

The Antagonistic Construction of the “Self” and the “Other”:

Television and The Village



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**UNIVERSITY OF LIBERAL ARTS
BANGLADESH**

S M Imrul Hassan

Student ID: 173013010

Department of English and Humanities

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S M Imrul Hassan

Student ID: 173013010

Thesis Supervisor: Ms. Nishat Atiya

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

I hereby declare that this thesis is the student's own work and effort. All sources of information incorporated here have been duly acknowledged. This thesis has been submitted with my approval.

Nishat Atiya

Date: 29 January, 2022

(Nishat Atiya Shoilee)

Lecturer

Department of English and Humanities

DECLARATION

This thesis is a presentation of my original research work. Wherever contributions of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly, with due reference to the literature, and acknowledgement of collaborative research and discussions.



Date: 29 January, 2022

S M Imrul Hassan

ID: 173013010

Department of English and Humanities

University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh

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Abstract

This research paper will highlight how in a society false ideology results in repressing people and threatens their identity with the problematic construction of “self” and the “other.” By comparing both the movies *Television* and *The Village* we will see that there are groups of people who have made some specific rules and regulations that do not actually exist in their actual culture. Creating such norms generates a culture within a culture, justifying the manipulation of the common lifestyle by imposing a new identity over the subalterns. Every individual has their self-knowledge but when someone from outside introduces a new identity to a community, there will rise a contradiction between two identities. Therefore, the “other” identity is constructed by the “self” as a subject position that accepts what the majority of the commons desires to be the master identity, exposing its subjects to a positional hierarchy. Though both of the movies are from different countries, it seems they have questioned a common phenomenon which is how false ideology can be constructed, why people might accept those false ideologies, and how they can be exploited by them since an already superior “self” holds the socio-political licence to taunt an inferior “other.” The end result of the paper confirms the suffering of a great majority from an identity crisis, making them unaware of the purpose of their life. As a result, it can be stated that a strong message in both movies is that if an antagonistic relationship between two different selves or communities rises, there will be violence or clashes of interests and various kinds of crime can take place in those communities due to identity repression.

Keywords: Television, The Village, Self, Other, Interpellation, Power, Fantasy, Reality, Ideology

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

This research paper will demonstrate how both the movies *Television* and *The Village* construct the idea of a “self” and an “other” within their respective communities. In general, a society stands for a man-made organization that changes from age to age and it cannot be thought to exist without its individual members. Therefore, the interdependence of the individuals and their society is inevitable. However, when there is an authoritative power in the community, that power holds the potential to develop a false ideology over the common majority that leads to creating the idea of a “self” and an “other”. The contradictory development of this “self” and its “other” could be community against community, political against non-political, individuals against individuals. However, both directors in *Television* and *The Village* have shown respectively how certain outward sources or unfamiliar ideas are deemed to be the harmful “others” that might try to harm the carefully constructed and traditionally accepted “self” of the community. The “self” is thought to be the safe zone because it represents the socially acceptable notion of subjective identity. This however, indicates a significant moment of departure between the “self” and the “other” that leads to unavoidable far-reaching consequences later, causing the very principle of human unity to question itself.

Primarily, the terms ‘self’ and ‘other’ were introduced by Edward Said in his 1978 book *Orientalism*. He portrayed here how the Europeans considered themselves as the legal ‘self’ and the East as the underprivileged ‘other’. In Said’s understanding, it is the Western understanding of the East imposing their ideals, ideologies on that side of the world, denoting a corruption of the Eastern mindset by convincing its people that everything in the Western was better than what they had. Additionally, orientalism refers to an attitude of the powerful Europe towards the

socio-economically inferior East, even in terms of epistemological tradition and ontological aspects. This hierarchical faith makes the occident believe that they have the right to rule over the orient.

This thesis adopted this definition of Edward Said's "self" vs "other" as a key ingredient to understand the segregation between two different sets of ideologies, groups of people, beliefs, faith, tradition and technology in both the movies *Television* and *The Village*. As a result, the construction of the "self" and the "other" is not only based on the East vs West. Rather any entity/phenomenon that considers itself powerful might assume the identity of the "self" and make the rest feel as an "other". Although Edward Said applied this concept to primarily understand the conflict between occidental and oriental ideologies, this paper will theoretically consider the relationship between the "self" and the "other" as the relationships between two antagonistic forces where the former holds more power over the latter. By investigating the dichotomy of such intriguing affairs in the abovementioned movies, the paper will capture a hierarchical system that promotes one-sided storytelling and in-group favoritism, making one group believe in its positional superiority than that of the other.

To talk about the movies, *Television* (2012) is directed by one of the renowned Bangladeshi producers/directors, Mostofa Sarwar Farooki. This movie was selected as the *Closing Film of Busan International Film Festival in 2012 (Asia Etcetera, 2020)*. In this movie, we can see that its plot revolves around a headstrong Amin chairman who bans every kind of technology from his village because of his innate fear of the newness that today's advanced gadgets promise. Even his son, Sulaiman Patwary, has to ask permission from his father to use mobile phone and laptop. With these technologies, Sulaiman talks with Kohinoor, with whom he has a relationship. Once Kumar Babu, a fellow villager who belongs to the Hindu religion,

purchases a television set, it causes a commotion in the whole village, making the chairman allow only his family to watch television as they are from another religion. And since he has a television in his house, no Muslim is allowed to enter his place. But being a primary teacher, Kumar Babu has all his students come for tuition at his house from every corner of the village, who secretly hold the intention to watch that television at least once. When Amin Chairman becomes aware of it, he immediately takes action against Kumar Babu by taking away his television. Coincidentally, Kohinoor is there and when Amin chairman recognizes her he also punishes her in front of everyone. Therefore, she breaks up with Sulaiman Patwary. As a result, the son rebels against his father's rules on using modern technologies, causing the manifold plot of destructive selves and others to collide in latter contexts.

On the other hand, *The Village* (2004) is an American thriller movie produced by M. Night Shyamalan. The plot of this movie is almost the same as *Television*. The story is about a village where a group of people named as Elders isolate themselves from the town. They put restrictions over youngsters who are not allowed to cross the woods. They create a fake ghost story and name it "Those We Don't Speak Of". In a parallel sub-plot, two youngsters Lucius and Ivy Walker seem to like each other, planning to get married but when Noah, the antagonist, hears about it, he stabs Lucius, badly injuring him. For better treatment, Ivy Walker decides that she should go to the adjacent town to bring some medicines. And when she goes to his father who was the Chief of Elders, he reveals the actual truth, that "Those We Don't Speak Of" is a mere façade, that the elders have created such ghost stories because they had a bitter experience in the town, still carrying that trauma along with them. For that reason, they have tried to keep their next generation away from the violence of modern city life, not justifying the animosity between the righteous country-self and the unruly 'other,' the town.

