

# Prince of Lyalipur

M. A. Sarfraz ( Research and Consultant Psychiatrist, Peel Health Campus, Mandurah 6210, Western Australia. )

## Abstract

Prince Masud Khan was a leader of psychoanalytical movement in its halcyon days. His name is given by many in the profession in the same breath as Freud, Klein and Winnicott. Despite his aristocratic background, handsome and charismatic personality and distinguished achievements as an academic and clinician, to the English he remained a Pakistani and nobody knows him in Pakistan. This article is an attempt to examine Prince Masud's work, personality and some of the issues behind his absence from our collective conscience (JPMA 52:321 ;2002).

On a cold and gloomy December morning in 1987, I was asked whether I had heard of Masud Khan? The question was asked by Dr. Chris Dare, as I finished introducing myself on my first day at the Institute of Psychiatry, London. "Should I?" was the only response I could mutter. He just smiled wryly and looked away. Many years have passed since, but I have not been able to forget the pain and disappointment on his face. I came to know later that Khan was dying a slow death, at that time, made more painful each day by his enemies. But who was he? Was he just another tall, rich and extraordinarily handsome playboy who lived a style of his own creation, or a misunderstood genius whose roots sunk deep and spread across three cultures? **Patterson (1989) writes:**

Masud Khan, prince of princes as he described himself, art collector, womaniser, snob, charmer, cancer victim. He was these things and more and surely one of the most charismatic and controversial figures of his time "

Psychoanalysis is the therapeutic method, devised by Sigmund Freud, for the treatment of some psychological problems by probing the interaction of conscious and unconscious mind and bringing the latter into consciousness. Masud Khan was one of the leaders of the psychoanalytical movement in its halcyon days and his name is given by many in the same breath as Freud, Klein, and Winnicott. He was editor of leading psychoanalytical journals, had an endless waiting list of rich and famous clients (including a former Prime Minister of Pakistan) and could command high fees for his eagerly awaited lectures. During a psychiatric meeting recently, I mentioned that I hailed from Lyalipur and Prince Masud used to visit my father. A respected female colleague could not stop kissing me to show her admiration "Oh! you are so very lucky" she kept saying. His name is capable of arousing such emotions in people, yet hardly anybody knows him in his native country, Pakistan. After spending forty years of self-exile in London, to the English he remained from Pakistan and in his native country he was an alien. In spite of all colour and exuberance, his life turned out to be a Greek tragedy. He lived in that interface between fact and fiction, truth and metaphor, reality and fantasy.

Muhammad Masud Raza Khan was born in Jehium on 21 July 1924. He was brought up on the vast estate of his father, Khan Bahadur Raja Fazaldad Khan at Montgomery (Sahiwal). Masud Khan was the second child from his father's fourth marriage. Khan's mother was an extremely beautiful lady of Persian origin and was just 17 at the time of her marriage. Raja Fazaldad, 76, had obvious difficulty in convincing his children (and other wives) that it was a serious relationship. Family tensions featured heavily in his decision to move with this part of his family to Lyalipur, a town some 100 miles away. Khan's later psychoanalytical theories regarding the consequences of failure of early environment due to a pathogenic mother, reflect the real sadness and loss he must have experienced when moving out of

his extended family. Khan, thirteen years old at the time, apparently took a while to settle but later thrived on the increased time and attention provided by his father. He set about concentrating on his studies and polo, while his mother gave his father “the best twenty years of his life”. After graduating from the local college, he went on to complete an MA in English Literature from the University of Punjab, Lahore. His thesis on James Joyce’s ULYSSES was of such quality that it had to be sent to London for a fair assessment. Raja Fazaldad must have been an extremely proud man when the news of Khan’s acceptance at Balliol College, Oxford arrived.

Khan’s sister died following an overdose of antituberculous medication in 1942. This was soon followed by his father’s serious illness and death. Khan was very close to his father. He found his loss unbearable; he stopped going out and even playing his favourite sport, Polo. During this difficult period he received psychotherapy from Dr. Latif, who influenced him to have analysis and training in London. Khan arrived in London, forgot about Oxford, and was lucky to have analysis and supervision from some of the finest psychotherapists of all times. He did not have to work, so finished the syllabus quickly and was soon found engaged in regular discussions with his teachers. He would spend his spare time with a group of students most of whom went on to become eminent psychoanalysts themselves. They were always struck with his ability to work hard and a sense of loneliness. While the former ensured his ascent in the profession in the face of resistance from certain quarters, the latter resulted in him having many girlfriends. He was deeply in love with one of them but was turned down by her family on account of being a ‘foreigner’. It is said that he had many relationships in his life but this incident changed his attitude towards women forever. Khan was said to be genuinely happy, only when he was painting or writing on his own.

Over the next 25 years. Khan grew in fame, fortune and professional stature. He was regarded as a person of great sensitivity, with some original and unusual ideas. He wrote four books and numerous papers, in addition to editing classic works of Freud and Winnicott. His writings have been described as the most scholarly and gracious that psychoanalysis has ever produced. His language is graceful; his theories are simple and are given colour and conviction by memorable case descriptions. He had a rare and precious gift of bringing several great minds in psychoanalysis together and creating something completely new from it. His theories about “schizoid personality”, “perversions” and “acting out” brought to life some of the dead and buried ideas in psychoanalysis. He lived and had his busy practice in a gracious flat in the Knightsbridge area of London. As a clinician, he was considered a maverick; a law unto himself who knowingly broke boundaries of classic psychoanalytical technique. He refused to be a mirroring object in the sessions, which he believed made the process one-sided and left the patient isolated. He was often authoritarian, but managed to combine it with tenderness and genuine tolerance. His style was charismatic and he used his background, experience and feelings to guide him. His students attest with honest gratitude to his profound knowledge and sensitivity. For them he was the most influential presence in their lives and he rescued many from abandoning training by providing an acceptable version of psychoanalysis which made treatment possible.

