



## A Jungian Exploration of Persona and Identity in *The Kite Runner*

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### Abstract

*Khaled Hosseini's The Kite Runner (2003) explores the complexities of identity through the concept of Carl Jung's persona, which refers to the mask we present to the world. This study utilizes a qualitative research approach to examine the internal conflicts of Amir and Baba as they navigate the division between their carefully crafted public personas and their hidden desires. Through close analysis of the novel's text, this study focuses on the characters' words, actions, and internal monologues to reveal the personas they construct. Additionally, interpretations of Jungian psychology and literary criticism further enhance this analysis by examining the concept of the persona. By examining how Amir and Baba navigate the societal pressures of war-torn Afghanistan, this study investigates the motivations behind their contrasting personas – Amir, who is burdened by guilt and yearning for approval, and Baba, who personifies unwavering Pashtun ideals while masking a past transgression. Through this analysis, we shed light on the potential hypocrisy inherent in constructed identities. Furthermore, this research delves into the characters' past experiences to understand how these experiences shape their need to project a certain image. Ultimately, this analysis aims to uncover the characters' shadows by exploring the concept of the persona, which illuminates their journey of redemption and the complex interplay between societal expectations and the longing for authenticity. This analysis suggests that confronting these hidden aspects of ourselves is crucial for personal growth and, potentially, collective transformation.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Life in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* (2003) is a constant negotiation between the masks we wear and the humanity hidden beneath them. Carl Jung's concept of the persona, the carefully constructed facade we present to the world, serves as a powerful lens through which we examine the complexities of the characters, particularly Amir and Baba. Within the Afghan social hierarchy, ethnicity and social standing become brushstrokes on the canvas of these personas, dictating expectations and shaping behaviors. This research delves into how Amir and Baba craft and maintain their public identities.

Amir, the narrator and protagonist, yearns for his Baba's approval. He cultivates an image of the ideal son, who must be intelligent, loyal, and Pashtun; constantly seeking his father's validation. Yet, beneath this facade lies a web of guilt and insecurity stemming from a childhood betrayal. Baba, on the other hand, embodies the image of the unwavering Pashtun – strong, courageous, and fiercely independent. However, his persona masks a hidden past transgression that continues to cast a long shadow on his life. By juxtaposing their carefully constructed facades with their private actions, this analysis exposes the fault lines and contradictions that lie beneath the surface.

The exploration extends beyond Amir and Baba. This study investigates the persona-building of Assef, a character who uses religion and patriotism as a mask for his underlying sadism. This comparative analysis reveals a universal human tendency to wear masks, highlighting the potential hypocrisy that can fester within these constructed identities.

Furthermore, this research explores the motivations behind these carefully constructed personas. By examining the characters' social context and personal histories, the analysis aims to understand how past experiences and societal pressures may influence their desire to project a specific image. For instance, did Baba's feelings of guilt regarding his past mistake with Ali contribute to his discomfort with accepting charity? In addition, how might Amir's childhood trauma have fueled his quest to be perceived as a "good" person, even if it meant compromising his own integrity at times?

Ultimately, this exploration of the Jungian persona in *The Kite Runner* (2003) aims to unveil the characters' inner struggles and expose the fault lines between their public facades and private realities. This deeper understanding enriches our appreciation of the novel's exploration of identity, morality, and the human capacity for both deception and redemption. By peeling back the layers of the persona, we gain a deeper understanding of the characters' humanity, their capacity for good and evil, and the complex inner struggle between societal expectations and the yearning for authenticity.

### Research Questions

The research questions of this study are as follows:

- i. How does the need for his Baba's approval influence Amir's construction of a persona and the resulting internal conflict he experiences?

- ii. How do societal pressures and a past transgression shape the contrasting personas of Amir and Baba, and how do these personas contribute to their internal struggles?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Adiguna (2013) provides an overview of various socio-cultural differences, political upheavals, historical facts, the author's personal life, and the experiences of the characters during the chaotic political events in Afghanistan, including the Soviet invasion, the rise of the Taliban, and the tragedy of 9/11.

Usman (2014) analyzes the cultural and ethnic values of Afghans in the novel. According to Usman, Pashtuns are depicted as stereotypical characters representing jealousy, hatred, oppression, prejudiced attitudes, and racism. On the other hand, Hazaras are portrayed as a poor and oppressed minority group victimized by the dominant Pashtun ethnic community in Afghanistan. Usman argues that there is anti-Pashtun propaganda used against Pashtun Muslims worldwide. He sees the narrative as a simplified propaganda against Pashtun Sunni Muslims through generalizations. Usman regards Hosseini's discriminatory attitude as biased and lacking historical verification.

