

Crime and Social Control in Pakistani Society^{*} : A Review of *Moth Smoke*

By

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Sutherland said: "Criminology includes the scientific study of *making* laws, *breaking* laws, and *reacting* toward the breaking of laws," (Sutherland & Cressey, 1960, p. 3). This review essay examines Hamid's novel *Moth Smoke*, demonstrating the three aspects of Sutherland's definition of criminology. Using Sutherland as a guide, this essay explores the development of the criminal mind in the natural social world. Socioeconomic factors are identified that contribute to the growth of the criminal mind, the place of power and knowledge, and the elite's dominance over the down trodden, metaphorically, the moths. Classical and postmodern approaches to criminology are compared to the dimensions of Sutherland's definition of crime within Pakistani society.

Moth Smoke is set in Lahore, Pakistan in the summer of 1998, during India and Pakistan's nuclear confrontation. The book captures the frustration and anger of the less fortunate in a country where the ruling class is thoroughly corrupt and where the economic gulf is so vast that the wealthy insulate themselves from the rules that bind the rest of society. The book also conveys the sense of primeval pride felt throughout Pakistani society because the Moslems of Pakistan have the bomb just as the Hindus of India.

Darashikoh "Daru" Shezad is a young banker who grew up on the fringes of high society, but whose lack of connections shows him the yawning hiatus between the haves and the have-nots. His increasing predilection for booze and dope make matters worse. When Daru gets fired from his banking job in Lahore, his decline begins. Before long, he cannot pay his bills, and along with his electricity, he loses his foothold among Pakistan's elite. As Daru descends into a life of drugs and disillusionment, he falls in love with the wife of his childhood friend and rival Ozi (Aurangazeb), the beautiful and restless Mumtaz, to whom he is drawn with the obsessive intensity of a moth circling a candle flame. At first Daru is happily reunited with Ozi, his beautiful wife, Mumtaz, and toddler son, Muazzam, after their return from the United States. Soon, the two friends are pushed apart, by Daru's declining social circumstances, by a horrific

instance of Ozi's immunity from justice, and by the attraction that develops between Daru and the radiant, moth-burning Mumtaz.

Desperate to reverse his fortunes, Daru embarks on a career in crime, taking as his partner Murad Badshah, a notorious rickshaw driver who is a populist and pirate. When a long-planned heist goes wrong, Daru finds himself on trial for murder. While he has committed one murder in the course of a robbery with Murad Badshah, he is framed for a hit and run committed by his friend Ozi, who is insulated from law and the criminal justice system. While the class of people to which Ozi belongs makes the law in Pakistan, they are immune from sanctions when they break the law.

Lost and listless Daru's fate mirrors that of his country, hyped on the prospect of becoming a nuclear player, while corruption taints its politics. The title of the book refers to what remains when the moth is seduced by the candle flame and is a metaphor for Daru spiraling toward his own destruction, drawn by the allure of sex, drugs, and easy money. In the end, what remains of the brilliant and promising Daru, is just smoke.

Making of Law

Moth Smoke shows how the ruling class of society defines crime. After Ozi's return from the U.S., he gets into the fold of this ruling class, he himself a part of it — "Dressed in elegant evening wear, chins held aloft, are key components of Lahore's ultra-rich young jet set..." (p. 77). This class enjoys "sovereign immunity" from the rules they make as can be seen from Ozi's impatience with traffic laws, resulting in a hit and run murder that were attributed to Daru, not a member of this privileged group.

The novel explicitly demonstrates the inherent conflict between the rich and the poor, showing how Marx's conflict paradigm explains the lawmaking process in Pakistani society. As opposed to a pluralistic paradigm, Pakistani society is clearly separated into two groups. Law is a tool of the power-holders in society, where statutes are written by the elite to retain their privileged status. In *Moth Smoke*, the rich make the rules, have the connections, get the jobs, and perpetuate their wealth, while the poor must follow the rules, are often made scapegoats, do not have influential connections, do not get jobs, continuing in poverty and bearing the brunt of inherent socioeconomic conflict. This is demonstrated by Butt Saab, a friend of Daru's uncle, to whom he went looking for a job after being fired from his banking job. Butt Saab says: "We have more people than we need right now. And the boys we're hiring have connections worth more than their salaries. We're just giving them the respectability of a job here in exchange for their families' business," (p. 53).

