

Delusions of Democracy: Fictionalizing State Failure, Political Schism in *Riot* and *The Party Worker*

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Abstract

*State failure refers to a weak writ of the government where state institutions fail to provide fundamental rights to the people. It encompasses the welfare of the State, basic freedoms of the people, and strong footings of judiciary and law. The present research will explore the repercussions of state failure in Omar Shahid Hamid's *The Party Worker* and Shashi Tharoor's *Riot*. Both novels present the deplorable State of affairs in their respective cities, Karachi and Zaleelgarh. The study is conducted under the theoretical framework of Diamond (2015), where democracy fails, political schism is brazenly challenged, and social institutions are at the cusp of failure. Every institution is putting the life of the people at risk, be it the judiciary, human rights, liberty, freedom, and police. The political schism is not providing law and fundamental rights to the masses. The hawkish and fiendish approach of state writ causes collateral damage to the pillars of society. Corrupt practice by the top echelons of the State abounds lawlessness, causing its people to suffer.*

Keywords: State Failure, Weak Writ, Democracy, The Party Worker, Riot.

Introduction

Politics has been an integral part of English Fiction writing in Pakistan due to the political fabric of our country and its multi-faceted problems. The intersection of literature and Politics serves as a microcosm to understand the dynamics of cataclysmic changes due to state failure and political instability. Shashi Tharoor's *Riot* and Omar Shahid Hamid's *The Party Worker* are apt examples of the derailing of democracy and political upheavals in India and Pakistan, respectively. Lockhart (2009) states that:

"The people thus rendered powerless are the victims of what we call sovereignty gap- the disjunction between the de jure assumption that all states are sovereign, regardless of their performance in practice, and the de facto reality all are failed states or malfunctioning and not providing the citizens their basic needs" (Lockhart, 2009, pg. 32).

The conundrum of political instability and power politics has usurped the people's fundamental rights, and the masses are left to suffer; hence, they are made to fall into the quagmire of problems. This research aims to explore the implications of state failure and examine how political schism becomes the reason for society's social and political fragmentation along communal lines. Pakistan has been in limbo since its independence, a nascent state grappling with myriad issues. Another country from South Asia, India, is also facing a deplorable state of human rights violations. Pakistan saw many military coups and has been targeted by many dictatorial regimes, which

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caused decay to the social fabric of the State; it has long been tortured by political stunts by different parties along with civil-military and bureaucratic nexus. Novelists are a mirror to society; they weave the plot by watching the things happening around them. Both the novels *The Party Worker* and *Riot* portray the agony and plight of the people; the Pakistani author is an accomplished civil servant, whereas the Indian author is a key player in politics and serves as a minister. I undertook these authors because both showcased their novels depicting the masses' plight and represented the relationship between the State and the masses. Woodward (2017) states that "the concept of state failure is de facto loss of monopoly on the use of force. It is unable to control its territory and large parts of the territory. It no longer has to uphold internal legal order, nor is it delivering public services to the citizens" (Woodward, 2017, pg. 97).

Both the novelists wrote about the repercussions of state failure, and literature is a glaring example of venting out the problems faced by the people. Both countries share the same political landscape, such as political instability, the derailing of democracy, and the assassination of their Prime Ministers, Benazir Bhutto in Pakistan and Rajiv Gandhi. Taylor (2015) opines, "Politics, like nature, abhors a vacuum, and the condition of failures generates unappealing political orders. Failure is always in someone's interest. In India, power politics and rampant corruption ultimately lead to state failure" (Taylor, 2015, pg. 6).

The centrality of the State in both novels made it essential to take it up as a subject. Both books have the explicit themes of state failure and political decay. Rotberg (2002) states, "State failure is artificial, not merely accidental or fundamentally caused, geographically or externally. Leadership failures and decisions have destroyed states and continue to weaken the fragile polities that operate on the cusp of failure" (Rotberg, 2002, pg. 9). States fail because of the violation of human rights and monopoly of violence despite having a government. The State becomes weak and loses its control over the territory. The collapse of the central government leads the country to impose order, causing chaos on a large scale. A failed state can never provide fundamental rights to the people, weakening the judicial order and social and economic fronts. Both authors discussed the deplorable and appalling state of affairs in their novels. Shahi Tharoor talks about his ideas in an interview with *The Hindu*:

"A lot of what I am trying to explore in this novel involves collisions of various sorts. Collisions between individuals regarding love and hate between cultures are collisions of various sorts. In a riot, what happens is the ultimate collision of violence. But violence, which involves both peoples saying this is who we are and this is who we are not!"