In contrast to the aforementioned research, Malik et al., (2014) examine the narrative from a linguistic/structural perspective in their latest research. They apply "Huckin's analytical tools of CDA" to the novel and analyze the linguistic manipulation employed by the author to achieve his objectives. The multiple themes of identity, knowledge, power struggle, and social relations are analyzed in terms of linguistic devices by contextualizing the text of the novel. Assef is portrayed as an antagonist, a true embodiment of evil, and possessing negative traits in his personality. Hassan's facial expressions are compared to those of a lamb, as he is marginalized and powerless against the sinister Assef. Another notable feature of the novel is the stoning death of a woman at Ghazi Stadium caused by extremists. According to Shah, this event symbolizes the devastation in Afghanistan as a whole, similar to "the rape of Hassan and Sohrab" (p. 22).

Rehman et al. (2023) provide insights into Amir's psychological journey in Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* by using a Jungian analysis. While previous critics have explored themes such as guilt, betrayal,

and redemption, this paper goes deeper into Amir's process of individuation. Drawing from Jungian scholars who emphasize the importance of confronting one's own shadow for achieving wholeness, it analyzes how Amir deals with his repressed guilt and cowardice. In contrast to studies that focus primarily on external events, this analysis delves into Amir's internal conflicts, aligning with the notion that self-discovery involves facing hidden aspects of the psyche. This enhances our understanding of Amir and expands the application of Jungian criticism to *The Kite Runner* by illustrating its effectiveness in examining war trauma and personal transformation.

Rehman et al. (2023) also analyzes the motivations of the characters and their thematic significance in *The Kite Runner*. The analysis incorporates core Jungian concepts, such as the archetype of the scapegoat, shadows, and individuation. This analysis effectively demonstrates an understanding of these concepts. For example, it highlights how Hassan's unwavering loyalty and victimization position him as the archetypal scapegoat, while Amir's internal conflicts and repressed guilt reflect the Jungian concept of shadow projection. By using this Jungian framework, the analysis emphasizes the characters' internal struggles and their journeys towards self-discovery.

Kai-fu (2019) critically examines an analysis of Amir's psychological journey in *The Kite Runner* (2003), focusing on Erikson's developmental stages. While the review acknowledges the paper's clear structure and its emphasis on how Amir's experiences shape his psychology, it suggests further areas of exploration. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of Amir's complex transformation, the review recommends incorporating existing research on trauma, masculinity, and the portrayal of betrayal within the novel. Additionally, exploring alternative psychological frameworks, such as Freudian psychoanalysis, could offer fresh perspectives on Amir's internal conflicts. Lastly, conducting a more in-depth analysis of the impact of Afghan culture and historical events on Amir's choices and self-perception would contribute to a more effective examination of his psychological growth.

Despite the various critical perspectives on *The Kite Runner*, there is still room for a more comprehensive analysis. While Rehman et al. (2023) offer valuable insights into Amir's psyche using Jungian psychology, there is potential for incorporating additional frameworks such as trauma and masculinity. These frameworks could further explore the lasting effects of Amir's persona and

experiences and the complex interplay between guilt, betrayal, and his evolving sense of masculinity. Similarly, analyses like Adiguna's (2013) provide historical context, but a deeper examination of how Afghan culture influences the characters' choices and motivations, as suggested by Kai-fu (2019), is necessary. Understanding the cultural norms surrounding loyalty, honor, and social hierarchy could provide a richer understanding of the characters' actions and the moral dilemmas they face. By integrating these elements with existing critical approaches, we can create a more nuanced and multifaceted interpretation of *The Kite Runner*, one that delves deeper into the characters' inner landscapes and the cultural tapestry that shapes their experiences. Therefore, the gap left by the previous researchers is the inner and outer image of the characters of Hosseini's novel, which is going to be filled by the researchers.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research employs a qualitative approach to analyze the inner struggles of the characters in Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* (2003). Carl Jung's analytical psychology serves as the framework for examining how societal pressures, personal desires, and past transgressions shape the characters' public personas and contribute to internal conflicts. To establish the foundation, a close reading of the novel identifies passages that illustrate:

- a) Public personas and private persona (dialogue and actions that reflect societal expectations; and internal monologues and actions that contradict the public persona)
- b) Internal conflicts (feelings of guilt, shame, and conflicting desires)
- c) Potential manifestations of the shadow (negative traits hidden behind the public persona)