Conflict criminologist William Chambliss (1964) used the law of vagrancy to highlight the ruling class domination theory of crime. Even when an act is defined as crime by the rich and powerful, lawmakers in Pakistan recognize the commission of crime only when committed by commoners. Once ascribed to a commoner, however, lawmakers feel morally obligated to take all steps to uphold the law. For example, Ozi (Aurangzeb) in present Lahore belonging to the elite ruling class, framed his childhood friend Daru, removing competition for his wife's

affection. This power play within the ruling class dominated society illustrates political power in the hands of the rich, power-holders, and lawmakers. Within this social structure, the police are not objective enforcers of the law; rather, they serve those in power and position.

This conflict paradigm of law is illustrated in Daru's conversation with Mujahid Alam, his junior in school. Mujahid says: "Our political system's at fault. Men like us have no control over our own destinies. We're at the mercy of the powerful... We need a system... where a man can rely on the law for justice, where he's given basic dignity as a human being and the opportunity to prosper regardless of his status at birth," (p. 225). Mujahid then goes on to discuss a need for a paradigmatic shift toward a consensus paradigm of law. He says, "A gathering of like-minded people, brothers who believe as you and I do that the time has come for change," (p. 225). Similar to Durkheim's (1893[1964]) mechanical solidarity with a collective consciousness, Mujahid hopes for a consensus paradigm of law: "None of us can change things acting on our own," (p. 226). However, it will take a long time for this paradigmatic shift to take place in Pakistan. The common people, including those who are at the wrong end of society, are still reluctant to take the first step to change the social order. As Daru thinks to himself, "I can't say that I entirely disagree with their complaints... But I'm definitely not going to that meeting (referring to the meeting Mujahid invited him to of like-minded brothers)," (p. 226).

It is not just Mujahid who talks of a need for change. A member of the elite, Mumtaz too feels suffocated by the hypocrisy of the ruling class. Writing under the pseudonym 'Zulfikar Manto' (which she kept secret from everybody but Daru), she exposes hypocrisy and dark areas of Pakistani society. She interviews Dilaram, a prostitute about her life, and Professor Julius Superb after Daru's conviction for murder. Her newspaper articles disturb the smug upper class and the calm waters of corruption and decadence, resulting in the newspaper office being stoned. Mumtaz, evidently happy at the reaction, cheekily informs Daru that the windows of the newspaper office are made of cheap glass! "Michel Foucault's 'power/knowledge' techniques used to probe the inner secrets of subjects' lives proved an invaluable source of information for institutions seeking to enhance the predictability and regulation of behavior," (Arrigo, Milovanovic, & Schehr, 2005, p. 13). Similarly, in a very postmodernist sense, Mumtaz wields the power of language to create awareness about the inner workings of victims' lives and those of others in society.

Breaking of Law

What is crime and what constitutes the breaking of law? Denzin (1982, p. 116) wrote: "Criminal activity arises from and out of the actions of interacting individuals, who, in the course of their dealings with one another, alter and modify the power relations they have with one another. These alterations often require for their execution violations of legal codes and statutes." Breaking of law is illustrated in *Moth Smoke* as the novel opens with reference to Daru's trial and imprisonment for murder. Daru smokes hashish and feels pleasure, the pleasure of an inherently immoral act. This pleasure leads him to greater immoral acts in a systematic manner, much like the 'moral career' that a deviant police officer undergoes (Kappler, Sluder, & Alpert, 1994). Later, Daru drives drunk and he is arrested. The police threaten to put him behind bars, but he avoids jail by bribing them, yet another instance of law breaking.

The next morning when Daru goes to the office, he is late as a wealthy client waits for him. Daru offends the rich client, someone from the ruling class. In no time, Daru finds himself without a job. There is no distinction between the employer and the rich client; they are the same. The rich and the powerful make the laws, are to be revered, and any discomfort afforded them by those on the wrong end of society are avenged appropriately. These small time bankers are put in their place when they forget their position under Rawls' (1971) veil of ignorance. In the words of Nils Christie (1997, pp. 20-21), "crime does not exist. Crime is constructed through a long process of decisions. Or in the words of Hulsman (1986, p. 71): 'Crime has no ontological reality. Crime is not the *object* but the *product* of criminal policy. Criminalization is one of the many ways to construct social reality' ... A core area in criminology is therefore by necessity the close observation of the meaning-creating processes." In Pakistan, the rich and powerful give meaning to acts.

