

Ideological Interpellation of Individuals in Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy*

This research attempts to study the ideological interpellation of individuals by racial, class and caste ideologies in Indian society depicted in Vikram Seth's novel *A Suitable Boy*. The ideologies affect the formation of subjectivity of the individuals in the novel and they are compelled to take various subject positions. The novel is a depiction of four Indian families: three of them are Hindu families and one is a Muslim family. The Kapoors, the Mehras and the Chatterjis are all Hindus, and the Khans are Muslims who are the families with their own interpellated by the ideologies that shaped up the social belief system of the time. The story covers over a period of 18 months in the newly independent India of the mid-20th century. The Mehras live in a fictional town, *Brahmpur*, in a fictional state, called *Purva Pradesh*, which along with other real Indian towns, like Calcutta, Delhi and Kanpur. These settings bring diversity in the stories of large number of cultural practices with number of ideologies.

The novel is basically a love story that revolves around on the efforts of Rupa Mehra to arrange the marriage of her younger daughter, Lata, to a 'suitable boy'. The cultural practice that the parents choose the life partner to their sons and daughters is rigidly practiced in India. Rupa says that she herself will choose a husband for her daughter Lata, at the beginning of the novel, on the day of marriage between her elder daughter Savita and Pran Kapoor. Lata is 19 years old, seemingly vulnerable college student but she is determined to choose her own way without being influenced by her strong-willed mother or her opinionated brother, Arun. Finally, the story revolves around the choice Lata is forced to make between her suitors, Kabir, Haresh and Amit, but at the same time it examines the inner workings of and the various cultural problems faced by four families. Lata, Arun and their mother Rupa are

made to act according to the ideological position they are given to by the then socio-cultural ideologies.

Lata's marriage has to take place according to the cultural practice of the Hindu society in which multiple ideologies are at play. Her marriage should be arranged with a suitable boy who belongs to Hindu religion, similar class and caste like her. To examine the complexity created by the interplay of ideologies in an Indian family is the main research problem.

Cultural practices of Indian society are full of cultural dealings of the ideologies like caste, class and religion. It is because of the complex interactions among the ideologies, Lata's marriage has become difficult and complicated process. The main objective of this research is to study the role of various ideologies and hegemony in the Indian society represented in the novel.

Even though this research primarily examines the novel to see the functioning of class and caste ideologies in Indian society represented in the novel, the analysis will be totally textual. Only the textual evidences will be drawn into the discussion. Even though, this research uses the theoretical basis of ideology and hegemony, it does not clarify all the aspects of ideology and hegemony due to limitation of time. Only the supportive theoretical premises will be used.

Seth's novel, *A Suitable Boy*, has drawn large number of criticisms since its publication. It is very long novel written in English by an Indian author that chronicles the various activities and cultural dealings of four families.

Critic Barbara Pozzo, in her analysis, "*A Suitable Boy: Abolition of Feudalism in India*" encompasses the various issues dealt in the novel:

Throughout the novel, the author examines important national issues of a political nature in the period leading up to the first post-Independence national

election of 1952: namely, the psychological and economical effects of the partition between India and Pakistan on the refugees, as well as the status of lower caste peoples, such as the *jatav*. (42)

Pozo points out that the Seth's novel is historically significant one as it describes the political situation of India after post-Independence India and the impacts of India Pakistan partition. It deals with the refugees during the partition era, their psychological and economical consequences due to partition as well as the status of lower class people. Pozo furthers:

At the same time, this epic novel highlights various other issues including Hindu-Muslim strife, abolition of the *zamindari system*, land reforms and the empowerment of Muslim women. However, the book's most important tool by which to interpret Indian culture is the questioning of the generally acknowledged view held by Western lawyers concerning the role of the law in society. (42)

Pozzo points out the Indian political situation and psychological and economic impacts of Indo-Pak partition. The lower caste people like *Jatav* and their situation are also depicted in the novel. The religious strife and abolition of Zamindari System are also crucial historical backdrops of the novel. Another critic, Punam Pandey points to the Indian sensibility in the novel:

It is worthwhile to mention here that Seth's advocacy of Indian sensibility nourishing its social and political perspectives through his characters he could not dare to put on before readers inter-caste marriage between Kabir Durrani and Lata because of the result and communal frenzy in 1951-52, it was unthinkable, on the part of the novelist. (119)

The communal strife between Hindu and Muslim communities as well as the cultural

barriers set by the caste-system in Indian society does not let Lata and Kabir to marry. The depiction of the Indian cultural proceedings of the time are crucial for the writer to bring in Indian sensibility in the novel.

