

FALSE SELF

The Life of Masud Khan

Linda Hopkins



KARNAC
firing the mind

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Three people in particular stand out: the French analyst Wladimir (“Wova”) Granoff (d. 2000), the California analyst Robert Rodman (d. 2004), and book publisher Harry Karnac (d. 2014). Granoff had been Khan’s “crucial friend” in the early 1960s prior to a major estrangement. Still, he had the grace and honesty to talk to me about the extreme pleasure he had in the friendship in the days when it was going well. We met in Paris several times in an era when e-mail was not yet popular and we exchanged many faxes. Right from the beginning, he trusted me and granted me access to his extensive correspondence with Khan. Bob Rodman was still working on his biography of Donald Winnicott (*Winnicott: Life and Work*, 2003) when we met and we went on to share substantial material concerning our separate and overlapping research subjects. Bob had unfailing energy and sensitivity to the nuances of life that kept me going through many difficult times. Harry Karnac originally had doubts about the importance of the work but after I won him over, he spoke with great generosity of his personal experience with Khan and Khan’s world. Then, wearing a very different hat, he guided me through the long process of dealing with various crises involving publication that I ultimately came to see as just part of the process. Harry and his wife, Ruth, were unflinching in their hospitality and their support. Karnac also put together the Bibliography, an impressive and time-consuming project.

Prior to becoming a psychologist and a psychoanalyst, I had studied Arabic as an undergraduate at Brown University and then as a graduate student at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies

Acknowledgments

(SAIS) in Washington, D.C. This educational experience got me interested in Islam and, after I changed careers, led me to investigate Khan's writings. I got a Ph.D. in clinical psychology at Temple University in Philadelphia and became a certified analyst and then a training and supervising analyst at the Philadelphia School of Psychoanalysis. I studied Khan on my own in my student years. His work was never assigned and I heard his name spoken out loud only once, in a talk by Salman Akhtar, a Muslim analyst who practices in Philadelphia. My private study was greatly enhanced when I became a student at a school dedicated to the study of British object relations psychoanalysis, under the leadership of Jill and David Scharff. Currently known as the International Psychotherapy Institute (IPI) located in Bethesda, Maryland, it was then part of the Washington School of Psychoanalysis, in Washington, D.C. This was my first opportunity to learn from others about the British analytic world. The Scharffs (winners of the 2022 Sigourney Award) are masterful teachers who have fostered a lively and supportive community. They provided the opportunity to meet leading British analysts who came to the school as guest teachers. All the IPI faculty and students are deserving of acknowledgment and, in addition to the Scharffs, I am particularly grateful to Anna Innes, Michael Kaufman, Kent Ravenscroft, Michael Stadter, Charles Ashbach, and Frank Schwoeri. In the years after the first publication of *False Self*, I did a second analytic training at the Scharffs' new analytic school, International Institute for Psychoanalytic Training (IIPT), another wonderful experience.

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Acknowledgments

My access to Khan's unpublished Work Books, a professional and personal (not clinical) diary, came about through collaboration and ultimately a friendship with Sybil Stoller (d. 2019) who gave me her copy of the Work Books. The Stoller copy of Khan's Work Books is particularly valuable now because the Khan archives in London were destroyed in 2019, and I now have the only complete copy (the first third of the Work Books is being published by the re-organized Karnac Books in fall, 2022, having been edited by me together with New York City analyst Steven Kuchuck).

Through Sybil I reconnected to J. Herbert Hamsher (d. 2016), my Temple University dissertation adviser. He lived in Los Angeles and was the longtime partner of Jonathan Stoller, one of Sybil's sons. Herb had an almost magical quality of transmitting courage and energy and I was thrilled to get to know him again. Herb and Jonathan both read and critiqued major pieces of the manuscript.