When Ozi and Mumtaz take Daru to a party, Ozi runs redlights, barely managing to avoid an accident. Mumtaz points this out but Ozi responds by saying, "bigger cars have the right of way" (p. 25). Once at the party, Daru mixes with the higher end of society. Since the rich live by different rules, drugs are sold at these high-society parties, not raising an eyebrow. This party is also eventful in the sense that Mumtaz and Daru take their first step in what later develops into a full-blown adulterous relationship. From a wife and mother, Mumtaz moves toward being a lover. At the same time, Daru moves from being a banker, a good friend, and master to becoming unemployed, being his friend's wife's lover, and being a bad master to his servant, Manucci. Merton (1967, p. 170) points out that "a conception basic to sociology holds that individuals have multiple social roles... the less integrated the society, the more often will individuals be subject to the strain of incompatible social roles." Mumtaz is a bad mother, and later becomes a bad wife when she starts cheating on Ozi. Even when she analyzes her relationship with Daru, she views it as an outlet, a way to prove to herself "that I wasn't a bad person, that I wasn't selfish and uncaring, that I could be giving and good. That it wasn't my fault I didn't love my son," (p. 241). In the end, filled with a strong sense of anomie, unable to live up to any of her roles, Mumtaz abandons all of them.

The novel introduces Murad Badshah, Daru's drug dealer who plays a significant role in steering Daru toward a career in drugs and robbery, resulting in murder. While Daru talks to Murad Badshah he sees a hawk circling in the sky. Murad Badshah, the hawk in this situation, although aware of Daru's intellectual ability as one belonging to a higher strata, knows that he is poor and susceptible to corruption. So, he shows Daru a gun, a step toward the life of crime. Daru, however, thinks of his mother and refuses to take it. Although Daru refuses Murad Badshah's offer, there are other hawks. Mumtaz manages to allure Daru to accompany her, while her husband, Ozi, is out of town. She calls him from her mobile phone and the lure of the higher class immediately affects him.

This adventure at night draws them closer as Mumtaz tells Daru of her secret identity as Zulfikar Manto, the writer, and her interview of the prostitute, Dilaram. Dilaram's life is fraught with criminal victimization. When she was a young girl, she was pretty, and the landlord of the

area asked her to go to his house. When she refused, he threatened to kill her whole family. So she went and was raped. He continued to compel her to go to his house where she was repeatedly raped by him, his sons, and his friends. Then the landlord sold her for 50 Pakistani Rupees (equivalent to ~U.S. \$1) to a city man. To be free she had to pay 50 Rupees to the city man. Since she had no money, the city man took her to a brothel, where she sold her body to earn her freedom. But when she did earn money, the city man told Dilaram that the villagers would not accept her now as she had already lost her honor. She had nowhere to go and stayed at the brothel. Now, she is the old matron at the brothel in charge of the place. As soon as Dilaram was put in charge of the brothel, the city man died of poisoning. It was alleged that Dilaram poisoned him, but no one knows, so violations of law continue unabated.

The novel demonstrates that the original crime is used to stigmatize the victim. As society further victimizes her, Dilaram is left with no option but to continue as a prostitute. While her rights are trampled, she draws no attention from the rich and secure. She has no protection of law. The concept of social contract is obviously redundant here where she has hardly any rights and gets no protection from the government (Rousseau, 1762 [1994]). Her landlord, in a powerful position, exploits her mercilessly. The power-play by the larger urban society in Pakistan is evident at all levels, trickling down to the smallest village. While the victims remain victimized, the predators continue to have their way. In direct contrast to Dilaram is Daru's servant Manucci. He was once a petty thief until Daru's mother reformed him. As Braithwaite (1989) would say, he was reintegrated back into society despite his past, while Dilaram was cast away because of it. Society's approach to Dilaram can be said to be very postmodernist in the sense that it focuses on the language of the law that twists and turns the balance in favor of the rich, the powerful, and the so-called honorable. Mumtaz, alias Zulfikar Manto, uses Michel Foucault's "power/knowledge" techniques to probe the inner secrets of Dilaram's life. Her exposé of Dilaram's life shows the hollow protection the law gives to ordinary citizens, attempting to build political will to overcome these blemishes.

