



RESEARCH PAPER

Legitimizing Oppression: An Althusserian Study of Jamil Ahmed's *The Wandering Falcon*

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the coercion on downtrodden people and the role of the state to legitimize the oppression in Jamil Ahmed's *The Wandering Falcon* through the perspective of Althusser's function of repressive state apparatuses in the capitalist society. It also tends to highlight the factors of class inequalities, marginalization and oppression that cause suffering for the destitute class especially in tribal areas of Pakistan. The state uses repressive state apparatuses such as the judiciary and armed forces to oppress those who violate the ideology of the state by emerging as a threat to the interests of the ruling class. Henceforth, the lives of the under privileged people are so difficult in those areas that they have to fight the battle of their survival against state-sponsored oppression. This study contributes to resolving the problems of the downtrodden people who are struggling to cope up for their rights in Pakistan

Introduction

This research tends to explore the subjugation of the downtrodden people in tribal areas of Pakistan and the role of the state in legitimizing the oppression with reference to *The Wandering Falcon* by Jamil Ahmed. It delineates the prejudiced and imperialistic attitude of state and non-state forces towards the backward people of tribal areas. The oppressed people have to face a lot of problems while leading their lives in a society where the state instead of helping poor people, supports the oppression against them. The State also tries to pressurize poor and suppressed people and doesn't seem interested in providing them any kind of support against the oppressive forces.

This piece of work portrays the aspect of coercion on the people living in under privileged areas with reference to Althusser's working of Repressive State Apparatuses in the capitalist society to highlight the condition of the poor people

who are marginalized in the capitalist society. The condition of Pakistani politics has a decisive effect on Ahmed's writing. He tries to pen down the imbroglios of Pakistani politics in his writings.

The novel "*The Wandering Falcon*" is a debut novel of Jamil Ahmed, a retired bureaucrat who served in the remote areas of Pakistan such as Malakand, Chaghi, Swat Valley, Khyber, Hindu Kush, Quetta and some other Frontier areas. *The Wandering Falcon* portrays the subjugation and marginalization of poor villagers in tribal areas of Pakistan whose lives are of no worth there. Ahmed reveals the height of oppression in tribal areas through the character of a boy Tor Baz who becomes *The Wandering Falcon* by traveling along the borders of Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan and witnesses the oppression faced by the poor villagers. Tor Baz witnesses his parents' killing in the name of honor when he is five years old. He spectates the oppression of the state on the poor tribal people who get punishment for demanding their basic fundamental rights. State institutions call those tribal people for negotiations but instead of negotiating with them they are arrested, trialed in court and got the death sentence. He witnesses the women who are compelled to work as a prostitute in the slave market. He observes sex-slavery in the slave market of Mian Mandi. He observes the kidnapping of the teachers in those areas at the same time he witnesses the children abandoned and the killings of several poor people and their livestock for crossing the borders without documents which they cannot obtain because of not having a birth certificate.

Althusser in his essay *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, explains that the state is dominant over the residents of a country and operates as a tool to oppress the poor in the society. RSAs and ISAs are the two terminologies of Althusser's theory. He says that the poor and common people are the victims of the state. Sometimes they are forced cohesively and sometimes they are convinced mentally to accept their marginalization which is imposed on them by the ruling class. People are helpless before these apparatuses so they have no choice left except to follow the rules and regulations designed by the ruling class. "No class can hold State power over a long period without at the same time exercising its hegemony over and in the State Ideological Apparatuses" (Althusser,1970, p.146).

Repressive state apparatuses work by punishing the people who have a rebellious attitude towards the ideology of the state. It supports and works in favor of the rich in society. Even the ruling class, itself uses the repressive state apparatuses in the state to control the rebellious voices. Marx and Engels (1848) believes that the state facilitates the bourgeoisie class and the proletariat class is kept in the darkness having no resources to fulfill their basic necessities. (p.77). The plight of people who belong to the lower middle class in Pakistani society is somehow, unsatisfactory for humanity. Sometimes the reek condition is exposed when the poor women are raped or forced into sex slavery. The cultural hegemony of Pakistani society does not provide equal rights to the poor people who are living their lives below the line of

poverty. The subjugated people are relentlessly targeted by hardline groups in Pakistan. They have to lead their lives in very low condition. Some bigoted feudalists have prejudiced minds against poor people and they use state and non-state institutions including Jirga to make them victimized of their oppression. Every year some tribal people migrate to different areas of Pakistan to save their life. The state seems completely involved in this oppression against the poor people through ISAs and RSAs because sustained oppression is not possible without the support of the state.