Critic Neelam Srivastava sees Seth's novel as the writer's effort to recreate India in totality. She writes:

Seth's naturalized representation of the nation goes hand in hand with his endorsement of Nehruvian ideology. In *A Suitable Boy*, the nation is an all-inclusive concept that moves from the individual, to the locality, to the regional state, and arrives to embrace the entire nation. Seth invents a state, Purva Pradesh, whose regional, specifically North Indian dimension is stretched to make it representative of India in its totality. (21)

Seth has represented India in naturalized way full of Nehruvian ideology. He has embraced India in totality; his imaginary construction of Purva Pradesh is to juxtapose with the Northern parts of India so as to generate complete picture of India.

Thus, after the study of numerous critiques of the novel, this researcher reaches into the conclusion that the novel is not studied in the framework of ideology analysis. So, departing from the earlier critiques, this research focuses on the class and caste ideologies in the novel.

Ideology is a term that is used by Marxist theorists in their analysis of political and literary contexts. Ideology is a kind of belief system in individual which results from his/her material circumstances. At the beginning, Marxists define this term as a kind of false consciousness as it relates a person to an imaginary reality. The notion of ideology is developing and thus, it continues to play remarkable role in present critical thought. Ideology is developed in its wider sense in Althusser's essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses." In that essay makes remarkable

developments in the notion of ideology standing on the traditional Marxist understanding of ideology. Althusser rejects as an oversimplification the notion of ideology as "false consciousness," or a distorted representation of reality by which dominant elite exploits a poor-class. This oversimplification implies an opposition of "false consciousness" to some kind of "true consciousness," or an understanding that the subject can transcend ideology, but in fact, according to Althusser, all consciousness is constituted by and necessarily inscribed within ideology. Ideology is as inescapable and indispensable as the air we breathe. All that we can have are competing versions of "false consciousness," or understandings of reality which are limited and therefore incomplete.

Althusser's reflections on Ideological State Apparatuses have shaped entire generation of critics and theorists, with interests in feminism, post-colonialism, and the sociological study of culture. It is a subject of special interest for Althusser and Gramsci. They show the examples how the operation of ideology are religious, including Althusser's development of vivid term for how the subject is "called" or "hailed", or the *interpellation* is transferred to the political domain.

In Althusser's account, ideology as such has no history since it is carried in the material, institutional forms of social life, and is always submerged back into them. The analytical problem is to preserve a critical focus on the moment of "calling," as the interpellated subject is both created and subjected at the same time. In this sense, one is always dealing with ideologies. Here, ideology is not a monolithic doctrine. It may appear in any arena of social life, in the family, the school, the church, political parties, government, and so on. Althusser's accomplishment is to have provided an example of ideological analysis. By reading Marx expansively, Althusser recontextualizes Marxist thought by freeing it from the dogmas of doctrine

or limitations of subject matter, by linking the position of the subject to the institutional apparatus that at once sustains and makes identity problematic.

The identity of Indian people is shaped by number of factors like class, caste and religion. Rosalind O'Hanlon writes in *Caste, Conflict, and Ideology*, "Even the local taxes, which were collected in part for the purpose of local education, went to support educational institutions from which Brahman children derived most benefit" (270). Even in the colonial period, British officials relied upon their subordinate Brahmin officials to collect taxes because of their unfamiliarity to the local languages and the Brahmans reaped most benefits from this situation. The possibility of being appointed as the subordinate official always lie on the Brahmans as they ruled the society being privileged on the top of the caste hierarchy in the society and even from the collected taxes, good part of money is spent for their own well being. Indian society is shaped by number of ideologies. This research analyzes ideologies and problematic identities of the characters in Vikram Seth's novel *A Suitable Boy* from the theoretical angle of ideology analysis.

