

## CONFLICTING BOUNDARIES OF SOCIAL CLASS: A POST-MARXIST CRITIQUE OF CLASS IN HAMID'S FICTION

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### Abstract

This research investigates the notion of conflicting and blurring of the boundaries of social classes. Mohsin Hamid's two novels, *Moth Smoke* (2000) and *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* (2013) are the selected texts for the analysis and post-Marxism is selected as the theoretical/conceptual framework as well as the methodology of this research. The research is significant as it is evident that Marxism is now in crisis and its extension is necessary to cope with the current socio-political and economic situation of the globalized world. The objective of this research is to highlight the elusive and transitory nature of social classes in Pakistan. The tentative result of this research is that Hamid's fiction is a challenge to the existing Marxist ideology of the fixed class system in various societies of the world, and elusive, the circular and transitory nature of social class will result in the emancipation of man from such fixed social structures and economic constructs.

**Keywords:** Class, Conflicting boundaries, post-Marxism, Pakistani fiction in English,

### Introduction

The concept of social class has been narrated by various theorists in their own different ways. Marx relates class with the means of production (Economic capital), Weber relates it, not only with the economic capital but also social status and the prestige (Social capital). Bourdieu by taking a challenging position to the previous views relates the class to the symbolic and cultural capital as well. This transition and fluidity of the concept of social class make it a post-Marxist phenomenon. In this research, I intend to explore the post-Marxist concept of class as it is delineated by Mohsin Hamid in his two novels, selected for this research. Stephen Ball posits that the gulf between the rich class and the poor class has increased to a great extent and even more than the damaged life chances have made the movement of capital between these two classes limited to a great extent (Ball, 2013).

Bradley (1996) asserts about the neo-Marxist and the neo-Weberian scholars that they are in contrast with one another on the theorization of social class. However, they share a common conception that capitalist social orders are stratified by class, in which the upper class enjoys power over the lower class through the control of the property, the generation of capital

and the market. Marx (1848) stressed the role of estrangement and exploitation in the generation of economic resources and perpetuation of capitalist power relations. Weber (n.d) has emphasized the role of democracy and rationalization as significant in creating entrepreneurial social orders as well as working class. However, by taking a challenging position to such theorization, this research challenges the gap which exists between the rich and the poor classes.

Although missing from Marx and Weber's unique hypotheses discussed above, the role of pedagogical institutions has also been emphasized by many critics who think that such pedagogical institutions are state apparatuses. For example, Althusser (2014) posits that in industrial society, education is an apparatus of the state, struggling to manipulate the equality of all sections of the society. American Neo-Marxists Bowles and Gintis (1976), acclaimed that pedagogical institutions work as channels for creating class consciousness, exhibited through their idea of the 'correspondence rule'. They proposed that schools may promote a class conscious society, instead of creating an environment which provides equal opportunities for all the children in the market. However, all these unintentional activities on the part of educational institutions could not eliminate the economic aspect of the students' life and particularly in the case of Pakistani students, getting an education in those Public-run institutions and the private-run institutions. In Pakistan, only the children of the elite class can get an education in the elite educational institutions of the world and hence increase their employability in the multinational business firms to get economic capital. However, a large number of the public-run institutions are providing quality education and thus class stratification and class consciousness are challenged and confronted.

Foster and others have declared in the context of the categorization of various social classes that 'social class categories are notoriously problematic' (Foster, 1996, p. 53). It is evident from this statement that to reduce social classes into various occupational groups is not justified because it becomes difficult to define the identical structure of various occupational groups as class stratification. For instance, in November 1998 the Office for National Statistics (ONS) reported the administration's new social grouping in a different than traditional classification. Kenneth Roberts, the Registrar General of ONS made a classification of various occupational groups. As indicated by his classification, which is the most popular official document up to this day, about various classes, he has divided the population into six classes based on occupation, grouped on professional levels (I, Professional, II Managerial and specialized III N Skilled non-manual, III M Skilled manual, IV Partly skilled, and V Unskilled) (Roberts, 2001). His classification of population into the above said various groups is indicative of the fact that in the modern era, there is a multiplicity of classes and the fixed class system as emphasized by the Marxist critics, have become more or less an obscure phenomenon. The idea of the social class, as it lays its emphasis on financial condition and work, is hazardous for various reasons, not least due to the gendered suppositions whereupon such orders have generally been marked, the suspicions of homogeneity inside class revamped and changed technical and work scenario at the beginning of the twenty-first century (Walkerline, 1996). The positivistic theories to deal with the social class from postmodern/post-structural points of view challenge the essential epistemological premise of the amazing speculations. These contending approaches have contended that social class can't be downgraded to the occupation and that class positions are not homogenous or effectively quantifiable. Postmodern scholars have stressed on how class connects with different social constructs (for example, sexual orientation and 'race') and is a 'lived' process that is inseparably attached to the identity. In this way, it has been