The breaking of the law continues to be classified and interpreted to meet the needs of those in higher social positions. What is interesting is that the ones supposed to safeguard the law, themselves, are seen actively taking part in corruption, similar to corrupt police officers (Kappler et al., 1994). Once when Daru goes to buy some hashish from a stranger, he was amazed at the ease with which the person sold him drugs, without any fear of the law. Daru asks him, "How do you know I'm not a policeman" and the reply is even more outrageous, "It doesn't matter if you are. Same price, same price," (p. 217). So, the police went there too like officers in New York City uncovered by the Mollen Commission (City of New York, 1994), and the police in Los Angeles as identified by the Rampart Scandal (Parks, 2000).

Murad Badshah and Daru are stuck in their situation by birth, and no amount of self-improvement or education can elevate them to a higher social position. Murad Badshah too like Daru, although highly educated, is unable to find a job and embarks on a life of drugs, crime, and piracy. The novel reveals that in today's Pakistan, the educated unemployed youth cannot find jobs because of their social position. These socioeconomic factors have a direct impact on the breeding of criminals. It shows how under such conditions the criminal mind is born, unlike

Lombroso's (1912) idea of the "born criminal." The criminal mind is born out of frustration at the unequal opportunities that society offers, frustration that basic goodness and intrinsic brilliance have no value if held by persons from the wrong end of society, frustration that the laws are different for the outcasts of society, frustration that human law is corrupt and biased, and frustration that truth is elusive and justice is unfair, partial, and unequal. Similar to Antigone, as mentioned in Nonet's (2005) *Antigoné's Law*, these otherwise law-abiding citizens, who may or may not have come from respectable families where family honor is still valued, disregard the human law, and steer toward a path of decadence and crime. Unlike Antigone, who looked up to a higher law, these individuals look to the lowest common denominator, essentially selling their souls, and seeking power that comes from controlling the lives of those weaker; the victims are only moths.

The sense of power that Daru experiences from hitting Manucci and killing moths with badminton racquets boosts his ego and confidence. By taking stronger and more potent drugs, Daru loses his sense of empathy. Deprived of electricity, water, and basic amenities, Daru gets sadistic pleasure out of hurting others. He even hurts Mumtaz, feeling a sense of power over her at the same time. Once she lets him know that she is not looking for a mate, and there can be no love between them, he tells her that he is taking heroin for he knows she will not be happy. Daru observes, "With the heroin comes clarity. And a certain cruelty, a calm disregard for consequences," (p. 209). He becomes insensitive to others, is drugged all the time, and antisocial tendencies are created as his criminal mind is artificially born.

The final twist in Daru's criminal career comes in the course of a robbery with Murad Badshah. Retribution is at play because the social balance must be maintained. Murad Badshah says: "This is how I see things. People are fed up with subsisting on the droppings of the rich. The time is ripe for a revolution. The rich use Kalashnikovs to persuade tenant farmers and factory laborers and the rest of us to stay in line." Pulling out a revolver, he tells Daru, "But we, too, can be persuasive," (p. 213). Once, Daru has the weapon in his hand, he feels complete, like the Lacanian 'wholeness,' a sense of power calms him. According to French criminologist Jacques Lacan, a baby, is unable to distinguish between itself and the object (like a breast) that satisfies his need as separate entities and so considers both as part of the same wholeness. (Arrigo, Milovanovic, & Schehr, 2005). Murad Badshah then tells of his plan to rob boutiques. His plan is well thought-out as he wants to hurt "the soft underbelly of the upper crust, the ultimate hypocrisy in a country with flour shortages. Boutiques are, in a word, perfect," (p. 214).