One of Khan's London relatives (anonymous) told me about two relatives in Texas who might be willing to speak with me, and thus it was that I discovered Khalida Riaz Khan and her sister Fatima Ahmed. They are the daughters of Khan's much older half-sister and, as children born at about the same time as Masud and his brother Tahir, they had a great deal to tell about Khan's childhood. Khalida and her cousin Zubair Sadiqi read the chapters on India to check for accuracy and Khalida's husband Riaz Khan (d. 2003) supplied me with details of Khan's university life in Lahore.

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Khan's controversial behavior left a trail of conflicted people and as a result I had to deal with legal issues from the very beginning of my project. A few weeks before he died, Joseph Sandler put me in touch with Robert Tyson, who advised me on how to work with the International Psychoanalytical Association to clarify my right to use the Stoller copy of Khan's Work Books. A grant funded by Marvin Sussman at The Union Institute helped pay for legal advice on international copyright law related to the Work Books. On matters straddling the areas of legality and ethics, I was greatly helped by the American analyst, Glen Gabbard, a man who is wise in many ways.

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After the biography was published (in 2006 and 2008), one of Khan's relatives clarified an important point never mentioned to me by Khan's other relatives, not written about in Cooper's biography, the various Khan obituaries, or discussed by Khan himself. He told me that Khan's mother Khursheed, who came to her marriage to Khan's father as a fourth wife with two young children, had been previously married to a local man who died, leaving her a widow.

Like Masud Khan, I have three "crucial friends." Jane Widseth, Susan Mathes, and Karen Saeger were always present as I did the work.

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PHOTOGRAPHS

Plates

1. Undated photo of Fazaldad Khan, Masud Khan's father (circa 1846–1943), in military dress and wearing medals that were awarded by the British for service in the Indian Army.
2. Masud Khan as a young boy, dressed in Western clothing for a formal picture, at the family home in The United Provinces of India (now Pakistan).
3. Masud's sister Mahmooda (1926–1942), standing in the back row, inherited her dark-skinned beauty from her mother Khursheed, who was Fazaldad's fourth wife. Mahmooda is pictured here with a woman and other children from the extended family.
4. Probably the first post-war International Psycho-Analytic Congress, held in Zurich in 1949. Masud attended as a guest through the influence of his analyst, John Rickman, and he was the only student at the Congress.
5. Masud with analytic colleagues in the early 1950s. Charles Rycroft is second from the left and Marion Milner is on Masud's right.
6. Wedding photo of Masud's first marriage in 1952. Jane Shore, the bride, wore an Indian karakuli cap matching that worn by her new husband, and she is joined in the car by Masud's brother Tahir (1923–1983) and his Hindu girlfriend from India, Uma Vasudev.
7. As newlyweds, Masud and Svetlana took a long lease at 3, Hans Crescent in fashionable Knightsbridge, London. Their neighbors were Michael Redgrave, Rachel Kempson, and their teenage children Vanessa, Lynn, and Corin. Photo by Rebecca Smith and Tara Stitchberry.
8. In the late 1960s, Masud returned to his childhood passion for horseback riding when he bought a horse he named Solo and rode daily in Richmond Park, London.
9. Svetlana Beriosova dancing the lead role in *Swan Lake* for the Royal Ballet in the early 1960s. Copyright © ZOË DOMINIC
10. Masud and Svetlana Beriosova married in 1959. This photo shows them in Monte Carlo in 1965. Copyright © ZOË DOMINIC
11. Mike Nichols, Rudolf Nureyev, and Julie Andrews at the Khan flat. The picture is from the early 1960s, in the period Masud called The Divine Years.
12. Masud in the 1960s, with an ever-present cigarette dangling from his mouth. A decade later, he would be diagnosed with lung cancer.
13. Masud and Svetlana holding Kalu, the much-loved household pet. Copyright © ZOË DOMINIC. Image copied from a polaroid
14. Masud and Svetlana out to dinner with Robert and Sybil Stoller in the late 1960s.
15. Masud and a longtime friend at dinner in the late 1970s or early 1980s, a period when Masud regularly dressed in his own variant of Eastern dress, often in black and silver.
16. Masud in his flat at Palace Court looking thin and distant, from a period near the time of his death in 1989.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