## **ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Baba and Amir experience a disconnection between their inner and outer selves, which is commonly referred to as hypocrisy or a "protective covering" according to the Jungian perspective (Sharp, 1987, p. 95). Their private actions do not align with their public behavior. Jung (1916) states that "the man with the persona is blind to the existence of his inner-realities." (p. 199). He highlights the lack

of awareness within their social community regarding the connection between their true selves and their public facade. They believe that they are not being hypocritical because they only show their societal image, concealing their private persona from others. They are hesitant to break their societal image and instead choose to uphold a strong ethnic persona. A Jungian analyst Sharp (1987) explains that the persona serves as a social bridge and a protective shield, as he says:

It is both a useful bridge socially and an indispensable protective covering; without a persona, we are simply too vulnerable to others. We regularly cover up our inferiorities with a persona, since we do not like our weaknesses to be seen (p. 96).

### **PUBLIC PERSONA AND PRIVATE ACTIONS OF BABA IN THE KITE RUNNER**

Baba appears to embody the strong characteristics of a Pashtun, known as Pashtunwali (Coulson, 2014). His strong ethnic persona symbolizes his powerful position in Afghan society. People call him "Toophan Agha" or "Mr. Hurricane" (Hosseini, 2003) because of his bravery, comparing him to the depth of an ocean. Baba presents himself as a robust Pashtun, willing to do anything for the social well-being of others, even if it means sacrificing his own inner peace. He single-handedly builds an orphanage in Kabul for orphans and impoverished children, demonstrating his love for them. Amir praises Baba for his financial and moral support in social work activities, noting how "Baba had personally funded the entire project, paying for the engineers, electricians, plumbers, and laborers" (Hosseini, 2003, p. 12).

Throughout the construction of the orphanage, Baba emphasizes the social and moral strengths of Pashtuns. He highlights that, as a Pashtun, one must be generous and upright, exemplifying his own social strengths within the Pashtun community. During the completion of the project, Baba delivers a speech that showcases his uprightness and heroic ethnic persona. Amir recalls, "Baba was wearing a green suit and a caracul hat. Midway through the speech, the wind knocked his hat off and everyone laughed" (Hosseini, 2003, p. 13). For a Pashtun man, the hat symbolizes honor and dignity. Baba asks Amir to hold his hat for him, symbolizing his expectations for Amir to become a strong and steadfast Pashtun like himself.

In his speech to Amir, Baba also represents the cultural code of Pashtunwali, specifically the principles of "nang" and "namoos" (Strickland, 2007). He teaches Amir to value cultural honor and dignity when Amir expresses his desire to marry an Afghan girl, Soraya. Whenever Amir attempts to meet Soraya before marriage, Baba reminds him of Pashtunwali. Baba explains that Soraya's father is a Pashtun, and a Pashtun cannot compromise the chastity of a woman. He advises him, stating, "the man is a Pashtun to the root. He has nang and namoos. Nang. Namooos. Honor and pride. The tenets of Pashtun men. Especially when it came to the chastity of a wife. Or a daughter" (Hosseini, 2003, pp. 126-127).

Besides his strong ethnic persona, Baba embodies the qualities of hospitality, another aspect of Pashtunwali. He not only entertains his friends with his hospitality but also welcomes his opponents in times of need. In California, as Amir comes of age, Baba tries to instill in him a respect for cultural hospitality. He teaches him that "we may be hardheaded and far too proud, but in the hour of need... there's no one you'd rather have at your side than a Pashtun" (Hosseini, 2003, p. 140). When General Taheri visits Baba's home to offer condolences during his final illness, Baba focuses on the ethnic image of Pashtuns and highlights their respect for cultural codes.

Baba is determined not to compromise the cultural code of Pashtunwali by relying on others for financial support. When Baba and Amir leave Afghanistan for America, Baba starts a small business at the San Jose flea market but never asks for a single penny from Americans or other Afghans settled in California. One day, when they enter a food store to buy some groceries, Baba quickly realizes that it is a welfare store. He walks "out of the welfare office like a man free of a tumor" and throws the groceries away, fearing that other Afghans might see him buying food with charity money (Hosseini, 2003, p. 114). He believes that his reputation may be tarnished if he is seen shopping in a charity store.

Baba builds an orphanage and presents himself as a generous and honorable Pashtun. However, in his private life, he betrays Ali and Hassan. Despite building an orphanage for orphaned children, he does not acknowledge that Hassan is his illegitimate child. While he emphasizes loyalty and devotion, he deceives his childhood friend, Ali, by having an affair with his wife Sanauber, resulting in Hassan's



birth. Baba is revered by his community for upholding the codes of Pashtunwali, but they are unaware of the disconnection between Baba's public and private persona.

