

# Organic Dissection of the Purported Ideological Benefits with the Help of Daksh Tyagi's Text *A Nation of Idiots*

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## Abstract

This paper critiques the social and cultural biases in the political world with the help of the book *An Indian Citizens Guide on How to Avoid A Nation of Idiots* by Daksh Tyagi. The dichotomy of the political world exhibits many barricades leading to the subordination of one section of the society. The paper analyses how the state establishes its hegemony and brings up the issues to the upfront that are at the periphery. Arguing that the common people consume what media houses propagate and believe it to be true as Antonio Gramsci asserted that hegemony establishes with the consent of the people.

The paper focuses on "Politics and Religion: The Divides that Unite Us" the seventh chapter of the book. This chapter explores the politics of religion and how well it works in creating a subaltern character in the human race following different cultural ideologies and explores the hypocrisy of the powerful in submitting themselves to the underprivileged. It discloses the personal account of the author so it can be taken as an original testimony. Reflecting upon the understanding of imperial history can be problematic as discussed by historians. This culminates in the exigency of creating a counter-narrative. This aspires one to raise his voice as has been raised by Tyagi in his book through a satirical tone. The research methodology I used in the paper is the qualitative method in MLA format. The primary source is *A Nation of Idiots* and critical theories.

**Keywords:** Politics, Ideology, Counter-narrative, Metanarrative, Subaltern, Power, Suppression and subordination, Hegemony, Idiots, Propagandas, Elitist orientation.

In the context of the text, *A Nation of Idiots* with Gramsci's Hegemony Theory and the Power Axis theory of Althusser and the concept of nationalistic and imperialistic historiography by Ranajit Guha renders subaltern voice to permeate.

### Research questions:

1. What is the definition of the "Idiot" in a satirical context?
2. What are the varieties of an idiot as discussed by Tyagi?
3. How does the power influence the common people?
4. How can an individual relate to the politics of the nation?
5. What is the role of artists in creating the counter-narratives to speak against the state apparatus?
6. What is the relationship of an artist with politics?
7. Why does the backlash require adherence to power to speak against the authority?
8. How do counter-narratives assist the common people to comprehend the disparities in society?

### Objectives:

1. Exploring and assessing the text *A Nation of Idiots* (seventh chapter) in an intertwined way to excavate whether a counter-narrative can make the common people question the propagandas of the authority.
2. Analyzing how satire in a text can impact the audience in a varied way using Althusser's Power Axis Theory.
3. Examining how the proletariat get affected and how the bourgeoisie reacts in light of the Marxian ideology.
4. Excavating the historiography of the subordinated people who when speaking is condemned for holding leftist views as the authority is flexible for people with their cultural ideology.
5. Predicting the bottom-line problems in the history and the elitist ideology as Daksh Tyagi reflects in his own words with his personal account and gauges the intricacies in the counter-discourse.
6. Composing the idea of the counter-narrative in assisting to lay down one's viewpoint as Modern theory states there is no consolidated centre for truth in the Modern World.

Ideology exists in institutions and the practices specific to them. We are even tempted to say, more precisely: ideology exists in apparatuses and the practices specific to them. (Althusser, Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses)

The paper facilitates its readers with the binary world which is composed of biases and there is a binary between those who support the state and those who are against it. Everyone is put into one of these two categories. Resistance against the state is considered anti-nationalism, and the other group favouring the state is considered nationalist. These binary discourses have prompted the artists to speak logic without taking sides. However, certain name-calling is attributed to them by the opposite side and they become anti-nationalists. Any counter-narrative that questions the government is thrown to one side or is either censored or threatened for having something against the authority. Media houses try to maintain hegemony whereas the Leftists give the counter-discourses to disintegrate the hegemonic structure and call the 'other' ideologists forward.