Friedman (1999) observed that a "State is a territorially defined association that embraces all the persons in that territory has a monopoly of violence and has a government" (Friedman, 1999, pg. 22). This statement clearly defines the State with its responsibilities that the State must have to deploy its writ within the territory including all power-oriented stakeholders. The State's most significant responsibility is to ensure the equal rights of every citizen. A state collapses when its central government fails to impose the order and law of the country, characterized as a failed state causing the physical loss of territory. Taylor (2015) states, "states fail because of internal and external problems, and the social codes are violated with impunity" (Taylor, 2015, pg. 8).

The states that are brazenly challenged with weak writ, lack of governance, and have no means to alleviate poverty are easily prone to malpractices of political schism. The derailing of democracy creates a delusionary state where the masses are always fooled easily. South Asian countries have also witnessed a wrecked state of affairs due to military coups. The regional players in South Asia barely witnessed the smooth sailing of democracy. Hence, it harnessed the economic and social growth of the developing countries.

Objectives

1. To analyze how *Riot* and *The Party Worker* depicts State Failure as a political and cultural crisis manifestation.
2. To examine the role of communalism and institutional breakdown in the narratives.
3. To explore the relationship between an individual and the structural collapse of political schism.

Research Questions

1. How do Tharoor and Hamid portray the role of political ideologies resulting in State failure?
2. What literary techniques do authors use to depict the cataclysmic changes and their impact on society?
3. How do both novels depict political schism as a collective response to the political discourse of state failure?

Literature Review

Dhir (2009) explores in his research article Shashi Tharoor's *Riot: Perspectives on History, Politics, and Culture* about the multilayered narrative of Shashi Tharoor's work, which draws our attention toward several matters related to the history, culture, and politics of India. Patil (2016) presents their analysis in this article entitled *Sociocultural Issues and Subjugation of Women in Shashi Tharoor's Riot* along with the discovered verifications of Sociocultural drawbacks and women's domination in Indian society. Ghosh (2018) states that the concept of hybridity identifies conflicts and attempts to mark out the consequences of hybridization and the effect of multiculturalism in Indian society as an amalgam of hybrid culture, religion, traditions, languages, and many more through the lens of post-colonialism. She discusses every individual's quest: "Who are they?" This question raises concerns about every individual living in a country like India, keeping several religions, cultures, beliefs, and social and customary differences from each other. Baskaran and Venkatesan (2020) speak about the carnage created by state failure, 'Vandalization' is an intended destruction or wreck of anything like property. This vandalization comes into the process with no special purpose or objective, just for damage or destruction. Various aspects like communal conflicts, religious imbalance, linguistic differences, political disparity, and rifts cause the pandemonium of state failure. In his blog, Imteyaz Alam (2017) writes about *The Party Worker* and the unholy nexus of Politics, crime, and religion. *The Party Worker* is a realistic crime thriller. Hamid, working as a Police officer, has an excellent command over the colloquial and diction, which is profoundly significant. The depiction of Karachi gives us a magnanimous visualization of the city and its deep fissures of crime. Shazaf Fatima Haider (2017) reviews *The Party Worker* and depicts bizarre facets of Karachi. Pakistan is a country with gruesome and deplorable conditions of the State. *The Party Worker* is a mixture of thriller, tragedy, and absurdity. The circumlocutions of truth and cyclical patterns of Pichkari's thought all culminate in the certainty of his imagined victimhood. *The Party Worker* is ultimately a unique account of the urban fabric of Karachi and detailed descriptions of the metropolis's social, geographical, criminal, and political factors.