In his public life, Baba claims that he can stand up against immorality in others. For instance, his "towering Pashtun specimen with a thick beard" (Hosseini, 2003, p. 11) symbolizes his moral strength within his own Pashtun community. He believes that if a Pashtun is morally and ethically upright, they always wear their hat sturdily, a symbol of "nang and namoos." This statement about Baba's moral strengths reveals his hypocritical nature. He publicly adheres to principles of honor and pride but struggles to maintain a balance between his public and private lives. Ultimately, his persona becomes excessively strong, leading to a private life filled with shame, sins, selfishness, and betrayals.

Baba also portrays himself as a strong religious figure, taking on the roles of both a moralist and a preacher. He upholds the social and moral conventions of Afghan society while adhering to his own personal moral values, which he believes align with the principles of Islam. Baba denounces the teachings of Mullah Fatiullah Khan, claiming that the moral lessons taught in his class are incorrect. His disdain for the mullahs is expressed through harsh and offensive language, as he declares, "piss on the beards of all those self-righteous monkeys" (Hosseini, 2003, p. 15). By making his own declarations on matters of morality, Baba asserts himself as both a moralist and a preacher.

Baba preaches Islamic codes to Amir by upholding his own moral values, although his focus on theft as the worst sin rather than the effects of alcohol on Muslims contrasts with the beliefs of a mullah. This exposes his hypocrisy, as he neither respects the mullah's beliefs nor follows his own moral codes regarding cheating and theft. This raises the question of whether Baba acts in accordance with his words. Outwardly, he appears to be the same man he speaks of, but in-wardly, he is a non-believer in God, a thief, a betrayer, and a hypocrite.

Baba condemns the immoral acts of others while concealing his own personal immorality. This is evident when he becomes furious with Karim upon discovering his lie about a truck waiting to take them to Pakistan after the Russian invasion. It also motivates him to risk his life to protect the dignity of a woman whom he does not even know. As an honorable Pashtun, he stands against the Russian soldier who attempts to dishonor her. In doing so, he not only preserves the honor of Pashtun women, but also

opposes all the atrocities in Afghan society. This demonstrates both his respect for women and the Pashtun culture, as well as his hypocritical nature, revealing disloyalty towards his friend Ali and his own wife, Sofia.

Baba's masculine persona reflects his devotion and commitment to Sofia Akrami, whom he refers to as his "princess" and loves deeply. However, he betrays her by engaging in an illicit relationship with his servant's wife. He cheats on his wife and denies her the right to his sincerity. While he may appear to be a devoted Pashtun and religious man to society, his private life is characterized by deceit and evil. Carl Jung (1916) presents a similar viewpoint on a man torn between his public and private life in this regard.

The social "strong man" is in his private life often a mere child where his own states of feeling are concerned; his discipline in public goes miserably to pieces in private life. His "happiness in his work" assumes a woeful countenance at home; his "spotless public morality" looks strange indeed behind the mask – we will not mention deeds, but only fantasies, and the wives of such men would have a pretty tale to tell. As to his selfless altruism, his children have decided views about that. (p. 194)

Baba's actions of "feeding the poor on the streets and building an orphanage" (Hosseini, 2003, p. 263) contribute to his social strength. However, he hides his guilt behind the facade of being an upright man, making it difficult for others to see. Despite his humanitarian efforts, his true self remains hidden. In his Afghan society, he presents himself as a "strong man," but in his private life, he is like a crying child. The contrast between his public image of "spotless public morality" and his private struggles causes him to feel depressed. When his true self is revealed, we witness the hypocrisy of Baba, who is torn between his legitimate and illegitimate sons. As a result, he starts to interact with people using a strong persona. This idea aligns with the perspective presented by Sharp (1987).

Civilized society, life as we know it, depends on interactions between people through the persona. But it is psychologically unhealthy to identify with it, to believe we are nothing but the person we show to others. (p. 95)

Baba lives in a civilized Pashtun society, where it is considered disgraceful for him and his family to reveal their true identity to their social community. He presents himself as an honorable Pashtun, but lacks the courage to expose his hypocrisy and inflated persona. From a Jungian perspective, Whitmont (1969) suggests that "the more inflated the persona, the more aggressive the shadow becomes." (p. 51) Baba's strong and radiant persona only serves to make his shadow darker and less developed.

### **BABA'S FIGHT WITH SHADOW AND PERSONA IN THE KITE RUNNER (2003)**

Placed in a Jungian context, both the shadow and the persona work in a compensatory way. In this regard, Sharp (1987, pp. 95-96), a Jungian analyst, presents a similar viewpoint: "the brighter the light, the darker the shadow. The more one identifies with the persona—which effectively denies the existence of a shadow—the more difficulties one will encounter with the unacknowledged 'other side' of the personality". The figure below illustrates the connection between the persona and the shadow.