In general, both of the movies convey the same message that both their characters are considering outsiders as the “other,” maintaining themselves as the subject. They think that “others” are always meant to cause harm, for which both Amin chairman and Edward Walker create a false ideology over their people and from their impractical take on the reality, youngsters state to live in a false imagination. This false ideology here appears to be a social ‘self’ which segregates itself from a ‘questionable’ other. *Television* and *The Village* also reflect how Louis Althusser’s idea of false ideology develops in the society and it interpellates the subject position as a meaning-making self against an impassive receptor which is the other. Keeping all these ideas in its mind, this research will attempt to address the following concerns:

- i)How is the antagonistic relationship between the ‘other’ and the ‘self’ portrayed in *Television* and *The Village*?
- ii)How do the ideas of the “self” and the “other” create a false ideology that is accepted by the people in both *Television* and *The Village*? What are the systematic impacts of it?

Methodology: The primary purpose of this thesis is to illustrate the antagonistic construction of the "self" and the "other" by a group of superior people within their community in movies *Television* and *The Village*. Therefore, to collect its primary data, the thesis focused on an analytical exploration of the movies’ plot and similar observations made by other researchers as secondary resources. All in all, an intricate and detailed observation of dialogues and similar relevant details from both the movies are used to recognize how the "self" and the "othering" process has been constructed within a community. Hence, the thesis will use a qualitative method in which the movies' plot will investigate the thematic concept of the antagonistic construction of

the "self and the "other" and the consequences caused by it in a community.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The antagonistic construction of the "self" and the "other" has been mainly developed by human beings for manifold purposes. Edward Said argues that a supreme authoritative power always takes place over the inferior and creates a difference within them, calling oneself the "self" and the inferior as the "other." A similar condition can be observed in both movies *Television* and *The Village*. From the way characters like Amin Patwary in *Television* and Edward Walker in *The Village* control their community's lifestyle and other aspects, it inevitably constructs a difference of existential aspects within their community's people.

Through these movies, it seems to be suggested that the 'outsiders' are considered as the "other," a threat to their community. As Antonio Gramsci says, such an environment makes people believe that they are free, but in reality, they are not. It denotes the establishment of hegemonic practices in a community. Moreover, Louis Althusser mentions in his 1970 book *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* that a government representative always holds supreme state power and imposes power over their community through punishment. In general, the outsider's intervention in their establishment is considered as the "other." This paper uses these critical assumptions on hegemonic administration as suggested by Gramsci and Althusser to understand the notion of power dynamics between the selves and the others in the chosen movies.

On the contrary, in the movie *The Village*, Edward Walker and the Elders of Covington village construct a rule without imposing any punishments over their community. According to Mohsin Mohi Ud Din and Michael Nichonchuk, reality can be constructed into another level of reality by creating a story. In one of his books, Ken Plummer too mentions a similar situation

where the authority holds power to construct a story that will develop a new community's culture, ideology, and lifestyle. That is how it becomes so easy for the Elders to build up such a ghost story and name it "Those Who We Don't Speak Of." The name itself reflects the antagonistic construction of the "self" and the "other" via one-sided storytelling where the narrator can create biased narratives.

Furthermore, the Elders create a utopia environment in their edenic village where there is a visible absence of both violence and punishment. As Louis Althusser suggests, in this environment the Elders of the village here impose power by projecting the image of a generous "self" that holds the submissive 'you' in a secondary subject position of the community, a situation that legitimizes the systematic exploitation of the latter by the former.

However, in the movie *Television*, rather than creating a false reality, Amin chairman develops false principles by assuming a powerful position over his people that is against society's existing rules of codependent habitation. However, as Mitchell Foucault points out, power is always interchangeable; it is not constant within an individual. A similar expression, too, can be seen at the end of the movie *Television*, where Amin Patwary sits in front of a television set as he cannot attend the Hajj timely. However, it was considered as the "*Shoytaner Baksho*" to him previously and he constantly tried to dissuade the people of his village from using technology. Yet ironically, this "other" takes power over him. Likewise, in the movie *The Village*, the Elders of Covington village consider the urbanity as the "other." Nevertheless, towards the end of the movie, Ivy Walker has to go to the town to fetch medicine to cure her fiancé Lucius Hunt. Both the movies here illustrate a common theme: Amin Patwary and Edward Walker try to keep their youths from the supposed touch of 'filthy' experience. This impression almost shows William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. He shows the transition of human beings from

childhood to adulthood with a plea to return innocent like a child again. On the other hand, the Elders and Amin Patwary try to prevent their association with modern life, its unnecessary intervention into their community, considering whatever that doesn't belong to them as the "other, " deeming the consequences to be the same as seen in the short story *Poth Jana Nei* written by Shamsuddin Abul Kalam where the protagonist Gohur Ali loses everything, even his innocence, as his village roads connect with the town. It is assumed from the very beginning that the corruption and other violence will transgress the innocence of his village.

To further understand the implications of the binary supposition of the self and the other, this paper uses Immanuel Kant's article *An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?* where it is shown that the process of othering essentializes the segregation of identities. It will bring scourge for the next generation in future where they will not be able to access any actual knowledge due to the antagonistic separation of what is knowledgeable from what is not.

In conclusion, as Jean Baudrillard's simulacra theory suggests, people living in a false, constructed reality live in a reality within a reality that has no genuine existence. The constructed reality wanders at the same place and cannot get out of it. Consequently, both the movies *Television* and *The Village* highlight how the assumption of a supreme power forms the antagonistic construction of the "self" and the "other" within a community and generates false ideas that impact the prevalent lifestyle on an ideological level.

Chapter 3

The Conflict of the “Self” and the “Other”: *Television*

In the movie *Television* we will find two sets of people within a community. It has a village chairman who does not like to watch television and holds the supreme power in his village. On the other hand, there are groups of people who enjoy watching television. This binary in the same community highlights that there is an antagonistic construction of the “self” and the “other” regarding power here. In relation to this, here we will see some important aspects of the construction of the “self” and “other” like those of the individual and community, youth and elderly, and technology and tradition.

