

Exploring the Geometry of God (2008) as a Critique of Zia's Islamisation of Pakistan

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Abstract

Khan's The Geometry of God (2008) is a representation of the conflict between the hard-line Islamists, and progressive and rational Muslims during General Zia's government in Pakistan. The present paper attempts a textual analysis of the novel in the light of Althusser's model of Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) and Repressive State Apparatus (RSA) (1970/71). Althusser (2008) propounded that State operates through ISAs and RSA to maintain the hegemony and power of the ruling class. ISAs include the educational system, the family, the media, the church (religion), the culture etc. operating through "ideology". Contrastingly, the RSA consists of the police, army, courts, the prison etc. that operate through the principle of "violence". The paper explores how RSA and ISAs functioned to establish and sustain the ruling ideology during the Zia regime in Pakistan. Khan notes that General Zia started the process of Islamisation with the help of Ideological and Repressive state apparatuses. The military dictator's regime used the educational system, the family, the religion, and the media ISA to strengthen, maintain and internalise the ruling ideology – Islamic ideology - among the masses. However, Zahoor and his colleagues challenged ideological apparatuses of the state and presented an alternate ideology. To deal with such cases of ideological dissent, the state used Repressive tools to protect and uphold the ruling ideology. Despite the use of ISAs and violence, the ideology of the marginalized cannot be eliminated altogether. This message is exhibited through the young characters of Amal, Noman and Mehwish who show strong resilience against the ruling ideology and continue to fight for an inclusive and broader vision of Islam and Pakistaniness.

1. Introduction

The Geometry of God (2008) is set in Pakistan during the Zia regime and its aftermath in the last two decades of twentieth century. The novel's plot revolves around Zahoor, a university professor who teaches Evolution. Other characters include Zahoor's granddaughters, Amal and Mehwish, and Noman, the son of a political leader of Jammāt-i-Pedaish (Party of Creation). The novel depicts the process of Islamisation of Pakistan by General Zia and his allies. The central concern of the novel is the ideological conflict between the hard-line Islamists, and the progressive and rational Muslims like Zahoor representing science. The conflict reaches the climax when the representatives of Jammāt-i-Pedaish charge Professor Zahoor with blasphemy. After a lengthy trial, when he is acquitted by the court, his opponents opt for violence. The violence takes lives of several people including Zahoor, his son, and his close friend, Junayd.

The novel is a critique of Islamisation/radicalization of Pakistani society during Zia's regime. The present study explores how far Althusser's model of Repressive State Apparatus (RSA) and Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) is relevant and useful in understanding the concept of State and its use of certain public and private institutions for power and hegemony of the ruling class.

Thus, the present study explores how different public and private institutions were used by the state to serve the political interests of the ruling elite. The study argues that General Zia employed his Islamist ideology through different state apparatus such as education, family, media, culture, law, police, and the military to establish and consolidate his political hegemony.

2. Literature Review

The Geometry of God has been analysed from several perspectives including feminism, national identity and identification, and geological theory (e.g. Cilano 2013; Zinck 2011; Waterman 2015; Shamsie, 2017). Cilano (2013) argues that the novel “explores the distance between state-sponsored ideologies and characters’ efforts to articulate a meaningful sense of collective belonging” (p. 133). The novel brings together conspiracies and homo-social bonds among the male characters to explain their overlapping relation to power. However, the female characters negotiate their place in the power relations suggesting the possibility of presenting a more inclusive narrative of “real” Pakistan. Cilano concludes that the novel attempts a redefinition of a “good Muslim” or a “real” Pakistani by challenging Amal’s status of an “object” and “anecdote” to attain the status of “subject”.

Zinck (2011) examines *The Geometry of God* “focusing on the tensions between radical Islam and rationalism, as well as on poetics of dissent” (p. 02). Zinck uses Beer’s theory of plate tectonics (1989) in which Beer draws an insightful parallel between the processes of unfixing and slippage and the Derridean idea of epistemological “ungrounding” or *différance*. When this geological concept is applied to interpret the construction of cultural meaning in national contexts, it functions, like *différance*, to epitomize intrinsic instability, the ever “deferred” shifting configurations of national and cultural identities. Zinck argues that the novel’s ideological argument maps out relationships that dichotomize into right/wrong binaries resonant with Huntington’s thesis of Clash and discourses of othering. He concludes that the novel presents the tensions and frictions in the context of modernity, secularism and Islam’s engagement with globalization.

