

## DOMINANCE AND HEGEMONY: A STUDY OF MARXIST CLASS CONFLICT IN MOHSIN HAMID'S MOTH SMOKE

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### ABSTRACT

Pakistani Anglophone literature chiefly deals with social life of Pakistan and the social conditions of diaspora in the western world. All social life revolves around economy. It is the production, reception, and distribution of wealth that determines actions of the people. The study examines economic conditions and class conflict as portrayed by Hamid in his novel *Moth Smoke*. The selected text bears vivid pictures of class conflict and its impact on the lives of the characters. All clashes in a society spring, says Marx (1995) from wealth, its fair or unfair distribution. Marxist critique examines how writers incorporate social and historical contexts into their works. The novel has several overt instances involving covert settings. Marxist critics identify overt occurrences and connect them to covert events of the moment. Characters in the novel, *Moth Smoke's* protagonist Daru and an unnamed youngster, experience economic hardship due to Pakistan's economic down turn. This study follows Barry's (1995) technique of studying Marxist analysis. To address class issues such as elite dominance over lower-class individuals and unequal employment prospects, To address other societal concerns in Pakistan, such as corruption, unemployment, poverty, drug use, and lack of quality education. The study reveals that the central as well as the marginal characters are deeply influenced by their economic conditions and it also determines their actions that lead to their happy or unhappy life.

**Keywords:** Marxism, class conflict, Marxist Criticism, Unequal opportunities

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Society is diverse in terms of ideas, culture, religion, traditions, and customs. Society divides people into lower and upper classes based on their socioeconomic status and Economic status. Lower-class individuals work hard but earn insufficient wages for a single meal, leading to hardship and misery in their lives. Upper-class individuals enjoy luxurious lifestyles and suppress lower-class individuals, resulting in class conflict the main focus of this study Class struggle leads to the control of the working class, and this control is the only tool to destroy class and classless society. Karl Marx refers to classes and class struggle as a record change that arose in some stages of continuous improvement, a means

of agitation and struggle to the rule of the working group. A class is a large group of people defined by their relationship to the historical system and mode of production.

This study analyzes Mohsin's Marxist view of class struggle. Hamid's book *Moth Smoke* (2000) was published in 2000. The novel presents a true picture of the Pakistani nation and also discusses the social and class problems of the country. This study was conducted to find out the causes of class conflicts and how class conflicts affect other social problems in Pakistan. The researcher selected Peter Barry's (1995) model as a conceptual framework for this study and used two methods of this model. The research is of a

qualitative nature and will be carried out through the analysis of the text of the book. Perspective based on class theory. Both books deal with socioeconomic issues and their impact on society, including the struggle to obtain the rights of citizens living in society. Karl Marx criticized class struggle and saw it as the power structure in the novel is criticized from a classical Marxist negative force that creates conflict and inequality between people based on wealth and wealth, and this place creates differences in class between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. And these social changes and social divisions occur because of the struggle between social classes. Mohsin Hamid portrays corruption, poverty and class conflicts in the above mentioned books to highlight socio-economic and political issues.

#### Background of the Study

The concepts of dominance and hegemony within class structures are deeply rooted in Marxist thought, which aims to expose the power dynamics that sustain social and economic inequalities. In post-colonial contexts like Pakistan, these dynamics are further entangled with historical legacies of imperialism, economic dependency, and cultural and religious traditions. Mohsin Hamid's novel *Moth Smoke* offers a compelling exploration of these themes, portraying the intricate class conflicts that characterize contemporary Pakistani society. Set in the elite circles of Lahore, the novel delves into the lives of individuals whose interactions are shaped by entrenched socio-economic disparities and rigid class hierarchies.

Hamid's *Moth Smoke* tells the story of Darashikoh Shehzad, a disillusioned banker who spirals into a life of crime and despair, mirroring the broader societal issues in Pakistan. The novel starkly depicts a society where wealth and power are monopolized by a privileged few, while the vast majority remain marginalized. Through Darashikoh's experiences, *Moth Smoke* sheds light on the pervasive nature of dominance and hegemony, both as economic forces and as psychological and cultural influences that shape social relations. This portrayal aligns with Marxist critiques of capitalism, where the ruling class maintains its dominance through control of economic resources and the manipulation of ideology to create a false consciousness among the oppressed.