Masud Khan was rich, famous and clever. Combined this with his intellect, good looks and aristocratic background, he achieved a near cult status in the profession. His marriage to Svetlana Beriozova, a principal ballerina, enhanced his reputation and influence to the royalty and high society across Europe. Unfortunately, the same could not be true for most of his professional colleagues who had to struggle to make a living. Their jealousy was frequently fuelled by Khan’s provocative grandiosity. He had an insatiable urge to be centre-stage and never discovered the bliss of being ordinary. In addition, he was outspoken and deliberately broke myths of classic psychoanalytical theory and practice. His supporters, including some eminent professionals, consider that he did it legitimately using his training, knowledge and a will to take the profession forward. However, they were out-numbered by defenders of tradition (for both right and wrong reasons) and the establishment. But Khan would have none of it and made his enemies task easier by doing more of the same. He lashed out at his critics. As a result his code of practice was officially challenged: he was accused of being self-revealing in analysis and among other

things of having an affair with a student. Khan remained unrepentant. Most charges were found unsubstantiated but he was lucky to escape punishment. Troubles did not, however, go away completely as the rumour factory was now working at full capacity. Soon everybody who was anybody in the profession had a Masud Khan story to tell.

Masud Khan was a fascinating man. He was born and raised during the British Raj in India. He followed them back to London and apparently chose to identify with the rulers in seeking to be accepted as an intellectual in the West. His love of English literature, French wine and art collection reflects how deeply he drank from the Western culture. At one time he was also accused of telling them nothing in the West about the East. It is now recognised that his roots never withered away and many of Khan's habits and theories were from his culture albeit not articulated. He opted to live abroad most of his life but in strange fits of passion writes about his unbelonging in Europe, or remaining unanchored in London "At last I know that alienated existence in the West alone defies my authenticity". His friends recall that in spite of his attachment to London and Paris, he remained "An expatriate: his country was Pakistan, his culture Islam, and his true tongue Punjabi. His big dream was to return to Lyalpur, to set up a foundation and bring psychoanalysis to Pakistan".

Khan's mentor and long-term supporter Winnicot died in the early 70's. This was followed by his mother's death in Pakistan. Similar tragedies thirty years ago had propelled him to where he stood today. As if that was not enough, he divorced his wife and moved to live alone in Bayswater. He must have been struggling to cope with these losses when he was diagnosed to have lung cancer. This was followed by his brother's death. For the first time in life, probably, Khan felt vulnerable. He wanted unconditional love from everybody around him as he felt he had earned it (as would happen in the East). But his enemies saw it otherwise; they turned on him and attempts were made to strike him off the membership of the British Psychoanalytical Society. By this time Khan could hardly speak as a result of his deteriorating illness "I would fight back if I had a voice..." he wrote when a colleague visited. That must be an understatement as Khan hit back with the last weapon in his armoury. His last book "When Spring Comes" came on the market in 1988. The book was well received by the lay public, but the Society found it offensive with more of the same of Khan's self-revealing style. So it did what some members wanted to do to him for a long time. Khan was struck off the British Psychoanalytical Society register. This was a fatal blow as the Society was like a surrogate parent to him; he had given himself to it as a teacher, librarian, writer, and editor (without pay) for over 30 years. What those responsible achieved by torturing a dying man remains a mystery; issues relating to race and religion on either side may be relevant. Some considered it a malicious attempt to discredit a life's work and achievements of a sick man, and left the Society. For others, this leaves a legacy of shame: an embarrassment, and a disgraceful scar on Society's own credibility.

### **Summer of 1989 in Hyde Park appeared the same:**

Colourful, fragrant and crowded. Children played under the watchful gaze of their minders near the lake. Occasional rider also trotted by. Even the regular visitors did not miss a certain tall and handsome man who rode his horse, Solo, no more. Those few who glanced at the obituary columns in the newspapers realised that Prince Masud had died in a London Clinic on June 7, 1989. He was miles away from home with only a nurse by his side. "I have no friends in London" he had written earlier. He had asked to be flown back from where he came many years ago. to be buried on the right of his father in the family graveyard in Lyallpur. Generous to the last, he left his enormous wealth to his estate manager, who had remained loyal when others fell away. Wherever the name of psychoanalysis carried some meaning (excluding Pakistan of course), the news of his death was received with great sadness; the golden age in psychoanalysis had come to an end. While most psychoanalytical societies in different parts of the world held special meetings to commemorate his death, the Society in London recognised his death nearly two years after it had taken place "What an end to my life".

Masud Khan leaves behind a legacy of sadness: an Eastern genius for being fated, suffering and surviving through the phases of his remarkable life, to his destiny as a person who had creatively

contributed to the human knowledge. He was not honoured where he distinguished himself and was never crowned in his homeland. In a sense this article is about sharing and working through his mourning; written with great affection for somebody (I met as a child) who will never see it. Some others have also written but they fell short of telling the whole story. In 2039, his personal papers will become public (after an official 50-year ban). If I am alive and in good health, I will write to clear his name; otherwise my 10 year old Lyalpur-bom son will carry the gauntlet. Meanwhile, I remember the 'Prince of Lyallpur' who conquered the West intellectually but was not recognised, because the dead live on through those who Remember them

Not a friend, not a friend greet

My poor corpse, where my bones shall be thrown:

A thousand thousand sighs to save, Lay me, O where

Sad true lover never finds my grave, To weep there

### **Acknowledgement**

I am grateful to J. Cooper to let me quote extensively from her book.