



## Unveiling Masculinity: Exploring Metaphorical Representations of Men in Pakistani Fiction through Mohsin Hamid's "Moth Smoke"

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### Abstract:

The objective of this study is to conduct a thorough examination of the conceptual metaphors used to depict men in Pakistani society, with the aim of revealing the dominant conceptualization of male gender in Pakistan. The study is based on the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) as its theoretical framework, and employs content analysis as the research methodology. The novel "Moth Smoke" by Mohsin Hamid has been chosen as the primary source due to its Pakistani setting, which provides a wealth of pertinent information. The findings reveal that the male gender is predominantly associated with the responsibility of earning and providing financial support for the entire family. Furthermore, men are portrayed as enjoying autonomy, allowing them to prioritize their own needs and desires. The outcomes of this study hold significant potential for future researchers investigating the role of conceptual metaphors in shaping gender conceptualization within societies, as well as their significance in literature as a medium for representing gender dynamics. By delving into the metaphoric representations of men in Pakistani fiction, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the cultural construction of masculinity in Pakistan and highlights the nuanced ways in which gender roles are portrayed and perceived in the literary realm.

### Keywords:

Metaphorical Representations, Men, Fiction, Moth Smoke, Pakistan.

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### **Introduction:**

As a result of Lakoff and Johnson's presentation of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) in 1980, the study of conceptual metaphors has emerged as a recognized subfield within linguistics. Therefore, the objective of this study is to examine the role of conceptual metaphors in portraying male gender roles within the unique context of Pakistani culture. Specifically, we will analyze how these metaphors are utilized as linguistic expressions that reflect societal views and beliefs regarding the tasks and responsibilities attributed to males in a particular culture or region. By investigating the conceptual metaphors employed in relation to masculine gender, we aim to gain insights into the attitudes and beliefs that shape gender norms and expectations in society.

To identify conceptual metaphors, researchers implied a methodology similar to the one outlined by Lakoff and Johnson. Our theoretical framework for this research is CMT, wherein the source concept (the concept for which specific words are used) is contrasted with the target concept (the concept under investigation). In this case, researchers extracted words associated with "male gender" from the sample and explore the concept of "male gender" using these linguistic expressions.

It is worth noting that the technique for recognizing conceptual metaphors employed in this study is consistent with previous research conducted in this field. By reviewing relevant prior works, this study will also provide appropriate citations to support the theoretical foundations of the research. By delving into the conceptual metaphors employed in relation to male gender roles in Pakistani culture, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how cultural beliefs and values shape gender identities and expectations. Additionally, the findings of this research may provide valuable insights for addressing gender disparities and promoting gender equality in Pakistan and beyond.

### ***Questions Regarding the Research:***

- What kinds of conceptual analogies does Mohsin Hamid utilize in the novel 'Moth Smoke' to relate to masculine gender?
- What does the predominance of these conceptual metaphors say about the way males are typically conceived of in Pakistani society?

### **Literature Review:**

Research has indicated that politicians utilize metaphors in their campaigns to effectively communicate their ideas and objectives to the general public. Lakoff (2002) utilized Conceptual Metaphor Theory in his book 'Moral Politics' to analyze the political discourse of both the Republican and Democrat parties. According to Lakoff (2002), this book highlights the divergent perspectives on morality and ideal family life held by the two political parties. These perspectives lead to differences in how the two political factions subconsciously perceive the world and form distinct opinions regarding governmental policies. Lakoff (2002) presents two

models, the "Strict Father" and "Nurturant Parent," based on the political views of Democrats and Republicans. He asserts that conservatives and liberals view the nation as a family. In the "Strict Father" model of the family, described by Lakoff (2002), the father is the dominant authority figure and is responsible for setting and enforcing very firm rules for the children. A mother's duty is to nurture her offspring and respect her husband's authority. Children are expected to acquire good character by adhering to these standards. In contrast, the "Nurturant Parent" model involves parents providing love, care, and respect to their children. Children comply with their parents' wishes as a demonstration of affection, rather than out of fear of punishment. Parents have the authority to make decisions, but they are expected to provide a clear rationale to their children. Children are encouraged to provide their suggestions, and parents give them due consideration (Johansen, 2007).