There are undoubtedly parts of this biography which some people will question as being exaggerations or untruths. I am an American woman writing about a Muslim Pakistani man who lived in London, and my knowledge of Khan and his world is limited due to our differences. Furthermore, I have the disadvantage of writing about a person who regularly exaggerated and otherwise distorted the events of his own life. I have tried hard to exclude what I consider to be outright lies (usually these are from Khan's final decade), and to report my sources of information. In cases where Khan was the sole informant, the reader is told that he is the only one reporting, and may have an opinion different from mine about the validity of the report. Some areas where I personally remain unsure about what to believe are: the details of Khan's apparent admission to Oxford in 1947 and his subsequent acceptance into analytic training, the exact nature of his analytic contract with Winnicott in the period 1956–1966 (i.e., whether he had formal sessions five or six times a week for those ten years or whether the "coverage" was at times more casual), and the account of the crazed relationship with Yasmine during the Dostoevsky period. It is likely that new information will be revealed in years to come that will help other biographers to tell a more complete story.

No one can deny Masud's talent. But it is also impossible to deny his sickness and his evil nature. When you have met someone like him, you know that the mind is not simple.

André Green

Much of what I have to say about Masud sounds critical and even derogatory. But it's odd, because I feel, and have felt ever since he died, a great sense of loss as if a large part of the gaiety of life was extinguished in his death.

Corin Redgrave

INTRODUCTION

One cannot lie with one's body; only with one's mind

Masud Khan¹

Masud Khan (1924–1989) always attracted attention, no matter where he was. In Northern India, as the youngest of nine living sons of a prominent Muslim landowner, he had been the adored “pet” in his extended family, where he was the token scholar. In London in the austere postwar years of the late 1940s, he was noticed in part because he was rich. At a time when the city was just beginning to recover from the trauma of World War II, he lived in an ancestral suite at the Savoy Hotel and had a chauffeur who drove him around the city in a Rolls-Royce. At age twenty-two, he spoke English fluently and was obviously well educated. And he was clearly an intellectual—in his first days in the city, he attended twenty-seven consecutive performances of *King Lear*. The British were not used to such an Indian, especially an unknown with no apparent connections.

His physical presence was in itself impossible to ignore. He was tall—at least 6'2"—and thin, with a ramrod-straight military posture. The combination of dark skin, Oriental features, and thick black hair, which he wore swept to one side, was unusual and, in the West, he was regularly described as “beautiful” by men as well as women. People remember his deep resonant voice, and women in particular remember the attractiveness of his hands and feet.² Only a small number of people observed that underneath the sweep of his hair on the right side, he had a severely deformed ear that was overly large and lacking in cartilage. The congenital disfiguration in a man so handsome reminded those who saw it of his complexity and added to their fascination. (A surgical repair in 1951 helped, but the ear was never normal.)

In manner, he had a haughtiness that fooled people unless they understood that it masked a deeper shyness. His intelligence and wit were obvious and pleasing, and he had an intellectual air that most people

found charming, with a lit cigarette constantly dangling from his mouth, ashes dropping unnoticed onto his clothes. At first, trying to fit in, he wore Western-style suits—with just a hint of differentness in his navy blue or black beret or a gray lambswool “Jinnah” cap, also called a *karakuli*. In later years, he dressed in Eastern-style robes or black collarless clothing with silver jewelry. Regardless of what he wore, he always looked exotic.³

Khan came to London in October 1946, supposedly to study literature at Oxford—and to have a personal psychoanalysis, since he was a deeply disturbed young man. His homeland was in what is now Pakistan, but in 1946 he was technically an Indian, because Pakistan was born a year later, in 1947, when British Colonial India was split into India and Pakistan. In those first months in the West, while his own country was also headed toward a new identity, the shape of Khan’s future evolved in an unexpected way. He would leave Oxford almost immediately, moving to London to start his analysis and to enroll in the training program of the British Psycho-Analytical Society.