Waqar (2017) encapsulates, "Karachi always remains in your blood." Omar Shahid Hamid describes his fourteen-year time in the Police Service and jot down the stories picked from the suburbs of Karachi. He garnered applause across the border for his four novels, proving his flair for writing as a great novelist. Zia (2017) summarizes that Hamid flawlessly envisages corrupt stakeholders and greedy politicians. Hamid exposes layer by layer the fine mask they have all worn for personal rather than national interest. The city is much more like a piece of cake for taking up.

Political strongholds, honorable gangsters, and villains appear in a single frame. Hence, from the language point of view to narration, *The Party Worker* is written briskly.

Procedure of Analysis

This study has been conducted by applying Larry Diamond's (2015) concept. The design is qualitative and descriptive in nature. Textual analysis is conducted on both novels, *The Party Worker* and *Riot*. The pertinent focus was studying state failure's implications and its dreadful consequences.

Theoretical Framework

The researcher applied Larry Diamond's (2015) theory of 'State failure,' showing that one depicts his actions in society as described in his book *In Search of Democracy*. The theory of State Failure will be applied to the pattern of this study and will be descriptive and analytical. The priority will be given to the negative consequences of the 'Failure of the State' and its influences on the individual characters and possible situations to dig out the results of State failure with reasons.

Conceptual Framework

Diamond's "Facing up to the Democratic Recession" explains his theory that underdeveloped countries have much poverty. He adds that the greatest barricader in ending poverty is purely political, and these developing countries claim to be democratic. Still, they have bogus and artificial democracies full of corruption and injustice. The government and poor conflict occurs when the ill-equipped government fails to empower people experiencing poverty, ensuring justice, health, care, electricity, jobs, education, and other basic facilities. The State's downfall starts when the "elite" become more affluent and the poor become "poorer" due to a transparent and flawless system. Diamond means that the State must have crystal-clear and neutral corridors of power and an organized attitude to serve its masses. They must provide easy access to the justice system, but when the State goes wrong, it issues its people a facilitated environment for the "rapacious elite." The elite exists in the majority. This establishment is unwilling to utilize state resources in a fever of commoners for the welfare and betterment. The State collapses due to deficiencies in the rule of law, good administration, and a trustworthy and neutral judiciary. So why does the survival of the masses become impossible, the crime rate increases, and impatience and intolerance appear among them, especially when they get deprived of their fundamental rights and facilities with tough survival? This contributes to the conflict and chaos in society, and specific resistance actions appear as the reason for "State Failure".

Political Schism and State Failure

The above-described perspectives will add the definite codes to this study which helped me for data analysis. This coding will give issue stability and reliance to the research. These categories have been made for coding. These codes are categorized by Larry Diamond (Diamond, 11). In first category, the reasons and the factors of "State Failure" will be identified in the selected text which emerged as a result of challenging the state writ. In second category, the effect of the unaffectionate and incapable state institutions and administrations will be analyzed on the characters of novel in the state failure. Scott (2020) social order is always schematic, it ignores basic human rights and essential features of real functioning social order" (Scott, 2020, pg. 6).