Daru is gradually committing more serious crimes, feeling empowered: "I'm finally taking control of my life. I keep waiting for the fear to come, but it doesn't. In fact, I'm walking taller, grinning, empowered by the knowledge that I've become dangerous, that I can do anything I want," (p. 219). Foucault's (1975) power/knowledge dimension is at play. Daru has been practicing a similar power game in his home when he plays moth badminton by killing moths with a badminton racquet. "What amuses me is the power I've discovered in myself, the power to kill moths when I feel like it, the power to walk up to someone and take their money and still put a bullet in them, anyway, just for the hell of it, if that's what I want to do. And I'm amazed it took me so long to come to this realization, that I spent all this time feeling helpless.

Self-pity is pathetic. Hear that, little moth? Ping!” (p. 219). Denzin (1982, p. 118) writes, “Investing power in the person and the body makes persons the prisoners of their own power... They are trapped within their own subjectivity and have turned power inward upon themselves and the others with whom they interact. Persons are both prisoners and prisons (contained and containers).”

Similar to the play on language like the postmodernists, Denzin discusses Dostoyevsky’s *Crime and Punishment*. The protagonist Raskolnikov is committing a perfect crime. Just as Katz (1988) explains in the *Seductions of Crime* what Raskolnikov experienced: “His hands were fearfully weak, he felt them every moment growing more numb and more wooden. He was afraid he would let the axe slip and fall... A sudden giddiness came over him,” (Denzin, 1982, p. 121). But the moment of reckoning is there soon. “He pulled the axe quite out, swung it with both arms, scarcely conscious of himself, and almost without effort, almost mechanically, brought the blunt side down on her head. He seemed not to use his own strength in this. But as soon as he had once brought the axe down, his strength returned,” (Denzin, 1982, p. 122). The power relation was overturned. “He was in full possession of his faculties, free from confusion or giddiness,” (Dostoyevsky, 1866/1989, p. 71; Denzin, 1982, p. 122). When Daru commits his murder during the course of the robbery, his aversion for Muazzam, Mumtaz’s son, had been growing for a while. Daru sees a kid running for the door. Nobody is allowed to leave the boutique alive. Not only does Daru not hesitate to kill the boy (with overpowering thoughts of Muazzam), he feels completely detached from the act, as if it was somebody else who raised the hand and committed the murder. This is comparable to Raskolnikov’s mental state when he killed the old woman. The act is done swiftly, and both the actors are scarcely conscious of themselves at the moment.

Reaction to the Breaking of Law

The penal system of a society constitutes the formal reaction to the breaking of laws. Daru is in a prison cell, grimy and dirty, isolated, and distanced from himself and the world outside. Throughout the novel, Daru, the moth, keeps moving toward his own destruction, unable to resist the allure of the flame in the form of drugs, easy money, and a married woman. He is completely ensnared by the criminal lifestyle, ceasing to make rational choices. Having had the benefit of a good education beyond his means, he is a misfit when he returns to the real world. Several informal mechanisms intricately woven into society check the breaking of unwritten laws. When Daru is inattentive, and fails to venerate the wealthy client, he loses his job at the bank. That was the first instance of reaction to Daru’s breaking society’s informal but powerful code. Because of his physical and economic deterioration after he lost his job, Daru loses his toehold within Ozi’s well-heeled world; he stops inviting Daru to his parties. This reaction is coupled with Daru’s own guilty conscious when he worries if Ozi discovered the adulterous relationship between himself and Mumtaz.

When Daru sells drugs to the affluent at high profile parties, he is treated as scum. Gradually delving deeper into the world of drugs and decay in his physical surroundings, he stoops to selling drugs to a minor, Shuja. Shuja comes from a big feudal family. Besides the formal law, Daru has also broken the informal law by meddling with a child from a rich feudal

family. Shuja manages to allure Daru to his house. When Daru enters the house, he is confronted by Shuja and his father. Daru's punishment begins as he is beaten by the gunmen at the house. After the beating, one of the gunmen drives him to the hospital, threatening him with death if he informs the police. Daru is left with a concussion, a broken nose, a broken rib, a compound fracture of his left forearm, and 71 stitches. This is the penalty he receives for selling drugs, albeit unofficially.