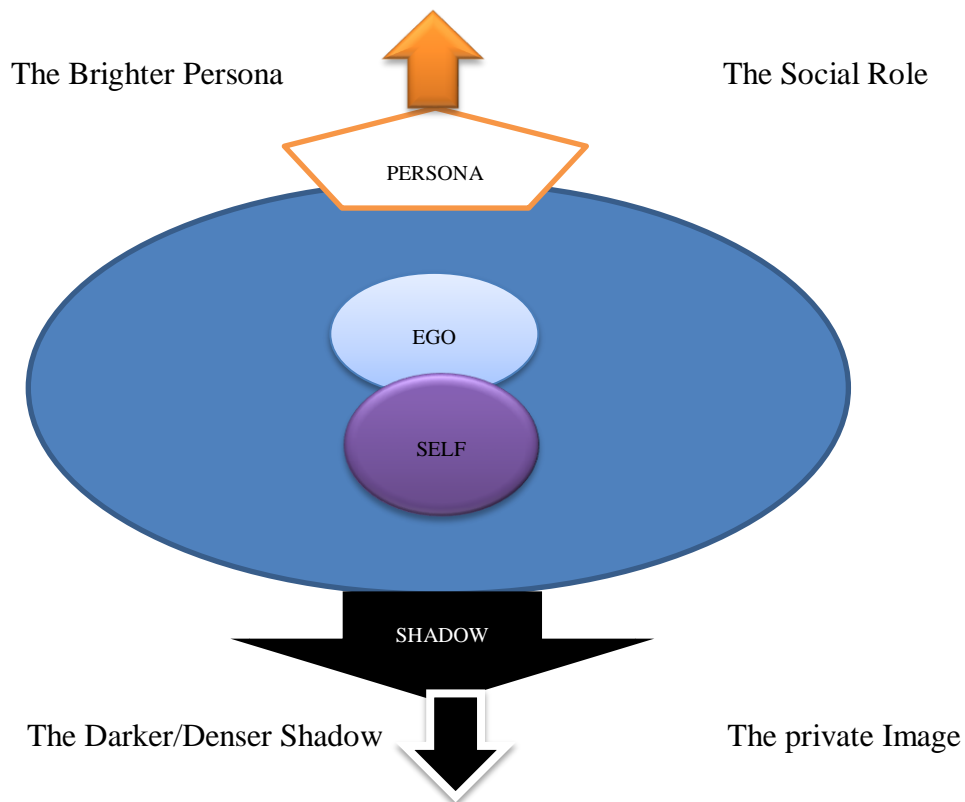


Figure 1 (drafted by the researcher herself)

The figure shows an up-arrow representing the bright and strong aspects of Amir and Baba's personas, while the down-arrow represents the darker aspects of their personalities. The more dominant their personas, the darker their shadows become. Baba's strong moralist/Pashtun/preacher persona weakens when he is reminded of his love with his wife upon seeing Amir, his legitimate child. In his private life, he struggles to balance his two sons: one who is socially legitimate (Amir) and one who is socially illegitimate (Hassan). Amir reminds Baba of his infidelity, while Hassan reminds him of his deceitful act toward Sanauber, his servant's wife.

As a father, Baba is tender and affectionate, but he is torn between his two sons - the legitimate and illegitimate ones. Symbolically, Amir represents his dominant ego, while Hassan represents his repressed unconscious. He fails to find balance between his ego and self. The more he ignores Hassan, the stronger and brighter his persona becomes. The more he prioritizes his ego over his self, the darker his shadow grows. Although he treats them both well, he loves them differently. He becomes anxious when something happens to either Amir or Hassan, which symbolizes his unconscious fear of the gap between his ego and self. His persona does not serve as a mediator between his inner and social worlds, which, according to Hudson (1978), constitutes "the compromise between the individual and society" (p. 54).

Baba portrays himself as a benevolent man who takes care of his servant, Ali, and his son, Hassan. He presents himself as a loving and responsible father. He never forgets Hassan's birthday and even arranges an operation to fix Hassan's hare-lip. Likewise, he acts as Ali's sincere friend, showing concern for the problems faced by his servants. Baba claims to have grown up with Ali and loved him like a son. However, internally, he betrays Ali, highlighting the disconnection between his words and actions. Amir describes him as follows: Ali and Baba grew up together as childhood playmates. But Ali's leg was crippled by polio, and their friendship changed. Unlike Hassan and I, who grew up a generation later, Baba never referred to Ali as his friend in stories he told us about their mischief-making. Instead, Ali would jokingly point out that he was the architect of their mischief, and Baba was the poor laborer (Hosseini, 2003, pp. 21-22).