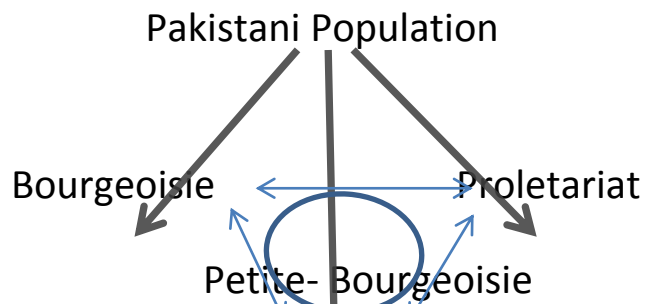
contended that unmitigated ideas of the class are missing in the light of the fact that it 'makes no reference to the marked identities, or awareness, or sentiments of solidarity' (Williamson 1981, p. 19). While a few, for example, Calvert (1982), has contended that the idea of the class is hazardous to such an extent that it ought to be disposed of.

Postmodern / post-structural, social constructionism (Gergen, 1985), approaches are also considered by class practice, not as a static, normative idea, but as being developed by encounters between individuals, classes, institutions and policies. Some theorists and researchers working within the postmodern / post-structural theoretical frameworks have differing views on reductionism and intentionality, with differences appearing between relativists "weak" and relativists "strong/true". As Gill (1995) outlines, 'strong' relativism predicates that there is no 'truth,' but multiple truths occur naturally, and all conflicting accounts and views are deemed equally plausible. Hence, to relate class only to economic capital is an obscure idea and cultural capital also plays an important role in the true analysis of the concept of class.

Hamid's fiction is full of examples of ruptures and gaps of economic capital as well as cultural capital which make it clear that class stratification is one of the main characteristics of Pakistani society. However, where Class inequalities are very vividly observant, the conflicting boundaries of classes are also very much conspicuous. This enhances the impact of his fiction as Post-Marxian. In Pakistan, the following three classes are identified.

a- Bourgeoisie                      b- Petit- bourgeoisie                      c- Proletariat

However, Hamid's fiction shows that there is a continuous flow of capital and Marxist identities are not permanent rather transitory and fluid in the context of Post-Marxist theory and it is not possible to pinpoint the specific class boundaries. This fact can be explained as under:



The diagram shows that the flow of capital from various class is a continuous process and with the shifting and transfer of capital from one class to another practically shifts the class identity of the specific group, hence the fixed class identities are shuffled, blurred and conflicting. Post-Marxism is a challenge as well as an extension of traditional/ classical Marxism. It supports as well as confronts Socialism, Leninism, capitalism and pluralism at various fronts. As it is stated by Laclau himself, that he has rejected the ideas of Marx because Marxism broke up. He acclaims that the process of continuity, as well as discontinuity, evolves out of simply "rejection" (Laclau, 1990, P- 201). It is not such a field of studies as is totally new in the tradition of literary theory rather it was Marx himself, who gave a lead to the post-Marxism and with the passage of time it grew as a separate field of study, critical of Marxism. In his book *Libidinal Economy*, Jean-Francois Lyotard has given an indication of what it is that makes Marx post-Marxist when he draws attention to the unsystematic nature of Marx's thought. We then witness, as Lyotard describes it:

Perpetual postponement of finishing work on Capital, a book becomes a chapter, a chapter, section, a portion, a conceptual discourse mutation process. Is the non-finito a

logical theory feature? In these post-relative days, we can accept this; but for Marx (and thus for Engels the impatient!), it must have been rather a strange, troubling reality (Lyotard cited by Sim, 2013, P-15).