As if this is not enough, he has more severe penalties awaiting him for his innumerable transgressions. Ozi comes to know of the adulterous relationship between his wife and his best friend. Just as Shuja's father, Ozi too has his own mechanism to avenge intrusion into his family. While Daru is already being tried for killing the child during the course of the robbery, Ozi manages to frame him for the hit-and-run murder that Ozi committed. Perhaps that is the only way of incapacitating Daru from continuing in the adulterous relationship with Mumtaz. Imprisonment is the price Daru pays for ruining Ozi's family. The police are naturally on the side of the rich and the powerful, and it is not a hard task for Ozi to frame Daru. At trial, the prosecutor makes slight of Daru's case by saying, "the accused has been described as untrustworthy by a former employer, as a peddler of drugs by a father whose son he corrupted. He has been seen consorting with known outlaws. Illegal narcotics and an unlicensed firearm were found in his home..." (p. 235). Soon after, Daru is convicted and put behind bars.

Toward the end, there is an effort of restorative justice (Zehr, 1997), to understand the offender, and to make him appear human to the public. Mumtaz writes, "The Trial, by Zulfikar Manto" (p. 245). It is a story of Daru's innocence. She interviews Daru's professor, Julius Superb, who knew Daru when he was a brilliant and promising young man. The interview brings to light Daru's talent and acumen as a student. Through the media, Mumtaz tried to reach the masses, to tell Daru's story, perhaps touch the victim's family, and let them know he is not the offender. She has interviewed people who are willing to say, anonymously, of course, that a Pajero (that Ozi owned) and not a Suzuki (that Daru owned) killed the boy. Also, certain members of the Accountability Commission, while refusing to be quoted, pointed out that it would be inconvenient for Khurram Shah (Ozi's father), himself under investigation, if his son were to be accused of a crime.

It is not only Daru who is penalized, however, as Mumtaz's penalty lies in her losing her family and losing Daru. Mumtaz is also distanced from her son, for whom she is unable to feel any love. As she feels alienated from everyone and regards herself as a 'monster,' she tries to take care of Daru, not because she loves him, but because she wants to be humane and less of a monster. In the end, her sense of self remains unfulfilled, saying "...I'm finding I can live with myself, which shocks me more than anything," adding "maybe I am a monster, after all," (p. 244). Ozi, because of his callous attitude to commoners, loses his own family, which he prized most, because of a commoner.

Conclusion

All the key players in the novel break the law. For breaking the law, they pay a high price by losing social position, their loved ones, and they are subject to the legal system. However,

based on Duff's (2001) analysis, the various actions of Daru, Ozi, and Mumtaz can be categorized as *mala in se* and *mala prohibita crimes*. Both *mala in se* and *mala prohibita crimes* involve taking unfair advantage over the law-abiding or disobeying a power-claiming law. Actions that are viewed as *mala prohibita* are "punishably wrong only because they flout the criminal law" (Duff, 2001, p. 26). *Mala in se* crimes comprise those wrongs whose "emotion-arousing wrongfulness is prior to and independent of the criminal law" (Duff, 2001, p. 26). While Ozi and Mumtaz's actions are *mala in se*, they are not recognized as *mala prohibita* in Pakistan given their privileged position in society. Some of Daru's actions are, however, *mala prohibita*, so he was convicted and incarcerated. Gönczöl (2005, p.183) wrote, "the prison-oriented criminal policy used for controlling male poverty and segregated ethnic minorities does indeed violate the requirement of equal treatment and human dignity." Considering the fact that Daru was a good student with exceptional talent as a boxer, given the right circumstances, he could have been able to contribute much more to society by being with it rather than isolated from it. As Gönczöl (2005, p. 184) suggested, the "approach to sentencing should also incorporate a strong commitment to facilitate the reintegration of offenders during the term of punishment in the community or after they had served their prison sentence." This, however, does not appear to be the practice and custom of the penal system in Pakistan.

This book can be used in undergraduate courses that pertain to criminology and comparative criminal justice systems. Graduate students can use this book for courses on crime, popular culture, and the media. This book can supplement other course readings because it provides a developing country perspective of crime and the criminal justice system. For students of criminology, it will be particularly helpful as it illustrates the three aspects of Sutherland's definition of criminology — the making of laws, the breaking of laws, and the reaction toward the breaking of laws. As the interest in Pakistani society continues to grow, the book can provide readers with cultural mores of a non-western, Islamic country.

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