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HONOUR, IDENTITY, AND CRISIS IN THE ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF GHANI KHAN'S SELECTED POETRY FROM THE PILGRIM OF BEAUTY

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Abstract

This article deals with the representation of masculinity in crisis in three English translated poems of Ghani Khan – The Chivalrous and Honour-bound, Oh Young Man! and Go My Child! Proceed Apace! — all from The Pilgrim of Beauty (trans. Imtiaz Ahmad Sahibzada, 2014). This study uses close textual analysis in the context of R. W. Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity with masculinity in crisis used as a conceptual lens, coupled with Catherine Belsey's approach to ideological contradictions in literary texts, to investigate how Ghani Khan's poetic discourse questions the masculine ideals found in Pakhtunwali, the traditional ethical code of Pakhtun society. The analysis shows how the three selected poems engage in a sustained critique of the performative masculine honour: Go My Child! Proceed Apace! dramatises the crushing weight of hegemonic masculine expectation; The Chivalrous and Honour-bound reveals the gap between claimed honour and actual conduct through biting satirical irony; and Oh Young Man! registers the collective implications of masculine failure as cultural and social decline. The poems together show Ghani Khan's poetic persona not as a participant of Pakhtun martial manhood but as its most philosophical critic, one who locates masculinity in crisis not in individual weakness but in the structural contradictions of a patriarchal code that promises moral authority while producing anxiety, hypocrisy and disillusionment. The study contributes to Pashto literary criticism, masculinity studies and translation studies.

Keywords: *Masculinity in crisis, Pakhtunwali, Ghani Khan, The Pilgrim of Beauty, Hegemonic masculinity, Pashto poetry, translation*

1.0 Introduction

Abdul Ghani Khan (1914–1996) poet, philosopher and politician is one of the most complex intellectual personalities in the history of Pashto literature. Ghani Khan, son of the legendary, Khan Abdul Ghazali Khan, inherited from his father both a deep attachment to Pakhtun cultural identity and a restless, critical intellect that refused to accept that identity uncritically. His poetry, primarily in Pashto, has been translated into English by Imtiaz Ahmad Sahibzada in the collection The Pilgrim of Beauty. Themes include love and mortality, nature, political disillusionment and the contradictions of Pakhtun social life.

Historically, the ethical code of Pakhtunwali has shaped Pakhtun masculinity, with its core pillars of *nang* (honour), *ghairat* (courage), *badal* (revenge), *melmastia* (hospitality) and *nanawatai* (asylum) defining the yardstick by which men are measured and judged in Pakhtun society. According to Ahmed (1980) and Barth (1959), Pakhtun masculinity is not mainly defined by physical domination but by moral conduct: a man reveals his manhood through honourable

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behaviour, communal accountability, and the readiness to sacrifice personal interest for tribal wellbeing. But as Lindholm (1982) notes, Pakhtunwali is also very situational and context-dependent; a code which is called upon selectively, performed strategically, and often honoured in the breach rather than the observance. This is the space between ideal and practice that Ghani Khan's poetry explores.

R. W. Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity has significantly shaped the theoretical study of masculinity. It refers to the configuration of gender practices that legitimizes patriarchal gender relations and sustains the dominant position of men in a particular historical and social context (Connell, 1995). Connell also emphasizes that hegemonic masculinity is historically contingent and subject to change, contradiction, and contestation. When established gender relations are disrupted and the legitimacy of a dominant form of masculinity is challenged, this may produce what Connell describes in terms of "crisis tendencies" within the gender order (Connell, 1995). Such disruptions can expose tensions between established masculine expectations and changing social conditions, creating possibilities for the reproduction, transformation, or renegotiation of masculine practices (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). This framework is especially powerful in the context of Ghani Khan's poetic universe where men are repeatedly shown as prisoners of the codes that are supposed to set them free and make them noble.

While Ghani Khan's philosophical, mystical, and aesthetic aspects are gaining scholarly attention, there has been little work done on his poetry in the context of masculinity in crisis. Islam et al. (2024) have applied existentialism to the poetry of Ghani Khan, showing how his poetic voice rejects imposed social identities in favour of authentic selfhood. Khalid et al. (2024) have examined the themes of reflexivity and social criticism in The Pilgrim of Beauty. However, none of these investigations have been able to consider the gendered aspects of poetic criticism of Ghani Khan - how his satirical, philosophical and elegiac forms are specifically used to question Pakhtun male identity and reveal its internal contradictions where this gap is presented in this article.