Literature Review

This section of research sheds light on the studies on Jamil Ahmed's *The Wandering Falcon* and it also brings into light how much work has been done on Althusser's ISAs and RSAs. Jamil Ahmad (1931–2014) is a Pakistani retired civil servant, story writer and novelist who prefers to write in the English language and he is best known for his anthology. Ahmed is one of those writers who expose public atrocities without fear. He has tried his best to expose the hypocrisy and shortcomings of the powerful classes of society. He is the true realist in giving hints of the oppression by the cruel people on the weak people in Pakistani society. He is a realist fiction writer who does not remain in the world of imagination. Pakistani and Indian writers have similar thematic concerns, writing about the self and the nation. Some of the writers deal with the themes of Partition and war, while others write about immigration, the history of Pakistanis that continues with the aspect of migration and exile. They try to examine the issues of identity, hybridity, home, unemployment and economic mobility, oppression and marginalization.

The Wandering Falcon which is shortlisted for Man Asian Literary Prize, is widely known as Asia's highest literary award, in 2011. This novel is also a finalist for DSC prize for South Asian Literature in 2013. The novel can either be construed as a short story collection or a novel, based on differing perspectives. The book narrates the story of Tor Baz (the black falcon) and his travel through the remote tribal areas along the Pakistan - Afghan border where he experiences the lives of the ethnic Pashtuns. The stories travel through the strict code of conduct of the tribals known as *Pashtunwali*, the lawlessness of the land where women are traded as commodities, adultery and anarchism, silhouetted against the Baluch desert landscape.

Ahmed and Gull (2017) in their article Victims of honor killing in Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride* and Jamil Ahmed's *The Wandering Falcon* explore honor killing by applying the theory of disgrace, shame and honor which is associated with Post-colonial feminism. They try to highlight the perception of blame, shame and honor which is commonly linked with women who belong to the tribal areas. They illustrate the aspect of patriarchy and social practices and conventions of society. At

that time, a woman is considered a figure of honor. She is treated in a way like she is an object for the male members of the society which gives us an impression that they are treated like animals. She is presented as having no rights, unable to speak openly but has to obey others like the way Tor's mother is represented in the novel. Their family heads are responsible for choosing their future. Whereas a woman who takes part in adultery is marked as Kari and the best way for a man to protect his honor is to kill her. But on the other hand, a man who ignores to do this is considered a disrespectful man.

The article explores *The Wandering Falcon* as a story of a young couple, who are expelled from their tribe to escape from the barbaric practices which are imposed on the individuals who trespass the limits of matrimony and household. Their son, Tor Baz, who moves from the boss and the criminals and transforms himself into *The Wandering Falcon*, is represented such a character who visits all tribes, mountains, fields including the residents of the tribal people. Through the article, the authors formulate an astonishing portrayal of a world of tradition, compassion, devotion, ferocity, oppression, and tolerance in their article. (Ahmed & Gull, 2014, p.22-27)

In the article *Rootless identity in The Wandering Falcon* (2016), Padam Raj Khanal states that relocating cultural region interprets an amalgamation of identification in *The Wandering Falcon*. During the process in which a person adjusts to a new place, he begins to start endorsing the patterns of that specific culture. Along with the altering cultural location a person has to change his way of living too and as a result of it, a person has to face the physical and intellectual crisis. The protagonist of the novel, Tor Baz, encounters ethnic transformation in his life when he moves from one place to another.

Tor Baz is raised in a tribal culture, where he spent most of the early years of his life. He is assigned to follow the patterns of his culture regarding religion, language and social conduct. The social, cultural factors of a community define the identity of its individuals. Due to the endurance crisis, Tor Baz, along with his parents has to move towards the border where they come across another tribal community and as a result of interacting with multiple cultures, he is unable to find a consolidated identity. It is due to this that he is neither able to carry on with his authentic self nor transforms him completely according to the new tribal culture. He becomes a product of both cultures and acts as a detached man. (Khanal, 2016, p.31).

Shazia Sadaf in her article *Human dignity, the 'War on Terror' and post-9/11 Pakistani Fiction* (2018) portrays that *The Wandering Falcon* is a story of people belong to tribal areas who are not ready to make any compromise on their cultural values and consider those cultural values as the part of their religion but in reality, these cultural values have nothing to do with their religion. Furthermore, people of those areas have suffered a lot just because of the war against terror which was started after 9/11 and as a result, those innocent people have been suspected as a terrorist and

considered as other within the society. Likewise, she illustrates that tribal norms, custom values of the people belong to tribal areas and their sufferings as a result of the war against terror have been highlighted in Ahmed's work. (Sadaf, 2018, p.125)

Another Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci in *Letters from Prison* (1947) also gives his views about class domination in society. Gramsci says that cultural hegemony plays a vital role in the domination of the bourgeoisie class in a state. In a society, culture promotes the Bourgeoisie class. Those norms and views are fixed by the ruling class that becomes the hegemonic culture for the poor and the working class in the society. According to him, capitalist order is maintained with the help of the hegemonic power and coercive power should not be used to maintain order in society. He gives much importance to the culture of the ruling class. The bourgeoisie class gets dominancy over the working class. The Proletariat or the working class is destroyed at the hands of the ruling class. According to the above said Marxists, the state always supports the bourgeoisie class. (Gramsci,1947, p.80-85).

