

Tribhuvan University

Sense of Alienation within Capitalism in Mohsin Hamid's  
*Moth Smoke*

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This thesis titled “Sense of Alienation within Capitalism in Mohsin Hamid’s *Moth Smoke*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Nabaraj Tiwari, has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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## **Abstract**

The privileges that the upper class enjoys, their disregard for laws, mistreatment of lower classes, influence and control in the country are contrasted with the deprived state of the lower classes in the novel. This causes “frustration and anger” in the less fortunate who are victims of a society divided into classes. Ozi, Mumtaz and Raider belong to upper class where they get every facility and violate the state’s laws but lower class people like Daru are forced to face the punishment. This kind of unequal distribution of not only fortune but also power and rights create alienation in lower class which is represented by Daru and Manucci in the novel whereas for upper class, people are indulging in various immoral and illegal activities.

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### **I. *Moth Smoke* and Mohsin Hamid**

The novel, *Moth Smoke* apparently narrates the unfolding of the life of a Pakistani youth. In addition to an interesting story, there are strong implications of the novel. If read critically, the novel exposes the social disparity in Pakistani urban society and comments on the unequal distribution of wealth as a means of shaping the lives of people belonging to different strata of society. Through this research, attempt will be to uncover the social aspect and laid it bare for the reader. The subtle indications of the social aspect, present in the novel, have been picked up in this research and discussed in detail and with clarity to take the novel not only as a time-pass story but as a social commentary that has been achieved through Hamid's profound art of characterization. The behaviour of characters belonging to different classes, their position in society, their attitude towards people belonging to a different class, their life style and way of thinking are the aspects the researcher has concentrated on in the research. For this purpose I have critically analyzed each character, as representative of his class, in light of the above mentioned aspects.

The title of the book refers to what remains when the moth is seduced by the candle flame, but it's also a metaphor for Daru spiraling towards his own destruction, drawn by the allure of sex and drugs and easy money. What makes the novel particularly appealing is that we feel right at home within this comforting structure of genre, but are simultaneously dazzled by glimpses into an utterly alien culture. Thus, a story we've heard a hundred times before comes across as somehow fresh and surprising. *Moth Smoke* by Mohsin Hamid is set in Lahore city. Lahore is divided into different classes depending on the financial standing of people in the society. Conflict between different classes of modern urban Pakistani society is one of the main concerns of Hamid in this novel. This conflict is portrayed through the

characters. The social commentary by Hamid, in the novel, revolves around the conflict between classes. Supporting this view Jay Paul writes:

The article presents history and criticism of postcolonial English-language South Asian fiction of Mohsin Hamid. The focus is on the book *Moth Smoke*, which contains the historical allegory and economic globalization. The novel analyzes contemporary Lahore, Pakistan through a post-colonial framework, with emphasis on how Globalization has transformed the city and Pakistan. (51)

The characters of the novel are representatives of different classes. Aurangzaeb, known amongst his friends as Ozi, and his wife Mumtaz belong to the elite class. Ozi and Mumtaz run with Lahore's urban hip, the suchi and mobile phone crowd.

Darashikoh Shezad, (commonly called as Daru) the protagonist is a member of the middle class. Manucci (Daru's servant) and Murad Badshah belong to the lower class of the society. The conflict between social classes is evident from the interaction and relationship between the characters belonging to different classes.

Conflict between classes generates due to the unequal distribution of wealth in society. Orrin C. Judd describes the conflict, presented in the novel, in these words:

The frustration and anger of the less fortunate in a country whose ruling class is thoroughly corrupt and where the economic divide is so vast that the wealthy can insulate themselves from the rules that bind the rest of the society, and can nearly avoid physical contact with the lower classes. (8)

In particular, it captures the frustration and anger of the less fortunate in a country whose ruling class is thoroughly corrupt and where the economic divide is so vast that

the wealthy can insulate themselves from the rules that bind the rest of society, and can nearly avoid physical contact with the lower classes.

When Daru Shezad is fired from his banking job in Lahore, he begins a decline that plummets the length of this sharply drawn, subversive tale. Before long, he can't pay his bills, and he loses his toehold among Pakistan's cell-phone-toting elite. Daru descends into drugs and dissolution, and, for good measure, he falls in love with the wife of his childhood friend and rival, Ozi—the beautiful, restless Mumtaz. Desperate to reverse his fortunes, Daru embarks on a career in crime, taking as his partner Murad Badshah, the notorious rickshaw driver, populist, and pirate. When a long-planned heist goes awry, Daru finds himself on trial for a murder he may or may not have committed. The uncertainty of his fate mirrors that of Pakistan itself, hyped on the prospect of becoming a nuclear player even as corruption drains its political will. This condition creates alienation within the characters of the novel. The emergence of class divisions in which one class had control over the means of producing what society needed, led to a further division between individuals and the society to which they belonged. Certain forms of social life drive a wedge between the two dimensions of the self, the individual and the communal, producing a separation between individuals' interests and those of society as a whole.

Alienation is the result caused from the process of estrangement or isolation from a natural or social context. It is a subjective experience. This feeling makes one separate from given context. It is caused due to the various reasons. It can be due to powerlessness, normlessness, cultural estrangement, social isolation, self-estrangement and so on. The capitalist division of labour is characterized, not merely by specialization of labourers in manufacturing, so that no individual works on the whole product but distribution, manual and mental labour and between labourer and

capitalist. These structural features lead to four manifestations of alienation. First, the worker is alienated from nature of the product, in so far as he or she has no control over its subsequent fate. Second, the worker is alienated from the production so that it ceases to have any intrinsic satisfaction. The ability of labour itself becomes no more than one more commodity, having value only in so far as it can be exchanged for any other. Third, the worker is alienated from other workers and from society as a whole. The worker is treated as an isolated individual and is judged by his or her ability to fulfill a pre-existing function within the production process. Production, therefore, ceases to be a genuinely cooperative or communal process. Finally, the worker is alienated from humanity's 'species being'. As a whole, alienated labour turns the species life of man into alien being, and into a means for his individual existence. It alienates from man his own body, external nature, his mental life and his human life. Furthermore, man's alienation from his species life alienates man from other men. Marx remarks that, "What is true of man's relationship to his work, to the product of his work and to himself, is also true of his relationship to other men" (Manuscripts 103). In general, alienated from species life means that each man is alienated from others men and each of others also alienated from human life. This alienation of species life is realized and expressed in their interactions.