Classical or traditional Marxist literature and criticism are grounded in the watchword "economic determinism" and the founding fathers of this discipline of study, Marx and Engels, establish a strong relationship of the economic condition of the ruling class and their influence on the prevalent ideas in the literary circles. They are of the view that the capitalists buy the consciousness of the intellectuals by means of their capital for the profit - purpose, as given in the following lines from *The German Ideology* (1848), "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas" (p. 67). This quote suggests that the sources of production manipulate the relations of production and thus the capitalist class asserts its influence on the intellectual force of the world. However, this strong Marxist stance is extended unwittingly, by Lyotard giving a new post-Marxist dimension to the Marxist studies as indicated from his views given above.

George Lukacs also thinks on the same lines as Lyotard and asserts that Marxist dialectics have paved the way for post-Marxism because Marx himself was indecisive of the nature and implementation of dialectics, as he puts forward in his book, *History and Class Consciousness*, (2016), that "It is the scientific conviction that dialectical materialism is the road to truth" (Lukacs, 2016). He thinks the dialects of Marx are only a method and prone to continuous change. Hence Marx himself and post-Marxists are on the same philosophical orientation regarding the transitional nature of class, culture and power in the world. Lukacs is of the view that Marx's methodology is prone to over-simplification, triviality and eclecticism. *History and class consciousness* prompted the Frankfurt School's theorists to develop what is now known as Western Marxism. Western Marxism is mainly marked by a better interest in conceptual and artistic concerns than in economic and political aspects (the latter prevailing in Soviet and Chinese Marxism), and the post-Marxist implications of this shift could be seen. To proceed with, it invalidates the base's dominance over the superstructure (more or less an article of faith in classical Marxism) and often overturns it. The hegemony work of Gramsci is also a crucial fact because it implies that the sphere of ideas can be a platform of ideological conflict still more crucial than the base's purely economic world. Gramsci's influence is widespread across the Western Marxist tradition, and the highly flexible, even post-Marxist practices introduced by the Italian Communist Party in the 1960s and 1970s when it deliberately sought to engage with other political groups in a spirit of commitment, speak much to Gramsci's academic legacy. Regrettably, however, for those who want to claim the significance of the post-Marxist approach, this strategy itself was not sufficient to keep the Communist Party of Italy (Sim, 2013).

Theodor. W. Adorno is another highly recognized critic and thinker, famous for his book, '*The Negative Dialectics*' which reflects a more substantial remark in a post-Marxist position, to the degree that Derrida's work and deconstruction are seen as foretelling the notion. By opposing debate (for Adorno, contradiction demonstrates' the untruth of identity, the reality that the concept does not complete the constructed thing), Negative Dialectics, or 'non-identity thinking,' it breaks off the orderliness of dialectical materialism, thus keeping the door open to post-Marxism (Adorno, 2015). As E. B. Ashton, the translator of Negative Dialectics notes out, the book can be regarded as an apology for deviationism, an overview of a Marxist thinker's inability to do just that.

Post-Marxism, as a political and philosophical theory, is getting around orthodox Marxism. The term was first introduced as a field of studies by Laclau and Mouffe, in their book *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985), the first work which credited the theory, for the first time it appeared. The theory was first introduced in the University of Essex, in the UK. Post-Marxism replicates the principle of the economy as the measure for the politics and excludes the idea to see the state as powerful with its interests of a given class. Post-Marxism is the trend introduced in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, almost during the 1960s, which processed out of many important events and particular trends of the century. The very effect of the political, academic and social happenings like Soviet Union's weakness and student conflict led by the student riots of 1968, which concurrently happened with Maoist theory, and the growth in the production, as well as manufacturing of the television, which very closely covered and broadcast the events in the Vietnam War, became the immediate cause of the development of this field of study. On account of these socio-political variations, Marxism loosened its dominance. Consequently, it gave a chance to the writers, like Laclau and Mouffe, to announce formally the proliferation of a new trend and theory with the new subject position that is called post-Marxism (Sim, 2013).

In the mould of "Welcome Release," Baudrillard's rejection of his Marxist past is more, but a certain air of nostalgia can be identified even here in the profile of this insubordination from Marxism. This 'solitary sharpshooting ranger from the post-Marxist left' can still talk of being, not without nostalgia, as submitted to us on the cover of his book *Cool Memories*. This is such an essential component of both Hegelian and classical Marxist thinking for the fine ancient drama of subject and object.' Baudrillard notes that "[the] subtlest dialectics always end in our nostalgia" is also present in the job of Benjamin and Adorno (Baudrillard, 1999).