The three poems of The Pilgrim of Beauty: Go My Child! Proceed Apace!, The Chivalrous and Honour-bound, and Oh Young Man! were chosen based on their analytically different yet thematically intertwined aspects of masculinity in crisis in the poetic world of Ghani Khan: the construction of hegemonic masculine expectation (Go My Child!), the satirical aspect of its hypocrisy (The Chivalrous and Honour-bound) and the lamentation of its overall effects (Oh Young Man!). They are a whole and powerful poetic argument regarding the nature and price of Pakhtun masculinity.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Masculinity Theory: Hegemony, Crisis, and Social Construction

With the publication of Masculinities (1995) by Connell, the theoretical approach to the study of masculinity was decisively changed as the biological determinist explanations of manhood were displaced by a social constructionist view of masculinity as a constellation of practices determined by the institutional structure, cultural norms, and historical conditions. The analysis of Connell, lies the notion of hegemonic masculinity: the culturally dominant masculine practice that justifies power of men over women and subordinate masculinities and is perpetuated not only by brute force but also by ideological assent. Connell does not claim that hegemonic masculinity is ever fixed; it has to be practiced and reinstated, it is thus always subject to contradiction, failure, and crisis.

In this study, masculinity in crisis refers to situations in which established masculine ideals lose their legitimacy, coherence, or capacity to organise social and gender relations amid

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changing social conditions (Connell, 1995; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Men in such a crisis are torn between the masculine ideal of promise of authority and dignity and the world of social structures that fails to deliver on that promise. What has been produced, as Kimmel (2012) has contended, is a typical mixture of anxiety, aggression and moral confusion - a withdrawal into performance and assertion at the very time that the real masculine power has been structurally subverted. Seidler (2006) has gone on to claim that the emotional illiteracy which hegemonic masculinity requires, adds to the crisis: men are socialised to deny their emotionality and expressiveness, and lack the inner resources to experience the breakdown of the masculine ideals they adopted.

The theoretical frameworks have been used in the postcolonial and South Asian settings. As it has been argued by Chopra et al. (2004), South Asian masculinity is held within the systems of kinship networks and moral economies that are progressively becoming unstable due to migration, urbanisation, and ideological change. The article by Iftikhar (2024) has explored the intricacies of South Asian masculine identity within the confines of the local and transnational contexts, showing that the cultural codes of honour and social hierarchy are both reproduced and challenged in the evolving socio-political environment. As has been demonstrated by Zeb et al. (2025), hegemonic masculinity in Pakistan has been strongly associated with notions of honour, power and emotional regulation and often, results in deep internal conflict in the men who are required to represent it. These findings provide the broader regional context within Ghani Khan's poetic critique of Pakhtun masculinity.

2.2 Pakhtunwali and the Construction of Pakhtun Masculine Identity

Pakhtunwali has been widely conceived as the main mode by which Pakhtun social life is structured and masculine identity is made and assessed. It was described as a moral economy by Ahmed (1980) with its main values of *nang* (honour), *ghairat* (courage), *badal* (revenge), *melmastia* (hospitality) and *nanawatai* (asylum) which a man can gain social legitimacy through ethical behaviour and the service of community members instead of physical superiority. Barth (1959) revealed the political aspect of this code by revealing the ways in which Pakhtun tribal leadership relies on the effective implementation of such masculine values in the negotiation, conflict and alliance settings. However, Lindholm (1982) has warned against viewing Pakhtunwali as a single and universally practised system, and has stressed its contextual and contingent nature - an aspect which is directly applicable to Ghani Khan and his satirical unveiling of the disparity between the ideals of Pakhtunwali and how it is actually followed.

Imtiaz and Kamal (2023) demonstrate that masculine identities in Pakistan are socially produced and continually reinforced through gendered expectations, revealing masculinity as a culturally negotiated rather than fixed identity. The tension between traditional masculine morals and changing social realities has been a determined feature of Pakhtun literary expression, from the martial heroism of Khushal Khan Khattak to the philosophical introspection of Rahman Baba. The poetry of Ghani Khan is a major evolution in this tradition, a poetry which through irony, satire, and philosophical meditations confronts the moral hypocrisy of hegemonic Pakhtun masculinity instead of merely re-enacting or regretting its ideals.

2.3 Ghani Khan in Existing Scholarship

The existing scholarly literature on Ghani Khan is rich but uneven in its thematic coverage. The role Sartrean existentialism can play in the poetic voice of Ghani Khan has been shown by Islam et al. (2024), and that his poetry is always faced by the weight of freedom and the rejection of socially imposed identity formation - a perspective that is familiar with the current research on masculine self-construction and its price. The Pilgrim of Beauty has been studied by Khalid et al.

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(2024) through the lens of reflexivity, individuality, and social criticism, revealing how the translated poetry of Ghani Khan is breaking the existing cultural discourses by philosophically questioning them. A romantic and supernatural aspect of his poetic vision has been analyzed by Amir and Khan (2024), and an ecocritical approach to his poetry has been made by Iqbal et al. (2022), who find a profound philosophical connection between the poet and nature.