Whether it is the drug addiction or his insistence on becoming martyr to his love, Daru's decline is not unlike the much scrutinized moth fatally spiraling towards the candle flame. From being a banker to a drug peddler to a petty criminal, Daru smokes through to the inevitable end. Mohsin Hamid has inferred interesting parallels between the characters and the nuclear rivalry of blood brothers India-Pakistan. And the fatalistic nature of the moth to bring forth certain unstated thoughts of Daru. Supporting this view, Goldsmith Prancisca writes:

This novel provides a pitch-perfect tale of the destruction of a young man. Socially unconnected, Dam loses his precarious footing among the respectably employed and falls into an abyss of emotional depression, moral turpitude, and criminal activity. He goes from bank employee to drug dealer to holdup man, while falling in love with Mumtaz, the journalist's wife of Ozi, Dam's boyhood best friend and rival. Ozi strips Dam of his self respect, and Mumtaz can never merely be Dam's lover, for she is both liberated and besieged by her own moral ambiguity. (116)

The upper classes have influence and power in the society. They have control over the society. The incident where Ozi kills a boy with his Pajero shows the influence and power exercised by the elite in the society. Ozi is not arrested for killing the boy whereas Daru is arrested for Ozi's crime. Aamer Hussain, in his article "Desire, Decadence and Death in Lahore," comments on Daru's arrest in these words, "He (Daru) is undone when society, through the machinations of the corrupt plutocrat Aurangzeb, accuses him of the hit-and-run killing of a child for which...Aurangzeb himself is responsible" (Hussain 6). Ozi is able to blame his crime on Daru due to his influence in the society. Ozi's pleasure at his triumph is clear from his reaction when Mumtaz tells him of Daru's arrest. "As soon as I heard Daru had been arrested for killing a boy in a car accident, I told Ozi. And Ozi smiled" (239). Ozi's triumph over Daru, in the tussle between them, can be read as the triumph of the elite class over the lower classes of society. Ozi gets Daru arrested in order to get back at Daru for having an affair with his wife. Mumtaz later confronts Ozi, "You killed the boy, didn't you?" Ozi didn't answer. Which was the answer" (240). When Mumtaz investigates the matter she learns that Ozi has been able to save himself through his family influence

in the society. She writes, "...certain members of the Accountability Commission... pointed out that it would be extremely inconvenient for Khurram Shah, himself under investigation, if his son were to be accused of this crime" (241). In these circumstances Daru is the appropriate bait used by the elite (Ozi and his father) to save their own necks. This justifies Daru's observation of Ozi as, "an overgrown child. A child who gets everything. Gets away with everything" (242). The lower classes hold malice against the upper classes because of being under-privileged and unequal.

Marx's Theory of Alienation is based upon his observation that in emerging industrial production under capitalism, workers inevitably lose control of their lives and selves, in not having any control of their work. Workers never become autonomous, self-realized human beings in any significant sense, except the way the bourgeois want the worker to be realized. Alienation in capitalist societies occurs because in work each contributes to the common wealth, but can only express this fundamentally social aspect of individuality through a production system that is not publicly social, but privately owned, for which each individual functions as an instrument, not as a social being.

Alienated man is an abstraction because he has lost touch with all human specificity. He has been reduced to performing undifferentiated work on humanly indistinguishable objects among people deprived of their human variety and compassion. There is little that remains of his relations to his activity, product and fellows which enables us to grasp the peculiar qualities of his species. At the same time that the individual is degenerating into an abstraction, those parts of his being which have been split off (which are no longer under his control) are undergoing their own transformation. Three end products of this development are property, industry

and religion, which Marx calls man's 'alienated life elements' In each instance, the other half of a severed relation, carried by a social dynamic of its own, progresses through a series of forms in a direction away from its beginning in man. Eventually, it attains an independent life, that is, takes on 'needs' which the individual is then forced to satisfy, and the original connection is all but obliterated. It is this process which largely accounts for the power that money has in capitalist societies, the buying of objects which could never have been sold had they remained integral components of their producer.

To show the protagonist's alienation in capitalism, this researcher is divided into four parts. First chapter deals with general introduction regarding of the research paper itself, the author and the text. Second part deals with theoretical modality of the research, theoretical framework on the basis of Marxian concept of alienation. The third part deals with textual analysis of *Moth Smoke*. Fourth chapter deals with the findings of the study regarding the alienation faced by the protagonist in the text.

## II. Sense of Alienation in Capitalism

The term "alienation" in normal usage refers to a feeling of separateness, of being alone and apart from others. For Marx, alienation was not a feeling or a mental condition, but an economic and social condition of class society in particular, capitalist society. Alienation, in Marxist terms, refers to the separation of the mass of wage workers from the products of their own labor. Most of us own neither the tools and machinery we work with nor the products that we produce they belong to the capitalist that hired us. But everything we work on and in at some point comes from human labor. The irony is that everywhere we turn, we are confronted with the work of our own hands and brains, and yet these products of our labor appear as things outside of us, and outside of our control. Marx first expressed the idea, somewhat poetically, in his 1844 *Manuscripts*: "The object that labor produces, its product, stands opposed to it as something alien, as a power independent of the producer" (109). Work and the products of work dominate us, rather than the other way around. Rather than being a place to fulfill our potential, the workplace is merely a place we are compelled to go in order to obtain money to buy the things we need. Hence, Marx wrote, "the worker feels himself only when he is not working; when he is working, he does not feel himself. He is at home when he is not working, and not at home when he is working. His labor is, therefore, not voluntary but forced, it is forced labor" (109). It is, therefore, not the satisfaction of a need but a mere means to satisfy needs outside itself. Its alien character is clearly demonstrated by the fact that as soon as no physical or other compulsion exists, it is shunned like the plague.

Alienation is the transformation of people's own labour into a power which rules them as if by a kind of natural or supra-human law. The origin of alienation is commodity fetishism – the belief that inanimate things (commodities) have human

powers i.e., value, able to govern the activity of human beings. Alienation is a foundational claim in Marxist theory. Hegel described a succession of historic stages in the human *Geist* (Spirit), by which that Spirit progresses towards perfect self-understanding, and away from ignorance. In Marx's reaction to Hegel, these two, idealist poles are replaced with materialist categories: spiritual ignorance becomes alienation, and the transcendent end of history becomes man's realization of his species-being; triumph over alienation and establishment of an objectively better society. People have been led to believe that their ideas, their cultural life, their legal system and their religion are the creations of human and divine reasons which should be regarded as unquestioned guides to human life. Marx reversed this formulation and argued that all mental systems are the products of real social and economic existence. The material interest of the dominant social class determines how people see human existence, individual and collective. Legal systems, for example, are not the pure manifestations, of human or divine reason but ultimately reflect the interests of the dominant class in particular historical period. Marx clearly states "it is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness" (qtd. in Selden 24). Here, the play of ideology is important. Althusser, regarding ideology, states:

In a class society ideology is the relay whereby, and the element in which, the relation between men and their conditions of existence is settled to the profit of the ruling class. In a classless society ideology is the relay whereby, and the element in which, the relation between men and their conditions of existence is lived to the profit of all the men.

(113)

The above quotation implicates that ideology would be a necessary aspect even to the classless society. He indicates that Ideology for every human beings. And, he also argues that ideology expresses a determination, a hope, nostalgia rather than describing a reality.

Supporting the view of Althusser, Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, in *An Introduction to Literature criticism and Theory*, write, “Ideology is a false representation of reality and as the idea of false reality; it is as the appeal to fears, anxieties and nostalgia”(160). So, this means that ideology is shaped by full of images and fantasies. And they further put:

The word, ‘ideology’, has something a bad name: the ‘crude’ Marxist notion of ideology is as ‘false consciousness’, ‘the system of ideas and representations which dominate the mind of a man [sic] or ‘a social group’, as contrasted with the underlying reality of economic and class relations. (161)

Marx developed his theory of alienation to reveal the human activity that lies behind the seemingly impersonal forces dominating society. He showed how, although aspects of the society we live in appear natural and independent of us, they are the results of past human actions. For Hungarian Marxist Georg Lukács Marx's theory 'dissolves the rigid, unhistorical, natural appearance of social institutions; it reveals their historical origins and shows, therefore, that they are subject to history in every respect including historical decline. Marx showed not only that human action in the past created the modern world, but also that human action could shape a future world free from the contradictions of capitalism. Marx developed a materialist theory of how human beings were shaped by the society they lived in, but also how they could act to change that society, how people are both 'world determined' and 'world

producing'. For Marx, alienation was not rooted in the mind or in religion, as it was for his predecessors Hegel and Feuerbach. Instead Marx understood alienation as something rooted in the material world. Alienation meant loss of control, specifically the loss of control over labour. To understand why labour played such a central role in Marx's theory of alienation, we have to look first at Marx's ideas about human nature.