This study seeks to critically examine the themes of dominance and hegemony in *Moth Smoke* through the lens of Marxist class conflict, connecting these themes to the ongoing socio-economic challenges faced by Pakistan today. Despite significant strides in development and modernization, Pakistan continues to struggle with issues such as poverty, unemployment, and extreme income inequality. These challenges are often exacerbated by a lingering feudal mentality, manifesting in both rural landownership patterns and urban elitism, representing a continuation of class-based oppression that Marxist theory seeks to expose and dismantle.

Additionally, the novel's depiction of moral decay and the erosion of social values can be seen as a critique of the materialism and corruption that permeate modern Pakistani society. From an Islamic perspective, these societal problems contradict the principles of justice, equality, and compassion that are central to the faith. Islamic teachings emphasize the fair distribution of wealth, social justice, and the protection of the poor and vulnerable. However, the reality in Pakistan, as portrayed in *Moth Smoke*, often starkly contrasts with these ideals, with the ruling class exploiting both economic and religious power to maintain their hegemony.

By analyzing the mechanisms through which the ruling class in *Moth Smoke* sustains its dominance, this study provides critical insights into the nature of hegemony in a capitalist society. The research will explore how Hamid's narrative reflects broader societal issues in Pakistan today, including the persistence of feudal structures, the widening gap between rich and poor, and the moral dilemmas that arise in such a context. This analysis aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how literature serves as both a reflection of societal structures and a powerful tool for critiquing the inequalities inherent in capitalist and post-colonial systems.

#### Significance of the Study

This study holds considerable significance as it delves into the intricate interplay between dominance, hegemony, and class conflict through the lens of Marxist theory in Mohsin Hamid's *Moth Smoke*. By analyzing the novel within the socio-economic and cultural context of contemporary Pakistan, the research sheds light on the deep-rooted inequalities that

continue to shape the nation's social landscape. This examination is particularly relevant given the persistence of feudal structures and the widening gap between the wealthy elite and the impoverished masses, issues that remain at the forefront of Pakistan's societal challenges.

Furthermore, the study contributes to the broader field of post-colonial literary criticism by highlighting how *Moth Smoke* reflects and critiques the ongoing struggles of class oppression in a post-colonial setting. By bridging literary analysis with socio-economic critique, this research underscores the role of literature as a powerful medium for understanding and challenging the status quo. The inclusion of Islamic perspectives on justice, equality, and social responsibility further enriches the analysis, offering a multidimensional approach that considers both secular and religious viewpoints. Ultimately, this study not only enhances our understanding of Hamid's work but also provides a critical lens through which to view the enduring issues of inequality and class conflict in modern-day Pakistan, making it a valuable contribution to both literary scholarship and socio-political discourse.

#### Statement of the Problem

The central problem this study addresses is the exploration of how dominance and hegemony manifest in the class conflicts depicted in *Moth Smoke*. Although Pakistan has undergone significant socio-political changes since its partition in 1947, the feudal system remains deeply entrenched, perpetuating economic inequalities and social injustices. This persistence of feudalism, despite 77 years of independence, continues to influence the lives of millions, particularly in rural areas where land ownership and power are concentrated in the hands of a few influential families.

A stark example of the brutal realities of this system is the recent incident in Sanghar District, where the legs of a camel were severed by a feudal lord, symbolizing the unchecked power and cruelty that still exist in parts of Pakistan. Such incidents highlight the ongoing dominance of feudal lords, who maintain their control through fear, violence, and economic coercion. This reality is echoed in *Moth Smoke*, where the lives of the characters are shaped by a similar

system of dominance, albeit within an urban setting.