Firstly, the audience encounters the difference between individual and community in the movie *Television*. Here, the individual is portrayed by Amin chairman, who holds the government power, imposes rules and regulations about watching television over the entire village population. Banning the television shows how a power controls people’s freedom. Amin chairman has considered himself as the “self” as he is a government representative whereas his village people are considered as the “other” upon whom he wants to introduce his rules as logical and needs to accept it in order to avoid any consequences from the effects of technology. An otherwise reverse concept of the well-known conflict of individual and community can be witnessed here where the minority (one man) seems to hold more power over the majority (community).

The technology has also been considered as an “other” in this movie. According to Amin chairman, television and other modern technologies are the tools of creating chaos in the society. Therefore, he rejects the uses of technology in his village and tries to impose a religious

ideology. This action by Amin chairman depicts the construction of the “self” and the “other” through the imposing impression of tradition against technology.

As a result, when people feel they are being repressed by an ideology that affects their regular life, they revolt against it. Even Amin chairman’s son Sulaiman Patwary goes against his father’s imposed rules. There is a generational difference between the youth and the elders here. The village youth supports watching television whereas elders are against it, thinking that these modern technologies will cause destruction for the youth's future. Therefore develops an antagonistic construction of the “self” and the “other” where youths are considered as “other” and the elders are considered as “self.”

3.1: Individual vs Community: As mentioned before, director Mostofa Sarwar Farooki highlights how an individual, coupled with government power holds the potential to introduce an antagonistic construction of the “self” and the “other” in a community through his personal beliefs regarding restrictions on watching television. The character Amin chairman, who is a government representative, has the state power to interfere into each and every person’s decision. In the beginning of the movie we see an interviewer taking an interview with Amin chairman. The interviewer asks him why he does not allow his people to watch television. In reply, the chairman says:

The people in my village love me, that's why they listen to me. On the other hand, in Islam, it is haraam to see pictures of animals. So, we neither take pictures nor show pictures. I, myself, have never stood in front of the camera. (00:01:45 – 00:01:56)

The last expression clearly portrays that whatever decision he is taking, he is taking it from his own perspective only. He is using the state power over his people. In relation to this, Louis Althusser’s concept of ISA can be brought to our attention where he stated that the much

convoluted phenomenon of power can lead a people into believing in an ideology without forced violence by structuring the significance of a particular set of ideas that are usually accepted without objections (81). Here, Amin chairman is using religion as a means to express the authenticity of his personal ideology to the villagers. This creates segregation in the community with some believing in him and some not. Amin chairman is considering himself as the “self” because whatever he is doing, he thinks he is doing it for the benefit of his people. On the other hand, the people are the “other” because they abide by the rules of their chairman. They are accepting the imposition of power over them because they themselves elected Amin Patwary as a government agent who will talk on their behalf. This is how the powerplay shifts in control of a government agent who later on imposes that same power by insisting a domineering ideology over his community.

In general, Foucault’s analysis of power is imposed to understand at one point how the “self” and the “other” might be involved in the complementary relationship as identified towards the analysis of this chapter. Moreover, the power being heralded by Amin shows that the notion of power is usually state-centric. The reason is, he is a representative of the government, therefore, he is trying to impose his own perspectives forcefully over his community. Contrary to the notion that power is centralized in the state and used as a tool to exploit the exploitative class, Foucault turns our attention to how the concept of power and individual agency can be a decentralized force. Here, thus the symbol of state-power, Amin practices a self-centered agenda against his own people.

3.2: *The Elder vs The Youth*: Besides the construction of the “self” and the “other” between an individual and the community, there is also a portrayal of elder vs youth in the movie *Television*. The generation gap can also be considered as an antagonistic construction of the “self” and the

“other”. The way youths perceive this world differs from that of the elders. This age difference becomes even more pronounced when Amin chairman and other elders of the village prevent the youngsters from having any kind of entertainment, disregarding the nature of it. Once, the son of Amin chairman, Sulaiman Patwary wants to buy a mobile phone but as his father has strict restrictions of using it, Sulaiman asks his mother to convince his father to buy him a mobile phone. In this situation, the mother plays the role of a conversational medium between her husband and son. She silently stands in the middle of the father and the son. Sulaiman starts his conversation saying “Amma, I want to go to Dhaka and do business” (00:09:04). In reply, Amin chairman says “Does somebody need to go to Dhaka for doing business?” (00:09:10). Here both the father and the son are present, yet they are not talking to each other directly. The presence of the mother conveys that there is a gap between two generations, where elders think themselves superior over the youths. Therefore, there needs to be a medium for the communication between these generation gaps, where the power play as it is stays within the men of the family and not the woman. In one of his interviews, Mostofa Sarwar Farooki mentions:

Your children are not your children, they come through you but not from you. This means there is a huge gap of understanding between our young generation and the generation of our father. For this reason there are issues of trust, understanding and attitudes between these two generations. These push them to become completely unfamiliar to each other. (00:00:44 - 00:02:10)

As a result, this superiority complex between two generations constructs an antagonistic identification of the “self” against the “other” in the community. Moreover, Sulaiman Patwary continues to convince his father saying that “I want to go to Dhaka and start my own business. I would like to make my father proud of me” (00:09:23). However, when his father denies his

request, Sulaiman asks for permission to use a mobile phone. This time Amin Chairman replies harshly:

No young children are allowed to use mobile phones in my village. The reason is after the advent of mobile phones, young children in all the towns of Dhaka are getting spoiled by talking nonsense all night long. Even a book came along named "Facebook", our young remain busy reading that book all day and night instead of reading their actual text books. (00:10:37- 00:10:52)

This argument of Amin chairman depicts the fact that he is not familiar with the latest technological advancements of the new generation. He has witnessed two different times. As a result, along with Amin chairman, other elders of the village do not support the demands of the youths either. They expect that their children will grow according to their ideology. This parental conflict portrays Jacques Lacan's theory of the *Mirror Stage*. In this theory Lacan suggests that a child, when born, possesses no functional knowledge than that of a "tabular - rasa (blank slate), suggesting that before the age of 6-7 months, a child has no idea of consciousness. When he/she stands before a mirror and mimics what they see in it, it becomes the child's first recognition or realization of the 'self.' From then on the child attempts to mimic what they observe from their surroundings, making their parents, or immediate caretakers the primary source of their knowledge about societal regulations or individual dispositions. This idea of parents as social agents can be identified in the movie too where Amin chairman seems to dominate his son's idea of what is right from what is wrong. Amin chairman here acts as a mirror before his son. It will not be too far-fetched to conclude here that Amin chairman reflects his parents' behaviour and tries to impose it over his son. This is a circle of influence, an animosity of time and ideas that is transferred from generations to generations.