In feudal society humans had not yet developed the means to control the natural world, or to produce enough to be free from famine, or to cure diseases. All social relationships were conditioned by a low stage of development of the productive powers of labour and correspondingly limited relations between men within the process of creating and reproducing their material life, hence also limited relations between man and nature. Land was the source of production, and it so dominated the feudal-manorial system that men saw themselves not as individuals but in relation to the land. Marx described this in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*:

In feudal landownership we already find the domination of the earth as of an alien power over men. The serf is an appurtenance of the land. Similarly the heir through primogeniture, the first born son, belongs to the land. It inherits him. The rule of private property begins with property in land which is its basis. (10)

Ownership of land was dependent on inheritance and blood lines: your 'birth' determined your destiny. In an early work Marx described how the aristocracy's pride in their blood, their descent, in short the genealogy of the body has its appropriate science in heraldry. The secret of the aristocracy is zoology. It was this zoology which determined your life and your relationships with others. On the one hand, the low level of the productive forces meant constant labour for the peasants, while on the

other, the feudal lords and the church officials took what they wanted from the peasants by force.

Thus alienation arose from the low level of the productive forces, from human subordination to the land and from the domination of the feudal ruling class. However, there were limits to these forms of alienation. The peasants worked their own land and produced most of the things they needed in their own independent family units: "If a person was tied to the land, then the land was also tied to the people... The peasant, and even the serf of the middle ages, remained in possession of at least 50 percent, sometimes 60 and 70 percent, of the output of their labour" ( Marx 12). The social relationships in feudal society were relationships of domination and subordination, but they were obviously social relationships between individuals. In *Capital*, Marx described how the social relations between individuals in the performance of their labour appear at all events as their own mutual personal relations, and are not disguised under the shape of social relations between the products of labour.

However, the constraints of feudalism were very different from the dynamic of capitalism. The bourgeoisie wanted a society in which everything could be bought and sold for money: "Selling is the practice of alienation" (14). The creation of such a society depended on the brutal enclosures of the common land. This meant that, for the first time, the majority in society were denied direct access to the means of production and subsistence, thus creating a class of landless labourers who had to submit to a new form of exploitation, wage labour, in order to survive. Capitalism involved a fundamental change in the relations between men, instruments of production and the materials of production. These fundamental changes meant that every aspect of life was transformed. Even the concept of time was radically altered

so that watches, which were toys in the 17th century, became a measure of labour time or a means of quantifying idleness, because of the importance of an abstract measure of minutes and hours to the work ethic and to the habit of punctuality required by industrial discipline.

Men no longer enjoyed the right to dispose of what they produced how they chose: they became separated from the product of their labour. Peter Linebaugh in his history of 18th century London, *The London Hanged*, explained that workers considered themselves masters of what they produced. It took great repression, a 'judicial onslaught', in the late 18th century to convince them that what they produced belonged exclusively to the capitalists who owned the factories. During the 18th century most workers were not paid exclusively in money: "This was true of Russian serf labour, American slave labour, Irish agricultural labour and the metropolitan labour in London trades" (Linebaugh 17). By the 19th century, however, wage labour had replaced all other forms of payment. This meant labour was now a commodity, sold on the market. Capitalists and workers were formally independent of each other, but in reality inextricably connected. Production no longer took place in the home, but in factories where new systems of discipline operated. The mechanisation of labour in the factories transformed people's relationship with machines, those remarkable products of human ingenuity, became a source of tyranny against the worker. In *Capital* Marx compared the work of craftsmen and artisans to that of the factory worker:

In handicrafts and manufacture, the workman makes use of a tool, in the factory, the machine makes use of him. There the movements of the instrument of labour proceed from him, here it is the movements of the machines that he must follow. In manufacture the workmen are

parts of a living mechanism. In the factory we have a lifeless mechanism independent of the workman, who becomes a mere living appendage. (19)

One of the most important, and devastating features of factory production was the division of labour. Prior to capitalism there had been a social division of labour, with different people involved in different branches of production or crafts. With capitalism there arose the detailed division of labour within each branch of production. This division of labour meant that workers had to specialise in particular tasks, a series of atomised activities, which realised only one or two aspects of their human powers at the expense of all the others. Harry Braverman pointed out the consequences of this division:

While the social division of labour subdivides society, the detailed division of labour subdivides humans, and while the subdivision of society may enhance the individual and the species, the subdivision of the individual, when carried on without regard to human capabilities and needs, is a crime against the person and humanity. (20)

John Ruskin, the 19th century critic of industrialisation, made a similar point when he wrote that the division of labour is a false term because it is the men who are divided.

In this system workers become increasingly dependent on the capitalists who own the means of production. Just as the worker is depressed, therefore, both intellectually and physically, to the level of a machine, and from being a man becomes an abstract activity and a stomach, so he also becomes more and dependent on every fluctuation in the market price, in the investment of capital and on the whims of the wealthy. It became impossible for workers to live independently of capitalism: to work meant to be reduced to a human machine; to be deprived of work meant

living death. Without work, if capital ceases to exist for him, Marx argued the worker might as well bury himself alive: “The existence of capital is his existence, his life, for it determines the content of his life in a manner indifferent to him” (22). There is no choice involved - work is a matter of survival. Therefore labour became forced labour; you could not choose not to work, you could not choose what you made, and you could not choose how you made it. Marx noted:

The fact that labour is external to the worker, does not belong to his essential being; that he therefore does not confirm himself in his work, but denies himself, feels miserable and not happy, does not develop free mental and physical energy, but mortifies his flesh and ruins his mind. Hence the worker feels himself only when he is not working; when he is working he does not feel himself. He is at home when he is not working, and not at home when he is working. His labour is therefore not voluntary but forced, it is forced labour. It is therefore not the satisfaction of a need, but a mere means to satisfy need outside itself. Its alien character is clearly demonstrated by the fact that as soon as no physical or other compulsion exists it is shunned like the plague.

(23)

There was another side to the fragmentation of labour in the factory system. The creation of the detail labourer who performed fractional work in the workshop meant that the value-producing class became collective, since no worker produced a whole commodity. This collectivity expressed itself in constant struggle against capitalist forms of production and frequent attempts by workers to assert their right to control machines rather than be controlled by them, most famously in the Luddite Rebellion

of the early 19th century, a revolt so widespread that more troops were deployed to crush it than were sent to fight with Wellington at Waterloo.

#### **Four Aspects of Alienation**

Marx attributes four types of alienation in labour under capitalism. These include the alienation of the worker from his or her 'species essence' as a human being rather than a machine; between workers, since capitalism reduces labour to a commodity to be traded on the market, rather than a social relationship; of the worker from the product, since this is appropriated by the capitalist class, and so escapes the worker's control; and from the act of production itself, such that work comes to be a meaningless activity, offering little or no intrinsic satisfactions.