Waterman (2015) in his chapter on *The Geometry of God* explores the clash between modern science and orthodox faith in General Zia’s Pakistan. He has used Naveeda Khan’s concept of ‘Muslim Becoming’ (2012) as a critical lens to discuss how different characters with contradictory visions present two opposite approaches to be better Muslim and better Pakistani. He argues that the central metaphor in the novel is blindness. Through this metaphor, the novel explores ways for how people must learn to see, whether to search and read a fossil, or to imagine/construct a Muslim nation. The enlightened characters of the novel, like Zahoor and Amal, see no contradiction between science and religion. These characters possess whole sight, and in their process of ‘Muslim becoming’ seeking and striving is much more important than achieving.

Kabir (2011) analyses *The Geometry of God* for Uzma Aslam Khan’s “deployment of a complex symbolic apparatus constructed from prehistory, geography and history” (p. 173). She argues that Khan has delineated a deep topography for Pakistan as source of emotional and symbolic re-rooting. Drawing on the prehistoric geological richness of Pakistan, Khan’s topography presents an alternative mode of being a “real Pakistani” instead of defining Pakistaniness through Islamicist strategies.

Naizr (2013) argues that the novel presents a conflict between a scientific view of religion and religious view of science wherein both the opposite groups assert their authority against the other. He concludes that the novel presents Islam as against rationality and science. This has been achieved by the narrative technique as all the three narrators belong to the secular group. Consequently, the leading secular character, Zahoor, is portrayed and discussed in positive and admirable light. Lastly, favoring a Sufi version of Islam, the novel presents rationality and science as internal but suppressed version of Islam.

Lastly, Shamsie (2017) notes that Khan in *The Geometry of God* “continues her preoccupation with Pakistan’s antiquity and geography to define a Pakistani identity...” (p. 411). Constructed in three alternating narrative voices of Amal, Mehwish, and Noman, the novel revolves around the debate between knowledge and bigotry during Zia’s regime. Besides blasphemy laws, the novel presents a discourse on the intellectual and mystical dimension of Islam represented by Zahoor. Shamsie argues that all three narrators fight “lone, difficult battles before they attain self-realisation and self-fulfilment” (p. 413). Shamsie concludes that in this powerful tale of a nation’s battle for self-definition, the novel ultimately moves beyond darkness and violence as Noman finds courage to shun his father’s ideology and finds redemption through his love for Mehwish; while Amal’s self-empowerment leads to the discovery of a new kind of whale.

A brief overview of the available studies on *The Geometry of God* shows that the novel has been under critical attention for its portrayal of the conflict between Islam and science focusing on the question of true Muslim and/or true national (Pakistani) identity. However, there has not been any significant study of the novel from Marxist perspective. Therefore, this study attempts a Marxist critique of the novel using Althusser’s framework of ISAs and RSA to analyse how Pakistani state, represented by Zia government and his allies, used the ideological and repressive state apparatuses to maintain its hegemony and power upon the masses.

3. Theoretical Framework

The French Marxist philosopher, Althusser published his most influential work, an essay titled “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” in 1970. The essay discussed how societies reproduce the relations of production which are the basic criteria for their functioning. Althusser, discusses the reason behind the continued exploitation of labour class by the elite/dominant class, which for him, can be understood through the concept of Ideological State Apparatuses.

Althusser (2008) notes that the classic Marxist theory describes the State as “the state apparatus” which represses and exploits the lower classes by reinforcing the dominance of already powerful through its apparatuses including the government, the police, the courts, the prisons, and the army etc. He views this functioning of the State as rather simplistic. He argues that the State apparatus is more complex as it comprises of the two distinct yet overlapping institutions – the Repressive State Apparatuses and the Ideological State Apparatuses.

Althusser uses the term, the Repressive State Apparatus for all the institutions that the classic Marxist theory has already identified including courts, prisons, police, and the army. However, he adds the new concept of the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) which function in the private domain. Althusser defines ISAs as “a certain number of realities which present themselves to the immediate observer in the form of distinct and specialized institutions” (2008, p. 16). He proposes

a list of ISAs which includes the religious ISA, the educational ISA, the legal ISA, the political ISA, the trade-union ISA, the communications ISA, and the cultural ISA.