Furthermore, as elders have the superiority over the youths, sometimes they punish them for disobedience as can be seen in the movie. For instance, once a school teacher brings a television to the village, this creates a commotion among the people because he has questioned Amin chairman's jurisprudence. Nonetheless, Amin chairman allows this violation of his law because the primary teacher belongs to a different religion. Later on, when he finds out that the youngsters of the village regularly visit the primary teacher's house to watch television, the chairman immediately takes action through punishment. He punishes a young woman named Kohinoor, lover of his son Sulaiman, in front of the elders. Before subjecting her to public humiliation, he asks her, "Why did you come here? Was it because of the television?" But Kohinoor remains silent. This silence fuels his anger even more as he says, "You are such an imbecile! For this behaviour you must go to the front yard, hold your ears and do 3 sit ups" (00:52:07). In another scene, as some other young adults of the village go to the cinema in the town, upon their return the elders tie them up with ropes and force them to sit in front of the entire village as an example of those who violate the community code of restriction. Regarding these kinds of punishments reflects Louis Althusser's Repressive State Apparatus (RSA) where he suggests that punishments take place more in public (80). That is why Amin chairman tries to impose his power in front of the public so that out of fear the young of the village may accept the rules of that particular culture and later on start to believe in those rules as their fixed modes of cultural ideology. It is therefore, a methodical construction of the subject's position as the 'self' who is not only an agent of the government, but also a superior elderly with the 'others' as the positionally inferior young objects who internalize the authority's ideas as instructed. As a result, this repression drives the youth to revolt against the constitution of their elderly.

3.3: *Tradition as the “Self” and Technology as the “Other”*: Amin Chairman has

misconceptions about technology because he considers the newness of modern electronic gadgets as a foreboding possibility as we also find this kind of notion in a colonial context where technology is thought to be destructive for the community as well as for the country. And Amin chairman is no different than that.

The conflict between traditional faith and technological advancement is portrayed as one of the core concerns in the movie *Television* too. At the very beginning of the movie it is seen that Amin chairman is giving an interview justifying his disapproval of the television from his village. During the interview, there is a white curtain between the interviewer and Amin. This symbolizes that the chairman is consciously trying to keep himself and his people separate in a safe zone to preserve the “self” from the potential harm of the alien technology. Consequently, the opposite side of the curtain is the technology brought by the men of the town, the cameraman and the interviewer, using tools of destructive demerits, representing a quintessential “otherness” that threatens to invade the tradition of the village and questions the authority of Amin chairman’s sovereignty. We see the interviewer asking:

There is no restrictions in Islam regarding watching television. Even there are some maulana who preach with the help of the media. So why did you ban television? Don’t you think that you are violating the democratic rights of your own people? By whose law have you taken your decision? Does the law of the government work here or is it your law? Are you trying to create a mini-Bangladesh inside Bangladesh? (00:03:24 – 00:03:31)

The very question shows how Amin chairman is imposing power over his people by the supreme authority of his own decisions and actions. The stern disapproval of television or

anything remotely close to it on Amin's end makes the audience question whether it is his religious faith or himself that holds the answer to his antagonistic understanding of the media. This contrasting placement of tradition and technology thus invariably develops an antagonistic construction of the "self" and the "other". Tradition here plays the role of the "self". On the other hand, the use of technologies can be considered to be the "other"; a strange element that interrupts the authenticity of traditional ideologies and lifestyle of the community.

More often than not Amin chairman keeps calling the television a "*Shoytaner Baksho*" (Devil's Box). He confirms that technologies are responsible for the moral deterioration of both the youths and the elderly of his village. Without a doubt Amin belongs to a generation that was more familiar with radios than the TVs. He seems to hold onto the same principle of his time, witnessing a generation which has incorporated technologies and electronic gadgets as its primary resource material. He now resists new inventions because he is not well acquainted with them, and he refuses to even consider the many new technological promises. When a primary teacher, Kumar Babu, brings a television, Amin chairman becomes speechless and asks, "Don't you know that in our village it is forbidden to take pictures and see pictures of animals?" (00:35:01). Kumar Babu replies, "As I am a Hindu, in our religion, watching television is not a sin" (00:36:07). After hearing this Amin goes to an imam and asks for a solution that goes with their religion. He starts crying and says:

One by one, the Western fanatics invent forbidden things. And by following them, the Muslims of the world are losing their faith. Imams are also getting spoiled by the influence of it. Our great imams now perform "waz" on television. Now, if I throw the television into the river, the rights of those infidels will be violated and if I allow the

television in the village, my religion will be ruined. What do I do now? (00:38:37 – 00:39:10).

This conversation ultimately reflects a tendency in Amin to disavow new concepts, not being quite critical about the situation but thinking from a perspective that he is familiar with. While his ceaseless effort to continue his religious faith is admirable, his absolute rejection of the promises of technology that can rather benefit the community both religiously and morally captures the way he rationalizes his fear of the new. He discards the possibility of technology merely as a tool, a productive or counterproductive use of which ultimately depends on the users in question, not the tool itself. As Antonio Gramsci argued, a separationist tendency as such can systematically affect the power positions of a community. This is the hegemonic willingness to refute the probable social benefits of a television that is reflected through Amin. Furthermore, the way Amin chairman tries to convince his belief over banning television in his village, it highlights Louis Althusser's concept of Ideological State Apparatus, a mechanism that establishes the longevity of an idea based on the social position the idea man/woman holds (Althusser, 81).

Additionally, when some elders approach Amin and say "Either allow us to watch television or let us die of poison" (00:48:35) in reply, Amin says "Then die. It is better for you to die" (00:48:51) and later on he orders his people to throw Kumar Babu's television into the river. It seems like Amin is trying to get rid of the influence from technology at any cost. He has always considered technology as the dangerous "other" because he believes it to have been only misleading his people.