The psychoanalytic movement flourished in the postwar years, and the handsome Indian would become such a leader that in 1976, the American analyst Erik Erikson exclaimed, “The future of analysis belongs to Khan!” He was by then a prolific writer, speaker, and editor as well as an innovative clinician. His lasting reputation was ensured by his writings—clinical and theoretical contributions in which he wrote openly about what he really did in the consulting room, in stark contrast to the formality and evasiveness of most analysts of his time. When he died in 1989, he left behind four books, three of them highly regarded and the last one scandalous: *The Privacy of the Self* (1974), *Alienation in Perversions* (1979), *Hidden Selves* (1983), and *When Spring Comes: Awakenings in Clinical Psychoanalysis* (1988; published as *The Long Wait* in the United States).

In addition to Khan’s own significance, it is of great importance that he was the principal disciple of Donald Woods Winnicott (1896–1971), one of the most influential analysts since Freud. Khan referred to Winnicott as “the man who was destiny for me,” and Winnicott experienced Khan as the son he never had. It was a strange and almost unbelievable alliance, because the two men were a study in contrasts. Winnicott was a pixelike man who was raised in the proper world of the British middle class, in a home dominated by women.⁴ He complained that he had experienced such security that he had to search to find his “madness.” Khan grew

up with a patriarch father who sired fifteen children with three of his four wives—and his “madness” was barely in control on the best of days. Winnicott, who had twinkling blue eyes, liked to start his day by sliding down the banister of his staircase giving a cheery imitation of a clucking chicken, while Khan was, as one of his analysands said, “the kind of man who you just know would have a dagger in the next room.”⁵ The Winnicott–Khan connection is central to the story of Khan’s life in the West.

Khan’s private life would match his professional living in its star quality. In London, his second marriage was to Svetlana Beriosova, a tall Russian beauty who was at the time of their marriage the number two ballerina with the Royal Ballet, about to become number one, after Margot Fonteyn’s planned retirement. Together, Beriosova and Khan created a salon where they entertained the major stars of the art world, including Michael Redgrave, Julie Andrews, and Rudolf Nureyev. The Khans invited these artists to their home along with the less well known but equally talented “greats” of the analytic world, creating a mix that was as lively as it was strange.

What only his intimates knew was that Khan suffered all his life with depression and serious psychological problems. In mid-life, he began a long and unremitting fall from grace, struggling to survive the pain of divorce, the terror of a supposedly terminal cancer, and the ravages of alcoholism. He ended his life in disgrace, having been ejected from membership in his psychoanalytic group, the British Psycho-Analytical Society, as a consequence of inappropriate socializing with analysands as well as published writings that included a vicious anti-Semitic tirade. He died in 1989, just a few months after the society rejected him. Almost to the end of his life, however, he continued to write, and even the last book contains material that will live on.⁶

Many people read Shakespeare and see their own lives mirrored, but not many people live life on a scale grand enough to match the fictional characters of the great tragedies. Khan did live such a life, a life that has a striking similarity to the fictional lives of his favorite characters: Shakespeare’s King Lear and Dostoevsky’s Prince Myshkin, from *The Idiot*. Whether it was Destiny (arranged in part by himself) or Fate (something totally outside of his control), he had a rise and fall as major as those of King Lear and Prince Myshkin, and he left behind, as they did, both inspiration and destruction.

As I proceed to track Khan's life in more or less chronological order, it will become clear that no matter how much information is revealed, he remains something of a paradox. The British analyst Eric Rayner told me: "Masud's soul came from the Devil and his writing came from the gods." This biography is an attempt to show these sides of Khan, and other sides too, in the spirit of Khan's clinical thinking, where he was firmly convinced that people have multiple incompatible selves that are all real. The way to understand a person, he said, was to "explicate the paradox," not to try to resolve it, and indeed this idea is one of the major contributions made to psychoanalysis by Khan and by Winnicott.