Post-Marxism is born of disenchantment, although it can prompt positivity about a political future, unrestricted of the constrictions of Marxist orthodoxy (Sim, 2000). Two main variants of post-Marxism have been identified in *post-Marxism- A Reader* (1998), by Stuart Sim. He has identified these as *post-Marxism* and *post-Marxism*. He is of the view that a *post-Marxist* is one who has rejected the primary concepts of Marxism (the case of Jean-François Lyotard or Jean Baudrillard, for example) and a *post-Marxist* is, like Laclau and Mouffe, a critic of Marxism who endeavours to make Marxism relevant to the current scenario of the conceptual developments of the theories of poststructuralism, deconstruction, postmodernism, and feminism on to Marxism (Sim, 2013).

We can trace the roots of post-Marxism in various social and intellectual threads which collectively constitute "Crisis of Marxism". These social and intellectual formations lead us to innumerate the basic postulates of this field of study. First of all, it critiques the economic determinism of the western Marxism by including in its scope the significance of cultural capital. End of existing socialism is another important feature of post-Marxist ideology. Globalization of Persisting Marxist trends also gave rise to post-Marxist thinking. Pluralism, difference, scepticism towards authority, political spontaneity, and the cause of the new social movements are the characteristic features of this field of study. These threads of post-Marxism are an effort to trace its crystallization as its own independent theoretical disposition in the light of different theoretical and political moves in the course of literature. While in the strong parallelism to the development of the post-Structuralism, postmodernism, second-wave feminism and especially with the classical Marxism itself that how such developments came into existence (*Laclau & Mauffe*, 1985)

Post-Marxism may likewise be viewed as a reaction to one too much 'false dawns', as in Perry Anderson's mid-1970s' proclamation that, 'The possibility of a progressive circuit re-opening between Marxist hypothesis and mass practice, circled through genuine battles of the modern working class, has gotten relentlessly more noteworthy' (Anderson, 1970). Beginning from the breakdown of Marxism and protecting its postulates from its appropriation as a worldwide social and political power, presently post-Marxism has become an undeniable discursive reality in the field of scholarly analysis.

. Marxism has loosened its grip on account of its authorial practice, as its totality is insufficient to deal with the current flow of cultural pluralism. In the eyes of some theorists, Marxism is a discredited school of thought. In a sense, Marxism has put the public under the burden of authority. Now the air of liberality and equality has taken over the whole world. So the current commitment is with the libertarianism instead of the past with authoritarianism. In the later twentieth century, two major theorists Laclau and Mouffe secured the essence of Marxist thought and re-oriented it to make it adaptable to the newly emerging cultural environment in the world. Marxism is considered as a starting point to move on, so, in a way, it is a departure point of the post-Marxism in speculation. Post-Marxism has harder feelings of the rejection instead of a simple extension in the view of Laclau and Mouffe's theory. In the recent cultural climate, it is harder to decide for us, with particular reference to Laclau and Mouffe that Marxism itself is not clear from the scepticism. We can proceed further with the fact that Marxism has to face inflexible and harder critique in the hands of professed and adherents who came up with the logical outcome, seems to be post-Marxism. Hirst and Hindess from England and André Gorz and Rufol Bahro on the Continent, have revealed the degree of discontentment of the Marxist followers, who are in a state of confusion, while considering their heritage in Marxism, especially during the final two decades of the twentieth century.

### **Conflicting Boundaries of Class in *Moth- Smoke***

*Moth Smoke* (2000) the debut novel by Hamid, in its literary discourse and imagination asserts strong pieces of evidence of the existence of transition of class structures at various fronts of the country. Laclau & Mouffe assert that the reconstruction of the native literary ideology is a must to establish its true identity. So, Hamid realistically detailed in his fiction, a large number of the characteristic social values related to the political, cultural, historical and socio-economic norms of Pakistani community as a whole. He has tried to break the fixity of the biased and lopsided Eurocentric ideology of Pakistani nation to wash away the general disgust against their indigenous conception by making the reader realize the false notions against the representation of Pakistani literary ideology. Hamid has successfully related the forgotten golden principles of the glorious past of the Native culture with the globally oppressed present to highlight the false representation of the Pakistani identity in his political discourse to prove the non-fixed and transitory nature of social classes in Pakistan.