The power here Amin chairman possesses is that of the "self"; as suggested by Michel Foucault, this synonymous concept of ideology and power are interrelated. He demonstrate show

the exercise of knowledge is inextricably linked to actions of power. And usually, the power idea is thought to have “originated from society” in the form of armed special forces, prisons, judiciary, etc:

To pose the problem in terms of the State means to continue posing it in terms of sovereign and sovereignty, that is to say in terms of law. If one describes all these phenomena of power dependent on the State apparatus, this means grasping them as essentially repressive... State is superstructural in a whole series of power networks (what then creates them? Shall we take them as God-given?) that invest the body, sexuality, the family, knowledge, technology etc. (122)

However, the movie *Television* also shows that the sense of recognition can be self-established as well, isolated from the direct power of the state which is possessed by the chairman Amin Patwary. Despite his continual attempt to isolate his community and repress people by keeping them out of knowledge about the outer world (Kant, 59), Amin does embrace the idea of a productive “self“ and understands how the fearful ‘other,’ be it a rampant youth or “devil’s box,” was more of a product of his imagination. Therefore, at the end of the movie, when Amin chairman could not fly for performing Hajj and hears the recitation of a dua of live Hajj on a television set, he surrenders himself saying, “O Allah, whether I am in Dhaka or in Mecca, wherever I am, I have reached you.” (1:46:02).

This realization of Amin conveys how in most cases, the antagonistic relationship between the ‘self ‘ and the ‘other’ (individual and community, elderly and youth, technology and tradition) is a construction of our imagination. Therefore, the power that used to reside in Amin chairman once now shifts onto a more holistic understanding of the audience where tradition and technology now remain side by side. Creating a biased narrative and imposing rules and

regulations over using technology creates only an antagonism between the “self” and the “other” in the movie, which however is resolved in a way that shows a harmonious existence of both:

What I mean by power relations is that we are in a strategic situation towards each other [...] We are not trapped. We are always in this kind of situation. It means that we always have possibilities of changing the situation. We cannot jump outside, and there is no point believing that you are free from all power relations. But you can always change it. So what I’ve said does not mean that we are always trapped, but that we are always free. Well anyway, there is always the possibility of changing. (Interview, “Sex, Power and the Politics of Identity”, 386)

Chapter 4

The Conflict of the “Self” and the “Other”: *The Village*

Unlike the movie *Television*, the movie *The Village* directed by M. Night Shyamalan portrays a utopia of a community where state power, punishment and other influences of violence are absent. Rather there are groups of Elders in the Covington village who hold supreme power and “protect” their future generation from the interruption of any obstacles of urbane lifestyle where people confront the modern times and their inevitable consequences of corruption and moral decay. Thus, this research will shed light on the antagonistic construction of the “self” and the “other” developed with false ideologies in the movie *The Village*.

Basically, the Elders are in a trauma caused when they used to live in the urban area. They try to leave urban life behind and start a fresh one on their own. And that makes them believe that urbanity is the “other” as it has regulated codes of conduct to follow. On the other hand, they choose the countryside because according to Edward Victor Walker, chief of the village and Elders, it is a place where his people will live a harmonious life as the countryside is far away from the touch of modern life. Therefore, the Elders construct an antagonistic relationship between the urbanity and the countryside where urban is the fearsome “other” and the countryside is the safe “self”.

Additionally, to continue this harmony in their village, Elders create a fantasy ghost story amongst the youths and children. It is almost like they are creating a reality within a real which is not true. The Covington village appears to be a place of innocence that is covered with false faiths and meaner myths developed by the Elders. Even to concretize the mass belief in the false ghost story, the Elders produce a farce-like performance by wearing ghost-like attires in front of the young. It appears that fantasy is considered as the powerful “self” and reality

becomes the inferior “other” because the latter involves no such fantastical element as the former.

Thus the Elders of Covington village create such a utopian environment surrounding them like they are keeping their youngsters safe by creating and recreating their own tradition. In this place they would like to keep the selected presence of ‘innocent’ affairs only. On the other hand, the Woods are kept far away from their boundary which appears to be rejecting modern life or its ‘dangerous’ experiences., resulting in the young generation’s isolation under the darkness of a constructed reality. And in the future they are supposed to be living in a reality where knowledge is absent. In this way the antagonistic construction of the “self” and the “other” can be observed through innocence against experience in the movie, *The Village*.

4.1: Urbanity vs Country life: After the rise of industrialization, life was separated into two different threads; one in the countryside and the other in the cityscape. Due to the post-industrial era’s dehumanizing oppression, a common romantic tendency was bred towards rustic life and all its raw innocence. This develops an antagonistic anticipation of the “self” and the “other” in terms of the urban sentiment and country life where ways of living, behaviour and other aspects of a community are completely different from one another. This has been clearly portrayed in the movie *The Village*.

In the movie, there are groups of people who call themselves the “Elders” of the village. They used to live in the urban side and a series of incidents convinces them into believing that a better future awaits in a different context which is of the countryside, making them leave their hometown and settle down in a distant village. They settle down there with the trauma of a former urban life. The countryside’s innocence was once true, however, is not maintained throughout the time of the multifaceted complications that the post industrial world brought with

itself. With the capitalistic growth of business world wide, migration into the city area increased the rate of criminal activities, turning the villages into popular tourist spots. As a result, the Elders' past life in the urban area seems to chase them into avoiding the bitter truth in such a way, they decide to not let their next generation face it.

As a way of justifying their drastic adoption of the countryside at the expense of discarding all urban sentiments, few members of the Elders mention their experiences of urban crimes, such as: a woman shares one of her bitter experiences regarding the death of her sister back in the city, “A group of men raped and killed her. They stuffed her in a dumpster three blocks from our apartment” (1:31:21). Another man adds, “A drug addict came in with a wound in his ribs. My brother tried to dress the wound. He pulled a gun from his jacket, then he shot my brother through his left eye” (1:31:33). And again another woman shares, “My husband, Michel left for the supermarket but he was found with no money and clothes.” (1:31:56). Furthermore, Edward Walker, chief of the Elders and a professor of History mentions how his father, the wealthiest person in the town was murdered while he was sleeping. These incidents clearly show that the post-industrial society develops the living ability in the town, and on the other hand, corrupts the human minds with the insatiable need for immediate gratification. A similar incident can be seen in the short story named *Path Jana Nai* by Shamsuddin Abul Kalam as well where the writer portrays the destruction of common human lives caused by the interruption of modernity into the village Moulkola. The moment protagonist Gohur Ali allows the town activities into his village through a concrete road, the people of the village begin to prosper financially but at the same time unrest begins to break out in the once peaceful place. The people of the village start operating around the ‘civil’/criminal society of the city. In simple life arrived the ropes of cunning and strategy.

