

## **JUNGIAN ANALYSIS OF HANIF KUREISHI'S "MY SON THE FANATIC"**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Literature, conceived as a "laboratory" of human life, provides examples of human experience presumably common to all readers.(Lois Tyson p.5) This article aims at analyzing Hanif Kureishi's short story "My Son the Fanatic" with reference to Carl

Jung's theory of shadow and persona. This is the story about a Pakistani immigrant, Parvez, who weaves the dreams of becoming prosperous in the western community by putting his son in the field of accountancy. Parvez is a well-settled taxi-driver in England. Strange things begin to happen in his life with the conversion of his son into his ancestral religion. Contrary to his father, the son begins to feel himself out of his elements there. A tussle is observed between the father and the son, father wants his son to adopt western ways and the son struggles to bring his father back to his origin, his fundamentalism. With the application of Jungian theory of shadow and persona to the said text, the researcher finds that the father and the son are actually two sides of the same personality that is Parvez. Parvez puts on the mask of a well-settled immigrant but cannot suppress his shadow related to his Muslim culture that keeps on growing and strengthening in the shape of his son, Ali. Parvez's deeds are incompatible with his ideology. He wants to imprint his western ideas onto his son but in vain. Furthermore the research paper expounds why the immigrants have to face problems when they go outside their culture.

**KEYWORDS:** Shadow; Persona; Fanatic.

## INTRODUCTION

Hanif Kureishi, commander of the British Empire, is a British Pakistani writer. He is well-known for his novels, story collections, screenplays, and film direction. In 2008, The Times placed him among the fifty greatest British writers since 1945. His work is also renowned for autobiographical elements. The given story also contains some autobiographical elements. Like Ali's father, Kureishi's father was a Pakistani immigrant. Like him, he has entangling relations with his father though for different reasons.

In his book Critical Theory Today, Lois Tyson expresses two types of reading a text, reading with the grain and reading against the grain. He says that reading with the grain means viewing a text from its author's angle while reading against the grain conveys the point other than the author's. If one reads the text of "My Son the Fanatic" with grain, one realizes that the writer deals with the generation gap and cultural clash between the father and the son in the said story. But reading against the grain of the story reveals Carl Jung's two major archetypes, shadow and persona. The present research analyses the story with reference to Carl Jung theory of shadow and persona.

## THEORETICAL FRAME

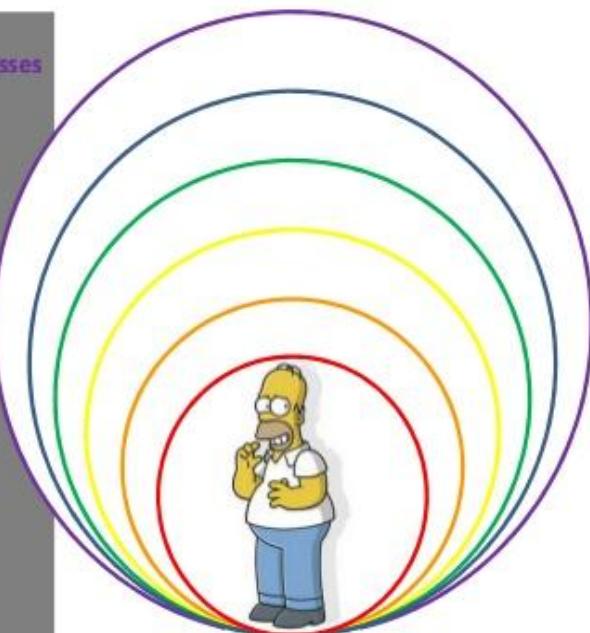
Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung believed that psyche comprised of three parts, the ego, the personal unconscious and collective unconscious. The ego is the conscious mind. What you are doing at this time knowingly constitutes your conscious part of mind. In the personal unconscious, there lie the repressed memories, desires etc. Jung considered collective unconscious as psychologically inherited. It posses all those experiences which are shared by all as a species. Collective unconscious is the abode of certain universal archetypal patterns. Animus and anima are major archetypes that represent opposing gender attributes. Shadow and persona are other important archetypes. Shadow is the denied component of human psyche and we want to lie dormant this psychic material. It is the dark, unlit, undesirable part of one's personality. It is the whole unconscious. "Everyone carries a shadow," Jung wrote, and the less it is embodied in the individual's conscious life, the blacker and denser it is." (Jung p 131) It may consist of primitive instincts which are suppressed by the conscious mind with the passage of time. Persona is originated from Latin word 'mask'. It refers to different masks people put on in various social situations to impress others. It will not be out of place to say that persona is related to conscious part of mind whereas shadow is linked with unconscious part of human mind.

Robert Bly says that shadow in fact is the hidden part of the personality. He compares the shadow with the bag that contains undesirable things. He expounds that everybody has a bag in which he keeps on putting the things disliked by the society and the parents. As he grows in age, the size of the bag increases. Contrary to this, the well-liked side of the personality that is persona becomes nicer and nicer in the particular culture with the passage of time. Jung stresses that the persona is the mask that one wears to leave a definite impression on others and on the other hand to hide the true nature of his individuality. Roberte says that it is outward sense of the self.



Figure 5- Jung's Model of the Psyche.

## The Jung Man's View



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In the short story “My Son the Fanatic” Parvez is a taxi-driver. Basically he belongs to Punjab, Pakistan but now he is settled in England. He has been living in England for twenty years with his son named Ali and a wife. The story starts with Parvez’s tension about his son’s changing behavior. In the past, he has been topper. He excelled in cricket, swimming and studies. But now he is throwing all his things, his sports material and books outside his room. Parvez discusses his son’s attitude with his friends and a girlfriend Bettina but to no avail. Gradually Parvez discovers that his son is becoming too religious. Ali is having a beard, leaving the lucrative post of accountancy. While they are living in England, all this seems to be stupid to Parvez. He feels ashamed of his son’s becoming too religious. He continuously tries to bring his son back to the so-called straight path, the path of western civilization. For example he tries to push him back to accountancy because it is well-paid job and ensures a prosperous life there. He wishes his son to adopt western way of life that is not growing beard, going in for accountancy.

