

## EXPLORING POLITICALLY HISTORIC ALLEGORY IN MOHSIN HAMID'S *MOTH SMOKE*

**Farhat Nawaz**

Lecturer Department of English, Abbottabad University of Science and Technology Havelian  
[farhatjadoon995@gmail.com](mailto:farhatjadoon995@gmail.com)

**Seema Safeer**

M.Phil Scholar, Department of Linguistics the University of Haripur, Haripur Pakistan  
[seemasafeer1986@gmail.com](mailto:seemasafeer1986@gmail.com)

**Zeeshan Shahjehan**

Subject Specialist (English)  
[zeeshanshahjehan1@gmail.com](mailto:zeeshanshahjehan1@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

*The present research paper has analyzed Mohsin Hamid's Moth Smoke by treating history of India and Pakistan allegorically. Through the selected characters the writer has made satire on the Mughal Empire as well as the political leaders of the time who have ruined the resources of country and subjugated people for the celebration of their power. The writer discusses the global issues through the discussion of local issues in the selected novel. This qualitative research based on anticolonial literary theory as counter narrative. The study concluded that history of colonization and subjugation transfers from foreign to local agents who prove to be worse than the actual colonizers.*

**Keywords.** History, politics, allegory, colonial.

### THE BACKGROUND

South Asia remained beneath the rule of colonization for a long time and its effects may be visible even these days inside the put up-colonial era. In this regard, Derek Gregory argues that "we stay inside the colonial present", a world wherein energy matters lots, even supposing it has been redefined and is still imposed on the powerless. According to Gregory, the production of expertise, data and media images is unfairly divided between East and West. These studies offer the socio-political, monetary and cultural impacts of colonialism in India and Pakistan and in this regard, women fiction writers have played an extensive function in highlighting the outcomes of colonialism. Colonialism is still a gift today. Throughout the period of colonization, the indigenous cultures of those countries subjected to overseas rule were regularly sidelined, suppressed and openly denigrated in favor of the promotion of the social and cultural options and conventions of the colonizers. In response, postcolonial literature seeks to assert the richness and validity of indigenous cultures in an attempt to restore pride in practices and traditions that were systematically degraded under colonialism. Colonizers regularly depicted colonial subjects as existing "history in the open" in immutable, timeless societies, incapable of progress or improvement without intervention and assistance. They thus justified their actions, which include violence in opposition to people who are hostile to colonial rule. A central concern of postcolonial writing is the revision of the record in order to report things from the perspective of those who have been colonized. Postcolonial writers used intended descriptions of indigenous peoples, places, and practices to refute, or "resist" stereotypes, inaccuracies, and generalizations disseminated through colonizers in educational, criminal, political, social texts, and settings. As a style of modern records, postcolonialism questions and reinvents modes of cultural perception, ways of seeing and perceiving. As anthropology, it records human relations between colonial peoples and subaltern people.

India and Pakistan once as a united India; it remained under the painful enjoyment of colonization via the British Raj and is considered to be usually regarded as a land of uncertainty. As Rushdie asks in *Imaginary Place of Origin*, is there an India? It questions the life of India as a nation. Additionally, according to Crane, India does not have a single real identification regardless of whether it is on the arena map. Despite these unique perspectives on India, Aijaz Ahmad argues that India has the characteristics of a healthy person. The history of English fiction in India goes back to the colonial length that added the English language to India through the academic channel. The history of the novel in South Asia is notably younger than the history of various genres of literature. If we look into the history of both nations, we find numerous politically tumultuous events. Post-Partition fiction offers a proper identification with the crisis. Various authors like Ghose capture the socio-political conditions due to the fact that the year 1947. The Assassination of Aziz Ghose is a tremendous work that presents the social and financial truth immediately after independence.