These stories from Baba's childhood reveal a deeper truth about his feelings towards Ali. By never acknowledging their friendship, Baba creates doubt in the minds of readers about why he is so concerned with the Hazaras, who have low status in Afghan society. It uncovers a secret that Baba is hiding and exposes the contradiction between his public persona as a heroic and generous man and his shameful treatment of his own family. He never reveals Hassan's true identity to the world or gives him the rights he deserves as his legitimate son, just like he does for me, his biological child.

Baba, who is a Pashtun, rejects the codes of Pashtunwali and struggles to maintain a balance between his public and private image. He stands up for fellow Pashtuns but ignores his own son and half-brother to me, Hassan. His reputation is more important to him than his true character. This is evident when my father-in-law immediately approves Baba's proposal for me to marry Soraya, saying, "Your reputation precedes you. I was your humble admirer in Kabul and remain so today" (Hossenin, 2003, p. 147). He is unaware of the pain Baba causes in his private life.

In summary, the relationship between Baba and me is complex and demanding. It forces both of us to project strong personas. Baba expects loyalty, bravery, and adherence to Pashtunwali from me, while I long to see in him a loving, caring, and accepting father. This demanding and conditioned father-son relationship leads us to meet each other with our strong personas. In a father-son relationship, the father serves as a role model, striving to pass on his own traits and characteristics to his son.

### **AMIR'S CONFRONTATION WITH SHADOW AND PERSONA**

Amir develops his social and moral beliefs from his Baba, who is his role model. Bloom (2009, p.54) quotes Miles, who explains that as the narrator of the novel, Amir struggles to meet his father's high expectations. This includes embodying traditional Afghan male qualities such as physical strength, bravery, the ability to discern right from wrong, and a willingness to stand up against injustice.

Baba fails to allocate equal time and attention to both of his sons. Due to a lack of time spent together and a distanced relationship with Amir, Baba is unable to pass on his brave nature to him. Although Baba loves Amir and wants him to stand up for what is right, he does not openly display

fatherly affection in the presence of Hassan. Baba wants to see his own traits reflected in Amir, but Amir does not live up to his expectations.

Amir aspires to be a writer and spends much of his time writing stories, maintaining the persona of a writer. At one point, Amir wishes for Baba to read a short story he has written, but Baba dismisses him and says, "Yes, give it to Kaka Rahim. I'm going upstairs to get ready" (Hosseini, 2003, p. 27). This interaction with Baba reinforces an image of him that makes Amir feel inadequate and drives him to contemplate harming himself to rid his body of Baba's "cursed blood". Baba does not value Amir's identity as a writer and wants him to be a strong athlete like himself. Baba becomes frustrated and even angry when he sees Amir constantly engrossed in books or lost in his own thoughts.

Baba becomes disappointed when he fails to see the same qualities in Amir that he possesses. Baba wants him to be courageous and enter the business world like him. Baba takes on the role of a tormented father by claiming, "If I hadn't seen the doctor pull him out of my wife with my own eyes, I'd never believe he was my son" (Hosseini, 2003, p. 20). When Amir fails to embody the qualities Baba desires, he tries to hide his true self from him. Amir attempts to appear as a hero and an obedient son by wearing a strong facade in public.

Baba desperately wishes for Amir to win the Kite-running tournament, believing that this would make him proud. When he wins the tournament at the expense of Hassan's sexual abuse, Amir assumes the role of a kite runner, impressing Baba and those around him. Baba throws a party to celebrate Amir's success, and Amir greets everyone with a forced smile, while internally he bleeds with guilt over betraying Hassan. He confesses, "My face ached from the strain of my plastered smile" (Hosseini, 2003, p. 83). Amir behaves like a respectable Pashtun, even welcoming Assef and his followers, despite their dishonorable actions towards Hassan. This reveals a hypocritical weakness in his actions, as he publicly accepts a gift from Assef but privately desires to punish him.

Like his father, Amir also wears a strong persona that does not bridge the gap between his public and private life. In his childhood, he plays with Hassan and considers him his friend. He shares his broken toys, tells him stories, and entertains him with his jokes. When his other Pashtun friends are absent, he treats Hassan as his equal. However, in public, he refers to Hassan as his "servant" and belittles

him as an "illiterate Hazara" and "a cook" Amir reflects on his contradictory relationship with Hassan, stating, "But he is not my friend! I almost blurted. He's my servant! Had I really thought?" (Hosseini, 2003, p. 30).