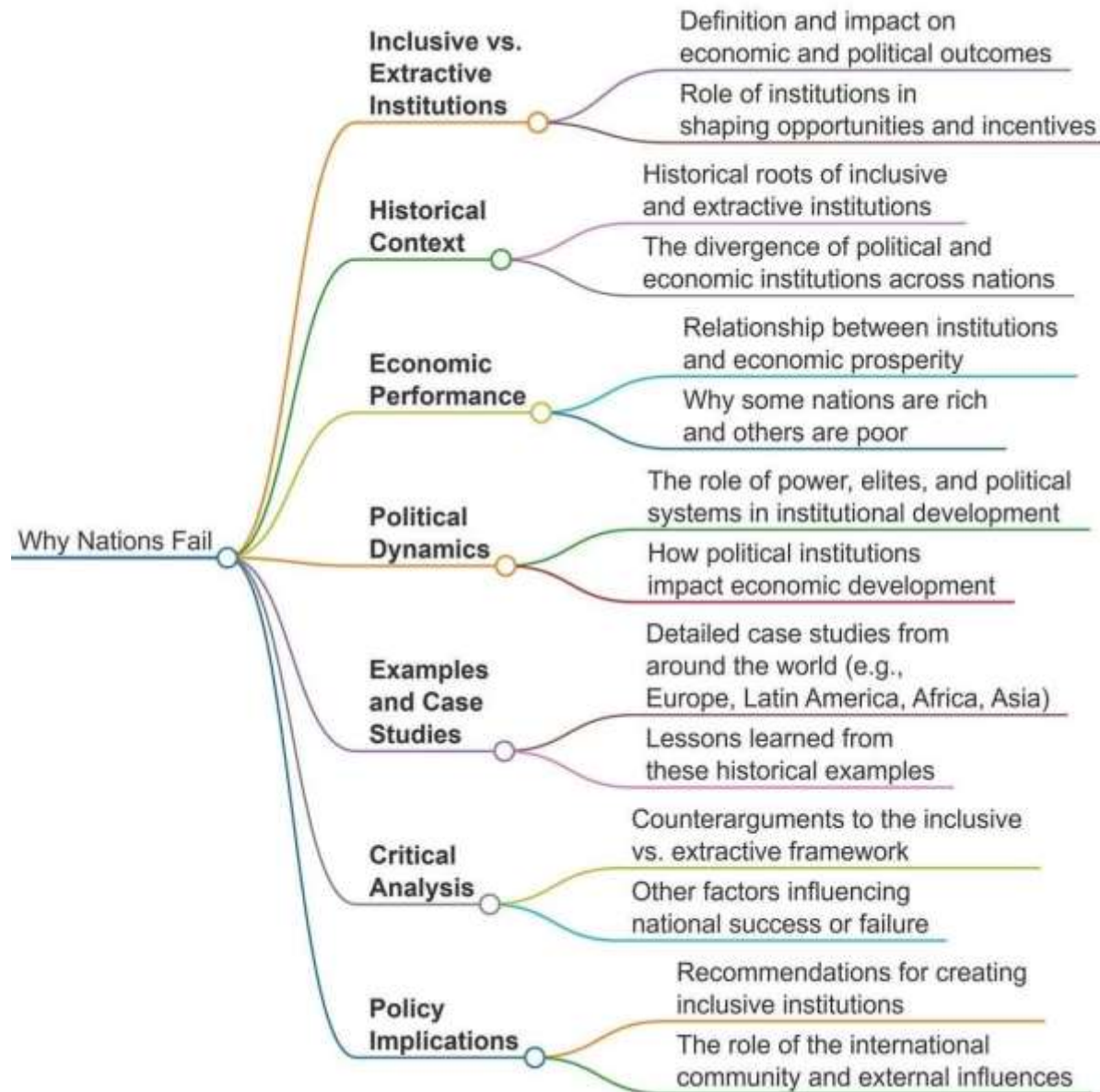
In the third category, the consequences of "State failure" will be inspected in characters and text by studying human rights.

These codes are mentioned below:

1. Writ of the State
2. State institutions
3. Human rights

Every community is conscious and sensitive for its religious affairs. And this is what happened in the novel which terrible shaken the writ of the state when the dispute of Hindu- Muslim started with the clash of Babri Masjid Ram Janam Bhoomi.

Figure 1: A mind map explaining the important points of “Why Nations Fail”



Data Analysis

Failure of State Institutions in Riot

Chesterman (2005) A collapsing state is therefore which maintains few or no functioning state institutions, has lost power to confer identity, can no longer assure security and legitimacy. Sometimes state failure comes through colonial legacy, sometimes by maladministration (Chesterman, 2005, pg. 6)

Police is authoritative and has power but still seems helpless and puppet for the high command's orders to take any action. Tharoor's fiction exudes brilliance when he depicts the failure of social institutions and how it decays the moral fabric of the society as well. He represents the deplorable condition of police.

He asked him furiously, if he is the representative of these ten men arrested by police. Where he was? When several Muslims were beaten, disgraced and dragged by their beards even they had no criminal records against and when these ten men are behind the bars suspected guilty, makes you march here quickly to yell for justice? (Tharoor, 2003, pg.17).