The setting of this novel is Lahore, a well-known city and the cultural hub of the country. Lahore is recognized for the existence of the socioeconomic, historical and cultural heritage of the Muslims as a nation from ancient times. Moreover, it is well selected by the author for its cultural variation. All kinds of class structures, Bourgeoisie, petit- Bourgeoisie and proletariat are seen in abundance in the novel and in real life too, which Hamid has tried to present as blurred and insignificant. Upward social mobility of the lower classes and down-gradation of the elite is practically evident and discursively proved by Hamid through various characters from Lahore. The tale follows the tale of a medication junkie, ex-broker, Daru (Shahzad) who goes

gaga for his companion's better half, Mumtaz. The tale has an imaginative structure that effectively tries a narrative with multiple techniques. It utilizes portrayal from various points of view. Other than its structure, the substance of the novel holds a bigger significance as it addresses the inconsequential issues and amplifies their significance. *Moth Smoke* immediately turned to be the most popular piece of fiction in South Asia and was chosen as the finalist for the PEN/Hemingway Award. The narrative technique of the novel is supportive of the multiple perspectives of this research. Like the multiple narrative technique, multiple class structures based, not only on economic determinant but also other multifaceted relationships of cultural, historical and political determinism are evident as Bourdieu puts it that in the post-Marxist, postmodern world the cultural capital is equally an important determinant of position of the prevailing structures as is the economic capital. Cultural traditions of the Lahoris are, to a great extent, realistically expressed through the practices of the characters. The power game is also shown as transitory and fluid. The intercultural mixing is also a foregrounding element for the reconstruction and revisiting of indigenous institutional paradigmatic representation.

*Moth Smoke* (2000) is a highly popular piece of fiction which is appreciated by a large number of literary figures. Joyce Carol Oates says about this novel that, it is an irresistibly engaging adventure and a searching portrait of contemporary young people in Pakistan and contemporary young people of Pakistan are very much critical and challenging to the existing hierarchical conventions and Hamid being an individual of the young generation of Pakistan, has taken this discursive challenge through his fiction. At the beginning of this novel, Hamid hits a contrast of past and future of an individual uncertain and at a larger scale, it becomes a universal principle for the world that 'When the uncertain future becomes the past, the past, in turn, becomes uncertain' (Hamid, 2000, p. 2).

Economic capital becomes a symbol of distinct status in the society under Marxist paradigm of research which is challenged by the post-Marxist theorists and Hamid has expressed it in his fiction as the people of lower economic resources are impressed by this artificial status, however from this novel it is evident that economic capital, in most of the times, deprives a person of his cultural capital, as is the case with Khurram sb, the retired secretary of the Government, whose pajeros impress others of his wealth but make them suspicious of his moral character. It is evident from the following excerpt from the text. Daru Shahzad expresses his views about the fact in the words: "I cruise down a driveway too short to serve as a landing strip for a getaway plane..... un-incarcerated Federal Secretary (Retired) Khurram Shah (pp. 9 - 10)." These lines also hint at the fact that parameters for maintaining social status are different for the elite class and that of the middle class. Everybody is busy in making his social status higher without taking into consideration the legality of the resources. Murad Badshah and Daru Shahzad take to corrupt practices in order to get minimum resources for their daily bread and Khuram Shah is addicted to corruption through kickbacks for the satisfaction of his wish to get richer and richer. Both parties are committing corruption, but for different purposes. The availability and sight of two new pajeros in an Ozi's house creates a feeling of depravity in Shahzad's mind. This challenges the totalitarian principle of Marxism in favour of individualization of post-Marxism.

Class discrimination is evident from the lines when Daru (Shahzad) is served by Mumtaz with Black Label, a costly wine. This wine, which costs at least four thousand per piece becomes a symbol of the modernized elite class. Daru is a middle-class man, and nowadays out of job. He says it is Ozi (Aurangzeb) who can afford it. On the other hand, it hints at the cultural fact of

Pakistani community that alcoholism is there in the social circles of Lahore but the quality of alcohol consumed determines the social class. The fact is narrated by Hamid in the following words, “Mumtaz pulls an unopened bottle of Black Label out of a cabinet..... But Ozi can afford the good stuff, and Black Label is fine by me, provided someone else is paying” (pp.10-11).