Al Jumah (2007) performed cross-cultural research that compared the prevalence of metaphors in English and Arabic business writing. Al Jumah noted that English language business discourse contains a greater number of metaphors than Arabic, based on an examination of various business articles. The 'war metaphor' is predominantly used to reference business, and the 'sports metaphor' is prevalent in the language of commerce. It has been observed that companies with a sluggish rate of adaptation are often likened to large, lumbering animals such as elephants, while those that demonstrate agility and adeptness in responding to environmental changes are often compared to swift and dynamic animals like lions. Al Jumah (2007) cites Phillips (1998, p. 43) to support the claim that the use of metaphors may increase stress in the workplace, which in turn can contribute to poor performance.

Lantolf and Bobrova (2012) conducted a study analyzing the conceptual metaphors employed in beer advertisements from the United States and Ukraine. The present study aims to examine the similarities and differences in conceptual metaphors for beer in American and Ukrainian cultures, as well as the modalities used to construct these metaphors in both cultural contexts. The study utilized a corpus comprising 16 American and 16 Ukrainian television advertisements. The primary conceptual metaphors utilized in American beer advertisements are "happiness is drinking beer" and "beer is a person," as identified by Lantolf and Bobrova (2012). The Ukrainian commercials showcase two commonly used metaphors observed in American advertisements, but with structural differences. Additionally, the Ukrainian commercials feature a prominent third metaphor that is absent in American advertisements, associating the consumption of beer with patriotism.

Fortress Besieged is a Chinese book, and Du (2015) analyzed the metaphors employed to construct four different emotions inside the text. Four feelings were analyzed: joy, sadness, love, and rage. According to Du (2015), the source domains of the metaphors employed to portray these feelings include direction, health and disease, light and darkness, and games. Results show that metaphors in spoken and written language are effective in conceptualizing and understanding abstract notions like emotions. It highlights the role that culture plays in determining which areas are used as metaphor sources. Fortress Besieger's reliance on the conceptual metaphor "anger is Qi" rather than other anger metaphors may be traced back to the preeminence of the "Yin-yang Theory" and the "Traditional Chinese Medicine Theory" in Chinese culture (Du, 2015).

## **Research Methodology:**

The current investigation encompasses both exploratory and explanatory aspects. The study utilized a qualitative research design and focused on the analysis of the novel "Moth Smoke" written by Mohsin Hamid. Given that Mohsin Hamid is a Pakistani author and the book is set in the Pakistani context, it was expected that the work would provide valuable insights into the metaphors commonly used to describe men in Pakistani society. In this research, Content Analysis was used as the technique, while the Constructive Metaphor Theory served as the theoretical foundation for guiding the selection of and analysis of the metaphors. Following an investigation into both the source and the target domains of the metaphors that were chosen, commonalities were revealed, which made it possible to investigate the metaphorical mappings' underlying conceptual underpinnings. The subsequent section offers a comprehensive discussion on the theoretical framework.

The study is conducted in accordance with the guidelines provided by Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), which was first established in 1980. The CMT identifies three primary classifications of conceptual metaphors, which are the structural metaphor, the ontological metaphor, and the orientational metaphor. A structural metaphor is a figure of speech in which one idea or concept is expressed in terms of another idea or concept. For example, the phrase "time is money" can be used to illustrate this. The ontological metaphor is employed to represent a specific activity, emotion, or concept as a distinct entity or substance. For instance, "Inflation is a phenomenon" serves as an illustration of an ontological metaphor. An orientational metaphor refers to the use of different spatial orientations to convey a particular meaning or idea. As an example, the statement "conscious is up; unconscious is down" can be presented to exemplify an orientational metaphor.

Lakoff and Johnson's proposal of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory challenged two existing theories. The Abstraction Theory proposes that underneath the literal and figurative meanings of a particular word lie a more basic and generalized idea. This idea is suggested by the term "abstraction." According to the Homonymy Theory, a single word may stand for more than one notion at a time. The authors Lakoff and Johnson (1980) contend that the Abstraction Theory is unable to differentiate between the two sorts of metaphors known as 'A is B' and 'B is A.' In addition, they claim that the theory is unable to adequately explain orientational metaphors and a variety of emotions. They go on to argue that the Homonymy Theory is incapable of adequately illuminating the systematic relationships that exist between the many different metaphorical expressions, and they provide the evidence that they have against it. In addition to this, it does not make the process of explaining extensions included inside figurative expressions any easier.