The research problem thus focuses on the following key questions: How does *Moth Smoke* depict the power dynamics between different social classes, particularly in the context of a lingering feudal mindset? In what ways do the characters embody or resist the forces of hegemony? And, how does the novel reflect broader societal issues of economic inequality and social stratification in a post-colonial context where feudal structures still hold sway? By addressing these questions, the study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the novel's contribution to the discourse on Marxist class conflict and the enduring relevance of these themes in contemporary Pakistani society.

#### 1.1 Research objectives

The objectives of the study will be to:

1. Analyze social problems and their causes in the book, showing the concept of Marxist theory and structure in the book.
2. Analyze the causes of class conflict according to Marxist studies of the novel, understand how class conflict affects our society and show the economic conditions of the period in which the book is set.

#### 1.2 Research Questions

1. How the novel describes the economic condition of that time?
2. What are the main aspects of social discrimination?

#### 2. Literature Review

Marxist analysis is carried out by many writers and scholars in particular fields of interest. Marxist analysis focuses on socioeconomic divisions, which are seen as fundamental divisions rather than divisions based on mere interests. According to Tyson (2006), from a Marxist perspective, individuals are divided into social and economic classes, these classes are more important than distinctions based on religion, race, country or gender. Basically, it suggests that differences between individuals are based on class, which is often an effect of differences in economic and financial status. Marxism has been widely used in the study of literature. The theme is conceptual and broad

and broad, and reflects society. All over the world, many researchers study literary works from a Marxist perspective. Undoubtedly, 20th century literary research was heavily influenced by Marxist thought. Here are some brief examples of Marxist research on abstract New Year practices. One of the most important works in recent years was done by Lashari(2008), who carried out a study of the poetry of Sheikh Ayaz and Marxist methods,

The untouchables in the poetry of Sheikh Ayaz remembered to rely on Marxism philosophy. In addition, many studies have been conducted on aspects of Marxism and class differences to understand the causes of class differences in society at large. For example, Berchoua (2014) traces the element of class difference in Charles Dickens' novel *Hard Times*. *Animal Farm* (1945) is a famous literary work written by George Orwell. The novel is about the Russian Revolution and the subsequent rule of Joseph Stalin. While Mashori and Zaib (2015) examine the effects of class struggle and social inequality in the English novel *The Zamindar's Wife*, many other Pakistani scholars have contributed to Marxist analysis literary works.

They both thought that the landlords were doing a wonderful job of destroying money by taking the property of the poor, the slaves, and the poor. In a similar story the wife of Zamindar follows up on praxis and causes feeble subalterns to rebel against strong landlords. *Moth Smoke* (2000) is one of the debut novels of Mohsin Hamid that Highlights the various elements of class conflict, dominates the entire novel as Malik (2017) argued that Mohsin Hamid's first novel depicts the dejection and outrage of bit blessed among nation where the ruling people totally degenerates and where the economic bay is tremendous to such an extent that the well-off protect themselves from the standards that is fixed with the remainder of society. The current will investigate the exhibition of natural clash between Air conditioned and non-air conditioned division of Pakistan during nuclear strain among India and Pakistan.

This examination is likewise an undertaking to analyze how elites of Pakistan appreciates all benefits and couldn't care a lot for the laws of nation as law is a sort of hardware for them to mistreat down trampled. The rich make

and appreciates the sovereign invulnerability from the standard, while as poor must observe a similar principle and are frequently considered as substitute, who don't force powerful associations, and are proceeding and enduring the worst part of innate financial clash. This research is largely based on social conflict theory, which is based on the fundamental assumption that society is divided into a ruling class and a subject class, and that the ruling class continues to abuse the subject class. Mohsin Hamid's book, *Moth Smoke* (2000) is critical of capitalism, and this study investigates the impact of various philosophies on people's lives. Through a detailed analysis of Hamid's book, he deals with the social and vital problems of Pakistani society such as class conflict, rugged individualism and food trafficking. Saleem et al. (2024) argued that Marxist critics analyze the nature of socioeconomic and economic problems in society as presented in literature. They examine how different views of Marxism have developed in society. Pakistan is a capitalist society. In his book, Mohsin Hamid points out the negative effects of capitalism on Pakistani society.