Laclau and Mouffe are of the view that superstructure effects superstructure in the post-Marxist setting and Ozi’s materialist ideology negates and affirms this at the one and the same time. His Pajero is another symbol of class consciousness, as when he drives on the road, he is of the view that all other vehicles and other things are inferior to his Pajero and he has sole right on the road which is narrated by Daru in the words given below, while his first drive-in Ozi’s Pajero. In these lines intermixing of various strata of society is hinted at by the writer. Daru is a member of a middle-class background, and affords only a Suzuki, whereas Ozi on account of his father’s corrupt practices and his foreign education has maintained a Pajero. In spite of a large economic disparity, they are friends and are boarding the same Pajero, though Daru is sitting in the back seat. Their equation creates a sense of a bond between them, which is other than economic capital. We can safely call it cultural capital, which Bourdieu has asserted for the determination of class structures, as the narrative of the novel affirms, “I sit in the back of Ozi’s Pajero.....swerve to avoid crushing someone, the Pajero’s engine grumbles with disappointment and Ozi swears. Stupid, bastard” (pp. 26-27).

The introduction of the novel is interesting because of its fragmentary nature. The novel starts with the tale of Struggle for the rule, between the children of Mughal ruler Shah Jahan. However, the difference is that the heroes in this novel are in a time of atomic testing, in the year 1998, in the present city of Lahore. The struggle between the sons of Shah Jahan is a very appropriate metaphor for the strife between various classes of unequal social status in terms of economic and cultural capital as well as ideological and political circumstances.

From the story of the novel, it is evident that very distinct class stratification of various character hints at the fact that it is economic position which divides classes from one another, but intermixing of various class characters designates that the boundaries are blurred between various classes on the basis of social and cultural values and it is a characteristic of post-Marxist discourse. We can clearly see that Murad Badshah, a rickshaw driver is a representative of the lower class, Daru (Shahzad), a banker, is a member of the middle class and Ozi, Mumtaz and Khurram Shah are representatives of the elite class. However, this demarcation between the classes proves futile and transitional very soon, as every one of them is seeking refuge in the company of others for socialization. Murad Badshah tries to conceal his origin of the lower-class by speaking English as it goes into the novel: “He speaks what he thinks is well-bred English in an effort to deny the lower-class origins” (p.44). Daru (Shahzad) intermingles not only with Ozi's family, but also moves in the upper-class people and enjoys ball parties and dance parties under the garb of his connections with Ozi and his family. On the other hand, Mumtaz is unhappy in the company of Ozi and returns to Daru for her satisfaction in various matters of life. So this all makes one thing evident that nothing in this world is permanent and Hamid wants to teach us through this story that we can reconstruct our socioeconomic condition by careful adaptation of egalitarian notions, as the present economic deterioration of the nation is not permanent like the characters in the novel.

Daru (Shahzad) is the most disturbed, but the central character of the novel. He, in his discussion with Murad Badshah, says “A man who works for another man is a slave” (p.45).



These words are actually a message from the writer for the reader and at a broader scale for the whole world. We, as a nation, can grow if we take these words seriously. Hamid wants to teach us that we should treat others on equal standing and here, others mean International organizations which earn billions by utilizing native resources and manpower but there is no emancipation of the local workers. This is a socio-political agenda explored by Hamid to teach us how we can reconstruct the indigenous culture. In order to do so, we will have to give up slavery of colonizers or neo-colonizers. In a larger sense, Hamid proclaims that the blindly following in the western traditions of discursive representation by the non-western writers, in order to show themselves in harmony with the mainstream literature is a form of slavery. By doing so the non-western writers feel the sense of inclusion, but it proves disastrous for their true identity.

Another important issue for the reconstruction of class in Pakistan in Hamid's fiction is the wrong concept that in order to keep pace with the progress of the world, we need capital. This is the determinant which works in Marxist ideology, but Hamid has challenged it too. Daru, being out of job, is visited by Murad Badshah, who suggests him to start a business. In reply to Murad's suggestion, he says: "Yes, but you need capital to start a business. I'm broke. The other day I received a notice that my electricity is about to be disconnected (p. 46)." And is countered by Murad that: "All you need is human capital: a strong mind and an obedient body (p.46)." This leads us towards Post-Marxist world, where cultural and symbolic capital is also of great significance along with economic capital. Literary reconstruction of social class is possible if the Pakistani writers have 'strong mind' and an 'obedient body'. The oppression and hegemony of the mainstream literature can be reverted through this formula without considering economic capital.