Hence, it can be pointed out on the basis of existing research that a bit of research work has been done on the novel, *The Wandering Falcon* by Jamil Ahmed from the perspective of post-colonial feminism, the war against terror and rootless identity but this study is a fresh study within the framework of Althusser's RSAs.

Material and Methods

This study tends to apply the qualitative method to analyze the text. It interprets and analyzes *The Wandering Falcon* with the support of Althusser's theory of state control through Repressive State Apparatuses that work violently and people are punished physically instead of convincing them mentally and they are forced to follow the rules and regulations which are imposed on them by the ruling class in the state. If any individual resists against the ideology of the state, the state becomes repressive and punishes people physically because no individual is authorized to challenge the ideology of the state. The police, the Army, the Government, the Civil Administration, the Courts and the prisons are among the RSAs. These apparatuses work under the ruling class of the state. The ruling class uses them to dominate the lower and middle class of the state. If anyone tries to break or go against the rules which are designed by the ruling class, he is punished violently. All the authoritative institutions work to facilitate the ruling class. But they obstruct the ways of the poor people in the state. The severe behavior is seen with the poor and oppressed people in the state through RSAs. (Althusser,1970, p.176).

In RSAs, people are forced to act upon the charts and Police and Army follow the signals from the ruling class to maintain the discipline in the state. They are working according to the desires of the bourgeoisie. The ruling parties keep on changing but RSAs remain in the hands of the ruling class. According to Althusser,

the state puts pressure on the poor and common people and they become a puppet in the hands of the rich class. Courts, police and even the army favor the ruling class to oppress the poor class in the state. State institutions work with the ruling class as they become part of it. (Althusser,1970, p.177)

Discussion

This chapter sheds light on the use of Repressive State Apparatuses by state institutions to oppress the marginalized people in the society with reference to the novel *The Wandering Falcon* by Jamil Ahmed. The chapter has exposed the condition of downtrodden people in the tribal areas of Pakistan by revealing that how the state legitimizes the oppression of the poor people living in tribal areas sometimes through its capitalistic policies and sometimes through the use of RSA. The state uses repressive state apparatuses to suppress those people who emerge as a threat to the ideology of the state so that none of the poor public dares to violate the ideology of the state

The Wandering Falcon highlights the use of repressive state apparatus by the state to crush the insurgency of a few Baloch people whose only fault is to demand their basic rights from the state. Roza Khan is involved in an armed insurgency against the state therefore, he spends many years of his life in the struggle for getting equal rights in the tribe as a result, he and his companions are often attacked by military aircraft and their families are arrested and tortured by the armed forces as one member of the organization named Jangu (2011) explains the conflict between state and tribal people as, "Six new moons have we seen since the trouble started. In this time, so many things have happened – mostly evil. Our crops have been burned, our grain stolen, and our animal flocks sold away or slaughtered. We have pointed our guns at them, and they at us. We have killed, and so have they. By now, even their airplanes hold no terror for us" (p.22).

The above-mentioned lines reveal the use of repressive state apparatuses to suppress the people who have a rebellious attitude towards the state but despite all tactics of oppression the insurgents remain resolute for continuing their struggle and as a result of this constant oppression the poor Baloch people who are fighting for their sovereignty, gradually become fearless and ready to face the consequences of their involvement in anti-state activities this is how repressive state apparatus leads the marginalized people towards a state in which they get ready to sacrifice their lives in a war of their sovereignty and this disastrous clash between state and poor Baloch people causes many casualties from both sides moreover state faces an absolute failure in enforcing its policies on the common masses in tribal areas by using ideological state apparatus and that failure of ISA leads towards a chaotic situation among state and tribal people as Ahmed (2011) explains:

“Last week, I met a Baluch who is a charcoal burner near the big Salt Lake in the north. He told me that in our absence from our homes, our families have been made prisoners by the authorities. They—our women and children, even those remotely related to us—are living in jails. Bred and brought up in the deserts, they are now living and sleeping in evil-smelling dark rooms in the city” (p.23).