Shadow can be positive and it can be negative. When we apply Carl Jung’s theory of persona and shadow to the text it is revealed that the two main characters of the story, Parvez and Ali stand for the persona and shadow of the same focal character that is Parvez. Ali, the son, is the shadow of Parvez that is both positive and negative at same time.

From the reader’s perspective, Ali is the positive side of Parvez’s personality which he has suppressed in his unconscious for he is living in England for twenty years. He is totally submerged in that society. Forget about his origin. Forget about his fundamentalism when his true side emerges in the form of Ali, he becomes reactionary, tries uselessly to keep this aspect of his personality asleep. The more he pressurizes his son in this connection, the more true spiritual he appears to be. Ali’s remark is very significant when his father stresses that life is for living. Life is for enjoyment so it should be enjoyed fully. He considers his Muslim culture, religious norms restrictions on his way to relish the unbridle luxuries of westernization. To Ali, “all this is nothing but a bottomless pit”. “Around the world millions and millions of people share my beliefs. Are you saying that you are right and they are at wrong? And Ali looked at his father with such aggressive confidence that Parvez would say no more. “Yet he would’t stand for his own son’s telling him the difference between right and wrong.”

“Don’t you know it’s wrong to drink alcohol? He had said. ‘He spoke to me very harshly,’ Parvez said to Bettina. ‘I was about to castigate the boy for being insolent, but I managed to control myself.’

“Surely it wasn’t a crime to have a drink when he wanted one?” When Ali forbade him to have alcohol. Parvez drank more whisky than his need.

When Ali reminded Parvez’s love for porkpies, bacon smothered with mushrooms and pork sausages, Parvez admonished his son, “You’re not in the village now. This is England. We have to fit in”.

To Parvez, the part of his personality that stops him from indulging in the western civilization seems to be the negative part of his personality and he tries his level best to subdue it at all cost. On the other hand the aspect of his personality that wants to bring him back to his origin and basic culture appears to readers to be positive aspect of his personality. This part shows him spiritual dimension, forbids him to be a part of western culture.

“In a low, monotonous voice, the boy explained that Parvez had not, in fact, lived a good life. He had broken countless rules of the Koran.”

This part of his personality wants to safeguard him from hell and see him in heaven, wish him mend his ways.

‘For us, the reward will be in paradise.’

“Pray,” urged Ali. ‘Pray beside me.’

**About the title of the story:** Reading between the lines the story imparts the knowledge about the dual conflicts from which the immigrants suffer. There are two type of immigrants; those who get adjusted somehow and those who never feel at home there even after their long stay there. The title of the story deals with the fanaticism of the son who has become a Muslim fanatic. But the story closes with the fanatic or frenzied attitude of the father who has reached the apex of the westernization beats his son while he is praying. And the son just asks the question, “Who is fanatic now?” The critical survey of the story demonstrates that both the father and the son are fanatic, both seem to be standing at pole’s apart to each other. Both are standing at the opposite extremes. The son’s fanaticism is obvious from these lines.

‘You are too implicated in western civilization.’ When Parvez reacted at this word and shouted, “But we live here!” he stresses that they have to adjust themselves there in one way

or another. Ali's comments "The western materialists hate us" Ali said. 'Papa, how can you love something which hates you?'

Parvez is immigrant and have liberal ideas no doubt. Islam teaches compassion and forbearance towards others. But Ali does not tolerate his father's liberal attitude that he has in order to adjust in foreign country. He attacks his father verbally as it is clear from Ali's speeches.

"The law of Islam would rule the world; the skin of the infidel would burn off again and again; the Jews and the christers would be routed. The West was a sink of hypocrites, adulterers, homosexuals, drug users and prostitutes."

Ali is not only impatient towards his father but also aggressive towards his father's girlfriend because he thinks his father's relations with her against the Muslim ethics.

"If Bettina looked at the boy in anger, he looked back at her with cold fury."

When you wear persona, you do not show your actual self then it means? Instincts of good and evil are there that dominate man's soul. Parvez does not show his actual self, his actual breeding. Parvez despite having Muslim creed, he is hankering after and adopting western ways of life blindly. Persona demands to be like the demand of society. Parvez admits his love for the west openly for the reason 'But I love England, they let you do almost anything here.' In Muslim culture, the persona is not having girlfriend but shadow demands it. Contrary to this in Western society persona requires to have a girlfriend but shadow is against it. Parvez has a girlfriend named Bettina with whom he shares things which he does not like to share with his wife. Ali being the shadow of Parvez looks at their relations with abhorrence. Bettina cannot escape from the attack of Ali, the shadow, indicated in the given line:

"Then why is he letting a woman like you touch him like that?"

There seems to be a tussle between persona and shadow in the story in fact and both seem to be standing on divergent sides.

## CONCLUSION

The paper focuses on the psyche of the immigrant and the problems faced by them through applying Jung's theories of shadow and persona to the text. Parvez stands for all those immigrants who try to lie buried their originality in their unconscious part of mind and put on

the persona or the garb of well-adjusted western in order to become prosperous there. But whenever their originality that is their shadow reemerges in any form as in the present case in the person of Ali, it always creates panic for the persona, in the recent story for Parvez. These settlers in order to get rid of their inferiority complex of being alien there and enjoy the privileges provided to the natives there, they suppress their true self and try to be look like the western.

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