SOURCES OF MATERIAL

It was surprisingly easy to find a great deal of unpublished material about Khan's life, probably because he wanted to be written about posthumously. As he wrote in his diary, "In a strange way I am leaving behind materials which I hope someone will put together and that will constitute the verity of Masud Khan."⁷

Of all my sources, the most significant material came from Sybil Stoller, whose husband Robert (1924–1991) was a Los Angeles analyst and one of Khan's best friends. When I first talked to Sybil on the telephone, she told me: "I'd be glad to tell you about my husband's relationship to Masud." I was ambivalent about making the trip to California because her words suggested that she did not have much to say, but some instinct told me to go. I knew that on the same trip I could look at the Khan–Robert Stoller correspondence, which is held in Stoller's archives at UCLA.

Sybil picked me up at the airport and drove me to her home in the Pacific Palisades. When I walked into her living room she waved at a pile of letters and manuscripts that was three-and-a-half-feet high and said, "This is my relationship with Masud." It turned out that Sybil had had her own friendship with Khan, which included a correspondence with letters fifteen to twenty pages in length written to her over a period of twenty-plus years.

And there was more to discover. Sybil did not tell me at first that she also had a complete copy of Khan's unpublished Work Books, a 3,045-page personal and professional diary covering the years 1967 to 1980 (with patient information mostly excluded), which Khan had given to

her and Robert over the years for safekeeping and possible publishing. Since the original Work Books are in an archive held by the International Psychoanalytical Association and frozen until the year 2039, I had not thought I would be able to read and use them. Then, on my third or fourth research trip to California, I was interviewing Roger Stoller, a son of Sybil and Robert, and I discovered that Roger's twin, Jonathan, was involved in a long-term relationship with a psychologist named J. Herbert Hamsher. By strange coincidence, Herb happened to have been my beloved dissertation adviser at the graduate program in clinical psychology at Temple University. He and I had been out of touch for more than two decades, as he had left the Philadelphia area to start a new life with Jonathan in Aspen and in Los Angeles. The synchronicity of this connection surprised all of us, and it influenced Sybil to trust me with the Work Books. To a biographer, this "find" has been like a buried treasure.

In addition to the Stoller correspondences, I had access to fourteen other relevant correspondences, all unpublished, nine of them from private collections. Since Khan's preferred mode of intimacy was correspondence, these were invaluable. They cover the span of his entire Western life.

I sought out the major people from Khan's life and most of them agreed to talk with me, so another important resource was in-person interviews that I conducted in the years 1993 to 2004 in Europe, South America, Canada, and various cities in the United States. (Many of the people I interviewed are now deceased.) Very often, people first told me that they would have little to say about Khan—and then went on to speak at great length, surprising themselves with the extent and the intensity of their memories. To my astonishment, about half the men whom I interviewed *cried* at some point. And it became a common experience that seventy- and eighty-year-old women spoke with great pleasure, a sparkle in their eyes, about times when they were young and sexual and daring. This would have pleased Khan, who liked to provoke people to "come alive."

Quite a few of the interviewees have asked me to quote them anonymously, and all of the women who had personal and sexual relationships with Khan asked for a pseudonym. I will make note of a disguised identity the first time a person is mentioned, but after that, the name will appear as if it were the actual name, without quotes. The pseudonyms I use were chosen by the subjects, whenever they had a preference. In a few cases, identifying information has been altered, and

those cases are noted in the text.

In three cases, I had numerous lengthy interviews with people who, upon reflection, did not give me permission to use any information from the interview. Two of these people felt that they and their families had been harmed by Khan and that the retelling of their stories might do more harm; and the other had a different personal reason for opting out. The missing information is interesting and it would add to themes discussed by others, but it is not crucial to the story.