According to Althusser there is a clear distinction between the RSA and the ISAs. The primary difference between the both is that “the Repressive State Apparatus functions ‘by violence’, whereas, the Ideological State Apparatuses *function ‘by ideology’*” (2008, p. 19). Further, Althusser claims that the RSA is one as it operates under the command of a unified leadership of government, whereas, in contrast, there is a plurality of ISAs. The unified RSA belongs entirely to the public domain. On the contrary, the ISAs belong to the private domain of churches, political parties, families etc. This makes ISAs less visible and more autonomous.

However, Althusser also stresses on the overlapping nature of the RSA and ISAs. He claims that there is no such a thing as a purely repressive or ideological State apparatuses as both work in close coordination with each other: “This is the fact that the (Repressive) State Apparatus functions massively and predominantly by *repression* (including physical repression), while functioning secondarily by ideology...” (2008, p. 19). Similarly, “the Ideological State Apparatuses function massively and predominantly *by ideology*, but they also function secondarily by repression....” (2008, p. 19). In other words, RSA maintains the economic dominance of the ruling class through the means of coercion, violence and force. The State institutions such as, the police, the courts, the army are used against the working class to compel them to do certain actions. Conversely, ISAs function through a discourse on ideology where the family, the religion, the educational system etc. naturalize the process of subjugation to certain rules, ways of life and thought processes developed, maintained, and reinforced by the dominating classes to ensure their possession of power in the State. Though the institutions involved in the ISAs seem to be vastly different from each other, their common aim of functioning through and reasserting the ideology of the powerful class keeps them unified.

Finding Althusser’s framework relevant to this study, we have used the concept of RSA and ISAs to explore how General Zia and his political and ideological allies used various public and private institutions in the novel to develop, sustain and reinforce the ideology of Islam, for the purpose of exploitation of the working class in Pakistan, and to maintain and consolidate their own dominance and power.

Having explained the theoretical framework, the following sections will discuss the data in the light of theory, first through ISAs and then through RSA.

4. Ideological State Apparatuses in *The Geometry of God*

ISAs are used by the state and private institutions to ensure the power and control of the dominant groups. ISAs maintain the dominance of the ruling class by defining and controlling people’s ideas, values, and beliefs. In *The Geometry of God*, Khan has depicted how Zia and his allies especially *Jamaat-i-Pedaish* used ISAs to achieve their ideological, political, and material designs. This is discussed in detail below.

4.1. The Educational ISA

National curricula and textbooks are key factors in shaping the identities and value system of the children (Nayyar & Salim, 2005). Aware of the significance of educational system, General Zia used textbooks as a tool to inculcate his ideology. For this purpose, he radicalized the national

curricula, for example, the subject of “*Dinya’at*” (the study of religions) was replaced with “*Islamia’at*” (the study of Islam) (Awan, 2012). Moreover, the textbooks of science were massively infused with religion during the Zia regime (Hoodbhoy, 2016). Furthermore, he made the subject of Pakistan Studies compulsory at school, college and university levels. Through this subject, the young minds were infused with retrogressive ideas resulting in conservative and intolerant attitude (Ali, 2005). This process of the radicalization and Islamisation of the education/textbooks remains a key concern in *The Geometry of God*.

In the novel, Khan highlights how the Islamisation of education was done by the state with the help of *Jammat-e-Pedaish* (JP). JP seriously pursues the “mission of introducing an educational system in keeping with the spirit of Islam” (Khan, 2008, p. 23). The purpose behind it is the moral reformation of the youth of Pakistan. As Mirza Anwar, the Vice Chairman of JP, believes that the young Pakistani is a “cultural freak” with “whimsy religion”. He claims, that through the Islamisation of education they “will save him from foreign influences – like science! Like films!” (Khan, 2008, p. 23). The most important aspect of Islamisation of education was rewriting textbooks and to prove through Jinnah’s speeches that he wanted Pakistan to be an Islamic state rather than a secular progressive state. Mirza Anwar assigns his son, Noman the task of rewriting the textbooks of science, which includes removing any references that may be contradictory to the Quran and Islam. Before he could start working on his task, Noman reflects on his new assignment in these words: “eliminate scientists from science books. Use verses from the Quran to prove their laws false. There have never been, and can never be, any discoveries because everything is already known”. (Khan, 2008, p. 110)

The novel elucidates the process of Islamisation of science, or what Khan calls ‘pure science’ by deleting references to the scientific theories and discoveries after quoting the relevant Quranic verses. The following example shows how Noman interprets verses from the Quran to explain the physical and natural phenomena.