This is how the police get pressurized to work under influential people's consents. If the administration doesn't feel free to take independent or fair decision it will be quite tough for state to maintain its strength and avoid collapsing. The heart-breaking incident of Gurinder Singh's nephew and brother-in-law shares the facts that angry or extreme buggers are more powerful than the police, proves the weak and shaken structure of authority in weak state. And even the disastrous thing is the assassination of working prime minister of India Gandhi is fair enough to justify the weak writ and state failure. Same state of affairs has been depicted in Hamid's fiction as well, where Asad Haider's kills the Police SHO Dilawar in order to complete Don's order. It is done to create fear in the minds of the people. Gayer (2014) "Karachi has also been an important arena of conflicts for political forces competing for the control of Pakistani state at large. Until the 1980s, it shared with Lahore the status of 'political pulse of the country'" (Gayer,2014, pg. 7).

Another aspect the writer described that India is a country basically a place with so many classes and these sects and classes have greater a void in the society.

Outside the caste system were the untouchables, who did menial and polluting work, scavenging, sweeping streets, removing human wastes, cleaning toilets, collecting the ashes from funeral pyres. Mahatma Gandhi tried to uplift them and called them Harijans, or children of God (Tharoor,2003, pg. 43).

The Brahmins are of the most superior class, the exalted and the Sudras are the ones who are basically helping out with funeral and cremation of ashes purpose from the funeral pyres. The district magistrate, Laxman, says that "I never wanted those tensions during the communal riots would escalate that much" but the tenacity of the issues made the situation grimmer. When minorities are deprived of their basic rights there are volcanic eruptions of the disastrous consequences. Religion is something when whenever the sacred sentiments are going to be hurt, the riots will be the culmination of the episode. Ignatieff (2005) "There is no obedience to legal system and all this creates chaos. When the legal order crumbles with the concentration of power in the hands of elites, the social order also crumbles down badly" (Ignatieff, 2005, pg.15).

Muslims are treated badly which abhors the system to violate their constitutional rights and thus, the agony stirs in the hearts of people. "Look around you, anywhere on the map; they are all dictatorship, monarchies, and tyrannies, military regimes. Take my word for it, it's the only way

they know. Muslims are fantastic and terrorist; they only understand the language of force” (Tharoor, 2003, pg. 57).

Vandalization of Social Institutions

The Party Worker revolves around the Don; leader of the United Front Party and his political machinery operating in the province and the chief protagonist of the novel Asad Haider brutally carrying out his boss’s mission to govern the city. The moment he starts kicking himself out of this dirty politics he is targeted by the Don and his men creating conundrum of terror in New York City where the Don is living since more than a decade. We witness a shocking and gripping tale of Machiavellian Politics and how men use the chivalrous means to attain and subjugate power. The State, political machinery and crime all are inter-related to each as fabric of social institutions is destroyed. The weaker lot becomes strongest alliance of the ruling Party and have nefarious and murkier designs to achieve power whenever they can seize the power. Asad Haider is deeply involved in several activities for which he is wanted by the Karachi police. “Rioting. Arson. Burning cars. Assault. Murder of political opponents. Murder of police officers, allegedly. Never been arrested though. But apparently, he is a legend in the Party. Supposedly a real nasty piece of work” (Hamid, 2017, pg. 19).

We see a grim, dark and gritty picture of Asad Haider who was once introduced as boy playing cricket on the streets, hired for the security of Don who was there to speak at the University. Asad Haider character is portrayed as a man with sheer power and violent mind who can go to at any length to accomplish his mission for The Party. Although, Asad Haider is no ordinary man. He is wisely chosen by the Don aka Mohammad Ali Pichkari sitting outside the province of Karachi by taking shelter in America for past several years. Asad Haider has to face the music of his deeds as he becomes the victim of his own criminal actions.

Never kill just your opponent, but eviscerate him. Strike as widely as possible against his family and friends to ensure that no one raises their heads. That’s how you spread fear in city of twenty million. It’s funny that you never think you will become a victim of your own terror one day (Hamid, 2017, pg. 16).

Throughout the Hamid’s fiction, we see the mayhem caused to the state by multiple people residing in Karachi creating havoc by their insane policies, usurping power from weaker. It also shows those who are friends once, when the relationship turns sour, they turn into foes. And those foes come with raging bullets and one is fizzled to see the irony of the fate. Men who are in power becomes the weak and they subjugate in front of the oppressor.