## **Findings:**

### ***Man as Object:***

The novel "Moth Smoke" by Mohsin Hamid utilizes a range of vocabulary borrowed from the world of tangible objects to describe male characters. Phrases such as "collapse," "break down," "hard-hearted," "bright," "solid," and "cool" are examples of such expressions. The fact that these concepts are derived from the domain of physical objects implies that individuals are

being viewed as inanimate items with specific attributes like temperature, ability to emit light, and susceptibility to harm and malfunction.

Throughout the book, the masculine gender is portrayed in various contexts using these metaphorical meanings. For instance, the word "collapse" is typically used to describe the falling down or caving in of buildings. In "Moth Smoke," the protagonist Darashikoh experiences a moment of collapse when he is unable to physically stand or defend himself during a struggle, resulting in him falling to the ground. Similarly, the phrase "break down" is often associated with the malfunctioning of equipment. In the book, Aurangzeb's emotional outburst and his plea for help from Darashikoh's mother are depicted as a moment of vulnerability or emotional breakdown.

These metaphorical expressions draw on the source domain of "breakable objects" and apply them to the target domain of "human beings." Just as physical objects have varying degrees of resistance and can break under certain conditions, individuals also face challenges they cannot overcome alone and seek support. The term "going through a breakdown" commonly refers to a state of mental or physical weakness in men. Moreover, there is a societal expectation for masculine individuals to possess a certain level of physical strength.

People who are perceived as tough and formidable are often associated with a high level of physical fortitude. Conversely, they are seen as vulnerable when their physical prowess declines and they become unable to protect themselves. A person who has been physically attacked and injured is rendered helpless and forced to submit, similar to a broken object that is susceptible to further damage and unable to resist. Therefore, it can be argued that a person experiencing physical or mental weakness is often described as having "collapsed" or "broken down."

Darashikoh, the male protagonist, refers to himself as "hard-hearted" because he fails to compensate his servant for two months of work despite being urged to do so. The term "hard" describes something substantial, strong, and difficult to bend or break. In the book, Darashikoh justifies his callous behavior, considering himself a skilled master capable of setting boundaries with his servants. Individuals who exhibit kindness are often described as "soft-hearted," while those lacking empathy are referred to as "hard-hearted." Emotions are generally associated with the heart, and someone who treats their staff rigorously may be seen as lacking compassion.

The word "bright" is used to highlight Darashikoh's intellectual prowess, as he is portrayed as exceptionally intelligent. "Bright" refers to emitting or reflecting a significant amount of light. In the book, a character named Julius Superb describes Darashikoh's extraordinary intellect that surpasses what is necessary for working in the banking industry. The term "ability to shine" is relevant to the source domain, while "man" is an appropriate descriptor for the target domain. Throughout the book, "bright" is used to indicate a character's level of intelligence and their ability to guide others in making informed decisions.

Darashikoh is often referred to as a "solid boxer," emphasizing his physical toughness and resilience. "Solid" means being hard or firm. In the book, a rickshaw driver named Murad Badshah describes Darashikoh as an intelligent boxer with exceptional talent. The term "solid" emphasizes the character's physical strength. Physical strength is often associated with

masculinity, and the state of being solid is regarded as the highest degree of rigidity among physical states. Therefore, a person who is resilient and has a high resistance to defeat is considered "solid."

Due to his perceived lack of interest in his surroundings, Darashikoh is often called "cold" or "cool." "Cold" refers to a lower temperature than usual. In "Moth Smoke," Darashikoh is portrayed as ruggedly handsome but emotionally detached. The term "cold" is used to describe his character. The source domain relates to the thermal condition of materials, while the target domain pertains to people. Emotional detachment is often associated with being "cold," as it is a commonly used term. The condition of being cold is also linked to death, as a deceased body lacks warmth and responsiveness. Consequently, a person exhibiting emotional detachment in various contexts is often described as having a "cold" demeanor.