The Quran states: Art thou not aware that it is God who has made subservient to you all that is on the earth, and the ships that sail through the sea at His behest. (22:65)
[Noman’s interpretation]: If ships sink, it is by His law. If they float, it is by His law. Which we can’t question or understand. Delete all references to Archimedes and his so-called principle. (Khan, 2008, p. 111)

The example illustrates the use of institution of education as an ISA to achieve political gains by a military dictator. By projecting a narrow and monolithic view of science from the dominant conservative religious perspective, the state could control the faculty of reasoning and critical thinking of the people and make them lead into a particular ideological direction.

Besides textbooks, teachers also play the role of ISA in the novel. Mehwish who is influenced by the ideology of her scientist grandfather, Zahoor, does not like Miss Fauzia, the head teacher at her school, for her ideological role in the shape of rigid moralizing and policing. Miss Fauzia represents conservative version of Islam as she opposes anything creative that Mehwish does. She does not endorse the way Mehwish compensates her blindness by using her insight and power of imagination for learning. Miss Fauzia looks at everything through the lens of her ideology. Her obsession with moral policing of students leaves her unsuccessful in her primary duty as a teacher.

Mehwish shares that according to Miss Fauzia "...the teacher does not exist except to correct..." (Khan, 2008, p. 151). Therefore, Miss Fauzia is always seen correcting and moralising her students rather than helping them in their learning. Consequently, she rejects Mehwish's learning experience saying that she (Mehwish) gets "pleasures of the senses" which are wrong as they stop Mehwish from feeling the pain of the world (Khan, 2008, p. 151). The following passage narrated by Mehwish illustrates her non-traditional way of learning with the support of Miss Amna and Miss Fauzia's negative reactions to it:

Miss Amna and I were playing this word game one day then I started drawing her feeling front and back making sure she was neat. I heard Miss Fauzia's foot steps [footsteps] like target shooting and her toilet smell before I could hide it she stole the page and told Miss Amna off. She slapped my hand and said drawing and writing for fun is not allowed the Prophet said those who are punished most by God are the makers of figures. (Khan, 2008, p. 149)

Miss Fauzia is more of an obstacle in the learning process of Mehwish. Miss Fauzia's rigid worldview and narrow vision harbours in Mehwish the feelings of ignorance and darkness rather than kindling her spirit and insight. Mehwish narrates that Miss Fauzia got angry when Mehwish told her classmates about the fossil of an ear bone of a primitive whale that was accidentally discovered by her sister, Amal. Miss Fauzia rejected it as a lie. She claimed that only one type of story, i.e. allegory or divine storytelling, is not a lie. It is because of such rigid approach of Miss Fauzia that Amal comments that "Miss Fauzia is too bitter for art" (Khan, 2008, p. 177). These examples highlight that Miss Fauzia rejects evolution, science and liberal arts as these do not harmonize with her conventional ideology. Instead, she works hard for the hegemony of her/state's ideology. Thus, through the character of Miss Fauzia, Khan illustrates the way teachers were turned into ideological apparatus by the state during Zia regime.

The use of education as ISA left deep influence on the young minds during general Zia's regime and afterwards. It gave Pakistan a generation of radicalized minds who believed in and followed Zia's ideology. As Haqqani (2016) sums up: "The Islamist bias in textbooks ensured that Zia-ul-Haq's ideological influence on the hearts and minds of Pakistanis lasted well beyond his period in power." (p. 169)

4.2 The Media/Communications ISA

Media also functions as an ISA to disseminate the ideology of the State among the masses, especially the younger generation. The novel narrates that *Jamaat-i-Pedaish*, as Zia's major ally, received local and foreign funding to support and implement their ideological agenda. JP establishes the Academy of Moral Policy to counter the influence of science on Pakistan's younger generation, and instead ingrain their young minds with the state ideology. For this purpose, Noman is assigned to publish a monthly magazine to enlighten and educate the younger generation about their 'true' culture and values. In Noman's words, among his three tasks "[t]he second is to publish a monthly periodical to be issued by the Academy of Moral Policy, called *Akhalq* (virtue), in which I'm to prescribe ways to relieve young minds of *maghrib za'dagi*, (westernization) (Khan, 2008, p. 89). JP sees a threat to their ideology in the discourse of science and labels it as westernization. Therefore, it uses the power of media and education to mitigate the influence of science, and to infuse the young minds with the ideology of JP/State. The need for

moral and ideological training is felt by Mirza Anwar who firmly believes that “[t]he young Pakistani is a cultural freak. His religion is whimsy. He is a split (Khan, 2008, p. 87). Thus, *Akhlaq*, becomes a vital part of state’s ideological apparatus implemented through a religious-political party.