Amir talks to himself about Hassan, trying to understand his own relationship with him. He realizes his own hypocrisy when he almost blurts out that Hassan is just his servant, not his friend. But he knows that's not true. He treats Hassan well, like a friend and even more like a brother. However, societal norms force him to remember Hassan's lower status as a servant, which makes him feel superior to Hassan.

Amir's persona as a good friend becomes stronger when Hassan is being assaulted by Assef. During the assault, Amir hides himself out of fear of Assef, who represents his own darker side. Amir constantly represses this side of himself because he can't overcome his fear of Assef, which is really a fear of his own shadow. Jung (1981) also states in this regard, "The mirror does not flatter; it faithfully shows whatever looks into it; namely, the face we never show to the world because we cover it with the persona, the mask of the actor. But the mirror lies behind the mask and reveals the true face" (p. 20).

Afraid of being seen as a coward by his father, Baba, and his mentor, Rahim Khan, Amir projects an even stronger persona than before. When he returns home after Hassan's assault, Baba and Rahim Khan are waiting to celebrate his victory in the kite tournament. Amir could have told them what happened to Hassan, but he remains silent to avoid an unpleasant confrontation with Baba. Instead, he pretends to be the winner of the tournament, projecting his persona onto Baba and Rahim Khan.

Although Amir betrays Hassan, he considers both Baba and Rahim Khan weak and irresponsible for not questioning him about his lateness. When Amir buries his face into Baba's chest, Baba draws him closer, causing Amir to forget everything. From an archetypal perspective, both father and son project their personas onto each other. Baba hides his guilt for having an illegitimate child and betraying his childhood friend, Ali, while Amir's betrayal of Hassan is hidden by his feigned loyalty, revealing his hypocrisy.

Amir's actions in the alley, abandoning Hassan to his fate, display a lack of adherence to Pashtunwali. When he drives Hassan out of his home, he wears a strong mask, pretending to be a truthful boy. He also breaks the code of Pashtunwali when he treats Rahim Khan as a friend but hides from him what he did to Hassan. Even though he appears to be a good master and friend to both Hassan and Ali, inwardly he is tired of pretending.

Now let's focus on Amir's persona as a husband. He loves Soraya and is committed and sincere in his love for her. Marrying Soraya fills the emptiness in his life. He describes her as his "yelda," the first night of winter, and his "Swap Meet Princess." Their relationship is built on mutual trust, love, and understanding. They take care of each other and remain loyal in their marriage. Amir does everything he can to make Soraya happy. Even though she can't have children, he still loves her and doesn't see her as incomplete.

Amir's masculine persona becomes stronger. He hides his shameful past from Soraya to maintain dominance over her. He pretends to be a strong Pashtun like his father, morally superior to Soraya, whose persona remains authentic. Soraya confesses her flaws before their marriage, telling him that when she was 18, she fell in love with an Afghan boy and ran away with him. They spent almost a month together before her father found them and brought her back home. She doesn't want to be hypocritical or dishonest by hiding her vulnerable past.

Amir becomes jealous of Soraya's masculine character because he still sees himself better than her. He admits to envying her and almost confessing his betrayal of Hassan, but ultimately chooses not to. He doesn't find courage from Soraya, who openly shares her secrets with her husband. He acknowledges that Soraya is a better person than him in many ways, including her courage. However, instead of being inspired by Soraya, Amir feels compelled to strengthen his own social mask to appear morally superior to his wife.

On another occasion, Soraya makes a generalization about all men, pointing out the double standard that allows them to engage in certain behaviors without consequences. She laments that when she makes one mistake, she faces judgment and criticism from society. Hearing this conversation, both Amir and Soraya are affected. Amir tries to comfort Soraya by expressing his love for her and assuring



her that he values her virtue. Soraya's comment about Amir being different surprises him. In response, Amir wonders why he is different, considering that he was raised around men and didn't experience the double standards that Afghan society imposes on women. He speculates that his father's unconventional approach to societal customs may have influenced him. However, he also admits that a significant reason he doesn't care about Soraya's past is because he has his own regrets.

Amir realizes that marrying Soraya is the first time he experiences the tenderness of a woman, as he has been surrounded by men all his life. He attributes his perceived difference from other Afghans to his close relationship with his Baba, who was a liberal and lived by his own rules. However, Amir's hypocrisy is revealed as he also has a dark past similar to Soraya's. When Soraya shares a story about teaching an illiterate Afghan woman to read and write, Amir presents himself as someone who has done a similar noble act and feels proud of it. This exposes his hypocrisy, as he admits to having used his literacy to mock Hassan's lack of knowledge.