The novel, in the very beginning, opens up with a wedding scene. Rupa Mehra's daughter, Savita, is getting married. Mother is warning her younger daughter Lata that she herself will look for a suitable husband for Lata too. The boy who is getting married to Savita is Pran Kapoor. They also comment on the thinness and nature of Pran in the discussion. In this conversation, Lata makes it clear that she does not want to arrange a marriage like her sister but the mother is firm. As the novel progresses, three suitors come to ask the hand of Lata. They come from different cultural backgrounds.

There is difference in approach for Lata and her mother regarding the marriage. The ideologies of family, culture, class, caste are at work in them from

different ways. Lata loves a Muslim boy who is her classmate and a writer. But her mother arranges a self-made businessman for her. Pran and Savita start their family life after their marriage. Pran's brother falls in love with a girl from culturally unsuitable family. The unsuitability of the families during marriage creates number of problems and the family should look at the suitable families for marriage is central to the novel. The novel is an example of the ideologies that operated in Indian society.

The theory of ideology, the Althusserian notion of "Interpellation of Individuals as Subject" is crucial for the exploration of the formation of identity. It is also instrumental in showing how the employment of artistic language goes parallel to the construction of a new subjectivity. In doing so, this research focuses on the representation of identity in language through dealing with the complicated process of identity re-construction and the internal dialectics. Otherness within the subject's identity is, thus, studied here with reference to the different languages of the ideological subjectivities. The very use of term suitable in Seth's novel is the instance of interpellation of the ideologies that distinguish between good from bad in Indian society and the identity of the boy and girls form because of their ability or inability to conform to the ideologies of the society.

At the very beginning of the novel, the family ideology of arranged marriage is there: 'You too will marry a boy I choose,' said Mrs Rupa Mehra firmly to her younger daughter. Lata avoided the maternal imperative by looking around the great lamp-lit garden of Prem Nivas. The wedding guests were gathered on the lawn. (6) Rupa Mehra's elder daughter, Savita is getting married to a boy her mother arranges for her. So, she is warning her younger daughter that she is also getting married to a boy the mother arranges for her. Savita's identity formation as an obedient and gentle girl is established in this scene. She is interpellated as a subject of

family ideology and is regarded as a good girl by mother. But she has still a responsibility to find a suitable boy for her younger daughter.

Lata is annoyed by the mother's imposition of family and social ideology that a good girl marry the person her family chooses for her. Her unwillingness to conform to the mother's belief is neglected by mother.

'Hmm,' she said. This annoyed her mother further.

'I know what your hmms mean, young lady, and I can tell you I will not stand for hmms in this matter. I do know what is best. I am doing it all for you. Do you think it is easy for me, trying to arrange things for all four of my children without His help?' Her nose began to redden at the thought of her husband, who would, she felt certain, be partaking of their present joy from somewhere benevolently above. (6)

'Hmm' spoken as displeasure over the mother's imposition of family ideology is sharply snapped by Lata's mother. She is firm in her belief i.e. the family and cultural ideology and she has the belief that arranging marriage will benefit the daughter herself. To invoke more convincing tone in her authority, she remembers her dead husband and the family values he used to adopt. It is clear that family is the first place in which the ideologies are taught and a person is subjected to them.

Family and school, as two significant 'Ideological State Apparatuses' (ISAs), provide the contexts where ideological languages function in order to construct the identity of the subject. In the given statement, she is in the family environment. Moreover, educational values determine the behavior of the people, so it determines how she behaves. To draw upon the Althusserian notion of Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) and their employment to interpellate the individual as subject is fruitful to see the ideology inside the family and the school. In Marxist theory, the

state is thought to be first and the foremost as the 'State apparatus', that is, as the sum of the institutions by which the ruling class maintains its economic dominance – the government, the courts, the police, the prisons, and the army, and so on. Innovating this Marxist concept through a symptomatic reading, Althusser claims that the state apparatus, in fact, consists of two overlapping but distinct sets of institutions. He categorizes them as the repressive state apparatus and the 'Ideological State Apparatuses'. In his book *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*, Althusser writes:

The State Apparatus (SA) contains: the Government, the Administration, the Army, the Police, the Courts, the Prisons, etc., which constitute what I shall in future call the Repressive State Apparatus. Repressive suggests that the State Apparatus in question 'functions by violence' – at least ultimately (since repression, e.g. administrative repression, may take non-physical forms). (136)