Noman, despite his personal aptitude towards mathematics, ensures that *Akhlaq* serves its purpose well. To appease his father, Noman, as the editor of *Akhlaq*, uses the periodical as a propaganda machine against science. The first issue of *Akhlaq* starts as following:

Virtuous behaviour (akhlaq) cannot be separated from a proper understanding of the purpose of creation (khalq). It is an issue as much of morality as (took forever to find the word) cosmology. Scientific thinking blurs the relation between the two by insisting on a world of ‘facts’. The purpose of our movement and of this magazine is to return us to the path of humble salmon that follows divine laws not fickle experiments, and not transitional change. (Khan, 2008, p. 95)

The passage clearly undermines the value of science. Through this anti-science discourse, Noman rejects science and scientific thinking for its emphasis on facts and experiments. He implies that scientific attitude is evil or non-virtuous. Therefore, confusing morality and virtue with purely academic disciplines such as cosmology, *Akhlaq* basically does not deal with the issues of morality or virtuousness, instead, in the name of preaching virtuous behavior, it promotes anti-science approach. Thus, the magazine serves as a propaganda tool to publicise the Islamist ideology of Zia and *Jamaat-i-Pedaish*.

4.3 The Family ISA

In *The Geometry of God*, like education and media, the institution of family also plays an integral part of ISA. The institution of family does not directly fall under the purview of the state as it operates in the private domain. The parents play the role of ISA at home, similar to one played by teachers at schools, colleges and universities. The novel illustrates that parents try to control their children’s lives by dictating their actions. They deem it as their parental duty to ensure that their children do not violate moral and cultural codes and norms.

Amal’s parents play the role of ISA as they want Amal to lead the life of a traditional woman. However, Amal through her assertive nature resists their attempts to control her and attains liberation and empowerment. To achieve her individuality, Amal has to resist at many levels: she resists patriarchy, religious ideology of the family and the state, and the official version of nationalism. Firstly, defying her father and society, Amal continues her clandestine romantic and intimate relationship with Omar unless they get married. Secondly, she does not follow the orthodox version of Islam projected by her parents and Apa Farzana as she endorses and follows her grandfather Zahoor’s mystical and liberal version of Islam. Thirdly, against all odds, she begins her job at a science lab and builds a successful career as a female scientist. Amal’s character symbolizes resilience of Pakistani women who bravely fought against the hegemony of Zia regime and the discriminatory laws passed against women during the regime. Her example testifies that the ISA working in the guise of family, education, and patriarchy was not always successful.

Apa Farzana, a member of JP, “has helped many women find forgiveness through Quran and Sunnah...” (Khan, 2008, p. 190). Amal’s mother is also one of her devotees who gets informal lessons in Quranic teachings from Apa Farzana. Apa Farzana doesn’t possess any scholarly or in-depth understanding of Quran and Hadith. Like Miss Fauzia, she represents a literal and traditional view of Quran and religion. She works as a part of ISA at domestic level, like what Miss Fauzia does at the institutional level, and Mirza Anwar at public level. Her job is to sensitize women about their “sins”, make them repent and seek forgiveness, and bring them, especially young women, to the ‘right path’ and ‘save them from evils’.

Apa Farzana labels Amal and her friend Zara as “slaves of the senses” (Khan, 2008, p. 190). For her, Amal is already doomed but she believes that Mehwish can be saved from the evil path: “There is still hope for this one” (Khan, 2008, p. 190). However, when Mehwish asks her a couple of questions, Apa Farzana gets cross and leaves with a message of warning to the mother of Mehwish: “You must be care full [careful] with her. She is at the cups of woman hood [womanhood]. It is not good. She should be watched. Or she will go the way of your other daughter and your father [Zahoor] (Khan, 2008, p. 191).

The character of Apa Farzana highlights the efforts made to control women’s lives during Zia regime. The institution of family played a pivotal role in taming and controlling women in the name of tradition, morality, and Islam. Jalal (2014) validates this point: “Women bore a major brunt of sea change in the cultural complexion of Pakistan during the heyday of “Islamization” (p. 251).

