animal whimper. A man laughed and Nimmo heard receding footsteps (155)

Anita Rau Badami recreates records from the pages of Indian history bloodied by the communal carnage during the country's Partition and the secessionist violence in Punjab. She chronicles the Indian state's armed retaliation to quell terrorism by storming into the holiest shrine of Sikhs-The Golden Temple. Sharanjeet or Bibi-Ji one of the central characters in the Novel who settled in Canada becomes a widow while on a pilgrimage to India during operation Blue Star against Sikh terrorists. During the 1980s some Sikhs were demanding nothing less than a nation-state of their own. This demand was instigated by Bhindranwale, "whose pungent diatribes against the ruling party have earned him lot, many Sikh followers" (315). Bhindranwale along with his followers attempted a civil war against the government by seeking to negotiate a settlement of Sikh demands. Gradually that became a violent movement called Khalistan. They took control over the holiest shrine Harmandir Sahib, The Golden Temple, Amritsar. And this, in turn, made the government give the General permission to launch their "Operation Blue Star". "This is a battle between Sant Bhindramwale and Mrs.Indhira Gandhi and that since the former is leading the battle, it will be fair to ask him to issue the statement about the creation of Khalisthan." (The Hindu,June 10, 2013)

The Golden Temple was a symbol of faith, equality regardless of class and caste. The place had been a beautiful lesson of harmony and equality. And today this place has become a war zone between the government and the preacher. "Their most holy place had been desecrated by the Indian Government (335). It is not just the soldiers but the Sikh people of Bhindranwale were attacking in their holy place just to gain control over the political necromancies. During the time of "Operation Bluestar," many innocent pilgrims were also brutally killed which created anger and violence among the people. "Centuries -old manuscripts had been destroyed. Pilgrims had been killed. Nobody was sure how many - some claimed that it was two thousand people and others insisted that it was much higher. Humiliation, indignity and death"(335). This incident can be referred to as the situation of Repressive State Apparatus where the state is being controlled by the ruling dominant class through the armed force. Althusser states that the repressive state apparatus represents the domination of state with the embodiment of the prison, the courts, the police, the army, etc. This apparatus functions mainly by violence, which not necessarily always take physical form. Nevertheless, a peculiarity can be made between state apparatus and state power; the latter is related to the objective of the class struggle while the former is the concerned with the repressive actions and may perhaps endure circumstances distressing the possession of the state power. Repressive state is applicable here since the State in power with the support of the armed forces has repressed the innocent Sikh people. The Operation Blue Star is one such incident represented in *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?* where innocent people were killed in the holiest place of the Sikhs.

An ideological state apparatus (ISAs) refers to a specific association which includes the church, the educational institutions, the family, etc. Badami's character Jasbeer is the best example that has been stereotyped with the story of Sikh ancestry educated by Pa-Ji. Over the years, his childish bitterness become firm, and when a fundamental preacher named Dr. Randhawa arrives in Vancouver, preaching the need for a separate Sikh homeland and this even more created religious anger and made him a member of Khalisthan movement.

This is the original land of Sikhs. It is our body and it has been cut to pieces by everyone- the Mughals, the British, the Mussulmans, the Hindus. We lie bleeding but we are not dead yet. Arise, warriors, and shout with me, Iour Country or Death!"(254).

Badami through the character of Jasbeer makes clear that it is religious people who inculcate the ideology of difference in to the minds of the society. Operation Blue star created a distrust towards the government and later ended in a confederacy to assassinate the Prime Minister which eventually led to the Anti-Sikh riot and the Air India Bombing by the Sikh terrorists.

Can You Hear the Nightbird Call? brings to limelight several historic events of brutality which took place because of the dominant rule undertaken by the government. Many religious conflicts become the source behind the brutality where human kill each other with no sagacity of compassion. Most of the brutal attributes in the novel are brought out the Ideological state apparatus which instigates people to hold values that seem hostile to their substantial positions. The religious preachers have structured people's mind in such a way that enables a group holding power to have the bloody conflicts that we find in the history of India.

The Sikh people in *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?* adopted to a set of ideology infused by their religious preachers has later become the sole reason behind many brutalities occurred from operation blue star to Air India 182 bombing. According to Althusser the belief that is structured in an individual's mind is not his ideology but the belief formed by the society. The ideology was transmitted through education, religion, family, etc. When the Ideological State apparatus fails to create an idea which is convenient, then another system, the armed forces, judiciary, and Police, comes to back them up.

To sum up, one may delineate that power paradigms have been analyzed within various discourses. A study has been made at how the identity of humans gets modified through different discourses either endorsed by the state or the men at the social level. The discourse of dominant power has been examined and how the society undergoes a complete change even when placed in different times and different places geographically have been looked at. The paper signifies that the dominant power in the society preaching unprecedented religious faith leads to the repression of the Society. An attempt has been made to study on parallel level indeterminacy of the historical truth and non-linearity of history through a study of fiction and non-fiction. The study also highlights the contribution of fiction in making a larger readership aware of the silenced histories which remain unrecorded in mainstream history by men writers.

Works Cited

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