The development of capitalism proved irresistible and it brought alienation on a scale previously unimaginable. In his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, Marx identified four specific ways in which alienation pervades capitalist society. The product of labour: The worker is alienated from the object he produces because it is owned and disposed of by another, the capitalist. In all societies people use their creative abilities to produce objects which they use, exchange or sell. Under capitalism, however, this becomes an alienated activity because "the worker cannot use the things he produces to keep alive or to engage in further productive activity... The worker's needs, no matter how desperate, do not give him a licence to lay hands on what these same hands have produced, for all his products are the property of another" (Marx 25). Thus workers produce cash crops for the market when they are malnourished, build houses in which they will never live, make cars they can never buy, produce shoes they cannot afford to wear, and so on.

Marx argued that the alienation of the worker from what he produces is intensified because the products of labour actually begin to dominate the labourer. In

his brilliant *Essays on Marx's Theory of Value*, Rubin outlines a quantitative and a qualitative aspect to the production of commodities. Firstly, the worker is paid less than the value he creates. A proportion of what he produces is appropriated by his boss; the worker is, therefore, exploited. Qualitatively, he also puts creative labour into the object he produces, but he cannot be given creative labour to replace it. As Rubin explains: "In exchange for his creative power the worker receives a wage or a salary, namely a sum of money, and in exchange for this money he can purchase products of labour, but he cannot purchase creative power. In exchange for his creative power, the worker gets things" (26). This creativity is lost to the worker forever, which is why under capitalism work does not stimulate or invigorate us and 'open the door to unconquered territory', but rather burns up our energies and leaves us feeling exhausted.

This domination of dead labour over living labour lies behind Marx's assertion in the Manuscripts that "the alienation of the worker means not only that his labour becomes an object, an external existence, but that it exists outside him, independently of him and alien to him, and begins to confront him as an autonomous power; that the life which he has bestowed on the object confronts him as hostile and alien" (27). For Marx, this state of affairs was unique to capitalism. In previous societies those who work harder could usually be expected to have more to consume. Under capitalism, those who work harder increase the power of a hostile system over them. They themselves, and their inner worlds, become poorer: "The worker becomes an ever cheaper commodity the more goods he creates. The devaluation of the human world increases in direct relation with the increase in value of the world of things" (28).

The labour process: The second element of alienation Marx identified is a lack of control over the process of production. We have no say over the conditions in which

we work and how our work is organised, and how it affects us physically and mentally. This lack of control over the work process transforms our capacity to work creatively into its opposite, so the worker experiences “activity as passivity, power as impotence, procreation as emasculation, the worker's own physical and mental energy, his personal life - for what is life but activity? - as an activity directed against himself, which is independent of him and does not belong to him” (29). The process of work is not only beyond the control of the workers, it is in the control of forces hostile to them because capitalists and their managers are driven to make us work harder, faster and for longer stints. In addition, as Harry Braverman points out: “in a society based upon the purchase and sale of labour power, dividing the craft cheapens its individual parts” (30) so the bosses also have an interest in breaking down the labour process into smaller and smaller parts. The resulting rigidly repetitive process buries the individual talents or skills of the worker, as Marx described:

Factory work exhausts the nervous system to the uttermost, it does away with the many-sided play of the muscles, and confiscates every atom of freedom, both in bodily and intellectual activity... The special skill of each individual insignificant factory operative vanishes as an infinitesimal quantity before the science, the gigantic physical forces, and mass of labour that are embodied in the factory mechanism and, together, with that mechanism, constitute the power of the master. (31)

Modern methods of production have increased the fragmentation of the labour process since Marx's day. The organisation of modern production is still based on the methods of the assembly line. Scientific research is used to break the production process down into its component parts. This has led, firstly, to the deskilling of white collar jobs and to a situation where managers have a monopoly of control over the production

process: “The unity of thought and action, conception and execution, hand and mind, which capitalism threatened from its beginnings, is now attacked by a systematic dissolution employing all the resources of science and the various engineering disciplines based upon it (32). Conditions of work, from the length of the working day to the space we occupy, are predetermined: “The entire work operation, down to its smallest motion, is conceptualised by the management and engineering staff, laid out, measured, fitted with training and performance standards - all entirely in advance” (33). Workers are treated as machines, with the aim of transforming the subjective element of labour into objective, measurable, controlled processes. In some brilliant passages in *History and Class Consciousness*, Lukács describes how the increasingly rationalised and mechanised process of work affects our consciousness. As the following extract shows, his analysis was prophetic and gives a strikingly accurate picture of today's white collar work:

In consequence of the rationalisation of the work-process the human qualities and idiosyncrasies of the worker appear increasingly as mere sources of error when contrasted with these abstract special laws functioning according to rational predictions. Neither objectively nor in his relation to his work does man appear as the authentic master of this process; on the contrary, he is a mechanical part incorporated into a mechanical system. He finds it already pre-existing and self-sufficient, it functions independently of him and he has to conform to its laws whether he likes it or not. (34)

Our fellow human beings: Thirdly, we are alienated from our fellow human beings. This alienation arises in part because of the antagonisms which inevitably arise from

the class structure of society. We are alienated from those who exploit our labour and control the things we produce. As Marx put it:

If his activity is a torment for him, it must provide pleasure and enjoyment for someone else... If therefore he regards the product of his labour, his objectified labour, as an alien, hostile and powerful object which is independent of him, then his relationship to that object is such that another man - alien, hostile, powerful and independent of him - is its master. If he relates to his own activity an unfree activity, then he relates to it as activity in the service, under the rule, coercion and yoke of another man. (35)

In addition, we are connected to others through the buying and selling of the commodities we produce. Our lives are touched by thousands of people every day, people whose labour has made our clothes, food, home, etc. But we only know them through the objects we buy and consume. Ernst Fischer pointed out that because of this we do not see each other “as fellow-men having equal rights, but as superiors or subordinates, as holders of a rank, as a small or large unit of power” (36). We are related to each other not as individuals but as representatives of different relations of production, the personification of capital, or land or labour. As Bertell Ollman wrote: “We do not know each other as individuals, but as extensions of capitalism: "In bourgeois society capital is independent and has individuality, while the living person is dependent and has no individuality"” (37). The commodities of each individual producer appear in depersonalised form, regardless of who produced them, where, or in what specific conditions. Commodity production means that everyone appropriates the produce of others, by alienating that of their own labour.

Marx described how mass commodity production continually seeks to create new needs, not to develop our human powers but to exploit them for profit:

Each attempts to establish over the other an alien power, in the hope of thereby achieving satisfaction of his own selfish needs...becomes the inventive and ever calculating slave of inhuman, refined, unnatural and imaginary appetites. He places himself at the disposal of his neighbour's most depraved fancies, panders to his needs, excites unhealthy appetites in him, and pounces on every weakness, so that he can then demand the money for his labour of love. (39)

We see other people through the lens of profit and loss. Our abilities and needs are converted into means of making money and so we consider other human beings as competitors, as inferiors or superiors.