Rehman, at al. (2022) argued that the class is an individual group at the socioeconomic level. Class struggle is the pitting of these public encounters against various classifications based on position, religious expression, wages, wealth, wealth, political power, and social power. The main cause of class struggle is the unequal distribution of wages and wealth between the different classes of society. Due to the strength of the class, the audience enjoys many unique social opportunities and rewards. It is an inescapable fact, it is a difficult problem that developed countries and the general public today is not ready to live beyond these standards and the general public. They continue to do business according to the independence and autonomy granted to them, which is visible to the public in their rights and privileges. In various social systems, men have a unique character, characterized by their power, inheritance and public respect. Values make people proud. Rehman, et al. (2022). In the third new interview, which follows Hamid's struggle to become a successful financial manager in his life, Hamid discusses the problems and obstacles he faced in his struggle to become rich. Awan1, Yousaf, F. (2019) explained that the author

finally focus on the social problems of the small country and Pakistan. Kakutani (2013) said that history is about seeing the light. You are two screens away. This scene is a very moving and unique story of religion and powerful impulses to progress, and shows a very striking and comparative sense of the suddenness and magnitude of the social and business problems which are expanding, or are being made. Set in an unnamed country compared to Pakistan, the novel is a progression of records, and records the life of a saint who lived for more than 70 years, from the empty countryside to the troubled city. He is the man who creates and destroys the disasters and opportunities of the water purification industry.

### **3. Research Methodology**

This research is based on qualitative research. According to Flick (2009) qualitative research uses content research strategies to examine social reality through text and vice versa. In this type of exploration, content descriptions begin a new layer of real-world features. Society has plenty of room to rely on writing to explore new discoveries, new methods, and better understanding. Technical analysis methods were used in this study. The research presented here examines the nature of the economic and social problems surrounding the store. As the researcher reads carefully, he looks for clues that help him understand the class and its activities. Then, once the data is complete, the researcher will try to organize it all, look for relationships, and produce a report on the need for ambiguous figures following the Marxist research example of Peter Barry (1995). The researchers took data from *Moth Smoke* (2000), which has 14 chapters in 288 pages, first the scholar reads the book and then he knows for sure. In his book, he distinguished between the social conditions of capitalist society and the class struggle against capitalists. Scholars have written stories from books to bits of confetti. He grouped the social conditions of capitalist society and class struggle with the oppression of the capitalist according to the theory. This research is qualitative. This study includes an examination of the book's unique text through Marxist research. Instead, this research is based on explaining the effects and consequences of people's actions.

The purpose of qualitative research is to foster a deeper understanding of the research. The researchers chose two Pakistani books as research examples: "*Moth Smoke*" (2000). This study is limited to human activities according to Peter Barry Model's (1995). Marxist study of fictional stories that speak authentically of traditional society. In the same way the researcher explains each aspect of the book according to certain natural laws. This study deals with social issues such as corruption, legal substitution, governance, corruption and mistakes, and attempts to support these issues are similar to the literature. Qualitative research is conducted using a variety of methods, but current research relies on an interpretive strategy for research. The present study is based on Barry's (1995) Marxist research model. Barry (1995) proposes five strategies for the Marxist study of literature.

1. Marxist analysts distinguish between the themes of literary works and connect hidden themes with basic Marxist themes such as class struggle and social development in various historical contexts.
2. Secondly, the method used by Marxist writers is to link the context of the literary work to the social condition of the writer.
3. Thirdly, Marxist analysts also use the method of explaining the situation of the entire literary work in relation to the social period in which it arose.
4. Fourthly, the Marxist method of analysis links the work to the social conditions of the time it was used and to the methods used on the goods.
5. Fifthly, the Marxist analytical method connects the literary works with the political events of the time determined by political conditions.