Therefore, in the movie *The Village* the Elders want to protect their future generation from such destruction and criminal activities that urban life promotes, generating the mass sense of a fearful “other.” But the question that remains behind is to what extent a geographical location has to do with the evil that men can commit. We see that when Lucius wants to go to town, his mother does not agree with him. She says, “We shall speak of the towns, just this once and we shall never speak of it again.” (00:22:56) And then she starts explaining to her son the bitter experience his father had in the town. “He was found robbed and naked in the filthy river, two days later.” (00:23:17). This information suggests that she is trying to instruct her son about the corruption and violence of city life rather than the medication she needs to be cured.

So, the countryside seems to be a safe place for them and she is considering it as that “self” to be harmless. Moreover, in one of the scenes of the movie there are two people talking about towns, one asks, “Do you ever think of the towns? (00:09:49). In reply, he says, “The towns? What for? They are wicked places where wicked people live. That's all” (00:09:53). This impression of the young clearly shows that they consider the town as a place of evils. This belief has been injected by the Elders of the village into their youths’ thoughts. Without any unnecessary and imposed barriers, punishment or any other forced means, they just create a story which will hegemonize their youngsters into believing that urban life is all about wickedness. They not only want to get rid of the urban life, but also from the character Noah Percy, a mentally challenged young man, who has been locked into a room, alone. As he is different from other normal young people of the village, he always seems to be a threat to the people. Ivy Walker locks him up in a room and says “You needn’t go to the quiet room if you take an oath to never strike any person again (00:18:17)”. Here, Noah represents the consequences of a decided

detachment from modern medicines, essentializing the imprisonment of the patient in isolation so that they cannot intervene in the order and ‘peaceful’ equilibrium of the countryside.

These expressions show that urban life is considered as the “other” in the movie as a disrupting force that causes chaos in the harmony of the countryside. The Elders here seem to nurture a fascination for the abominable, in which failure to succeed in the city life becomes synonymous with a justification for them to reject it altogether and create a fictional space of their own in a village where they can practice and standardize whatever law they feel like making. And from that point onwards, it becomes very clear how the very corruption they want to leave behind is always present rather in them, such as Noah Percy who stabs Lucius when he finds that Lucius and Ivy are going to get married. The hatred and violence is invariably there inside Noah’s heart. This shows the villagers’ justification of violence, creating a ghost story which is a lie and withholding the truth from the youths by trapping them inside a fabricated reality, and it is this controlling attitude of the Elders which is equally present in the urban areas. Therefore, the problem is neither with the city nor the countryside; it is with the humans themselves. The seemingly “strong” difference of philosophical opinions between two areas only reflects the development of a false narration created by the Elders in *The Village*. Kristoffer Chelsom Vogt mentions in relation to that:

Post industrial society was originally formulated as Utopia - hopeful speculations about the future. When their core concepts are used to describe the present condition, however, they take on the role of ideology. (*Work, Employment & Society*, vol. 30)

4.2: *Fantasy as the “self” and Reality as the “other”*: Everyone is born into an imaginary rule that already exists and their desires are shaped by the myth that influences them since birth. There is no way out of the fictional rule as well. When one breaks down the walls of our prison

and moves on to freedom, they are actually heading towards the more spacious courtyard of a more borough prison. As a result, the ideology that has been developed in the movie *The Village* directed by M. Night Shyamalan shows that an idea can be the demonstration of falseness and misconception of reality. Through educational and social institutions, media and families but most importantly different modes of storytelling or biased narrations, the common consciousness can be easily manipulated, projecting an untruthful identification that can no longer define a human for who they are.

A similar notion can be seen in the movie through the attitudes of the Elder's towards their children. Here the Elders have shaped the youths' reality with a fancy ghost story to keep them away from the actual harshness of real life experience. As the Elders hold the power over their community, they narrate a fake ghost story. Therefore, it can be said that stories are random scribbles over which the speaker has complete authority, allowing him or her to construct a new world by drawing on the previous experience and fantasy (Mohsin Mohi Ud Din and Michael Nicholsonchuk, 2016). Moreover, according to Ken Plummer:

Narratives are the wealth of nations: they animate life, sustain culture and cultivate humanity. They regulate and empower us, bringing both joy and discontent. And they are always embedded in ubiquitous power: stories shape power, and power shapes story. (2019).

As a result, the Elders of Covington village create such a ghost story that manipulates the gullible youths into believing a standard ideology which is not actually true. The Elders famously personify the phenomenon of danger as imaginary ghosts, "Those We Don't Speak Of." In the movie there is a particular scene where two young girls pick up "red flowers" and bury them under the soil (00:05:15). These red flowers symbolize Those We Don't Speak Of

which is considered as the “other ” in this movie. It seems like they are trying to bury their past life events under a fabricated fantasy. This idea becomes stronger when Ivy Walker says, “This color attracts Those We Don’t Speak of. You must bury it.” (00:21:46). This means that red is considered an ominous color because it is the color of blood which is a sign of violence. So, the very frequent and obvious outbursts of violence should be hidden from their community at any cost, as the Elders believe. And yet the regular crimes happening in the village in the name of the state law somehow always manage to evade their eyes.

Moreover, there are other events that are conjured up by the Elders to perpetuate stronger misbeliefs for the village’s young people who “should not” leave this place. The incidents are developed in the following manner:

In one particular scene, a group of children are found near a dead animal. When an Elder approaches them, the children are explained how it is found dead, who could be the killer of it. One of the children replies in response, “It was murdered” (00:06:59). The Elder asks immediately however, “But who is the culprit? Who has done this heinous act?” (00:07:02). A child says, “Those We Don’t Speak Of killed it”. “There it is!” the Elder answers (00:07:09). “Why would such a notion come into your mind?” (00:07:12). Therefore, children start to give their opinion such as “They are meat eaters, they have large claws” (00:07:16). The Elder thus persists to make the children understand that “Those We Don’t Speak Of have not breached our borders for many years. We do not go into their woods, they do not come into our valley. It is a truce. We do not threaten them” (00:07:25 - 00:07:40). He also adds, “Those We Don’t Speak Of are much larger than the coyotes. And we would know if they had been here. They make a sound when I make a sound, and they mimic before they attack” (00:15:36).