Noman is also subjected to the family ISA. As a son of a JP leader, he is asked by his father to work for his party. Noman’s father, Miza Anwar, works as ISA both in his personal capacity as a father and as a representative of a JP. Noman is not given any choice by his father; instead, he is simply assigned the task of circulating the ideology of JP. Noman neither likes his father nor his ideology because he is more interested in mathematics and science. Yet, he himself becomes a tool of ISA, working, though unwillingly, for the promotion of the dominant ideology. However, as soon as he gets to meet Zahoor, he is inspired by him. Consequently, he deflects his family and his father’s party to become Zahoor’s disciple.

Both in the case of Amal and Noman, the family as ISA fails to control them or make them follow the ideology of the state. These young characters, including Mehwish, reject the conservative ideology disseminated by the state and endorsed by their parents. They are rather influenced by the counter-ideology of Zahoor who offers a mystical view of Islam and a possibility of its harmony with science.

4.4 The Religious ISA

Historically, Zia and his major ally, *Jamaat-i-Islami* (JI), used religion (Islam) as an ISA for material gains and political power. As a military dictator, Zia wanted some popular agenda to engage and appease the masses, thus, he projected himself as “a true soldier of Islam” with no political ambitions. According to Jalal (2014), “Islamic Ideology and military might were the twin pillars on which General Zia-ul-Haq began building his new order” (p. 217). Similarly, JI as a religious political party found in the dictator a perfect ally for both their Islamisation program and political power: “The proud champion of Islam liked giving Mawdudi’s writings as official gifts

and awards. For the first time in the history of Pakistan, the *Jammat-i-Islami* had found a soul-mate at the helm of government” (Jalal, 2014, p. 218). Thus, religious ideology played a significant role in the alliance between the dictator seeking public support and the religious party seeking political power.

According to Althusser (2008), in the pre-capitalist historical period there was one dominant Ideological State Apparatus i.e. the Church which had religious, educational, and cultural functions. However, in modern times, the functions of the Church have devolved into education and culture as distinct ISAs. In Islam though there is no equivalent to the institution of Church (though historically mosques have remained centers of religious, educational and political propaganda), yet there is the possibility of religious concepts being used as distinct ISA. For example, Jihad has been a powerful concept in Islam used for both ideological and political reasons. In Pakistani context, Jihad in Indian-occupied Kashmir and Jihad in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union are the two most important examples.

The Geometry of God makes several references to the *Mujahideen* and the Afghan war. Khan criticizes how the concept of Islamic Jihad was used by the US to make Muslims fight America’s war for political and military hegemony against its archrival, the Soviet Union, in Afghanistan. For this purpose, the US spent billions of dollars on *Mujahideen* through Pakistan armed forces and Pakistani intelligence agency, ISI. As one character, Petrov, who defected from the Russian army to start his business in drugs, comments: “The CIA dumps more dollars into the Islamic Jihad than it did the Contras. Bloody, Mooj Jihadis have more Blowpipes and Stringers than prayer beads....” (Khan, 2008, p. 64). Though the novel doesn’t refer directly to Zia taking advantage of America’s cold war against the Soviets, however, it does show how JP uses the religious ISA for material gains. Noman observes how the war in Afghanistan has brought fortunes for his father and his party: “...I come home one day to find Aba looking very pleased. Since the beginning of the fifth year of the war in Afghanistan, his party’s received another boost of American aid, and I presume this is why he beams” (Khan, 2008, p. 35).

The novel does not focus much on the role of Zia and ISI in the business of Jihad. However, the criticism of *Mujahideen* and JP and Mirza Anwar clearly relates to the use of Jihad as religious ISA to fulfill their personal interests. Thus, the concept of Jihad was exploited to convince the young Muslims to join America’s war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan.

5. Repressive State Apparatus (RSA) in *The Geometry of God*

Zia’s program to Islamise Pakistani society was not limited to the use of ISAs to influence the beliefs, values, and culture of the people. It was backed up by RSA for those who resisted or challenged the state’s ideology and authority. During his regime, the RSA was consolidated either by the introduction of new laws or through the amendments to existing laws to ensure the implementation of the state ideology using force. As said earlier, Althusser (2008) notes that the basic difference between ISAs and RSA is their modes of functions: “[T]he Repressive State Apparatus functions ‘by violence’, whereas the Ideological State Apparatuses function ‘by ideology’”. Accordingly, in Zia’s Pakistan, the ISAs and RSA worked simultaneously supporting and reinforcing each other. Whenever the state failed to constitute social subjects through ideology, there were always laws in place to achieve the goal through punishments/use of force. In the novel, Noman makes a pertinent comment about the repression through RSA in case any

individual transgressed the ideological boundaries of the state: “Once you decide not to censor yourself, you find all the policemen are asleep. Till someone like me grossly exaggerates your strength. Then you’re revised. Translated. Sentenced. The word you become is not You” (Khan, 2008, p. 260).