### ***Ontological Correspondences:***

The mental illness that plagues man is analogous to the ineffectiveness of a broken item. The lack of feelings that exist in a man's heart and their unyielding disposition are analogous to the rigidity and chilliness of material items, which are impossible to shape in any way. A comparison may be made between the intellect of man and the idea of light, while man himself can be compared to something that has been illuminated. There is a direct correlation between the solidity and firmness of material items and the physical strength of a man.

### ***The concept of Man as animals:***

In the novel, "Moth Smoke," men who display uncivilized behavior are portrayed as becoming "wild." Similarly, individuals with limited financial means are referred to as "dependents" due to their reliance on financial assistance from wealthier individuals. Another term used in the same context is "saddled," which describes an unemployed person who is impoverished but maintains pride and self-importance.

The term "wild" typically applies to animals and plants that exist in their natural habitat without being domesticated or raised on a farm. In the book, during a cinema screening, the protagonist Darashikoh observes that male audience members become highly excited when a female actress appears on screen. This scarce presence of women in such settings leads to enthusiastic reactions from male viewers, often expressed through whistling. This observation draws upon the source domain of untamed animals and the target domain of human behavior. Like wild animals, humans are social beings who are educated and expected to behave in civilized ways. However, if an individual fails to regulate their emotions and behaves in an uncivilized manner, they may be labeled as "wild" or untamed.

In "Moth Smoke," the character Aurangzeb refers to the male protagonist Darashikoh as a "loving pet." This situation could have continued with Darashikoh being Aurangzeb's affectionate companion indefinitely, but the arrival of Defender changed the circumstances. The domain of origin pertains to animals that have been domesticated, while the target domain pertains to human beings. A domesticated animal commonly referred to as a "pet" is kept by humans primarily for companionship and recreational purposes. Pet owners take responsibility for ensuring that their animals receive proper care, including providing a comfortable living

environment and nutritious food. Over time, pets become domesticated and responsive to their owners.

In the novel, Aurangzeb reminisces about his childhood and shares insights about his relationship with Darashikoh. Darashikoh's father's death led to Aurangzeb's father taking on a paternal role for Darashikoh, fostering a close bond between them. However, it also resulted in Darashikoh developing an inferiority complex and Aurangzeb a superiority complex. Since Aurangzeb senior helped Darashikoh and his mom, this dynamic has arisen. Darashikoh and Aurangzeb are like a pet and their owner, the author argues. Aurangzeb sees himself as the owner of his best friend Darashikoh, whom he considers a "pet animal" due to his awareness of Darashikoh's unfortunate circumstances and the help provided by his father. Just as an owner must provide care and attention to their pet, Darashikoh becomes entirely dependent on Aurangzeb's father for his education. Aurangzeb views Darashikoh with great admiration and affection, similar to a devoted puppy. Therefore, when an individual relies on someone, typically someone outside their immediate family, they may be seen as a dependent who receives assistance. If they show gratitude and loyalty to their benefactor, they may be compared to a faithful dog, similar to how a pet is cherished by its owner. This establishes a parallel between an autonomous individual like Darashikoh and a domesticated animal.

In another part of the novel, Darashikoh is burdened by excessive pride and self-deception despite being unemployed and in debt. Murad Badshah's statement in "Moth Smoke" highlights Darashikoh's challenging circumstances, including financial indebtedness, unemployment, and an overwhelming sense of pride and self-deception. This depiction involves the metaphorical mapping of a source domain, an animal (specifically, a horse), onto a target domain, a human being. A saddle is a seat placed on a horse's back, providing a comfortable and secure platform for the rider. The individual in question is metaphorically portrayed as an animal carrying a saddle, symbolizing the burden of their own vanity and self-deception that guides their behavior. The term "saddled" emphasizes the societal status of an unemployed person who maintains pride. Such an individual is seen as an animal carrying a burden. In traditional gender roles, men are expected to provide financial support for their families. Consequently, an unemployed man or someone lacking financial resources may struggle to achieve a respected position in society. If a person continues to display arrogance and disregard their social and economic instability, they may be seen as lacking intelligence and dignity, much like an animal carrying the weight of a saddle and rider. Thus, this metaphorical mapping suggests that an individual with limited financial standing is considered insignificant within society.