Politics has remained a fertile ground for the emergence of literature since ancient times. Political literature existed in numerous paperwork which include magazines, journals and newspapers where writers; political ideas had been particularly promoted via political activists. The connection among literature and politics has continually been a contentious subject matter. A few critics argue that literature and politics are various things, at the same time as others project this view considering the fact that the social truth depicted in literature with the help of the maximum effective social group that is language cannot be freed from politics, ideology.

Since the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*, in particular, these warring positions are further polarized. In the view of postcolonial critics, literature is a social fact and it fulfills a political function. In reality, things are not as clear-cut as they first seem, nor are they as simple.

This study discusses the political and historical allegory in Mohsin Hamid's *Moth Smoke*. Hamid treats personal and individual characters as public and historical allegories. Hamid indirectly indicates to Pakistan's post-colonial problems through his use of satirical literary devices such as irony, understatement and ambivalent narrator. The writer, in his novel, *Moth Smoke* (2000) sets the history of Pakistan when its socio-political and economic problems were emerging. He discusses a number of political issues in the novel such political instability and internal strife because of bitter political issues between the two mainstream parties i.e. Pakistan people's party and Pakistan Muslim league. Similarly, nuclear standoff with India in 1998 and the resultant economic sanctions by the international community, further, September/11 2001 attacks in America, the resultant War on Terror and its impact on Pakistan's society, politics and economics are discussed.

## DISCUSSION

Set in Lahore, Pakistan, *Moth Smoke* mostly revolves around Darashikoh, the protagonist of the novel, which is a historical allusion back to the Mughal emperors. Ironically, Daru is poor while its members like his friends Mumtaz and Aurangzeb are rich enough to seize life. *Moth Smoke* is set in the 1990s, a time when the socio-political conditions of Pakistan were in a state of complexity. The novel talks about several post-colonial issues arising from the colonial power before partition and also debates the new irresponsible ruling elite class in the field of Pakistani politics.

In *Moth Smoke*, Hamid creates central themes that bind people together in a global capitalist system. While from Jay's point of view, "his writings represent a deeply ambivalent relationship to globalization". This socio-economic clash was demonstrated by Butt Saad who said: "We have more people than we need right now. And the guys we hire have good connections that are worth the higher salaries. Conflict between different classes can be seen due to the unequal distribution of wealth in society and this conflict is described by Orrin C. Judd (2006) in these words: "The frustration and anger of the less fortunate in a country whose ruling class is thoroughly corrupt and where the economic gap is so vast, that the rich can isolate themselves from the rules that bind the rest of society and can almost avoid physical contact with the lower classes. We only give them the decency of work in exchange for family matters."

### **Concept of globalization and Hamid's *Moth Smoke***

Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin define globalization in *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*. They state that globalization is "the process by which the lives of individuals and local communities are affected by economic and cultural forces that operate throughout the world" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 110). The impacts of globalization can be seen as both positive and negative as Mohsin Hamid shows in his novel *Moth Smoke*. Hamid shows these different effects of globalization through his characters, Mumtaz and Daru. Mumtaz benefits from globalization and raises awareness of social issues in the community. However, Daru struggles with globalization as it has damaged it socially and economically. Globalization could be used in a positive way by bringing awareness to social and political issues and helping the world become a "...united place", a place where people can come together and try to find solutions (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 110).

Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin argue that there are different views of globalization. One is seen as a "positive feature of a changing world" with access to information and technology that could be used as a great resource to communicate with the masses (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 111). It could help inform people about important global issues that affect everyone.

However, there are others who reject globalization and believe that it is "a form of domination by 'First World' countries over 'Third World' countries" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 111). They see it as an economic threat that affects the way they live their daily lives. The invasion of first world ideals and corporations is creeping in through the status and prestige that a foreign education provides. Globalization without free trade creates a system that keeps the rich richer and the poor poorer. Hamid's character, Mumtaz, is nostalgic for the free life she had when she got her degree in New York. They also struggle to cope with the traditions of their culture, especially those that are female. Mumtaz marries when she finds a suitable match and gives birth to a child because she is expected to do so. She tries to be a loving wife and mother, but it's just not natural to her, and that's okay. Instead, Mumtaz lives a double life as male journalist Zulfikar Manto, using globalization to her advantage. "I wrote about things people didn't want to see, and my writing was noticed" (Hamid 172).