Among these five methods, the expert used two methods, namely Strategy 1 and Technique 4, to explain and analyze the content of this book. As a result, the scholar managed to find the reason behind evil and loss of innocence in the basic foundations of racism and class justice.

Peter Barry's model according to Marxist Research Evidence.

**Finding-1**

The study of the book under Marxist analysis found class problems in society, and in almost all departments that such workplaces they were class issues. . We can analyze the fact that when Daru was fired from his job, he was unable to find another job. And the quality of education is very poor for those at the bottom who do not receive a standard education because they cannot afford to attend expensive private schools and universities, this problem can be seen in *Moth Smoke* (2000). Ozi returned after receiving his higher education in America and Daru received his education at a local university the research findings established that, as in Daru's case, these class issues drive minorities to delinquency and engage in social threats.. He wanted to earn more money and became a medicine and courier supplier.

In short, the study stated that poverty, lack of diverse job opportunities, poor quality of education, and the importance of the upper class to the workforce are the causes of class. This can be seen in the following quote from the novel:

"We have a bigger number of individuals than we need at the present time. Furthermore, the young men we're recruiting have associations worth more than their pay rates. We're simply giving them there spectability of a vocation here in return for their families' business," (Hamid, 2000)

**Finding-2**

This research also found that the attitude of the upper class people towards the lower class people is also seen in the book, especially the attitude of Daru people in the remote areas. He did not care about the people of Daru when he faced the economic crisis.

**Aggravation was detected on the following lines:**

"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." (Hamid, 2000)

**Finding-3**

This study also found that there is a lot of corruption, unemployment, drug trafficking, a poor health system, lack of level or quality of education, the crisis of power, the crisis of culture and the crisis of identity are problems which are also discussed in this book, however, according to Daru, Oji's father has reached a high position, such as the corruption of Oji's father, are issues that are discussed in two books. As he got rich from his corruption, Daruri included his father among the corrupt officials.

"Ozi's father has not been arrested by Union Minister (resigned) Khuram Shah, though the trial has lasted several hours so far." (Hamid, 2000).

**Finding -4**

Further research shows that the novel contain specific characteristics that can be summarized as representative of specific classes. For example, Ozi in *Moth Smoke* is said to represent the upper class, while Daru is said to represent the lower class. And another unnamed artist seems to be a symbol of the poor living in poverty to become rich.

"I'm rich, well-connected and successful. My father is a great man. Maybe I will become a great person. "If you're not a bigot, Lahore is a tough place." (Hamid, 2000).

**Finding-5**

The book also reflected the socio economic conditions of the time that served as a background for the it. On the socio-economic front, Pakistan has faced many problems, including unemployment, corruption, inflation, poverty and class conflict. Clearly, the cause of Daru's unhappiness is his economic situation, which may be related to the hidden agenda of unequal employment opportunities and economic inequality in Pakistan, which has affected the lower classes. In addition, the socio-political and financial situations presented in the book can be devastating and shake the lives of some people. Daru's loss of balance reduced his life. He was rejected from the attention of the bourgeoisie, which was a real recession. He blushed and scoffed at her words as he walked first class into the party.

#### 4. Conclusion

This book explores all aspects of Marxist analysis. Barry (1995) advises a Marxist to examine the stories and hidden stories in myth and relate them to the core themes of Marxism such as class division, exploitation and dire economic conditions. The researcher found through this study that the book has many examples of class struggle that is most insidious among the oppressed leading to poverty and injustice. Thus, the book is placed within the Marxist critique proposed by Peter Barry (1995). Through the textual analysis of the two selected books, the researcher finds the answers to the research questions according to the model of Peter Barry and to almost all the people and contents of the book to the special topics of Marxist class theory. In addition, the researcher also added suggestions at the end for other scholars to study and analyze the text of this book and go through Marxist ideas through the book so that others can benefit from it.

"We have a bigger number of individuals than we need at the present time. Furthermore, the young men we're recruiting have associations worth more than their pay rates. We're simply giving them there specability of a vocation here in return for their families' business," (Hamid, 2000).

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