Althusser further argues that the state also consists of what he calls the 'Ideological State Apparatuses' (ISAs). These are apparently distinct and specialized institutions such as: the religious ISA (the system of the different public and private schools), the family ISA, the legal ISA, the political ISA, the trade union ISA, the communications ISA (press, radio and television etc.) and the cultural ISA (literature, the arts, sports etc.). (137) The fundamental difference between the Repressive State Apparatus (RSA) and the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) is that both perform the social function of economic dominance and exploitation but the first (RSA) functions primarily 'by violence' whereas the second (ISAs) function primarily 'by ideology'. (138)

Lata is a subject on which the ideologies of the family are interpellated. At the same time, it becomes clear that the mother is not less subjected by various ideologies. She cries in the painful memory of her dead husband and laments on the

widow dress she has to wear in her daughter's wedding She cries and Lata tries to console her showing her the responsibilities around her as a mother of a bride: 'Now, now, Ma, you can't cry on Savita's wedding day,' said Lata, putting her arm gently but not very concernedly around her mother's shoulder. 'If He had been here, I could have worn the tissue-patola sari I wore for my own wedding,' sighed MrsRupaMehra. 'But it is too rich for a widow to wear.' (6) It is clear that a widow should not wear rich dress is an ideology that is observed by the widows in Indian society. They are not pleased with it but they are subjected to the ideology.

The discussion of suitability of Savita's husband, Pran, lets us the instances to examine other ideologies too. The bridegroom is thin and Lata talks about his thinness. But the mother sees nothing wrong with his thinness. Fat men are likely to fast and control their diet. Pran is thin but he is good, decent, cultured khatri boy:

'Thin ? What is thin ? Everyone is trying to become thin these days. Even I have had to fast the whole day and it is not good for my diabetes. And if Savita is not complaining, everyone should be happy with him. Arun and Varun are always complaining: why didn't they choose a boy for their sister then? Pran is a good, decent, cultured khatri boy.' (7)

The suitability of the bridegroom is judged on the basis of his suitability of caste and class. It is evident that Pran belongs to Kshtriya caste, a khatri and he is good and decent because he observes his life in the lens of ideology his home and his in-laws follow. Thus, family becomes the first and foremost state apparatus that teaches a person certain ideologies and thus, confining him/her within the ideological limit.

School is another major ideological apparatus that teaches a person the ideological conducts is evident in the novel. Malati's mother wants her daughters to be independent. She sends her daughters to Hindi medium school so that they could

learn Indian music, dance and languages. Her notion of independence is ideological as she believes that they need to learn the family values before going to some other peoples' house as the girls have to go to her husband's house sooner or later:

Malati's mother was remarkable in that she wished her daughters to be independent. She wanted them, apart from their schooling at a Hindi medium school, to learn music and dancing and languages (and especially to be good at English); and if this meant that they had to go to someone's house to learn what was needed, they would go - regardless of what people said. (45-6)

The emphasis on learning family values and get ready to go to her husband's house is what the girls are expected to do. The expectations of the family and the education of the school need to match. They act in collaboration so that the school can generate the subjects as the family ideology demands. Only then the schools are regarded as good and they are likely to succeed economically.

Religion is another state apparatus that controls the individual and makes them a subject. It teaches certain disciplines and codes to a person such as fasting, going to temples, churches or mosques. Althusser has kept it under repressive state apparatus. Religion controls the subject and rules over it. Rupa Mehra's fasting is one of the instances of such control:

'It is Ekadashi today.' Mrs Rupa Mehra fasted on the eleventh day of each lunar fortnight in memory of her husband.

'I don't care if it's ten Ekadashis,' said her father with some heat. 'Ever since you came under the influence of the Mehra's you have become as religious as your ill-fated mother. There have been too many mismatched marriages in this family.' (55)

Rupa becomes religious person when she went to Mehra's house after marriage. Her

father does not like the fasting but she rigidly fasts during Ekadashis, the days of fasting in Hindu religion. It because of her inclination to fasting her father compares her to her mother and criticizes her marriage and family influence of Mehras. He has got different ideology but the religious ideology became the apparatus to control Rupa and her mother.