The man Asad refused to kill, the first time he had refused an order from the Don in twenty-eight years. Why did he refuse? What was so different about Aleem? It wasn’t as if Aleem was a saint. Asad should know, he has killed plenty of saints. Aleem had his vices. The mistress in *Bahadurabad*, the under-invoiced tax returns those officials turned a blind eye to, the admittedly modest business favors gained through Party ministers. So, when the Don accused Aleem of colluding with the Agencies, Asad could not bring himself to believe that (Hamid, 2017, pg. 198). When the state fails to provide the basic rights of the people, it breeds sectarian violence as well. Riot and *The Party Worker* are example of state failure, where the protagonists are manipulated by the failure of system, it creates an atmosphere of eerie, when Priscilla Hart and Asad Haider are killed in the novels respectively, at the hands of system.

That’s Asad Haider, our target. He is a Shia Chokra. He’s from around this area. Used to odd jobs for one of Shia students’ group, until he became the Don’s bodyguard in the University. And then, when the Party was formed, he created the

militant wing. Nearly every person that the Party's ward bosses have killed, the order came from him. And he is the bastard who survived an assassination attempt today. He is the reason you are here. Here, in this file, with the details of all his illegal activities. You need to start leaking these details anonymously on the internet. Tears start streaming from Sadia's cheeks. Because I want to know if he was the one who gave the order to kill my brother (Hamid, 2017, pg.98).

It is the system which is pulling the strings and calling off for coercive violence. The government loses its control over the territory and hence paves way for the state failure.

“But then, the genocide ended, we became the part of government and the amount kept getting bigger. To the point where Tariq, our Party's chief minister, came to and said that Asad's corruption was hindering his efforts at good governance (Hamid,2017, pg. 113).

This is how politics works. We can see the Don's nefarious intentions in the following lines:

“It's the same with the money. We have a very finely tuned system of checks and balances in the party. We had documentary proof of Asad's corruption, we had statements from the people he took money from, but we have everything. Raja will tell you; he keeps all the records. But you ask, why did we not confront him with the evidence? It was not because we thought it was flimsy. This too can be blamed on my soft-heartedness. I did not want to put Asad on trial. I did not want his family's name to be smeared in this scandal. I have too much respect for his grandmother, who was one of my earliest supporters. Also, Asad was a hero to an entire generation of Party workers. They would all be shattered to find that their old idol had broken almost every tenet of the Party oath. I thought it would be better for all the concerned if we just simply expelled Asad, instead of hanging him publicly” (Hamid, 2017, pg. 197).

What kind of crimes they committed, they were prone to murder, extortion terrorism, kidnapping and ransom. Priscilla was also present “at wrong place in history at a wrong time, it was her fate that brought her to India from America, her own love affair become the course of tragedy for her” (Tharoor, 2003, pg. 198).

Democracy and Weak Writ of State

Every community is conscious and sensitive for its religious affairs. And this is what happened in the novel which terribly shaken the writ of the state when the dispute of Hindu- Muslim started with the clash of Babri Masjid Ram Janam Bhoomi. Democracy is another point which can weaken or strengthen any state if the state. The novel discloses the communal disobedience toward the state. This happens when the common masses do not trust the government for their religious and national rights such as Muslims as threatened minority made their personal law to not get interfered by others. All these differences create confliction among the masses and often creates hate for each other's religion and perspective too. The Hindu character Ram Charan Gupta clearly shows his disagreement ideas and mindset especially with Muslim community. The political leaders of every community are the actual threats to challenge the State Writ. It is because they just go with an extreme mindset and awoke people to follow their footsteps either create peace or dispute among the communities. “Indian Muslims suffer disadvantages, even discrimination, in a hundred ways....” (Tharoor, 2003,pg.112).

These leaders of communal, political or religious parties often appears with extreme mind sets as Ram Charan Gupta showed his displeasure for Muslims who starts violence first, just to discredit them and as the perspective the other parties has. Such hate directly creates violence in society and destroys the rule of law by challenging the state writ.