This moment shows that the Elder himself is creating a fantasy that he wants to impose over the children as a ghost story. He is pretending that there is horror into the woods. His desire to keep his children away from the harsh reality of the city seems antithetical here because the otherwise moral intention is being disrupted by a blatant lie in the first place. This is how they prove them as the authentic “selves” and the so-called outsiders of their village to be the “other”. Hence, the antagonistic construction of the “self” and the “other” has been developed through this kind of fantasy story overlooking the real life implications that cannot be avoided wither way.

In another scene of the movie it is seen that Lucius, a civilian, is asking permission from the Elders to go to the nearest town to bring some medicines for his mother. He thinks that ‘Those We Don’t Speak of’ will let him pass the forbidden woods as creatures can sense emotion and fear. He also added that ‘Those We Don’t Speak of’ will understand that he has pure intentions and is not afraid. This expression indicates that this kind of ideology is taught by Elders that manipulates their youths by suggesting that “others” are almost always harmful even if the self (“you”) doesn’t harm back, reiterating the evil nature of humanity above all else, training them to be afraid of the imaginary darkness that awaits outside the village.. Here “you” is an individual’s ideological interpellation as subject position (Althusser, 83).

To make this belief of fantasy as their real world sometimes the Elders dress up as the ghosts by themselves. One day the watcher of the village sees the ghosts coming into the village. He immediately rings the bell to warn the village people regarding the arrival of ‘Those We Don’t Speak of.’ Immediately the villagers run away from the open space and take shelter into their houses to stay safe from the ghosts. This is the first time the ghost appears in a red colored dress and interferes with the village life. The fantasy now appears visually to permanently mark

the memories of the village people so that they could believe that the ghost story is not fake. It is a manipulation through an ideology without any violence. It seems to be more effective in making people believe that they are the safe “selves” and outside their community like ‘Those We Don’t Speak of’ are the “others” who invade their privacy and violate the peace of the community.

Later on in one more scene the chief of the Elders, Edward Walker, is found to say, “I feel they are warning us. They acted as if they were threatened.” Another man says, “Creatures have never attacked us without reason” (00:35:12). And then Lucius Hunt confesses that he has crossed the Covington woods and witnessed ‘Those We Don’t Speak of.’ As a result they are now invading their village. But the Elders do not punish him for this. The reason is that they all have left urban life because of this violence. Therefore, instead of taking any actions they just want to make the youngsters believe that if they ever cross the woods again, next time ‘Those We Don’t Speak of’ will take the actions by themselves. But strategies as such seem to fall short of their high aim because the first lie to cover the upsurge of latter lies only increases the volume of crimes that are to follow in the second half of the movie.

On the other hand, when Noah Percy stabs Lucius, it is an emergency to bring medicine from the town. Therefore, Ivy Walker goes into the woods to fetch the medicines from the town but her companions are frightened of the ghosts in the woods. Then she mentions, “We have the magic rocks. They will keep us safe” (1:07:34) which is but part of another fantasy tale of a ghost story to perpetuate the established false reality. The “magic rocks” seem like a saviour from the “other” As Mitchel Foucault says, “Where there is power, there is resistance(95-96).” Furthermore, even Ivy’s companion suggests that the ghosts will mean no harm to her because she is blind. This shows that if an individual is disable, there is a low chance of attack from the

outsiders because they are weak. Here, the prominent idea of blindness plays a more effective metaphorical role than the shallow logical interpretation she offers about her disability to procure the audience's sympathetic reaction.

However, before going into the woods, Edward Walker, father of Ivy Walker confesses that the ghost story "It is only a farce" (1:11:11). It is them who "created those sounds. We did not want anyone to go to the town, Ivy. Forgive us for our silly lies. They were not meant to harm" (1:11:46). Therefore, it is clear that the Elders are trying to trap their next generation in a fabricated reality because outside this wood there are excruciating moments of bitterness of life that apparently 'should not' be faced by their young children, a false promise they themselves cannot hold as the policy builders.

In general, it seems to be the simulacraic irrelaity that Jean Baudrillard suggested (338) where an imagined reality takes over the practical one. As shown in the movie, the mindset of the you thsis shaped by their own guardians. Their lives seem to be artificially simulated in such a way where one man is mindlessly copying another because no one has an authentic gesture and no one knows where the authentic mode of expression comes from. They blindly follow the Elder's fake ghost story. In future this results in the young generation to be the "fetters of an everlasting immaturity" (Kant.59) followed by the pangs of an inevitable disillusionment.

4.3: *Innocence vs Experience:* In the movie *The Village* another aspect of antagonistic construction of the "self" and the "other" can be observed under the light of innocence and experience. Here, the sense of innocence the Elders try to impose on the young generation is methodically constructed and therefore, not spontaneous. This constructed innocence is considered as the "self" because if the young people stay out of the town with the belief that in the woods there is presence of nameless ghosts that may cause harm upon them, they will be

protected from the touch of corrupt and violent city life. On the other hand, the experiences the Elders have left behind are considered as the “other” because it is the urban experience that has taken away their close people and left them in a life of agony. Therefore, the Elders consider those experiences as a threatening agent for their young generation, assuming that their life should be safe in a bubble.. As a result, when these folks decide to move into the countryside, they create a preconditioned utopian environment for their next generation. In this constructed fantasy world the violence, corruption and deadly financial gains of city-life are absent. However, the innocence the Elders have created in the Covington village is not the natural innocence in a sense that it is rather manipulated, constructed and calculated as a preplanned man-made Elysium by the Elders of the village. Therefore, this is not the innocence of William Blake’s *Songs of Innocence* where he demonstrates that the innocence develops from childhood as a natural consequence of adulthood. Overall, rather the restriction of the world view imposed upon the young people becomes a sort of an exercise of power of the “self” from the end of the Elders. Therefore:

Theories of identity construction challenge conventional models of the person as a bounded or monadic individual with a fixed or essential identity, assuming instead a fragmented, incomplete social subject. Identities are presumed to be multiple, complex, and situated. All identities are social, including those personal identities which are experienced as unique (“who I am”). The construction of “other” identities is part of the processes through which social divisions and inequalities are established and reinforced. (Taylor 9)

This impression shows as Louis Althusser says that rather than a particular source of power, such as a lever, consent is acquired in a variety of distinct and complicated ways, and ideological

power is demonstrated to be more important than material power (Barry 168). Similarly, the Elders of *The Village* try to impose their own understanding over their youths.