Althusser elaborates the relationship between domination and subjugation by presenting us with the interpellation process. This process explains how individuals recognize themselves as subjects via ideology, thereby elucidating how subjects can be complicit in their own domination. Ideology functions to constitute individuals as subjects. According to him, individuals are interpellated primarily through the first “ideological state apparatuses” (ISAs) to which they are exposed to. As discussed above, the pioneer examples of ISAs are the family, the school, and the church, which are the institutions that exist before the entry of the individual into them. Althusser emphasizes the ubiquity of ideology and interpellation by noting how subjects are consistently constituted by Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) such as the family, educational institutions, and media such as literature, radio and television. The idea that an individual can be interpellated through various mediums would later be appropriated by theorists from diverse backgrounds such as cinema and media studies and cultural studies.

Although he initially presents a chronological instance of interpellation, Althusser emphasizes on the fact that the process is not governed by cause and effect, but happens simultaneously. He stresses that “the existence of ideology and the hailing or interpellation of individuals as subjects are one and the same thing” (118). In other words ideology, interpellation, and subject hood, mutually reinforce each other. Elaborating this, he presents an expanded version in the following words; “[. . .]

ideology has always already interpellated individuals as subjects, which amounts to making it clear that individuals are always-already interpellated by ideology as subjects, which necessarily lead us to one last proposition: individuals are always-already subjects” (119).

Patriarchal and caste ideologies have already made Lata a subject. Her interactions with a boy are subject to questioning and her mother and elder brothers are always there to approve or disapprove her closeness, interest or even the simple communication with the new boys:

'Who was that fellow you were talking to?' demanded her brother Arun, who, unlike his wife, had noticed Lata talking to Maan. Arun was twenty-five, a tall, fair, intelligent, pleasant-looking bully who kept his siblings in place by pummelling their egos. He was fond of reminding them that after their father's death, he was 'in a manner of speaking', in loco parentis to them. 'That was Maan, Fran's brother.' 'Ah.' The word spoke volumes of disapproval. (15)

Arun, Lata's brother shows interest on the communication between her and a stranger boy not just because he wants to know about her friend rather he feels himself in the position to monitor and regulate the behavior of his sister. She is her subject interpellated by the cultural ideology is evident in the quote. He is tall and pleasant-looking person but he regards that the matters of his sisters are the matters he has to deal with. He is a bully who controls the actions and egos of his sisters with his highhanded acts. When Lata talks to Maan, he comes to catch the communication and asks Lata about the person she is communicating to. He has the cultural ideology that after the death of their father, he is the rightful authority over the actions of his sisters. He is next in line after father and mother and he would be responsible if love or any accidents happen due to their misconduct due to his failure to monitor them. Their

behaviors, till their marriage with a suitable and family-chosen boy are the matters that need to be seriously considered as per the cultural ideology of her brother. In this instance, he does not say anything to Lata for talking to Maan but his monosyllabic 'Ah' is sufficient to show his disapproval of the communication between Lata and the stranger boy, Maan. It is not only the class and caste ideology but also the religious ideology that the women are subjects to their father, brothers and husband throughout their life. Religious ideology has also interpellated Lata as subject to her brother's control. It is this interpellation of religious and cultural ideology, her mother takes pain to choose a suitable boy for her marriage.

Actually, there is an interpellation of various ideologies along with the patriarchal one. The racial and cultural background of the boy with whom Lata talks to and his economic condition are also crucial aspects. If the boy was seen fit from each of the angles to the family members, in terms of class, caste, race and economic condition, they would not be so negative only with the instance of a communication between her and Maan. She is thus, the subject of various ideological interpellations at the same time when patriarchal ideology subjects her. The ideological interpellation of religious ideology that a girl must be under the control of her male guardian is cultural one that subjects her.

To see how religion interpellates individual of the ideology of the ruling class, it is very relevant to examine Althusser's analysis of religion. Referring to the biblical story of the dialogue between Moses and God, Althusser points out the moment when Moses is addressed by God. God hails Moses in his name, and Moses replied: "It is (really) I!", God says to Moses "I am what I am". This proves God to be the Subject, the absolute, ruler subject with capitalization and Moses to be the ruled subject as he needs to obey the God. Thus, religion is the ideology of the ruling, powerful Subject

that interpellates the ruled as the powerless subject. Althusser observes:

God thus defines himself as the Subject par excellence, he who is through himself and for himself ('I am what I am'), and he who interpellates his subject, the individual subjected to him by his very interpellation, i.e. the individual named Moses. And Moses, interpellated- called by his Name, having recognized that it 'really' was he who was called by God, recognizes that he is a subject, a subject of God, a subject subjected to God, a subject through the Subject and subjected to the Subject. (121)

Therefore, there are two implications of the subject whenever the term is used. There is a two way process that are the subject through ideology and the subject to ideology. There also exists in this process a guarantee that says "everything really is so."

