



## MOTH SMOKE: A STUDY IN THE LIGHT OF SOCIAL CONFLICT THEORY

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### ABSTRACT

Mohsin Hamids debut novel captures the frustration and anger of less fortunate in a country where the ruling class is thoroughly corrupt and where the economic gulf is so vast that the wealthy insulate themselves from the rules that bind the rest of society. The present will explore the demonstration of inherent conflict between Air conditioned and non Air conditioned division of Pakistan during nuclear tension between India and Pakistan. This research is also an endeavor to examine how elites of Pakistan enjoys all privileges and do not care for the laws of country as law is a kind of tool for them to oppress down trodden. The rich makes and enjoys the sovereign immunity from the rule, while as poor must follow the same rule and are often considered as scapegoat, who do not posses influential connections, and are continuing and bearing the brunt of inherent socio economic conflict. The most conceptual dependence of the study will be on the social conflict theory which is based on the fundamental core idea of division of society into ruling and subject class were ruling class always exploits and oppresses subject class.

Key words: Gulf, Air- Conditioned, Endeavor, Sovereign, Scapegoat, Brunt

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### INTRODUCTION

Mohsin Hamid is a Pakistani Diaspora writer born in 1971. He is best known for his three novels, *Moth smoke* (2000), *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* (2013) and his fourth novel *Exit West* will be published on 7 march, 2017. His debut and most acclaimed novel *Moth Smoke*, set in summer of 1998 revolves round the major four characters viz Daru ,his friend Ozi , Mumtaz wife of Ozi and Mannucci servant of Daru .The novel tells the story of decline of Daru ,who loses his job and falls in love with his best friends wife Mumtaz. Both Mumtaz and Daru had extramarital affairs and had insane sex so many times. Throughout the novel Daru feels insecure, and his insecurity is heightened by return of Ozi and his unfaithful wife Mumtaz from America,

from where both completed their graduation. The novel brings out the realistic picture of modern day Pakistan and side by side it portrays perfectly ones desire that ends up consuming the soul.

### Air- Conditioned vs Non Air-Conditioned

The novel was published during Pakistan's detonation of its first nuclear weapon in an escalating test for test with its close rival India. Like the atoms that splits for fission bomb to explode , modern day Pakistan particularly Lahore is itself divided into poor and rich, new and old ,conservative and liberal. The distinction is made by Mohsin hamid through the comparison of two major characters Daru and Ozi .Ozi has everything while as Daru has nothing: ozi has Mitsubishi Pajero, a well paid job, a foreign degree and a beautiful wife Mumtaz who leads a secret double life as an

investigative journalist under the pseudonym of Zulifikar Manto. The novel possesses an acute depiction of men and women trapped between two worlds. It also lays bare the greed and insecurity of Pakistani rich, and their devastating effect on poorer neighbors. Lower class always feels insecure as they can't afford the luxuries as rich had, as Daru is jealous of his best friend to attain the same position as well as to enjoy the same status. The novel also portrays the selfishness and lack of concern of upper class. As selfish but pragmatic Ozi put it as:

"You have to have money these days. The roads are falling apart, so you need a pejero or land cruiser. The phone lines are erratic, so you need a mobile"

Moth smoke acts as cure to bring out and highlight the social evils committed by modern day Pakistan society. The society is divided into two groups, upper or air conditioned who enjoys their special privilege while as lower or non air conditioned endeavors and puts their each and every effort to attain the same privilege as their opposites enjoy. The first group is much smaller, but its members exercise vastly greater control over their immediate environment and are collectively termed as elites. The second group large and sweaty, and contains those referred to as masses doesn't entertain any special privilege but are consistently fighting for it. The elites go on enjoying all the powers and still don't care for the laws when the upper class indulges in exploitation and maltreatment of the lower classes. The contrast between the two: their deprivation, discrimination, injustice causes anger among masses and they refuse to live in a continuous state of joy, alienation, unequal distribution of wealth. This act of endeavor for availing the same status which elites enjoy gives rise to confrontation between the two. The confrontation between two groups of Pakistan modern day society runs as a lively force throughout the novel.

Daru criticizes Ozi throughout the novel as he introduces him to the readers as the son of a corrupt father. Tries to curtail his anger and jealousy that it is only by virtue of his corrupt father that Ozi goes off to states for pursuing his higher education,

while as more promising Daru remains in his own country Pakistan. As Daru points out in the novel:

"Ozi's dad, the frequently investigated but as yet unincarcerated Federal secretary (retierd) Khuram Shah...."

