

# My son the fanatic by hanif kureishi

[Linguistics](#), [English](#)



[Your full September 20, " My Son the Fanatic" by Hanif Kureishi Hanif Kureishi has been known as a profound Asian writer, filmmaker and novelist and has written great screenplays and dramas in the 1980s and 1990s. His short story, My Son the Fanatic, is a confluence of religion and individuality which was published initially in The New Yorker in 1994. This paper analyzes the story focusing on the ' power of art' and the actual message conveyed to the reader. The story is a narrative about Pervez who migrates to England with Ali, his son. He starts noticing some changes inside Ali's personality and becomes very much disturbed and suspicious. He also gets the idea that Ali has been selling his possessions too. He is confused about who he should confide in. He hesitates talking to his friends out of shame. But then he decides to take some advice from them so he tells them about all the suspicion and doubt he is having about his son. After much pondering, they come to the conclusion that Ali must be getting indulged in drugs. Pervez also discussed this with Benetta, a prostitute who is a regular passenger in his taxi. She tells him to notice any physical changes in Ali. After much observation, the only thing he observes is that Ali has started growing a beard and prays five times daily. Pervez decides to talk it out to him on dinner. Ali sees his father drinking and criticizes him that he breaks Koran's rules. Pervez is astonished and more shocked when Ali tells him that he will not study in Western education system since that portrays Western values. Pervez tries to convince him but all in vain. One day, as Pervez is driving with Benetta, they see Ali and tell him to get in the car. Ali gets in and Pervez and Benetta try to convince him to which he reacts furiously. Benetta gets out of the car while it is in motion and goes away. At home, Pervez beats him

furiously due to his attitude. At last, Ali asks him who is being fanatic- Ali or himself? Now, we discuss the message that is being portrayed to the reader in this short story. Kureishi has very well brought into life the fatherly care that Pervez shows regarding his son; Ali's recognition of individuality; and, the importance of affection and guidance given by friends in this society. Kureishi has been keenly studying the values of second generation immigrants who were embracing Islam and was surprised at how young people could turn to strict code of religious life while living in a secular country like England. This inspired him to create the character of Ali who chose a path of his own despite his father's opposition. He accepted being considered a fanatic, a moron, someone who was going astray. This inspires the reader to think about individuality and religion and the connection between the two. The extent to which one may follow religion is solely one's own choice independent of the wishes of others. " But while I am here on earth I want to make the best of it", Ali says. Many people think that family values and standards should be so strict that a child may not be able to think otherwise or make his own decisions. Authoritarian parents never let the child choose for himself. The child becomes an under-confident person. Pervez, however, seems like an authoritative parent who is suspicious of his son's activities but observes silently and at times tries to argue with him giving him logics. This is another thing that Ali had already chosen his path once and for all. He is not even shy to speak the truth. " You are too implicated in Western civilization", is what he tells his father, pointing out his mistakes. Also, the one who is determined enough is not frightened by any brutality. " There was no fear in his eyes", Kureishi writes in the end of the

story. The power of art depends on the three pillars of public speaking as defined by Aristotle- ethos, pathos and logos. Ethos helped Hanif to gain his audience because he was already profound in writing great pieces of literature. He has very artistically made use of irony, sarcasm and pathos that engages the reader till the end while building a strong emotional bond between the protagonist of the story (Ali) and the reader, and the latter feels a strong feeling of love and envy for the former. Hanif has also used logos to get his message across because the whole story is based on actual facts and observations that he collected about the immigrants embracing Islam. Hence, he has very beautifully portrayed his message to the reader and his style has been very lucid throughout the story.