In the beginning of the movie it is seen that Edward Walker, the chief of the Elders, asks his people, “Did we make the right decision to settle down here?” (00:03:20) This means that they are trying to live in a place where they will be far away from the complications of modern life. Therefore, in search of innocence they choose the countryside because it is the place isolated from the post-industrial settings where crimes, violence and corruption take place. It is almost like they are trying to be connected with the natural lifestyle rather than the materialistic promises of the Enlightenment. It seems like the Elders are likely to enjoy “the innocent brightness of a new-born Day” (Wordsworth, William. *Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*, 40), most likely to leave their past trauma behind and start a new life in a village. However, as mentioned before, this innocence is constructed and not organic, a much discussed and well scripted theatrical attempt.

On the contrary, the young minds of the village seem to ask questions about the reality they are living in. For instance, in one scene Lucius Hunt tries to fetch medicine for his mother but due to the restrictions he cannot do so. He is the first person who raises questions regarding the bubble reality of which he is a direct product. He asks his mother, “There are secrets in every corner of this village. Do you not feel it? Do you not see it?” to which his mother replies, “the evil things from my past are kept close and not forgotten” (00:24:08). This indicates that she wants to nurture her newly adapted identity as an innocent woman, not ready to reminisce about the traumatic days and hours that shaped her or her family before. The questioning by Lucius portrays that the young generation has the ready curiosity to be illuminated but the repressing force over them as practiced immediately by the parents but more elaborately, the community itself does not allow them to do

so. Furthermore, when Ivy Walker says that it would not be a wise decision to cross the woods and reach the town (“What if there are medicines for Noah that could help him be still and to learn?” [00:28:50]), her comment has an important aspect that only Lucius Hunt realizes. It is of the fact that if they are allowed to cross the woods, face the fear and learn the resistance against it, they will be able to defeat the ghosts. This will help them possess knowledge about the outer side of their village, probably proving themselves to be more beneficial for their community. So, Hunt frequently asking questions shows that he wants to learn, the forbidden act which the Elders have worked against for all these years in a concerted effort. As a result, the way the Elders try to keep their next generation innocent from the outer world experience, it develops an anonymity between the “self” and the “other” identities in terms of innocence in the countryside against the experience in the urban landscape. It is almost as if:

Those guardians, who have graciously taken up the oversight of mankind, take care that the far greater part of mankind regard the step to maturity as not only difficult but also very dangerous. (Kant,58)

Therefore, staying in the darkness about the world does not denote innocence as much as it does ignorance, a kind of a curse implying that if the youngsters do not experience the outer world, they will be forever living in a fabricated reality that has no actual existence. They will rather be carrying on the false idea along with them and misleading their following generations onwards. It will be like the decay of fish that starts from the scalp (Sofa, 15).

Symbolically at the end of the movie such realization does seem to occur to the chief of the Elders, Edward Walker, who confesses later in front of the members of other Elders that he has indeed revealed the actual truth of the ghost story to his daughter, Ivy Walker, insisting that it will help her fetch the medicine from the town in order to cure her fiancé Lucius Hunt. The

members of the Elders react negatively. An elder says that Edward has jeopardized everything. In return he asks the question:

Who do you think will continue this place, this life? Do you plan to live forever? It is in them that our future lies. It is in Ivy and Lucius that this...this way of life will continue. If we did not make this decision, we could never again call ourselves innocent. And that, in the end, is what we protected here - innocence! (1:16:08 - 1:16:45)

Later on as accidentally Noah Percy dresses as ‘Those We Don’t Speak of’ and chases after Ivy Walker into the woods, she somehow manages to escape from him whereas Noah falls into a pit and dies. Later on, a young man reaches out to the Elders and informs them that Ivy has returned from the town with the medicines. In a dramatic irony, it is revealed that during her quest an animal attacks her and she kills it which was actually Noah Percy who had just dressed in like ‘Those We Don’t Speak of.’ Hearing of this, Edward Walker decides to create a story that “we will tell the others he was killed by the creatures. Your son has made our stories real.” (1:39:41 - 1:40:15), confirming the audience about the narrative power the Elders hold over their youths. A child’s play thus turns out to be a violent hunting session for the weak.

The end of the movie, however, has kept its loose contradiction open-ended for the audiences. Everything has pros and cons but no level of extremity has the best answer. So, as the ghost story is fabricated forever, this could be the sign of a continuation of the story or it could be the beginning of another story which will debunk the story of the Elders, keeping their young children in a false, constructed innocent utopia:

So it is harmful to implant prejudice, because they ultimately revenge themselves on those who originated them or on their descendents. Therefore, a public can achieve enlightenment only gradually. A revolution may perhaps bring about the fall of an

autocratic despotism and of an avaricious or overbearing oppression, but it can never bring about the true reform of a way of thinking. Rather, new prejudice will serve, like the old, as the leading strings of the thoughtless masses. (Kant, 59)

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research paper reflects Louis Althusser's mechanism of both Repressive and Ideological State apparatuses that have been found in the movie *The Village* and *Television*, both capturing the power struggles between the many versions of an authoritative 'self' and a submissive 'other.' Both the directors try to show how the community has accepted false ideologies and celebrated the imagined designs of reality rather than its actual truth. These imaginary notions of segregation and hegemonic control seem to have been constructed either by government agencies or by the ruling class, both privately and publicly. It creates a dominant culture practiced by a small group of people. Both *Television* and *The Village* also show that the problematic idea of 'self' is always subjective and subject to debatable authenticity, that the binaries of selves and others invariably involve an ideological recognition that assures us that the 'self' is more genuine, individual, unique, and naturally matchless subject compared to an 'other.' (Althusser, 85)

Furthermore, it is the subject position that complements a community's conscious beliefs, and thus if that particular person changes his beliefs, the established norm is challenged or changed, if proved effective. Therefore, this research paper highlights that the antagonistic construction of the "self" and the "other" has nothing to do with the community, technology, youth, urban and countryside, or even innocence and experience. It is the subjects or human agents who themselves create such beliefs within their community and with repressive power or ideologically, they might tend to manipulate the underlined tenets of humanity by imposing their own constructed rules. As the *en masse* constantly wants to keep themselves disciplined, they want to follow someone in society who will make life easier for them. Therefore, as shown in the

movie, it can be concluded that the many anonymities between the selves and the others in a society only serve the historical obligation which the man-made principles of division have been rigorously practicing in order to hamper the very pattern of communal existence.

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