Contrast between masses and elite is clear from the comparison of two cars of Ozi and Daru. Daru's small Suzuki car has nervous cough while as Ozi's Mitshubi Pajero or land cruiser shuts with a deep thud. Ozi's Pajero provides him with a license to drive rashly and later on kills a pedestrian boy mentioned in the novel. He describes his social status and special privilege as:

"I am a wealthy, well connected, and successful ...Lahore is a tough place if you are not an important person"

Daru's frustration makes him over ambitious that he vows to get them by hook or crook. He is curious to get his lost job again so that he could afford air conditioner and pay his electricity bill. He had dropped his curriculum vitea in so many companies and instead to pay attention they used the cv's to set tray of tea on it. Rejected by every company as they recruit only foreign MBA. Corruption was another cause of his rejection as he was earlier appointed by his father's friend Khuram Shah. This is clear from his conversation with Murad Badshah as:

"Murad Badshah asks me, how my job search is going on, 'Badly they want foreign qualifications of MBA. He takes a hit 'How did you get your previous job? 'Through a family friend, 'I admit Ozi's father .as a matter of fact."

The masses couldn't find a job easily is clear from the character of Murad Badshah. Highly educated, M.A in English literature was unable to find a well paid job and later on purchased Rickshaw. He considered Ac's unnatural and dangerous; he was a man who likes to sweat to gain his lost identity. On the other hand air conditioned posses special privilege to enjoy parties, indulge themselves in activities like taking drugs, having extramarital affairs. They also carry out some other illegal activities in abundance and substantial amount, and remain unquestioned and unscathed by law. This all has witnessed by Daru when he entered a party and says:

“As I roll a joint, couples argue and kiss, unable to see me, seeing them. Two guys are pacing about. One seems to be calming the other down, but I am too far away to hear their words .several people chat on their mobiles”

Another distinction between two groups is shown by Mohsin Hamid through education system of present day Pakistan, he points that elites send their sons and daughters to achieve their education. The poor has to be contented with their own countries poor education because of their low economic status. The economic status of Daru led him to sell charas, hash and drugs. Once he provided charas to Shuja who belongs to a big Feudal family. Later on he was caught up by his father and was physically beaten up. Daru thinks it is a wild goose chase to compete with him. Even when murder attempt is done over masses they always keep their mouth shut. This is clear from his conversation with doctor as:

“Who did this to you? The doctor asks.  
Auto accident, ‘I say. He shakes his head”

The most prominent example of the callous attitude of elites towards the lower class is evident from Ozi’s lack of concern, when he hits a boy with his land cruiser. Daru witnesses the whole incident. Ozi doesn’t mind putting a little fear into people whose vehicles are smaller than his. He does not stop on a red light and cuts too close-by a boy on a bicycle. The boy loses his balance and his hit by his land cruiser. The boy’s body is rolls to stop by the traffic signal that winks green, unnoticed by the receding Pajero. By this Daru feels jealous and takes a kind of vengeance by engaging himself in extramarital affairs with his beautiful but unfaithful wife Mumtaz. The conflict between classes is also evident from the fact that maintenance of servants. Riches or upper classes can easily handle their servants and could provide them with good salary. While as it is difficult for non air-conditioned to handle their servants because of their financial constraint, as Mannucci servant of Daru remained a good servant to his master until he paid him with salary. Later on Daru was fired from job he didn’t pay him, and finds him away from home and says;

“Mannucci is gone. My own servant has left me, left because of my little slap. That boy has better pray I never see him again. To think that I fed him sheltered him, for all these years, and this is his loyalty, his gratitude.”

Throughout the novel it is obvious that Daru falls while as his rival Ozi rises. Ozi lives in an environment were generators and air conditioners are essential part of life. Side by upper class of society is always insensitive and makes fun of their opposites. Ozi’s insensitiveness and his superiority complex is evident when he points out as:

“You need a generator...how can you survive without one? Daru’s reaction is, ‘Ah! Ozi you just can’t resist; can you? You know I can’t afford a generator.”

#### Conclusion

*Moth smoke* has obviously raised the curtain from social aspect and laid it bare for readers. *Moth Smoke* provides a developing country perspective of crime and criminal justice system. It also provides three aspects of law: the making of law, breaking of law and the reaction towards the breaking of law. *Moth smoke* brings out the social evils committed by elites as well as masses and presents them as an important tool of obstacle in countries development. Lack of concern, unequal distribution of wealth, moral corruption, and injustice: *Moth smoke* acts as a cure in a lively manner to eliminate them from society.

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