*A Nation of Idiots* is a text by Daksh Tyagi who is one of those nationalists who speak without taking the side of any political ideology. He has weaved his own story to predict the most obvious account. Imperialist history is problematic as Dipesh Chakraborty in his book *Habitations of Modernity* shows how imperialists have portrayed colonialism to have benefitted its colony. As Winston Churchill, a British historian said: "History is written by the victors," he indicates that history becomes selective as E H Carr in his book "What is History?" asserts about how history becomes a realm of selective events, written by a selected few (people in authority) and it also involves their political bias, similarly, Guha talks about the elitist orientation of history in his essay "Dominance without Hegemony."

Deconstructing how in times of pandemic, people started relying for any information on social networking sites. And how politics became a plaything of every youth, which lead to unnerving communal violence among the citizens. It culminates in how misinformation or "Fake News" culture was propagated which gave birth to an online pandemic called "misinfodemic." This is due to the fact that counter-narratives are being discouraged with informal and in fact, lethal means, these artists are either detained or tarnished publicly with certain allegations. In the world of Post Truth era, where personal views are better shaping the idea than the facts themselves, it has become necessary to dismantle the popular idea of religious politics or to unearth the true idea which is most needed in the time of 'Fake News' culture. Daksh Tyagi is one of the writers of the post-modern world who is trying to fix the ethical dilemmas of modern life. I intend to calculate his yearning throughout his text to see an enlightening effect on the people who are victims of hegemony.

Gramsci in his book *Prison Notebooks* talks about 'consent' which is taken from the common people with a promise and instead creates a moral trap on the grounds of religion and community. Articulating the underlined politics and the "organic intellectuals" who are ones based on activism, and are representatives of a subaltern class against the traditional ones who remain committed to their commissioners like the tyrant or the state. Analysing that Daksh is here one of the "organic intellectuals" who is dissecting the religiopolitical and the socio-political instances which only assist in propagating the powerful narratives siding the common people's narratives. Antonio Gramsci in his *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*

says “All men are intellectuals, but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals.” We can assess the political biases and the “idiots” in the words of Tyagi are those people who are too lazy to speak up and do not realise a way to become a citizen is too easy. But many fear voicing up as the counter-discourse is taken as a threat to power as it discloses the vices of the authority and questions their ideological propagandas. This questioning leads to their political aggression which results in detaining and reprimanding.

It is said that no one truly knows a nation until one has been inside its jails. A nation should not be judged by how it treats its highest citizens, but its lowest ones.... (Nelson Mandela)

This dictates to us the difference between an “Idiot” and a “Citizen.” We can infer that voicing is what saves us from becoming an “Idiot” and the artists like Tyagi or Vir Das who are similar activists (organic intellectuals) can be captivated, yet, they can produce their ideas as Faiz Ahmad Faiz while in prison produced his perspective on the Indian Independence:

Ye daagh daagh ujaalaa,/ ye shab-gaziida sahar,  
Vo intizaar thaa jis-kaa, ye vo sahar to  
nahiin.. (Faiz, Subh-e- Azaadi)

This translates to: This blemished light, this partly-bitten rise is not the rise we had envisioned. He compresses his thoughts and talks about the politics behind the independence and criticizes the celebrations while focusing on the fate of the common people crushed under the powerful discourse of the people in authority while still being behind the bars. This illustrates to ‘an idea’ which is produced even behind bars and is the biggest enemy of an opponent i.e., authority. Similarly, Hitler left jail as the wordsmith of *Mein Kampf*, a political screed and memoir. We can deduce from these that there is a binary world where counter-discourses were created both by the Rightists and the Leftists.

A politician’s survival kit: Please the majority, comfort the minority, keep the rich in the loop and the poor disillusioned. (Tyagi, 129)

Tyagi here very firmly unnerved the knots of a trap which is created by the powerful for they rule the state and the common people to inflict their power upon, they get things inferred by the common men for their own benefit.

It should never be forgotten that, in the struggle between the nations, it is in the interest of each one of them that the other should be weakened by internal struggle. Hence it is always possible to pose the question of whether the parties exist by virtue of their own strength, as their own necessity, or whether rather they only exist to serve the interests of others. (Gramsci)

Highlighting how Gramsci delineates here the strength of the powerful and the politics in the state. And assessing how Tyagi through his own story portrays the power politics, especially how “political parties have too often used rioting to gain a foothold in a state. If a state does not exist, they first create it and then declare the killing open. Which makes me wonder if it is

easy to exploit a faith.” (Tyagi 132) We can manage to procure the practicality of the issue underlying the purported democracy. Problematising the agendas of the parties (both Left and the Right) through these activists who work for the subaltern and stir the fringe elements are the actual saviours for they raise their voice for the common man.