### **Conflicting Boundaries of Class in How to Get Filthy rich in rising Asia**

Edmund Gordon has said in a review of *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* (2013) that, Hamid's audacious novels have changed the way we see Pakistan. His electrifying new work is his most impressive yet. No doubt this third novel is highly impressive and paradigm shift narrative in which all the characters are unnamed, the hero named as 'you' and the heroine as 'pretty girl'. This technique of narration generalizes all the socio-political links of an individual with a larger spectrum of the whole world. As we know that 'you' is singular and at the same time plural. The post-Marxist theory seems in practice as the hero, heroine and all the major and minor characters of the novel show transition, fluidity, indeterminacy and iteration which are all representatives of social change. Social customs, rituals and celebrations are essential factors of any culture and Hamid's *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* (2013) is full of these elements. The existence of the nuclear family, traditional one-room homes for the families, working in the fields from day to night, scanty modern facilities, meagre economic resources and abundant contentment, traditional cousin marriages, conventional conflicts of mother in law and daughter in law are all narrated by Hamid very skillfully. A very encouraging break of this circle is shown through the first step taken by You's father to shift his family to the city which is the reconstructive step for resistance against capitalistic bourgeoisie class as Hamid's discourse shows the intention of You's father that in a salary of ten thousand rupees per month he can fetch his family to the city. He says, "At the moment he is able to send most of his salary back to the village, where it is split between your mother and the rest of the clan" (p.11) and if gathered up this amount may be sufficient to shift the family from the village to the city. 'You' becomes an entrepreneur with his education and hard work from being a sick child in the

beginning. Thus we can easily deduce from the above discussion that Hamid has tried to revisit and reconstruct the class stratification of the Pakistani community as an elusive, non-fixed and transitory social construct.

The novel is divided into twelve chapters, each containing a message of the comprehensive nature of our practical life. The characters, through which these messages are conveyed to the reader are without names, rather generalized arch-types, like, you, pretty girl, politician, bureaucrat etc. This shows that Hamid allegorically depicts the generalized contemporary social change and consciousness of struggle.

A couple of years back, Gupta composed an educational article in *Granta* about India's new rich, wherein he clarified that the nation's monetary development had been very touchy, and in this manner class has additionally gotten hazardous. If there should be an occurrence of 'you' turning into a businessman from the least fortunate town kid this is appropriately a reasonable clarification as Gupta says: "Yet they are encompassed by totally different individuals – private representatives, business visionaries, home specialists, retailers and general wheeler-vendors – who are definitely getting more cash than they are and employing progressive political force. These individuals may originate from smaller urban areas, they might be less common, and they may talk just poor English. In any case, they are talented in the domain of chance and benefit, and they are at home in the blasting universe of overlords, associations, rewards, political agents and periodic viciousness – that sends their anglicized companions running for the closest cappuccino" (Gupta, 2009). These characteristics of various sections of our community show upward social portability, an idea of post-Marxist theory.

The discourse of this novel is full of examples and incidents which show social class, its transitivity, fluidity and non-fixity as described by Laclau and Mouffe in post-Marxist perspective. The hero and heroine of this novel have emerged successful in the economic system as well as cultural status in spite of the fact that they belonged to impoverished families. 'You' is born as a sick child in a village and 'pretty girl' is also a girl of meagre economic means. Both have to work hard to get an honourable position in the social hierarchy, as the narrative of Hamid's novel claims that, "What is clear to the pretty girl is that she must bridge a significant cultural and class divide to enter even the lower realms of the world of fashion"

The evidences of post-structural/postmodern and even more precisely post-Marxist social classes in Hamid's fiction are present in the narrative of the novel, as Feudal system has been prevalent in the country for centuries and there is nobody in the villages of the country who could meet the gaze of the rich landlords but Hamid has tried to show its transition too, as the bearded men have started to meet the gaze of the sons of the landlord because they do not work in the lands for their daily bread and have started working in the seminaries to earn money. This reflects the decline of economic power structures and supports the post-Marxist perspective of Pakistani socio-political and cultural structures. Hamid narrates, "Should the landlord or his sons drive by in their SUV, your father and his brothers will bring their hands to their foreheads, bend low, and avert their eyes" (p.10), and this tedium is reverted by the author by narrating, "Recently some men have begun to do it. They walk tall, with chests out" (p.10). The lines quoted show that with the passage of time the poor people, who live their life under the control of the feudal lords have started feeling the cruel behaviour of the landlords and have started searching alternate ways of earning a subsistence for their families. One example of this fact is You's father, who is not working with his brothers in the fields rather he works as a cook in the

nearby city and earns ten thousand rupees per month. This money provides the basic necessities of the whole nuclear family.