Our human nature: The fourth element is our alienation from what Marx called our species being. What makes us human is our ability to consciously shape the world around us. However, under capitalism our labour is coerced, forced labour. Work bears no relationship to our personal inclinations or our collective interests. The capitalist division of labour massively increased our ability to produce, but those who create the wealth are deprived of its benefits. Marx's descriptions of this process in the Manuscripts are extremely powerful indictments of the system:

It is true that labour produces marvels for the rich, but it produces privation for the worker. It produces palaces, but hovels for the worker. It procures beauty, but deformity for the worker. It replaces labour by machines, but it casts some of the workers back into barbarous forms of labour and turns others into machines. It produces intelligence, but it produces idiocy and cretinism for the worker. (41)

Human beings are social beings. We have the ability to act collectively to further our interests. However, under capitalism that ability is submerged under private ownership and the class divisions it produces. We have the ability to consciously plan our production, to match what we produce with the developing needs of society. But under capitalism that ability is reversed by the anarchic drive for profits. Thus, rather than consciously shaping nature, we cannot control, or even foresee, the consequences of our actions. For example, new, cheaper techniques of production may, when repeated across industry, produce acid rain or gases, which destroy the ozone layer.

Similarly, when one capitalist improves production in his factory, he is unwittingly contributing to the slowing up of the rate of profits for his class as a whole by lowering the rate of profit. One firm can produce to fulfill a particularly sharp demand, only to find when the goods hit the market that other firms got there first. Instead of simply meeting demand, there is a glut in the market. This means that we produce more but what we produce is unwanted. All previous societies suffered from shortages, famines and the failure of crops. Under capitalism recessions mean that workers consume less because they produce too much. And they consume less, not because their labour is inadequately productive, but because their labour is too productive. There is nothing natural about the economic crises we face: it is our social organisation which prevents us enjoying the potential of our ability to produce.

Thus, no matter how deeply alienation affects them, the ruling class will always be driven to defend the system that creates their alienation with all the power and brutality at their disposal because of their material position within it. In addition to this, Lukács argued that the ruling class can never rise above the commodity fetishism of capitalism. The bourgeoisie can never recognise the real nature of capitalism without confronting their own role as exploiters and upholders of the

system. Therefore the capitalists do not want to recognise the real social relationships which underlie the institutions of capitalist society. They prefer to continue believing that the relations of production are natural and inevitable. In contrast, Lukács argued that workers, though also shaped by commodity fetishism, were not permanently blinded to the reality of capitalism. Rather he argued that the working class is in a unique position to be able to tear the veil of reification from capitalism because its struggle against capitalism reveals its real own role in producing the wealth of society. Class struggle means that workers no longer see themselves as isolated individuals. It means that they can become conscious of the social character of labour. Lukács suggests that when workers glimpse the reality behind commodity fetishism it can help them to realise the need for a revolutionary transformation of society: “This enables us to understand why it is only in the proletariat that the process by which a man's achievement is split off from his total personality and becomes a commodity leads to a revolutionary consciousness” (66). The only way to overcome alienation is for workers to collectively abolish their separation from ownership and control of the means of production, and to use that control to abolish the market and replace it with conscious planning for human need.

### **III. Sense of Alienation within Capitalism in Mohsin Hamid's *Moth Smoke***

*Moth Smoke* exposes the social disparity in contemporary Pakistani urban society and criticizes on the unequal distribution of property as a means of shaping the lives of people belonging to different strata of society. The behavior of characters belonging to different classes, their position in society, their attitude towards people belonging to a different class, their life style and way of thinking are the main aspects where this researcher has critically analyzed to unfold the secret of alienation in Capitalism.

*Moth Smoke* is set in Lahore which is divided into different classes depending on the financial standing of people in the society. Conflict between different classes of modern urban Pakistani society is portrayed through the characters. The privileges that the upper class enjoys, their disregard for laws, mistreatment of lower classes, influence and control in the country are contrasted with the deprived state of the lower classes in the novel.

This unequal distribution causes frustration and anger in the less fortunate who are victims of a society divided into classes. Aurangzeb is the son of a corrupt father who is introduced to the reader, in the novel, through Daru's words, "...Ozi's dad, the frequently investigated but as yet unincarcerated Federal Secretary (Retired) Khurram Shah" (11). Ozi is rich and is therefore entitled to all the luxuries of life. When Daru comes to meet him for the first time, after Ozi's return from the States, he sees that he has, "...not one but two lovely new Pajeros..." (11). Ozi also has a new bigger house which makes Daru uncomfortable because he can sense the economic disparity between them, as he says, "I'm a little nervous...may be because my house is the same size it was when he left..." (11). Ozi's Pajero is also contrasted with Daru's Suzuki. As Daru narrates, "...I notice the difference in the sounds of slamming car

doors: the deep thuds of the Pajero and Land Cruiser, the nervous cough of my Suzuki” (81). Ozi’s car establishes his high social position and he is shown to have a monopoly on the roads. Daru’s description of Ozi’s way of driving depicts his authoritative position on the road: “Ozi drives by pointing it (Pajero) in one direction and stepping on the gas, trusting that everyone will get out of our way” (12). Ozi believes that, “...bigger cars have the right of way” (12). This shows the privilege enjoyed by the upper class in the society due to their social position.

Another luxury enjoyed by the rich is that of the air-conditioner in the hot summer months of Lahore weather. The lower classes cannot afford air-conditioning due to its excessive consumption of expensive electricity. While having conversation with Mumtaz, Daru asserts the social hierarchy prevalent in Lahore:

“At our age, my hirsute chum, all women care about is cash. And my bank account is hairy enough for a harem.”

“Such refinement,” Mumtaz says, handing me a Scotch, nicely watered and iced. “Are all Lahori men like him (Ozi)?”

“Certainly not,” I tell her. (13)

Daru’s statement and his last remark “Certainly not” clearly show the social division in Lahore. Ozi is one of the few people who have access to enough material comfort. But in capitalist society all people cannot gain all that since all reproduction remains in the hand of few upper class people.

This economic divide through the use of air-conditioner is presented, in the novel, by Professor Julius Superb who reads a paper at the “Seminar on Social Class in Pakistan” which has the following lines:

“There are two social classes in Pakistan...The first group, large and sweaty, contains those referred to as the masses. The second group is

much smaller, but its members exercise vastly greater control over their immediate environment and are collectively termed the elite. The distinction between members of these two groups is made on the basis of control of an important resource: air-conditioning”. (37)

Ozi is a member of the elite having control on the air-conditioner. Ozi has taken up with Lahore's elite, who wantonly guzzle the city's unstable power supply with their air conditioners as the rest of its denizens bake in the brutal summer heat. In the same way Daru represents lower class of Lahore.

The lower classes cannot afford air-conditioners and their helplessness makes them dissatisfied with their lot and furious at the rich. Murad Badshah’s attitude is revealing in this regard: “He loved load-shedding for this reason. It amused him to see the rich people on the grounds of their mansions...fanning themselves in the darkness...Indeed, nothing made Murad Badshah more happy than the distress of the rich” (104). It is further said about him, “...he rebelled against the system of hereditary entitlements responsible for cooling only the laziest minority of Pakistan’s population...” (104-105). Daru is unable to pay his electricity bill after losing his job and therefore has no air-conditioning in his house. His condition is unable to afford electricity or air-conditioning, he lives alone in the sweltering darkness. His feelings for the rich and their air-conditioners are same as those of Murad Badshah, as he says, “I was happier when we had load-shedding five hours a day: at least then a man didn’t have to be a millionaire to run his AC” (104). Lack of air-conditioning facility is also shown to be an important motive in Daru’s turn towards crime. It is written in the novel, “He needed money to have his power and air-conditioning and security restored, and he swore that nothing would stand in his way. He, a man who hated guns, came to accept that he would have to use one” (109). The lack of air-

conditioning in the lives of the lower classes is also emphasized through Manucci's behavior who is unable to comprehend that air-conditioners make cold air and not hot air.