Every community is conscious and sensitive for its religious affairs. And this is what happened in the novel which terrible shaken the writ of the state when the dispute of Hindu- Muslim started with the clash of Babri Masjid Ram Janam Bhoomi.

And then realization hits him. Nani Amma. Mumtaz. Her husband. And her six-year old daughter. Never kill just your opponent, but eviscerate him. Strike as widely as possible against his family and friends to ensure that no one raises their heads. That's how you spread fear in city of twenty million. It's funny that you never think you will become a victim of your own terror one day (Hamid, 2017, pg. 66-67).

For residing in a country like Pakistan where everything is fair in the name of messy politics. They are hungry for power to establish their writ by inculcating fear in the public by mass killing of the innocent. What matters the most is the power. The power to subjugate. The text is divided into two parts; the New York chapter and Karachi chapter. Both are gripping narratives about wealth, power, crime, lawlessness, greed, mass killing of people and minister including the Police officers.

Then you the Don is the uncrowned king of Karachi. His will cannot be challenged, and any who do, on pain of death". It's all connected. The Don ordered my execution when I refused his command for the very first time in life (Hamid, 2017, pg. 198).

He was walking, talking and killing machine. "In English you call it pharaoh, I think. A man he thinks he is God on Earth. Power has driven him mad" (Hamid, 2017, pg.212). But Asad changes everything. He was the head of Party's militant wing for over twenty years, for God's sake. He was the Don's irreplaceable acolyte.

It's a testament to Don's foolishness that he killed Asad's family before ensuring that Asad was dead. Asad Haider is a man who will never forget, or forgive. And many of the ward bosses owe to Asad than to the Don (Hamid, 2017, pg. 189).

When state failure occurs, either military coup is there or opponents topple up the government. The civil and bureaucratic nexus creates quagmire of problems. "I will conduct a shake-up in the bureaucracy and the police. We all need to build the Party once again, said the Don, as once we did. Only this time, there is no Aleem, no Imam and no Asad" (Hamid, 2017, pg.199).

The district magistrate, Laxman, says that "I never wanted those tensions during the communal riots would escalate that much" but the tenacity of the issues made the situation grimmer. When minorities are deprived of their basic rights there are volcanic eruptions of the disastrous consequences. Religion is something when whenever the sacred sentiments are going to be hurt, the riots will be the culmination of the episode. The text of the novel is full of several instances that share the weak writ of the State. One of them is the disputed issue of Babari masjid, when the issue was discounted in court. Both sides share their points and references as proof. Muslim kept the place as their holy mosque but Hindus declared it as their sacred place of Ram Janam Bhoomi, where they claim to build the temple again after destroying the mosque of Muslims. According to their point, Muslims warrior destroyed the place and build mosque over it.

Fundamental Human Rights Violations as Consequences of State Failure in RIOT

Riot narrates the tale of a female protagonist character Priscilla Hart who comes to India to volunteer a women representative NGO, works for the human rights of women. Priscilla is however victimized by the current circumstances of riots of that time in the country. The biggest exploitation of human right can be observed easily through the fact that a representative of human rights for women herself got murdered with this bitter reality of having even no right to life. It was Priscilla's right to live with freedom of expressions, but she received death threats by Ali twice in

the text along with dirty titles like filthy whore. She got victimized just because of giving awareness to the women for their very basic rights, rights to physical health and for having birth choices.

Conclusion

Both the novels brazenly question the failure of state writ and how the people have to pay the price of it. The feudal lords, civil and military bureaucratic nexus further paves way for violence and clash of ideologies existing in the society. The state institutions are in limbo and plagued by corrupt policies of the ruling parties. The judiciary fails to deploy justice, agencies are plotting conspiracies and police is a nuisance for the people; all this lays a strong foundation for state failure. Both the novels depict, how the political schism becomes a casualty by violating the laws and human rights of the people. Life without the proper provision of basic rights in itself is a matter of grave concern. Liberty, justice, freedom of speech are amid basic rights of any civilian; which is triggered once they are not implemented in true sense. So, in order to achieve the benchmark of a stable society, South Asian needs a firm foundation of democracy and justice for the state for its smooth functioning.

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