The persecution of Zahoor on the fake charges of blasphemy is a major event in the novel. It is a clear example of how RSA was used in the support of ISAs for ideological and political hegemony of the regime. Zahoor as a central character in the novel challenges the ideological authority of General Zia and his Islamist allies. He refuses to accept the conservative version of Islam and Pakistan presented by the regime. JP finds a challenge to its authority in Zahoor and his few colleagues who favour a more flexible and pluralistic view of Islam. Finding Zahoor a real threat, JP decides to use RSA to tame and silence the old man.

Zahoor is the prime victim of RSA. His persecution starts with termination from his job as a professor of science at a local university due to his teaching theory of evolution and his unorthodox views. Amal narrates that it was a time when weather forecasts were banned on the state television (PTV); science and history books were being rewritten; and the teaching of evolution was banned (Khan, 2008, p. 38). In those times, when the state was using all the available apparatus to implement her rigid ideology, Zahoor naturally becomes a “dangerous man” for his defiance to the state ideology. He is not liked because he did not buy the official view of religion and ‘real Pakistan’ that the regime propagated, and wanted people to follow. Instead, he would urge that “to learn is to search for what isn’t written or rewritten” (Khan, 2008, p. 38).

After termination he takes up a job at a private school where he teaches the young students to challenge authority. In Mehwish’s words, he taught that: “We accept a thorty [authority] blindly and what not look at how the Party of Creation rewrites our creation one minute Jinnah is a kafir the next a save year [saviour]” (Khan, 2008, p. 153). After losing this job too for similar reasons, Zahoor and his local and international colleagues hold a seminar to share their research on evolution with the public. The seminar is attended by a few but Noman reports a grossly exaggerated version of the event to his father. Thus, he turns Zahoor into a big threat for the JP mission. To suppress him, Noman is tasked to send threats. Of the two warnings sent to Zahoor, one is accidentally found by Amal. Written on the letterhead of Academy of Moral policy, it reads as:

Dear Sir,

Godlessness is a cancer whose favourite organ is the pen. It must be treated by every means available or it will spread. You are being watched. You have been warned. . .
(Khan, 2008, p. 109)

The use of word Godlessness by Noman creates the impression of blasphemy in Zahoor’s views and work, suggesting the use of repressive means to tackle it. And this threat materializes in the shape of fake blasphemy charges against him. He is formally accused of blasphemy to be prosecuted under the blasphemy law. The police investigation report about the accused says that the 70-year-old Zahoorul Din claimed that “all things are accidents calling himself a prophet and gathering a huge army...” (Khan, 2008, p. 183). The text clearly shows that the charges are baseless as Zahoor never made such blasphemous claims. Still, he is sentenced to life imprisonment by the trial court. His case is transferred to the Lahore high court for further

proceedings. Kept in solitary confinement for his protection, the prison also functions as RSA to torture and break the spirit of the old man. In prison, he faced extremely pathetic conditions: "His cell stinks. No toilet... No fan. No window...No light" (Khan, 2008, p. 185).

Noman who initiated the malicious campaign against Zahoor by misrepresenting him to his father and other JP members, later himself reveals how the blasphemy charge against Zahoor was fake and the result of a well-planned scheme: "This is the plan: find a student with a grudge. Zahoor's past makes this easy" (Khan, 2008, p. 232). Later, after Zahoor's release, Noman tells him that "Aba's party hired the student who accused him of blasphemy" (Khan, 2008, p. 255).

After a long ordeal and humiliation, Zahoor, however, is temporarily and conditionally released from the jail, with the help of a powerful military man. His release is on the condition that he acts senile. The text suggests that the RSA of law, police, and criminal justice system have been successful in silencing and repressing the old scientist. On his release, his family is surprised that he has lost his passion: "He comes out cold" (Khan, 2008, p. 257). He is weak and sick, always being looked after by Junayd. Moreover, he is no more allowed to work on fossils.