Hamid's character Daru is affected by the global economy in a negative way. Daru sees Mumtaz, Ozi and their former classmates bringing their New York and English lifestyle back to Pakistan after earning their foreign degrees. Dara envies them because he couldn't afford to get an education in the States or England like his friends. He is constantly reminded of this fact, especially when he attends the few interviews his uncle was able to arrange for him. The interviewer tells him that the few new hires "actually have MBAs. And when I think about it, one also has a foreign diploma. The lack of foreign education is a major part of why it is difficult for Dara to get a job that pays enough to afford air conditioning at home.

### **Hamid's ambivalent attitude on the concept of globalization**

Ambivalence about globalization is reflected in the seeming contradiction between the novel's focus on the systematically negative role globalization plays in the lives of its characters and Hamid's insistence on personal responsibility, on the need, that is, not to blame colonialism but to realize that "it's our fault if things aren't going well" (Dawn np). *Moth Smoke*, however, makes it plain enough that Daru, Ozi, Murad and the other characters, though they bear personal responsibility for their actions, live in a local world almost wholly determined by the structures of globalization, transnational markets, and cultural commodities and behaviours imported from the West. As we have already seen, Hamid avoids drawing a link between these structures and the history of British colonialism, historicizing contemporary events instead by connecting them to the last years of the Mughal Empire. The novel's opening pages, as I noted earlier, invoke the struggle for succession near the end of the reign of Shah Jahan between his sons, Aurangzeb and Dara Shikoh (3-4). Drawing on the fact that Aurangzeb, who triumphed over Dara Shikoh, was a rigid and thoroughly repressive Islamist while Dara Shikoh embraced pantheism and was much more secular in his outlook, Hamid suggests a link between the struggle for power of these brothers and the tension between Islam and secular modernism in Pakistan in his own time. Although this dichotomy gets blurred in the novel, where the characters Aurangzeb (Ozi) and Dara Shikoh (Daru) seem equally modern and secular, Hamid has said that the novel is about the dangers of "intolerance" in the past and in our own time, and that Ozi and Daru represent, respectively, the struggle between an Islamic and a secular state

(Gross np). The outlines of this idea are a little hard to discern in the novel, however. Even though Daru falls into drug dealing and burglary, Ozi emerges as the more corrupt character. But corrupt and ruthless as he is, it is difficult to see how Ozi can be associated with the historical Aurangzeb, since he is thoroughly Westernized and secular, and his "intolerance," when it comes to Daru, is rooted in jealousy, not religion.

## **CONCLUSION**

Hamid in *Moth Smoke* created a political satire at the elite elegance dwelling in Pakistan. He presented the more serious nation of Pakistani society wherein the rich elegance is authoritative in formulating laws and flouting them carelessly, while the terrible class has to uphold the sanctity of the policies made via the wealthy. The writer notes that upper magnificence humans force round town in white BMWs, indulge in capsules and alcohol, and squander Pakistan's wealth, which it borrows from Western powers every year. Hamid pointed out the Mughal generation which is going again to remind us of the colonialism of the British Raj. Similarly, the novelist will become a satirical goal in a unique about neo-colonialism, in which the Pakistani economy is ruled by means of multinational organizations. Like Roy, Hamid criticizes the glorification of nuclear electricity when normal people get embroiled in political squabbles. Hamid discourages Pakistani politicians from participating inside the struggle on terror, which has dire effects for Pakistan. He criticizes the ruling elegance for being dictated through overseas policy. It demonstrates that the author has correctly depicted socio-political problems in *Moth Smoke* the usage of the technique of allegory.

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