These lines indicate the distressing upshots of oppression on the Pakistani population particularly the people who belong to tribal areas and the great effort of the downtrodden people to achieve their civil liberties in Pakistan. The state institutions arrest the families of those who start resisting against the state policies and turn their lives into hell so that those who challenge the writ of the state can be made an example for those who are thinking about revolting against it so that no free mind dares to emerge as a threat for an ideology of the state henceforth repressive state apparatus is used without considering any moral value because all ethics, values, and laws are formed by the state and state preserve the right to change those ethical and moral values when it requires and the dilemma is that only poor class is effected by state apparatuses and those who have power and authority are the people who manipulate state ideology and apparatuses according to their material benefits. Just because of this thing:

Althusser believes that ideology is a thing that has a material existence and those who revolt against the state ideology, which is actually designed to control the minds of the poor, are treated ruthlessly by using repressive state apparatus (Althusser,1970, p.113). as in this case state through its armed forces burn the houses of insurgents’ and prison their families so that those insurgents can be convinced forcefully to surrender. The brutalities of law enforcement agencies also confer that how the oppressed and subjugated *Baloch people* endure as Other and Outsiders within the boundaries of their homeland and treated brutally in the same way as they belong to any opponent country. Therefore, the Baloch start to regard themselves as people of outskirts within their homeland and start armed resistance against the state to get rid of sustained oppression.

The continuous conflict between state and Baloch militants come to its end when the militant group receives an invitation from the military for a peace agreement and ceasefire,” In the last few days they had come upon two travelers who had heard that the government was willing to hold discussions with them under a flag of truce, and to suspend hostilities while the talks lasted’ (p.25). The insurgents decide to visit the public office for a peace dialogue so after a continuous journey, the caravan including seven men and their Sardar reach the public post office where they inform the government officials that they are called for a peace agreement hence they are asked to wait for three or four days in a guest house where they are served with a proper meal. After four days, all of those seven men and their Sardar are unexpectedly trialed in a court on charges of killing army troops in place of having a

peace dialogue with them to address their genuine concerns. The call for a peace treaty works as a trap for the militants to trial them for the criminal activities which they have committed against the state.

The insurgents take a stance that they have been called for a peace treaty so the forced trial cannot be imposed on them as their Sardar says, "We came for talks." He waved the paper in the direction of the voice that had addressed him. "Read this," he said. "I know this paper," said the other man. "It is of no value. It carries no signature" (p.28) Therefore, all of them are sentenced to death because of their rebellious activities against the state which indicates that the state is the ultimate power and no individual is authorized to challenge the writ of the state. As in this case, the state firstly enforces its decision of eliminating the Sardar system from the tribal areas and convinces the people through ISA for the implementation of the state's ideology but when the people revolt against the state's ideology and start insurgency then they are tackled through repressive state apparatus and all of those insurgents are sentenced to death even after ensuring them a peace agreement. In this way, the state utilizes its authority and exercises its power which individual has no right to challenge, and those who cannot get convinced of state ideology and dare to challenge it same as Roza Khan and his companions in *The Wandering Falcon* (2011) are treated ruthlessly by the state with the help of repressive state apparatus.

"Hamesh Gul talked about The Kuki Khels which were the second-largest of the eight where one of the sons of the Sardar had raised the standard of revolt against the Pakistani government. As a result, their castle (we were to see this imposing structure later) had been bombed by the Pakistani air force, and there it stood to this day—a blackened empty shell. The son had obstinately argued that since the government had damaged the building, it was for them to repair it" (p.78).

Hamesh Gul's story elaborates another example of RSA in which a son of Sardar challenges the writ of the state and starts a revolt against the state as a result the state destroys his castle through consecutive bombardment but soon he realizes that he is not powerful enough to retaliate against the state, therefore, he prefers to solve out the matter through negotiations and as a compensation he demands the repairing of the destroyed building to solve the matter which also reveals that no individual is strong enough to stand against the state because the state has armed institutions to suppress any rebellious activity against it as the state leaves no time to make revolt unsuccessful through the usage of air force henceforth the one who dares to take a stand against the state eventually surrenders in front of the state soon after the state starts using repressive state apparatus to counter his rebellious activities.

Conclusion

The plight of people belong to the lower middle class in Pakistani society is somehow, unsatisfactory for humanity. The cultural hegemony of Pakistani society does not provide equal rights to the poor people who are living their lives below the line of poverty. Every year some tribal people migrate to different areas of Pakistan to save their life. The state is completely involved in this oppression against the poor people through RSAs because sustained oppression is not possible without the support of the state. The situation for downtrodden people becomes even worse when they raise their voices against injustices in the society. The state suppresses their resistance through judicial institutes and armed forces. The marginalization or stigmatization of less prestigious social groups through RSAs is a common phenomenon, especially in third-world countries. The poor tribal people are always sidelined and are exploited fully by the mighty and powerful even in the most elevated and civilized communities and societies. Moreover, by the harsh and uncongenial approach of behavior, they are forced to exclude somewhere else to an alternative place for their survival but the marginalized people often find ways to negotiate such oppression sometimes through alternative means of articulation and sometimes through violent resistance.

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