

# PRECARIOUS IDEOLOGICAL SUBJECT POSITION OF A DIASPORA FAMILY: AN ALTHUSSERIAN STUDY OF THE DOMESTIC CRUSADERS

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the precarious ideological subject position of a diaspora family in Wajahat Ali's *The Domestic Crusaders* through the theoretical lens of Louis Althusser's concepts of Ideology, Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs), and Interpellation. The research investigates the role of media and family as ISAs in shaping the identity of diaspora individuals, illustrating how dual ideological interpellations create a state of ideological liminality and identity crises. Using a qualitative content analysis approach, the study highlights the unconscious internalization of dominant ideologies and their impact on diaspora subjectivity, demonstrating that diaspora individuals navigate conflicting ideological landscapes that shape their self-perception, attitudes, and social interactions. This article contributes to the broader discourse on diaspora studies by offering an Althusserian interpretation of ideological subjectivity in post-9/11 American society, where Islamophobia and cultural hybridity intersect to produce existential ambiguities.

**Keywords:** Ideology, Ideological State Apparatus, Interpellation, Diaspora, Subjectivity

## INTRODUCTION

In contemporary diaspora literature, the tension between cultural identity and ideological subjugation remains a central theme. Althusser (1970) defines ideology as "the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence," highlighting the unconscious yet pervasive role ideology plays in shaping subjectivity. His concept of Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) emphasizes how institutions such as media and family propagate dominant ideologies, reinforcing ideological subject positions through interpellation. This article examines the ideological subjectivity of a Pakistani American Muslim diaspora family in Wajahat Ali's *The Domestic Crusaders*, illustrating how interpellation by competing ideological forces produces identity crises and ideological precarity.

### Theoretical Framework

Althusser's theories of Ideology, ISAs, and Interpellation provide the foundation for this study. According to Althusser, ISAs function

through ideology rather than force, subtly shaping individuals' perceptions of themselves and their social realities (Althusser 85). Interpellation, the process by which ideology hails individuals into subject positions, ensures compliance with dominant ideological narratives. In diaspora contexts, individuals experience interpellation from multiple, often conflicting ISAs, leading to ideological instability. In *The Domestic Crusaders*, characters are subjected to interpellation by both American liberal ideology and Pakistani Muslim ideology, resulting in an unresolved ideological duality.

### Media as an Ideological State Apparatus

Media functions as a potent ISA that disseminates dominant ideological discourses, reinforcing hegemonic narratives that shape public perception and individual subjectivity. Following 9/11, American media intensified Islamophobic rhetoric, positioning Muslims as the ideological 'other' (Samman 45). In *The Domestic Crusaders*, media interpellation

manifests in the family's interactions with television broadcasts, which portray Muslims as inherent threats to Western values. Salman, the patriarch, reacts with exasperation: "Goddamn media. Same nonsense every day! Blame Islam. Blame Muslims. Blame immigrants for everything!" (Ali 57). His frustration underscores the way media hailing forces diaspora individuals to negotiate their ideological subject positions within an exclusionary discourse. Fatima, the youngest daughter, experiences a similar interpellation but responds differently. As an activist engaged in social justice movements, she internalizes an oppositional ideological stance, rejecting mainstream media narratives while embracing a radicalized Muslim identity. Her reaction—"Hate our people? Oppress Palestinians? Own Hollywood, distort the media?" (Ali 62)—illustrates her ideological resistance yet also reveals her subjugation within an alternative ideological framework. Thus, media hailing does not merely impose a dominant ideology; it also compels individuals to assert counter-hegemonic identities that are nonetheless ideologically structured.

According to Said (1997), media plays a crucial role in shaping the discourse surrounding marginalized communities. The post-9/11 era saw an increase in biased representations of Muslim identities in Western media (Huntington 56). This dynamic exacerbates the ideological crisis experienced by diaspora individuals, further fragmenting their self-perception.

#### Family as an Ideological State Apparatus

In diaspora contexts, family serves as a primary site of ideological reproduction, transmitting cultural, religious, and nationalistic values that counter or complement dominant ideologies. In *The Domestic Crusaders*, the family unit functions as an ISA that interpellates its members into Pakistani Muslim ideological subject positions. Kulsoom, the mother, embodies traditional values, urging her children to adhere to Pakistani cultural norms despite their American upbringing. Her ideological positioning is evident in her interactions with Fatima: "A woman's honor is her family's honor. You disgrace us by challenging our traditions" (Ali 78). This statement exemplifies how familial interpellation enforces cultural continuity, even in displacement. Ghafur, the youngest son, embodies

the precarious ideological subject position of second-generation immigrants. Torn between his father's traditional values and his exposure to American secularism, he oscillates between ideological affiliations. When confronted with media portrayals of Muslims as extremists, he expresses confusion rather than outright rejection or acceptance: "Are we what they say we are?" (Ali 85). His uncertainty highlights the fragmented subjectivity produced by dual ideological interpellations, reinforcing Althusser's assertion that ideology operates unconsciously, shaping individuals' self-perceptions without their full awareness.

#### The Impact of Dual Interpellations on Diaspora Identity

The ideological precarity experienced by the characters in *The Domestic Crusaders* underscores the broader struggles of diaspora communities. Subjected to both American liberal ideology and Pakistani Muslim ideology, the family members navigate a liminal space where ideological allegiances are fluid and contested. Althusser (75) posits that "all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects," meaning that individuals cannot exist outside ideology but can only move within its structures. This ideological flux manifests in the characters' conflicting attitudes, moral ambiguities, and fluctuating perceptions of belonging.

For example, Salahuddin, the eldest son, seeks to assimilate into American culture but remains subject to familial interpellation, preventing him from fully embracing Western liberal ideology. Conversely, Fatima actively resists American media narratives but remains entrapped within an oppositional ideological subjectivity. These contradictions illustrate the inescapability of ideological interpellation, reinforcing Althusser's claim that subjects cannot recognize their subjection as subjection (Althusser 89).

#### Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the ideological subject position of the diaspora family in *The Domestic Crusaders* is marked by precariousness due to dual interpellations by conflicting ISAs. Media and family serve as primary ideological apparatuses that shape identity formation, producing ideological ambivalence, internal

contradictions, and existential uncertainties. Althusserian analysis of diaspora subjectivity reveals that ideological interpellation is neither monolithic nor unidirectional; rather, it operates through multiple, intersecting ideological structures that individuals navigate in complex ways. Future research may further explore the intersection of Althusserian ideology with postcolonial and intersectional theories to deepen the understanding of diaspora identity formation in transnational contexts.

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