But the repression of Zahoor does not end here. Zahoor's release unleashes a round of violence that takes many lives. In separate incidents, the security guards of Zahoor, his lawyer, and the guard of the judge who released Zahoor are killed. Later, when Zahoor makes his first public appearance at Amal's wedding, an assailant opens fire to take his life, to execute a self-imposed punishment to an alleged blasphemer. The shootout results in the death of Junayd, and Munir Mamu, Zahoor's son. Zahoor, Mehwish and Noman are also hit by bullets. Though Mehwish and Noman survive, but Zahoor too old to recover, despite two surgeries, succumbs to the injuries after some time.

The case of Zahoor exemplifies how the state uses RSA in the form of law, police, and the prison to persecute Zahoor who challenged the hegemony of the state over the matters of faith. The RSA was successful in silencing and neutralizing Zahoor after making him go through a lengthy and shattering experience. As Noman says: "Power knows the best way to break is through monotony wear and tear" (Khan, 2008, p. 200). However, in Zahoor's case, it seems that there is a parallel RSA which functions in the private domain manifesting itself in the shape of extreme violence. Even after being released by the court through legal process, the private RSA remains unsatisfied and hence move to act through violence. This most extreme form of repression takes the lives of several people. This shows that RSA, if operated by the people in private capacity, can be extremely violent and difficult to control. Further, though the text is not explicit about who killed all these people, but it does suggest that JP is behind the violence. Thus, we can safely say that the system of ISAs is always complimented by the RSA and vice versa, be it at the level of state institutions, or private groups.

The novel also presents a subtle critique of the blasphemy law as a part of RSA. Noman tells Mehwish that the blasphemy law was penned by two British men in 1960. But, "Pakistan made it a weapon of . . ." (Khan, 2008, p. 200). Mehwish also narrates the history of blasphemy law in poetic form telling that Sir Peacock "[w]rote the penal code like Braille, [f]ull of holes and gaps" (Khan, 2008, p. 201) to punish the damage to temples and masjids. The poem goes on to suggest that the British crown was happy with the division the law brought in their Hindu and Muslim

subjects; and how gradually the law became a tool of intimidation. A little insight into the history of the blasphemy law in Pakistan tells us that many sections were added during 1980-1986 by the Zia regime to islamise the constitution of Pakistan. It was only after these amendments that the number of convicts under this law increased manifold. According to a report published in Dawn, in contrast to only 14 reported cases before 1986, the number of people charged under the law increased to 1274 after 1986 until 2010 (Siddiqi, 2013). This almost 100 times increase in the cases charged or convicted under the blasphemy law in the post-Zia Pakistan is exemplified through the case of Zahoor in *The Geometry of God*. The novel clearly suggests how the law has been misused as a tool of repression and hegemony against the religious minorities, or to settle personal vendetta.

6. Conclusion

The discussion focused on the use of ideological and repressive tools used by Zia's government and his allies through both public and private institutions. The study shows that different public and private institutions served for the hegemony of the ideology of the ruling elite. The public institution of education became a major ideological weapon of the regime. The textbooks were rewritten to Islamize the curricula of the schools, colleges, and universities. In the novel, Noman rewrites the textbooks to create a "pure science" based on the Quran. Miss Fauzia as a teacher also performs the role of transferring and enforcing the state ideology on the young minds. Academy of Moral Policy and the monthly *Akhalq* fall under the category of the media ISA to influence the youth with the ideology of the ruling class. The family also functions as ISA but in private domain. The parents of Amal and Mehwish, and Noman's father influence rather force their young children to follow the conservative religious ideology of the state in the name of family values and beliefs. Apa Farzana, as the member of JP, also plays the role of family ISA by actively pursuing her moral and religious mission. Finally, Jihad also serves as the religious ISA bringing strategic, political and monetary benefits to the state.

Besides ISAs, the state also used Repressive tools to ensure that ruling ideology is not challenged. Zahoor refuses to accept the rigid version of Islam and patriotism projected by the state. Thus, he is subjected to repression through law, police, and the prison. The novel underscores the importance of violence as the worst extreme form of repressive apparatus. It suggests that the state can go to extreme boundaries to achieve the hegemony of ruling ideology. To sum up, the study validates the relevance and significance of Althusser's concept of ISAs and RSA in the Pakistani context. It exposes how the dominant ideologies function systematically, and, implicitly and explicitly, to achieve and maintain their domination. In Pakistani context, it proves that there was a lot more to Zia's Islamisation than merely reforming or purifying the society of its moral ills.

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