Thus, through the air-conditioner the writer is exposing the economic disparity in classes of society and the privileged state of the rich which is the cause of conflict between the classes. Portraying this scene, Murad Badshah narrates one event in the following words:

People were dying for their hunger, old boy, dying for their hunger.

But there was no need for them to go hungry. My mechanic's cousin told me, and I heard this with my own ears, mind you, that there was over a hundred tons of flour in that warehouse alone. Stockpiled, hoarded to keep up the prices. (213)

Being indifference to the pathetic condition of lower class people, upper class people hide food and other necessary things just to increase price. In this frustrating capitalism people can get dissatisfaction and feel alienated and nothing else.

Another privilege enjoyed by the rich is of expensive high- quality education. The elite can afford to send their children abroad for higher studies while the poor have to make-do with the local institutions. This disparity is shown in the novel through Daru and Ozi. They studied together in the same school but when the time for college came, Ozi went abroad leaving Daru to study at Government College, Lahore. Daru felt left-out as nearly all of his class fellows went abroad to study further. His bitterness is evident through the lines: "That night I was the angry one, angry because he (Ozi) was leaving me behind...because I'd done better than he at school, on the tests, and he was the one going abroad for college. And money had never really felt like a chain until the summer they all left" (47). The acquirement of high- quality

education by the rich and the inability of the poor to do so, is also detrimental in generating conflict between the elite and lower classes and Mohsin Hamid has commented on this factor through his characters.

The novel shows that connections are necessary for one to rise in the society. The elite classes are well-connected in the social set up and the lower classes suffer due to their lack of connections. Connections are made mostly on the basis of a person's financial standing. Daru is unable to find a new job because he lacks proper connections. Murad Badshah corrects him when Daru says that he can't find a job because he lacks foreign qualification or an MBA degree. Murad Badshah says to him, "It's all about connections, old boy" (40). Daru can't get another job because jobs are scarce, he tells us, and in a country infested by cronyism, only the cronies, like Ozi, are connected enough to succeed.

When Daru is finally called for an interview in a bank the employer, Butt saab, tells him:

[T]he boys we're hiring have connections worth more than their salaries. We're just giving them respectability of a job here in exchange for their families' business...I am meeting you, to tell you honest truth, as a favor to your uncle," Butt saab continues. Unless you know some really big fish...no one is going to hire you" (53).

Daru's inability to find a job because of lack of connections makes him disgruntled. He becomes acutely aware of the social hierarchy where the upper classes are the well-connected ones. As Daru's unemployment stretches into weeks, Shezad becomes increasingly aware of Lahore's divisions between the poor and the ultra-rich. Ozi, on the other hand, is well connected in the social fabric and reaps many benefits from his connections. Describing his privileged social position, he says, "I'm wealthy, well

connected, and successful. My father's an important person. In all likelihood I'll be an important person" (9).

The conflict between classes is evident in the novel also through applicability of rules and law, on the lower classes and not on the elite, in the society. The elite are shown to be above the law. They drive around their city in white BMWs, party on floodlit lawns, indulge in illicit alcohol and drugs, and dance to music specially mixed for the occasion by famous London DJs. Thus, in the novel, the elite are shown to indulge in parties where drugs, pre-marital sex and similar illegal activities are carried out in abundance and unquestioned by the law:

The party turns out to be a real insider's affair. Just a hundred people, the who's who of the Lahore party crowd, all hip and loaded and thrilled about Santorini in June. Even the music isn't the standard clobber collage but rather some remixed kind desi stuff that I've never heard before (because, I'm soon told, the DJ mixed it specially for this party and send it in from London). (82)

This aspect is presented ironically in the novel as Daru watches the police cooperating in making such parties possible. He comments on this in these words, "...a mobile police unit responsible for protecting tonight's illegal revelry" (81). The laws being only for the lower classes is evident as Daru is caught by the police for being drunk where as the police protects a party consisting of drinking as its main activity.

In the novel Ozi hits a boy with his Pajero and is not accounted for it. This is another example of the rich being above the law in the society. This aspect is also clear from Daru's words when he says, "The police don't stop us on our drive home. We are in a Pajero, after all" (79). The inequality in applicability of law creates dissatisfaction in the lower classes and exposes the class conflict. Daru's bitterness in

this regard is clear when he says to Mumtaz, “It’s easy to be an idealist when you drive a Pajero” (80).

In the novel, Hamid shows different attitude of people belonging to different classes towards each other. The lower classes respect the elite class due to their high position in the social hierarchy. On the other hand, the attitude of the upper class towards the lower classes is humiliating and callous. Daru is fired from his job due to his encounter with an arrogant rich client who is described as, “Malik Jiwan, a rural landlord with half a million U.S. in his account, a seat in the Provincial Assembly...His pastimes include fighting the spread of primary education and stalling the census” (21). His importance for the bank is clear from the way the BM (Branch manager) of Daru’s bank, responds to him, “BM grabs Mr. Jiwan’s hand, in both of is...bows slightly, at the waist and at the neck, a double bend...” (21). This bending by the BM is indicative of his respect for his rich client. Mr. Jiwan’s behavior towards Daru is demeaning. Feeling his dignity hurt Daru thinks, “And there is only so much nonsense a self-respecting fellow can be expected to take from these megalomaniacs” (22). In this way, the upper classes command respect and authority in the society from lower classes and they treat the lower classes in a debasing manner. Daru reflects on this aspect in this way, “These rich slobs love to treat badly anyone they think depends on them...” (221). Akmal, who is a member of the elite with an income of a million-plus U.S. treats Daru in a degrading manner when Daru comes to sell him hash in a restaurant. Daru narrates Akmal’s manner to be, “slightly condescending, in the way the rich condescend to their hangers-on” (142). Later Akmal makes fun of Daru and says, ““You didn’t get fired for trying to sell dope to bank clients, did you?” and laughing he speeds away in his car” (143). Daru’s response is such, “May be he doesn’t think what he said was insulting, or that someone like me can even be

insulted, really. But humiliation flushes my face” (143). The loss of respect causes anger and frustration in the masses and their mistreatment at the hands of the elite generates the social conflict between upper and lower classes. Daru’s anger at the degrading attitude of the privileged class is clear from his words:

But you get no respect unless you have cash. The next time I meet someone who’s heard I’ve been fired and he raises his chin that one extra degree which means he thinks he’s better than me, I’m going to put my fist through his face (144).

In the novel, the upper classes are shown to be indifferent to the plight of the poor. Their callousness and insensitivity towards the lower classes is highlighted. When Ozi comes to visit Daru in his house he feels hot because there is no electricity in Daru’s home. He tells Daru, “You need a generator....How can you survive without one?” (91). Daru’s reaction is, “Ah, Ozi. You just can’t resist; can you? You know I can’t afford a generator” (91). Ozi lives in an environment where generators and air-conditioners are an essential part of life but the lower classes are unable to afford such luxuries. This shows the disparity in the social standing of both friends and their lack of mental harmony. This disparity builds up as Daru falls lower financially and Ozi rises.

