

# THE FAMILIAL GRIP: ALTHUSSERIAN IDEOLOGY AND THE BATTLE FOR IDENTITY IN WAJAHAT ALI'S THE DOMESTIC CRUSADERS

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## ABSTRACT

This article explores the role of family as an Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) in shaping the ideological subjectivity of the Pakistani Muslim diaspora in Wajahat Ali's *The Domestic Crusaders*. Employing Louis Althusser's theory of Ideology and Interpellation, this study examines how the family unit functions as a primary agent of ideological conditioning, enforcing cultural traditions while also negotiating the pressures of assimilation in a post-9/11 Western context. The research contends that the family's role as an ISA creates internal conflicts between generations, leading to identity crises and ideological precarity. By analyzing key moments in the play, this article reveals how familial interpellation operates within the broader ideological struggles of diaspora communities, ultimately shaping or resisting subject formation.

**Keywords:** Family, Ideology, Interpellation, Diaspora, *The Domestic Crusaders*, Cultural Hegemony, Generational Conflict

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## INTRODUCTION

The family is often perceived as a sanctuary of cultural preservation and moral guidance. However, from an Althusserian perspective, it functions as a powerful Ideological State Apparatus (ISA), subtly instilling dominant ideological values within individuals (Althusser 85). In diaspora communities, the family plays a crucial role in negotiating between native traditions and the host country's ideological structures, creating a unique space where conflicting identities are forged and contested. This article examines Wajahat Ali's *The Domestic Crusaders* through the lens of Althusser's theory, investigating how familial interpellation shapes the ideological subjectivity of its characters. Ali's play captures the ideological tensions that arise within a Pakistani Muslim-American family in the aftermath of 9/11, highlighting generational and ideological conflicts between parents and children. The family is both a source of cultural continuity and an enforcer of ideological expectations that attempt to stabilize identity amidst external ideological pressures (Bhabha

52). The study aims to reveal how familial interpellation operates in the play, shaping individual perceptions of belonging, resistance, and assimilation.

### Theoretical Framework:

**Althusser, Family, and Ideology** Althusser conceptualizes ideology as a material force that exists within institutions such as schools, religion, and the family, reproducing dominant social norms through interpellation (Althusser 90). Within the family structure, interpellation functions by positioning individuals within preordained ideological frameworks, ensuring that they accept cultural and moral values as natural (Hall 105). The interplay between ideological submission and resistance within the family leads to internal struggles that define diaspora identity formation (Spivak 73).

Homi Bhabha's notion of hybridity is also pertinent to understanding the ideological crises in *The Domestic Crusaders* (Bhabha 112). The

characters in the play inhabit a liminal space between Pakistani and American ideologies, creating fractured subjectivities. This study extends Althusser's theory by incorporating postcolonial critiques of identity formation, highlighting how diaspora families act as ideological battlegrounds rather than passive cultural vessels.

#### The Family as an Ideological State Apparatus in *The Domestic Crusaders*:

The family in *The Domestic Crusaders* operates as a microcosm of the larger ideological struggles between tradition and modernity, religious adherence and secular liberalism, and cultural preservation and assimilation. The father, Salman, embodies an older generation's adherence to traditional Pakistani values, acting as a gatekeeper of cultural morality. His insistence on maintaining cultural and religious norms reflects an unconscious compliance with ideological conditioning. His wife, Kulsoom, reinforces this familial ideology by emphasizing honor, gender roles, and respect for tradition (Ali 78).

Conversely, the younger generation—Salahuddin, Fatima, and Ghafur—grapples with these interpellations in distinct ways. Salahuddin, the eldest son, resists familial ideology by embracing American liberal values, challenging traditional patriarchal authority. Fatima, the daughter, adopts a hybrid identity, oscillating between feminist activism and Islamic consciousness. Ghafur, the youngest, is caught in the ideological crossfire, displaying an internal struggle to reconcile competing ideological forces. Each of these responses illustrates how interpellation is not always passively accepted but can be resisted or reconfigured (Butler 47).

#### Gender, Patriarchy, And Ideological Control:

A key aspect of familial ideological interpellation in the play is its reinforcement of patriarchal norms. The mother, Kulsoom, exemplifies the internalization of traditional gender roles, acting as an agent of patriarchal ideology (Ali 82). Her interactions with Fatima highlight the generational and ideological clash over gender expectations. Fatima's defiance against imposed femininity represents an active rejection of the ideological conditioning that the family attempts to enforce. This struggle aligns with Gayatri Spivak's argument that ideological subjugation within the

family disproportionately affects women, who are expected to uphold cultural purity while negotiating their autonomy (Spivak 87). The familial ISA, therefore, not only operates at the level of cultural reproduction but also as a site of gendered ideological control, further complicating identity negotiations within diaspora families.

#### Resistance and Counter-Interpellation:

Although the family serves as an ISA that attempts to regulate identity, *The Domestic Crusaders* also portrays resistance through counter-interpellation. Fatima's engagement in activism challenges the ideological mandates of both her family and Western liberalism. Salahuddin's conscious rejection of his father's expectations exemplifies an attempt to break free from ideological conditioning, even as he remains interpellated by another ideology (Ali 101). Ghafur's ideological oscillation reflects the struggle of second-generation immigrants who must reconcile parental ideology with the reality of Western sociopolitical structures. These moments of resistance indicate that while familial interpellation is powerful, it is not absolute. As Althusser suggests, ideological subjection is never entirely complete; subjects can recognize their ideological positioning and attempt to disrupt it (Althusser 95). The play presents the family not as a monolithic ideological force but as a contested space where ideological battles are continuously fought and negotiated.

#### Conclusion:

This study has demonstrated that the family in *The Domestic Crusaders* functions as an ISA that enforces cultural, religious, and patriarchal ideologies through interpellation. The generational tensions within the play illustrate the ideological struggles of diaspora families, highlighting how identity is shaped, contested, and reconfigured. While the family attempts to maintain ideological stability, the characters' responses reveal the possibility of counter-interpellation and identity negotiation.

By applying Althusser's theoretical framework alongside postcolonial critiques, this research underscores the complexity of diaspora identity formation within familial structures. Future research could explore comparative analyses of familial ideological interpellation in other diaspora narratives, broadening our understanding of how

ideological conditioning operates across cultural and national contexts

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