Althusser's has provided us with examinations that helped him to come out with a summary of what he had discovered about ideology in the form of four premises: the interpellation of individuals as subjects, their subjection to the Subject, the mutual recognition of subjects and Subject, and the absolute guarantee that everything will be all right if the subjects recognize what they are and have accordingly. Similar kind of hailing and control of religion is seen in the novel. The Imam of the mosque prays in the time of Hindu Muslim conflict: O God, help those who help the religion of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon Him. May we also do the "same. Make those weak, who weaken the religion of Muhammad. Praise be to God, the Lord of all Being.' (126) In this instance, the people are hailed by the terms 'those who help the religion' and establishes God as the supreme entity.

Ideology is the producer of discourses to control other and generate the subject subjected to certain beliefs. Foucault has the opinion that discourses produce subjects within relations of power that potentially or actually involve resistance. For example,

Foucault gives the example of the sexuality in the nineteenth century who is discursively produced as a subject and an identity within discourses as diverse as psychiatry, jurisprudence and literature. He maintains:

There is no question that the appearance in nineteenth-century psychiatry, jurisprudence and literature of a whole series of discourses on the species and subspecies of homosexuality, inversion, pederasty, and 'psychic hermaphroditism' made possible a strong advance of social controls into this area of 'perversity'; but also made possible the formation of a 'reverse' discourse: homosexuality began to speak on its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or 'naturalness' be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified. (101)

His example well presents and exemplifies how power is both repressive and enabling. According to Foucault, power is a relationship that implies resistance. It is not something held by a particular group, but rather, it is a relationship that inheres in all discourses whether they are economic or media or familial and so on. Furthermore, it is dispersed across a range of social institutions and practices and functions through the discursive constitution of embodied subjects within discourses. The subject positions and modes of embodied subjectivity constituted for the individual within particular discourses permits different degrees and types of identity and agency, which are both compliant and resistant. The discursive fields, able to produce meanings and subjectivities, are not homogenous. They include discourses and discursive practices which may be contradictory and conflicting, being able to create the space for new forms of knowledge and practice. While there is no place beyond discourses and the power relations that govern them, resistance and change are possible from within.

The productions of religious discourses are evident in the novel. The people outside the Muslim religion are regarded as barbarian. The use of negative terms to describe the outsiders is the proof how blindly the religious people are running after the religion:

Their religion was indanger. The barbarians were at the gates. They prayed, these infidels, to their pictures and stones and perpetuated themselves in ignorance and sin. Let them do what they wanted to in their dens of filth. But God could see what was happening now. They had brought their beastliness near the very precincts of the mosque itself. (124)

In the instance of Hindu threat to Muslims, the Muslim Imam regards the religion in danger and the people who are against them as infidels, ignorant and sinners. The protestors and the people opposing them are no more than the people who are not subjected by Muslim ideology and are not easily controlled. So, they are charged and the God is regarded as the observer of all these protests and their devilry.

Althusser in his seminal essay “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” examines the relationship between the state, modes of producing or reproducing power and ideology from a Marxist perspective, defining ideology as “the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (162). In his definition, he observes the ideology functioning as an arbitrator or mediator between systems of power and individuals. He believes that it permits for hegemonic power to reproduce itself by incorporating traditional forms of repression thereby incorporating individuals into the power structure. The religion has established the imaginary relation of the individual to the non-existent things and codes in such a way that Firoz feels guilty not observing or going against religion:

When the bewildered Tasneem had left, Firoz tried to orient his thoughts.

Hismouth was dry. He felt strangely disturbed. Surely, he felt, even if we have not met on this mortal plane, we have met in some former life. The thought, counter to the religion he nominally adhered to, affected him the more powerfully for all that. (111)

Firoz has just rejected to feed a bird that is pointed as his sin because any rational human being should help a creature in need is the religious ideology. This ideology makes him guilty that he failed to act against the religion and he is a sinner because he tried to counter the religion.