Transitory and fluid nature of socio-political, economic and cultural structures of the community is depicted by Hamid in the novel in a light mode and humorous way by the description of a game being played by two female stereotypical characters of the community. This game is a typical cultural behaviour and relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. Hamid states, “Your mother and grandmother play a waiting game. The older woman waits for the younger woman to age, the younger woman waits for the older woman to die. It is a game both will inevitably win”(p.11). Power structures are shifting and transitory as described by Laclau & Mouffe in support of their post-Marxist theory and the lines quoted above are a very apt description of this postulate of theory.

Hamid’s characterization in this novel is representative of shifting and fluid class structures in the Pakistani community. Main characters of the novel ‘You’ and Pretty girl are in constant transition. They are shown weak, depressed and deprived characters in the society at the beginning of the novel but well established, progressive and prosperous at the end of the novel. However the process of transition is not complete and once again, in the end, they are seen in a miserable condition. This transition reflects the post-Marxist assumption of Macherey’s Theory that the idea of a circle is not circular in itself. So the class structure in Pakistan is in a constant flux of change and fluidity. However, ‘You’ and pretty girl have to work harder than the persons with a strong economic background in order to enter that strata of the community. Hamid narrates in the novel that, “What is clear to the pretty girl is that she must bridge a significant cultural and class divide to enter even the lower realms of the world of fashion. Hence her initial interest in movies, and in you” (p.33).

‘You’ in spite of being a member of the poorest family of a village has transformed himself to a great extent in the city and has started working in a company, the owner of which is making money by fraudulent and corrupt practices. But ‘You’ still lives in the outskirts of the city as mentioned by Hamid in the novel “The car approaches the outskirts of the city, passing the disinterred earth and linear mounds of vast middle-class housing development” (p.49).

‘You’ has improved his financial position by working hard in various ordinary professions and is able to wear presentable and goodly looking clothes which give a reflection that he can be counted among the rich community of the city. This fact is narrated by Hamid in the words that “You are excited and nervous, but pleased by your appearance when you glimpse yourself in the mirror of your motorcycle, thinking your garb connotes wealth and class” (p.51). These words by the writer connote transition of the protagonist from lower class to middle class. This is not the transition of an individual rather of the whole community because a large number of people resemble the protagonist.

Post-Marxist theory of Laclau & Mouffe, Bourdieu and Macherey rejects the fixity of the supremacy of the elite class and favours the post-capitalist transition of the materiality of the material which depicts that the upper class has declined and middle class rises. Hamid has used the metaphor of ‘scrawny body of population’ for the rising middle class. He narrates, “Because of a hypertrophying middle class, bulging from the otherwise scrawny body of the population like a teenager’s overdeveloped bicep” (p.87).

Concludingly, from the above analyses, it is evident that the post-Marxist theorists posit that the marked boundaries of class, as advocated by the Marxists are no more watertight demarcations rather these boundaries are now conflicting and blurred. Hamid’s narrative

technique, plot construction, thematic development and art of characterization, all are indicative of the fact that he is a strong follower and practitioner of the post-Marxist theory. His discourse vividly indicates the progressive traits of his ideology and imagination. His galaxy of characters is presented as developing and progressive. These are not a stereotypical fixed representation of Marxist class conflict, rather elusive, transitory, non-fixed and fluid post-Marxist in their nature, content and form. Daru (Shahzad), Mumtaz, Ozi and Murad Badshah, all are not the same at the end of the story as they are depicted at the beginning of the novel, *Moth Smoke*. 'You', pretty girl and their families likewise, are not the same as they were delineated at the beginning of the novel, *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*. Thus, from the above interpretations, it is proved that the current socio-economic and political scenarios are reflective of the fact that the boundaries of the social classes are conflicting, blurred and no more conspicuous.

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