Tyagi says in his book “Remind me, did we fight for our freedom so only a select few can drink from a body of water?” (133) We can explain the praxis of biasness here as Faiz in his poem “Subh-e-Azadi” (“Freedom of Dawn”) illustrates. This is what Althusser his essay *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, highlights while discussing the relation between the state and its subjects with the help of the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) and the Repressive State Apparatus (RSA) talking about how proletariats (the common people) are kept in “false class consciousness” (Engels, 1893 letter).

Before we go to access the inherited versions of understanding, we can go further by comprehending the fact how common people (proletariat) make powerful (bourgeoisie) invincible, and how they have to submit themselves instead of openly doubting the other party’s intention. It is devoid of juxtapositions to carve the reasons for the common people’s submission to the authority. They are suppressed on either way of the horizon. (Althusser)

We can compose the idea that we are held by order, an order of a person not among us who can undeniably handle things better for his end overlooking others’ needs while still making sure he is being hailed for his hand among the public. Manto very famously said:

Hukmaraan jinke sar par makkhi bhi nahin bethi vo  
muashre ke bhooke nange ghalazat ke dher par bethe  
logon ka dard kese samajh sakenge.

Translates to: Rulers on whose heads not even an insect lingers, how will they understand the pain of those hungry, naked people sitting on a filthy heap? This is what Gramsci in his *Prison Notebook* talked of- the “organic intellectuals” and the “traditional” ones. We can comprehend how necessary it is to not live on “bells and claps” as Tyagi in his book highlights, he says:

Swear by religion or swear without, breathe an ideology or  
snort a concept undeniably we live by a code. Tiny  
invisible bells guiding us. (Tyagi 135)

Deducing from the example that Tyagi talked about, we come to infer the need to become activists. A need to choose a representative from among us who better represent us in his narratives i.e., a counter-narrative in opposition to the grand narrative or metanarrative (Jean- Francois Lyotard).

Now add to religion a politician and you get claps.  
Confronting, irregular and shrill, claps force us to react.  
Leaving us angry and fuming. (Tyagi 135)

Life with bells: religion and life with claps: politics with religion. This is my inference from Tyagi’s industrious illustration of the concept of puppets (the common man) or “bells and claps” example in the hands of the authority.

We come to evaluate that the only way to bring common people (subalterns) into a loop of suppression is to distract them from their own exploitation, ushering them towards false interests that serve the purpose to keep the public aloof from understanding the hypocrisy and achieve consent to the rule of the dominant group with the help of ideologies. Tyagi mentions the burning down of the cars amidst the political chaos and he says: “Distraction is an opportunity.” (139)

To conclude, we can draw a blueprint of how politics keeps us intertwined and enriched with immense lures. How Tyagi, an artist who in his definition of life is fulfilling his purpose as an individual by coming along the line of recruitment in political activism and by creating a discourse in opposition to the idea of blindly submitting to the ideological traps (both social and religious) and the lures of the authority to keep themselves in the position of power. To dismantle the propaganda, Louis Althusser, a French Marxist philosopher, his cultural ideology theory and Antonio Gramsci, an Italian activist and journalist, his cultural hegemony theory, and the text of Daksh Tyagi, *A Nation of Idiots* are taken as a Bible. Because we only know the truth when we draw an unconsolidated centre of power and the biggest power is the ultimate truth, between it lies all the social or religious politics which manipulate the minor truths for their own benefit and ultimately lose the balance and a more solid truth pervades which only a common man can realize and observe.

I have optimized the obvious truths based on my observations from various online and offline sources where activism is often reprimanded by the government because they don't like their powers to be questioned and to solidify their positions, therefore, are encouraged to remain subalterns. Hence, giving way to counter-discourses.

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