Althusser's essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" was an attempt to explore the process in which the subject became subject to ideology. He opines that human beings become repressed by different ideologies of the state from an early age. Ideology, which is present everywhere in such a system, plays its decisive role in the formation of the subject's beliefs, actions and practices. The essay was highly influential in the development of theoretical explorations of both the ideologies of the modern socio-political system and the mechanisms behind the constitution of subjects. According to Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royal's *Literature, Criticism and Theory*, Althusser's essay seeks to demonstrate that "ideology is bound up with the constitution of the subject." (173).

Lata is the central character in the novel who encounters numbers of ideologies in the course of her life. She first appears at the wedding of her sister Savita to Pran Kapoor. Whole novel revolves around her mother trying to find a suitable boy for her marriage. Lata goes to university; she is quick minded and educated. The only a problem she has is she is naive about life and relationships. Lata questions the idea of an arranged marriage like that of her sister where the couple knows nothing at all about each other. Her attitude is typical of the young Indian

population after the separation of India and the British. Although Lata is free to go to the university and shopping with friends unaccompanied, but she is aware of the restrictions imposed upon girls. Lata and her mother, Mrs. Rupa Mehra, are both trying to find, through love or through exacting maternal appraisal, a suitable boy for Lata to marry.

In a few chance encounters she happens to meet Kabir a fellow student from a similar class constituency at Brahmputh University who turns out to be Muslim but since he has an ambiguous first name she does not know until later that he is a Muslim. When his identity is revealed she is at once aware that the relationship with him is impossible, knowing the clear taboos against Hindu-Muslim miscegenation in the specific cultural and religious practices of the Indian subcontinent. Her friend Malati's initial response to Kabir's Muslimness exemplifies such an awareness when she advises Lata to "better drop him" (167) as well as Lata's own reiteration at various points in the novel that this relationship is pointless and futile. She asks Kabir if he knows the notion of marriage in her family. Significantly Kabir's reaction to the seemingly impossible social taboo against Hindu Muslim marriage is a secular surprise that this should be no issue at all. "You love me. And I love you. That's all that matters. He says this in a classic affirmation of love transcending all differences of culture, class, religion, race or caste. However Lata's mother Mrs. Rupa Mehra's hysterical outburst shows that her upper caste Hindu family will never accept her relationship with Kabir. Moreover when Mrs. Mehra discovers that Kabir's mother is suffering from mental illness, it only confirms her othering of Muslims. Seth shows Mrs. Mehra as a woman representative of her class, caste and generation. Consequently she takes Lata to Calcutta to remove her from the polluting and threatening presence of Kabir. As the novel meanders along, we come across other

suitors of Lata. Thus, the instances of cultural hegemony due to Mehra's ideology is also seen in the novel.

Cultural hegemony is also crucial aspect to examine the ideology throughout the novel. The English people always hegemonize the Italians. Hegemony is the idea examined by Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci to investigate the dominating power of the ruling class to rule the other classes. Ashcroft et. al. write about hegemony in *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies* as:

Hegemony is important because the capacity to influence the thought of the colonized is by far the most sustained and potent operation of imperial power in colonized regions. Indeed, an 'empire' is distinct from a collection of subject states forcibly controlled by a central power by virtue of the effectiveness of its cultural hegemony. Consent is achieved by the interpellation of the colonized subject by imperial discourse so that Euro-centric values [. . .] are accepted as [. . .] most natural or valuable. (116-17)

Cultural hegemony and the negative conception about the people of other religion and lower caste are religious and caste ideologies that are seen in the novel. The Muslims and Jatavs, the untouchables, are hegemonized by the Hindus and regard them as the enemies to whom they need to wage war or deal with:

Muslims threatening us from inside the country or across the border we can deal with. If Nehru were not so softhearted we would have dealt with them properly a few years ago. And now these jatavs, these' - his expression' conveyed distaste at the words - 'these scheduled caste people are becoming a problem once again. But let's see, let's see. ...' (137)

The Muslims and Jatavs have to face hegemony the Hindu cultural hegemony. The Hindus regard Muslims as the enemies to fight off while the Jatavs are regarded as

problems.