Not only Ozi, Mumtaz is also unable to comprehend the difficulties that the lower classes have to face. When Daru tells Mumtaz that he has been fired she casually tells him not to work as to her he doesn’t, “seem like the sort of person who’d enjoy being slave to a faceless business” (44). Thus, for the rich employment is a recreational activity and is carried out for fun but the lower classes have no choice but to work for survival. Daru’s cynicism exposes this, “This is the very sort of attitude that pisses me off with most of the party crowd. They’re rich enough not to

work unless they feel like it, so they think the rest of us are idiots for settling for jobs we don't love" (27).

Professor Julius Superb elaborates the callousness of the upper classes towards lower classes in an interesting manner. He satirizes behavior of the upper class through the metaphor of air-conditioners. He says:

And if they (elite) should think about the rest of the people, the great uncooled, and become uneasy as they lie under their blankets in the middle of summer, there is always prayer, five times a day, which they hope will gain them admittance to an air-conditioned heaven or the very least, a long, cool drink during a fiery day in hell. (103)

Instead of practically doing something for the benefit of the unprivileged, the elite are shown to resort to prayer which is the easy way out. This shows the selfishness of the elite and their disregard for the lower classes.

Another instance related to air-conditioners, that shows the insensitivity of the elite, is when Mumtaz asks Ozi not to use the air-conditioner too much. She says, "The entire country suffers because of the wastefulness of a privileged few" (106). Ozi's replies, "I couldn't care less about the country" (106). Mumtaz is not concerned about the country herself. The actual reason behind her dislike for air-conditioners is her "delusional and obsessive fear of pneumonia" (106), as Ozi points out. She talks about their responsibility towards the country only to get Ozi to turn off the air-conditioner as she fears catching pneumonia. This shows their self-centered behaviour and lack of concern for the welfare of the less fortunate people.

The most prominent example of the callous attitude of elite towards the lower classes is the incident where Ozi hits a boy with his Pajero. Daru witnesses the whole incident. Ozi, who has an elitist mind-set "doesn't mind putting a little fear into

people whose vehicles are smaller than his” (95). He does not stop on a red light and cuts too close-by a boy on a bicycle. The boy loses his balance and is hit by the Pajero. “The boy’s body rolls to a stop by the traffic signal that winks green, unnoticed by the receding Pajero” (96). This shows Ozi’s lack of concern. The feckless life of upper-class youth of Pakistan, who talk on cell phones as they speed through congested lanes in their oversized, air-conditioned SUVs, oblivious to traffic lights, regulations, cyclists, beggars, and rickshaws Ozi’s callous behaviour is further highlighted when Daru tells him that he saw what happened. Ozi’s reaction is, “Ozi’s lips stretch. Flatten. Not a smile: a twitch. ‘We’ll take care of his family...I’ll make sure they’re compensated’” (97). Ozi’s callousness makes Daru feel disgusted. Instead of feeling guilty or being concerned for the boy’s health, Ozi is ready to compensate the boy’s family through his money. This shows the viewpoint of the upper class that everything can be accounted for, through money, even human life.

The callousness of the elite towards lower classes is one of the major causes in the rift between classes in society. The lower classes have to strive to keep their self respect intact in the society ruled by the elite. One of the dilemmas faced by Daru during his decline is that of saving his dignity and respect. Murad Badshah describes Daru’s condition in these words, “...Darashikoh was in rather difficult straits himself: he was in debt, had no job, and was saddled with the heaviest weight of pride and self-delusion I have ever seen one person attempt to carry” (63). The novel shows a gradual decline in Daru’s social standing as his financial position weakens. His social position deteriorates from the middle to the lower class. The fall from one class to the next is steep, with Daru’s self-esteem and moral balance diminished in the descent. Daru dislikes taking favours from Ozi and his father, since he resents their corrupt millions. He is tired of living on their hand-outs. His resentment is clear when

Mumtaz offers him to borrow cash from Ozi and Daru replies, “I don’t want any money from Ozi.” The words came out more forcefully than I’d intended” (118). His bitterness is exposed to the reader, as he thinks, “I don’t want any of his corrupt cash” but, helpless at the hands of circumstances, he goes to Ozi’s father to ask him for some job. Daru describes this act in these words, “I was getting by without any more of his hand-outs. And I was quite content not to see him. But tonight I swallow my pride, hold my nose, and arrive at his place promptly at ten” (69). Thus the lower classes have no choice but to swallow their pride and self-esteem. Daru is caught in a dilemma when he thinks of selling hash. He thinks about it this way:

The problem is, selling hash seems sleazy somehow. Lower class. I still like to think of myself as a professional, not rich but able to stand on my own, with a decent income and a job that doesn’t involve bribing or being bribed, helping my friends with a little hash when they’re out, getting a little booze from them when I am. (141)

But this dilemma is solved as he realizes that he needs the money and he decides to do it. Money is the main problem of the lower classes and without it they have no dignity in society. This is clear in the case of Daru when he sells hash to Raider and Raider insists to give him thousand rupees for it instead of the decided price of five hundred. At this time Daru thinks to return the extra five hundred, “Pride tells me to give It back, but common sense tells pride to shut up, have a joint, and relax. I shrug and put the note into my wallet”(138). Murad Badshah belongs to the lower class. In the beginning of the novel when Daru has not fallen from his middle class position, he treats Murad Badshah in a degrading manner because Daru has a higher social status than Badshah. At that time, Daru’s thoughts about Murad Badshah were, “I don’t like it when low-class types forget their place and try to become too frank with you” (3).

Daru also treats his servant, Manucci unkindly. Even though Daru feels bitter at the way the elite class treats him but his own attitude with Manucci is degrading and ronical. This shows the vicious cycle prevalent in the society. The elite class degrades and mistreats the classes that fall below it; the middle and lower class. Similarly the middle class mistreats the lower class. Manucci is afraid of Daru due to his unkind behaviour. Ozi comments on Daru's mistreatment of Manucci in these words, "Daru beat him, humiliated him, and didn't pay him sometimes for months" (63). This is true as when Manucci asks Daru for his pay Daru raises his hand and Manucci flinches. This shows that Manucci is afraid of Daru. Then, he runs off, looking upset. And Daru's thinks about it, this way, "...I did the right thing. Servants have to be kept in line" (64). Whenever, Mumtaz talks to Manucci, Daru gets upset. He thinks about Manucci, "He's chatting away, which annoys me, because I don't like it when the boy forgets his place. It makes me look bad..." (66). Daru's thoughts show his prejudiced attitude towards his servant. This tussle between master and servant continues through-out the novel and it mirrors the social conflict based on classes. When Manucci wears a white kurta shalwar Daru compares himself to Manucci and feels uncomfortable. This is clear from the lines, "I look from myself, in my dirty jeans and T-shirt, to Manucci, in his crisp white cotton, and feel a strange sense of unease" (170). It shows the class-conscious attitude of Daru who cannot tolerate a lower class person's appearance to be better than his. When Daru's Fatty Chacha praises Manucci for "looking very smart," Daru is unable to stand it and he says to Manucci, "Go clean my bathroom...and scrub behind the toilet. It's getting filthy" (171). This exposes Daru's prejudice towards the lower class.