Amir reflects on his friendship with Hassan, remembering how he often acted as a teacher to ridicule Hassan's illiteracy instead of genuinely teaching him. This highlights Amir's double standards and the contrast between his public appearance and private thoughts. It is clear that Amir is aware of this dichotomy, as he acknowledges his own duplicity. However, he doesn't fully confront or address his inner weaknesses, much like his Baba. Both father and son hide their true selves, leading them to live as strangers in America despite their societal images.

Amir criticizes the hypocrisy of other men while concealing his own diplomatic and hypocritical nature behind a facade of authenticity. He is confronted with his true self when he looks in the mirror, but like his Baba, he does not want his family, friends, and society to see the darkness within himself. This lack of self-awareness, coupled with the desire to protect his image, prevents Amir from truly addressing his own flaws. Amir reflects on the social masks he and his father wear in California, stating, "For me, America was a place to bury my memories. For Baba, a place to mourn his" (Hosseini, 2003, p. 112). In America, they are able to leave behind the painful reminders of their past, such as Hassan and Ali. It is a place where their previous traumas do not plague them like monsters, ghosts, or snakes; instead, their protective facades grow even stronger. Amir further expresses, "America was

different....somewhere without ghosts, memories, or sins" (Hosseini, 2003, p. 119). In America, their concealed selves remain hidden beneath an amplified and more polished facade.

### **PERSONA OF ALI AND HASSAN**

The researchers now turn to the weaker personas of Ali and Hassan, the other characters, who come from a marginalized ethnic group in Afghanistan. Both the father and son have scars on their faces and are physically unfit, but morally and ethically stronger than Baba and Amir. Their personas are productive, revealing the balance between their inner and outer image. In the words of (Hudson, 1978), their persona act the "mediators between the inner world and the outer world" (p. 54), they wear various personas but fulfill the demands of every mask they wear.

Both Ali and Hassan are loyal in their friendships and servitude: Ali with Baba and Hassan with Amir. Hassan's persona as Amir's friend is productive as he fulfills the demands of friendship. He takes on the role of a kite runner for Amir, stating, "I am going to run that blue kite for you" (Hosseini, 2003, p. 58). He appreciates Amir's pursuit of writing stories and encourages him by saying, "someday, Inshallah, you will be a great writer... and people all over the world will read your stories" (Hosseini, 2003, p. 160). Hassan refuses to hand over the blue kite to Assef, enduring brutal treatment by Assef and his followers. He sacrifices his honor and life for Amir's sake, becoming a sacrificial lamb.

We can observe the same commitment and loyalty in Ali's actions. He remains loyal to Baba and Amir until the end of his life. They fulfill their duties as friends and servants with full commitment and sincerity, exhibiting less hypocrisy and diplomacy compared to Baba and Amir.

### **CONCLUSION**

Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* (2003) explores the complexities of identity through the concept of the persona, or the mask we wear in the world, as described by Jung. This study focuses on Amir and Baba, revealing how they both present themselves differently to the world than they truly are, leading to internal struggles. Amir desires his Baba's approval and portrays himself as a loyal son and ideal Pashtun. However, deep down, he carries guilt and shame from a childhood betrayal. Baba, on the other hand,

embodies the strong and independent Pashtun ideal. Yet, he hides a past transgression that burdens him and prevents genuine connections and personal growth.

Through analyzing these contrasting personas, this study highlights the dangers of maintaining a false public image that diverges from one's true self. This inauthenticity breeds internal conflict and hypocrisy. However, *The Kite Runner* (2003) also offers hope. Amir's journey suggests the possibility of bridging the gap between his public persona and his true self. By facing his "shadow" and confronting hidden aspects of his personality, he begins a path towards authenticity. Unfortunately, we often lack the courage to confront our inner darkness and expose it to the world. As Jung (1916) aptly states, "the man with the persona is blind to the existence of inner realities" (p.199). Our inability to acknowledge our darker side leaves us susceptible to vices such as guilt, betrayal, selfishness, imbalance, cowardice, and deceit, similar to Amir and Baba's experiences.

Ultimately, *The Kite Runner* serves as a cautionary tale, urging us to strive for coherence between our public and private selves. By embracing introspection and having the courage to confront our hidden aspects, we can move towards a more fulfilling sense of identity and build genuine connections with others. This authenticity, both personal and potentially collective, opens the path to a more meaningful and fulfilled life.

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