Terry Eagleton's account of understanding of Althusser's essay in his *Literary Theory: An Introduction* would be very important to see the dominant position of the ruling class. He says; "How is it, the essay asks, that human subjects very often come to submit themselves to the dominant ideologies of their societies – ideologies which Althusser sees as vital to maintain the power of a ruling class?"(149) Terry Eagleton, for example, merely points to the parallel lines of these two aspects and is not concerned with a new approach based on them. He states:

The relation of an individual "subject" to society as a whole in Althusser's theory is rather like the relation of the small child to his or her mirror image in Lacan's. In both cases, the human subject is supplied with a satisfyingly unified image of selfhood by identifying with an object which reflects this image back to it in a closed, narcissistic circle. In both cases, too, this image involves misrecognition, since it idealizes the subject's real situation. (172-73)

Althusser's perception of the way the subject is constituted is reflective of his idea of the anti-Humanist Marxism. While Humanism regarded the human being as free and self-conscious, for him, he or she is considered to be the agent of ideology participating in the reproduction of the conditions of his/her being subjected. In addition to this, whereas the classical concept of the subject commemorates the idea of the subject being the 'cause,' for Althusser, the subject is the 'effect' because the situation into which an individual is born precedes him/her and the subject is the effect of it. Therefore, he epitomizes that he or she as subject is always-already interpellated.

How a class ideology is responsible to construct a person's subjectivity can be seen in the dialogue between Maan and zamindar's son Rasheed. He shows how his

thought and subjectivity is affected by the zamindari system his grandfather and father practice:

'So you're zamindars?' Maan was surprised.

Rasheed thought this over before saying: 'My grandfather was, before he divided his wealth among his sons. And so is my father and so is my, well, my uncle. As for myself . . . 'Well, who am I to set myself up in judgment in these matters? They are very happy, naturally, to keep things as they are. But I have lived in the village almost all my life, and I have seen the whole system. (216)

Rasheed describes the zamindari system, how it works and how the zamindars become happy in the misery of common people. The ideology of zamindari system and its impacts on individual subjectivity are clearly specified in his observation. The zamindars become happy exhorting money and making poor people suffer. They want their sons follow their footsteps and give their deeds the positive names like working for family honor:

I know how it works. The zamindars - and my family is not so extraordinary as to be an exception to this - the zamindars do nothing but make their living from the misery of others; and they try to force their sons into the same ugly mould as themselves.' Here Rasheed paused, and the area around the corners of his mouth tightened. 'If their sons want to do anything else, they make life miserable for them too,' he continued. 'They talk a great deal about family honor, but they have no sense of honor except to gratify the promises of pleasure they have made to themselves.' (216)

The choice of language, the use of the term honor, by the zamindars helps them to remain in power. Julian Wolfreys considers the relationship between language and power and states that language is not only an adjunct to forms of power but also the

articulation of that power. Referring to Foucault's view on relations between the subject and discourse, he goes further to point out that there are always a number of other elements present. He says:

[...] human subjectivity and identity itself is produced out of various discursive formations as a result of the subject's entry into language shot through and informed by figurations and encryptions of power, politics, historical, cultural and ideological remainders organized through particular relationships and networks. (66)

Formation of subjectivity thus starts when the subject enters the lingual world and thus language is a battlefield of ideologies. The subject's initiation with language creates an ideological interpellation of which he/she is unconscious. Language embodies ideological features and elements as it absorbs and reproduces them, thereby ultimately making them constructive of the subject's subjectivity. There are two different phases in the subject's exposition to language: infantile and mature years. In the mature years, the subject is alienated through the ideological interpellation that has both direct and dramatic modes. It is clear that the language used by the powerful groups gives them the power as it gives power to the zamindars over the common people in the novel.

To sum up, large numbers of ideologies come into play and they are subjected to the individual characters of the novel. Lata, her radical belief that she must know and love her man before the marriage going against the socio-cultural ideology that the family of the girl is responsible to arrange her marriage to a suitable boy, is the central subject subjected by various ideological position. Religious and caste ideologies play major role to forbid her love to a Muslim boy and finally, she has to flinch with the family decision and needs to marry a person her family regards

suitable for her. The novel brings forth racial, class, caste and religious ideologies of the mid-twentieth century Indian society along with their socio-cultural impacts.

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