Later, in the novel, when Manucci asks Daru not to sell charas, Daru's behaviour is unjust and cruel, "I feel the anger coming slow and dry...This will not

happen. I won't permit it. My servant will not tell me what to do" (27). He slaps Manucci hard across the face. Daru's attitude towards Manucci is representative of behavior of the entire middle class that criticizes the elite class for mistreatment but does the same with the lower class. Another example of mistreatment of lower class by the upper class is the case of Dilaram who runs a brothel in Heera Mandi. She tells Mumtaz how she got started in the business as Mumtaz asks about her past for an article on prostitutes. Dilaram narrates the story:

"I was a pretty girl, like this one here." She smiles at our adolescent tea server. "Only younger. The landlord of our area asked me to come to his house. I refused, so he threatened to kill my family. When I went, he raped me." (52)

Beginning with this incident she tells Mumtaz about a series of similar events that followed. All of these incidents show the mistreatment that Dilaram, a young poor girl, had to face at the hands of the rich landlord and his acquaintances. Dilaram's narration exposes the injustice in the society and the unchecked abuse of the lower class by the upper classes. This abuse of the lower class results in the social conflict between classes. The upper classes have influence and power in the society. They have control over the society.

The incident where Ozi kills a boy with his Pajero shows the influence and power exercised by the elite in the society. Ozi is not arrested for killing the boy whereas Daru is arrested for Ozi's crime. Ozi is able to blame his crime on Daru due to his influence in the society. Ozi's pleasure at his triumph is clear from his reaction when Mumtaz tells him of Daru's arrest. "As soon as I heard Daru had been arrested for killing a boy in a car accident, I told Ozi. And Ozi smiled" (242). Ozi's triumph over Daru, in the tussle between them, can be read as the triumph of the elite class

over the lower classes of society. Ozi gets Daru arrested in order to get back at Daru for having an affair with his wife. Mumtaz later confronts Ozi, “‘You killed the boy, didn’t you?’ Ozi didn’t answer. Which was the answer” (242). When Mumtaz investigates the matter she learns that Ozi has been able to save himself through his family influence in the society. She writes, “...certain members of the Accountability Commission...pointed out that it would be extremely inconvenient for Khurram Shah, himself under investigation, if his son were to be accused of this crime” (244). In these circumstances Daru is the appropriate bait used by the elite (Ozi and his father) to save their own necks. This justifies Daru’s observation of Ozi as an overgrown child. A child who gets everything and gets away with everything. The lower classes hold malice against the upper classes because of being under-privileged and unequal. Their anger, frustration and desire to be equal are clear through Murad Badshah’s words:

[...] it is my passionately held belief that the right to possess property is at best a contingent one. When disparities become too great, a superior right, that to life, outweighs the right to property. Ergo, the very poor have the right to steal from the very rich. Indeed I would go so far as to say that the poor have a duty to do so, for history has shown that the inaction of the working classes perpetuates their subjugation. (64)

When Murad Badshah tells Daru of his plan to rob exclusive boutiques, he justifies it through these words,

‘People are fed up with subsisting on the droppings of the rich... The rich use Kalashnikovs to persuade tenant farmers and factory labourers and the rest of us to stay in line.’ He...pulls out the revolver... ‘But we, too, can be persuasive’ (65).

Thus, the lower class is shown to resort to crime in order to satisfy its needs. All of the above mentioned factors exhibit class discrimination in the society and the conflicts that generate due to this discrimination between different classes. Hamid has presented the class conflicts through the characters and the portrayal of class conflicts through the characters constitutes the social commentary of the novel. The novel's social commentary in the background constitutes an extremely important part of the novel that show how the capitalism brings alienation within working class people because of its indifference towards the issues of laborers.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

We live in a world where technological achievements unimaginable in previous societies are within our grasp: this is the age of space travel, of the internet, of genetic engineering. Yet never before have we felt so helpless in the face of the forces we ourselves have created. Never before have the fruits of our labour threatened our very existence: this is also the age of nuclear disasters, global warming, and the arms race. For the first time in history we can produce enough to satisfy the needs of everyone on the planet. Yet millions of lives are stunted by poverty and destroyed by disease. Despite our power to control the natural world, our society is dominated by insecurity, as economic recession and military conflict devastate lives with the apparently irresistible power of natural disasters. The more densely populated our cities become, the more our lives are characterised by feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Like the atoms that must be split for a fission bomb to explode, modern-day Lahore is itself divided: between old and new, rich and poor, conservative and liberal. Lost amid this fractured society is Daru, a young man fired from his job as a banker, whose two great passions are hash and his best friend Ozi's wife, Mumtaz. Daru, an intellectual wastrel, has a kind of underworld existence; unable to afford electricity or air conditioning, he lives alone in sweltering darkness. Ozi and Mumtaz, in contrast, run with Lahore's urban hip, the sushi-and-mobile-phone crowd.

In the novel, the elite classes are well-connected in the social set up and the lower classes suffer due to their lack of connections. Connections are made mostly on the basis of a person's financial standing. Daru is unable to find a new job because he lacks proper connections. Murad Badshah corrects him when Daru says that he can't find a job because he lacks foreign qualification or an MBA degree. Daru can't get

another job because jobs are scarce and in a country infested by cronyism, only the cronies, like Ozi, are connected enough to succeed. He becomes acutely aware of the social hierarchy.

The conflict between classes is evident in the novel and is the applicability of rules and law, on the lower classes and not on the elite, in the society. The elites are shown to be above the law. They drive around their city in white BMWs, party on floodlit lawns, indulge in illicit alcohol and drugs, and dance to music specially mixed for the occasion by famous London DJs. Thus, in the novel, the elites are shown to indulge in parties where drugs, pre-marital sex and similar illegal activities are carried out in abundance and unquestioned by the law. This aspect is presented ironically in the novel as Daru watches the police cooperating in making such parties possible. He sees a mobile police unit is protecting the illegal celebrations. The laws being only for the lower classes is evident as Daru is caught by the police for being drunk where as the police protects a party consisting of drinking as its main activity.

In the novel Ozi hits a boy with his Pajero and is not accounted for it. This is another example of the rich being above the law in the society. The lower classes respect the elite class due to their high position in the social hierarchy. On the other hand, the attitude of the upper class towards the lower classes is humiliating and callous. Daru is fired from his job due to his encounter with an arrogant rich client Malik Jiwan, a rural landlord with half a million U.S. in his account, a seat in the Provincial Assembly. In this way, the upper classes command respect and authority in the society from lower classes and they treat the lower classes in a debasing manner. On the other hand, the loss of respect causes anger and frustration in the masses and their mistreatment at the hands of the elite generates the social conflict between upper and lower classes.

The upper classes are indifferent to the plight of the poor. Their callousness and insensitivity towards the lower classes is highlighted which shows the disparity in the social standing of both friends and their lack of mental harmony. This disparity builds up as Daru falls lower financially and Ozi rises. Another example of mistreatment of lower class by the upper class is exposed by Dilaram's narration.

To sum up, injustice in the society and the unchecked abuse of the lower class by the upper classes results in the social conflict between classes. Daru, Manucci, Dilaram and Murad Badshah are the sufferers of capitalist society of Lahore since they don't possess enough fortune as Ozi or Mumtaz or Raider or Jiwan. This unequal distribution of capital has caused frustration to the lower class people hence alienation is the ultimate result.

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