### ***Ontological correspondences:***

Overall, the novel draws ontological correspondences between unethical and uncivilized human behavior and the untamed nature of wild animals. It also establishes parallels between the reliance, assistance, and sentiments of fondness in human relationships and the devotion of domesticated animals towards their owners. Furthermore, a man burdened by pride and false ego can be likened to an animal carrying a load, symbolizing the weight of their vanity and self-deception.

### ***Man as Fish:***

In the novel "Moth Smoke," the male protagonist is frequently referred to as a "fish." The term "big fish" historically represents upper-class men, while "small fish" refers to men from the middle or lower classes.

The novel draws a parallel between individuals and fish, where "big fish" denotes those who hold significant positions in society and exert influence over others. The author explains that a "big fish" is "an individual whose name holds significance for a head of state" (Moth Smoke, p. 55). In contrast, "small fish" describes individuals with limited social networks and a modest standard of living.

In one instance, the character Darashikoh attends a job interview where he is informed that he needs a reference from a prominent individual to secure a position at the bank. Another time, during an upscale dinner gathering, Darashikoh finds himself without companionship, feeling insignificant like a "small fish" left to fend for itself. Darashikoh perceives being evaluated as unimportant, resulting in being ignored for the rest of the evening (Moth Smoke, p. 78). This treatment is attributed to his unemployment and lower social status.

The source domain of fish and the target domain of humans are both involved in the metaphorical mapping that occurs within this situation. This metaphor is a reflection of the way in which bigger creatures ensure their own existence by preying on lesser species and vice versa, as witnessed in the animal realm. This is also true for fish that live in environments that include water. The common occurrence of unfairness and inequality in society is brought to light by the colloquial expressions "big fish" and "small fish". Individuals with wealth and social standing leverage their resources to build connections with other influential people, creating a well-connected upper class. This network engages in reciprocal exchanges of favors to benefit each other. As a result, individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds face disadvantages due to limited access to influential networks. This often hampers their ability to secure lucrative employment and achieve financial success, even with commendable skills and talents. Additionally, those of higher social standing often display condescending attitudes toward individuals from lower classes, avoiding association with them.

### ***Ontological correspondences:***

The concept of larger entities consuming smaller entities serves as an analogy for human survival within our societal framework.

### ***Man ad butcher:***

Regarding the use of the term "butcher" in the novel, a character named Aurangzeb refers to Pol, Idi, Adolf, and Harry as "butchers." The author draws a comparison to infamous figures from the twentieth century known for mass killings. In the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, a butcher is defined as someone involved in cutting and selling meat or slaughtering animals. Here, the source domain is "butcher," while the target domain is "man."

Pol Pot led the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia, implementing policies of societal purification that resulted in the isolation and suffering of the Cambodian population. Idi Amin, the President of Uganda, expelled Asians from the country and carried out brutal acts of violence. Adolf Hitler, leader of Nazi Germany, orchestrated the Holocaust and started World War II. Harry S.



Truman, the former President of the United States, authorized the use of atomic bombs on Japan during World War II.

In "Moth Smoke," these four rulers are referred to as "butchers," highlighting their ruthless and merciless actions, similar to a butcher slaughtering animal without remorse.

### ***Ontological correspondences:***

The inhumane treatment of individuals by male leaders, as depicted in the novel, draws a parallel to the merciless and savage treatment of animals by butchers.

### **Conclusion:**

This section presents the study's findings and addresses the previously raised questions. Based on the collected data, it is evident that all the metaphors used to depict the male gender in *Moth Smoke* portray men as distinct entities. These metaphors can be classified as Ontological Metaphors. It is important to note that Conceptual Metaphor Theory encompasses various sub-categories of Ontological Metaphors, and the metaphors mentioned earlier fall under the category of 'entity metaphors,' which represent a particular concept in the form of an entity.

As mentioned previously, it is commonly expected within Pakistani society that men have the responsibility of maintaining positive social relationships and providing financial support for their families. This implies that the male gender holds a position of dominance in society. Male members are expected to fulfill their role by providing for their families and developing strong social networks. Individuals who exhibit inappropriate behavior in social settings may be perceived as lacking social decorum. Men have the freedom to lead an autonomous lifestyle; however, if they display self-centered behavior, they may be viewed as immature and incapable of managing their responsibilities, thus requiring assistance to fulfill their duties.

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