The book is organized chronologically into nine parts, and five of these parts include separate chapters with transcripts of interviews with analysts and supervisees who describe Khan's clinical work. I am grateful to these people for sharing their information, as it illustrates Khan's clinical genius, as well as his gradual deterioration. The interviews are highly personal and, even though I am a practicing psychoanalyst, I will not make anything other than a superficial comment on the content. I do not want to second-guess my interviewees by assuming that I know more than they do about their own selves—so their words stand alone.

PART I

COLONIAL INDIA

(1924–1945)

1.

Early Years in Montgomery

No matter how much I have translated it all into metaphor and myth, my childhood is still alive and real to me, and my feudal upbringing gives me any virtues I possess.

*Masud Khan*¹

Masud Khan's childhood home was in Montgomery (now Sahiwal), an area in the northwest part of the United Provinces of India known as the Punjab. The land had been conquered by the British in the latter half of the nineteenth century after a savage conflict in which Khan's father and uncles were allied with the British.² After the conquest, his family continued to maintain close military ties: of his eight half-brothers, seven would have celebrated careers in the Indian and then the Pakistani army. In the West, Khan claimed, probably accurately, that his was the first generation in which there had not been a murder. He told a friend: "In my country, life is very cheap. I could have men disposed of for a mere five hundred rupees—that is how we might deal with difficult situations. My people do not feel Judeo-Christian guilt: my people feel vengeance."³

As an adult, Khan was always aware of the powerful influence of his "savage" Eastern roots.⁴ In the West, he wrote:

[I]n all honesty I have to confess that in some deep dark recesses of my soul I am still hankering after an ideal of heroism which is essentially militaristic, impersonal and political. The taint of my ancestry. The victory of my imaginative-intellectual sentiments is not yet complete over this dark inheritance. [I have an] inner craving for heroic social battle and a dark fascination with war and soldiery That is perhaps why I live away from my country. Because in it I will eventually get seduced into action.⁵

Khan's father, Fazaldad, was a Shiite Muslim⁶ who was born a peasant. Because of their alliance with the British, he and his two brothers were richly rewarded, acquiring significant power and wealth. An old photograph shows a tall (6'5"), light-skinned, and handsome Fazaldad, proudly wearing military dress that includes two medals around his neck.⁷ Family legend has it that he received one of these for his bravery in carrying a wounded British general to safety in a battle in Mesopotamia.

After the British conquest, Fazaldad's name changed to Khan Bahadur Fazaldad Khan. "Khan" and "Bahadur" are terms of respect for people with power, not family names, and indeed Punjabis did not use family names until after the British came. Fazaldad's descendants use Khan as their last name and it is a name that has become common in Pakistan. This group of Khans, however, is no ordinary family. The wealth accumulated by Fazaldad has been passed on to members of a large extended family, and his landholdings in several different locations in Pakistan, including Chakwal and Faisalabad (formerly Lyallpur), are still held by family members.

As the Punjab settled into peacetime, Fazaldad switched from being a warrior to being a farmer. He specialized in breeding and selling horses that the British used in their army and for polo, and he became a self-taught horse veterinarian. He made his home in the remote countryside of Montgomery and he also owned land in other parts of Northern India. The social system was feudal, and the peasants who lived on his land were required to work for him.⁸

Fazaldad, by the custom of his religion, was free to marry four times, and he did so.⁹ His initial marriage was to a first cousin, as was common. When she was unable to bear children, there was a divorce.

His second wife, Badsha (d. 1955), was a Muslim from the Pathan tribe, a fair-skinned group that includes Hindus as well as Muslims.¹⁰ The couple had eight children together, four sons and four daughters. As a Pathan, Badsha did not share the Rajput tradition of contempt for females, and she made sure that her daughters were educated, albeit secretly. These daughters then encouraged their own daughters to be educated. Masud was especially close to Badsha's granddaughters Khalida Khan and Fatima Ahmed, who were his age. "Uncle" Masud and his "nieces" played together as children and attended university together. These two women, both professionals living in the United States, are major sources of information about Khan's early life.¹¹