The most salient missing link in all this scholarship is a consistent work with the gendered aspects of the poetic critique of Ghani Khan. How his satirical and philosophical modes are specifically combined and applied to question the very concept of Pakhtun manhood, unveil its performativity, and note its human price have not been analyzed in the prism of gender theory. More broadly, scholars have argued that the study of masculinities in South Asia requires greater attention to culturally and historically specific literary contexts (Chakraborty, 2014; Chopra et al., 2004). This gap is addressed in the current article by applying Connell's framework of hegemonic masculinity and crisis tendencies to three analytically relevant poems by Ghani Khan to examine representations of masculinity in crisis.

2.4 Translation and the Mediation of Gendered Meaning

Venuti (2012) and Bassnett (2014) have theorised the role of translation in the mediation of linguistic and cultural representations of gender. Venuti maintains that translation is necessarily an ideological intervention that either domesticates the cultural difference - by making the text familiar to the readers of the target language, maintaining the incomprehensibility of the original and questioning the beliefs of the host culture. With the poetry of Ghani Khan, the translator Imtiaz Ahmad Sahibzada has adopted a strategy, which does not replace culturally specific terms -*Khan, Thanedar, Pukhtoon*- but presents the English-language audience with the culture of the Pakhtun in its own terms. This is a method which has a critical effect on the poems: it guarantees that the satirical revelation of Pakhtun masculine hypocrisy by Ghani Khan cannot be translated into a general critique of human nature but should be approached as a historical specific critique of a certain cultural construction.

According to Bassnett (2014), the idea of sensitive translation, according to him, does not entail the transfer of language but cultural mediation wherein the meaning that it has locally can be made accessible to the international readerships without destroying their cultural specificity. It is just this that the English translations of the poems of Ghani Khan that have been discussed in this study help to accomplish: they allow the moral and satirical pathos of his critique of Pakhtun masculinity to be opened to the world and to worldly theories, and at the same time to preserve that cultural particularity that gives that critique its intellectual sharpness and emotional effectiveness.

3.0 Theoretical Framework

This paper is structured around two overlapping theoretical frameworks which help us understand and analyze how gender is represented in the translated poetry of Ghani Khan. The first framework is R. W. Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). The emphasis of Connell on masculinity as a relational, historically specific and socially constructed set of practices - not a biological essence or cultural inheritance- allows us to read the poems of Ghani Khan as dramatizations of a particular historical production of masculine identity in crisis. Ghani Khan demonstrates that the hegemonic masculinity of Pakhtunwali - honour, courage, leadership, and moral authority - is structurally unable to fulfill its promises, resulting in its followers not the dignity and power but anxiety, moral corruption, and emotional mutilation.

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Masculinity in crisis, is as a concept to be applied to the analysis as it focuses not on the failures of individual men but on structural contradictions of the patriarchal systems, the ways in which the very codes that legitimize men and give them authority are the roots of their moral and psychological decline. Masculinity in crisis is not an individual state, as Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) suggest, but a social one: it is a situation where the norms of hegemonic masculinity can no longer effectively order the social life, when the distance between ideal and practice is too big to support the fiction of masculine power. The poetry of Ghani Khan is, among others, a continued poetic exploration of this divide.

The second framework draws on Catherine Belsey's (2002) approach to ideological contradictions in literary texts. Belsey argues that literary works are not transparent reflections of social reality but sites of ideological negotiation and conflict, in which dominant cultural narratives are simultaneously reproduced and destabilised by narrative tension, symbolic contradiction, and the pressure of suppressed alternatives. It can be applied to the poetry of Ghani Khan and the poems can be read as an ideologically charged reading that reveals the internal contradictions of Pakhtun hegemonic masculinity - contradictions that exist within the culture, but are typically hidden or denied in the culture by the dominant hegemonic self-representations. It is not necessary, as Belsey insists, that the literary critic should pursue the unity of the text but rather its variety and heterogeneity: in this case, the gaps, tensions, and unresolved conflicts that demonstrate the instability of the current ideological order.

Collectively these structures allow one to read Ghani Khan's poetry both as an object responsive to its formal and literary attributes, its engagements with irony, satire, apostrophe, and symbolic imagery and as an object that reflects on its cultural and ideological implications as a space of gender critique in the Pashto literary tradition.

4.0 Methodology

The method used in this study is the close textual analysis which is based on qualitative analysis. The corpus contains three poems of Ghani Khan translated into English that are all extracted in The Pilgrim of Beauty (trans.). Imtiaz Ahmad Sahibzada. Go My Child! Proceed Apace!, The Chivalrous and Honour-bound, and Oh Young Man!. The three poems were chosen based on their enduring and direct relationship to questions of Pakhtun masculine identity, their formal and tonal variety enabling a multi-dimensional approach to the question of masculinity in crisis and their overall ability to depict the entire spectrum of masculine crisis, between construction and exposure to consequence.

The method of analysis will involve determining and explaining the formal strategies of the poems that create, question and disrupt depictions of hegemonic Pakhtun masculinity, such as tone, irony, apostrophe, symbolic imagery, and figurative language. The poems are analysed one after another, and special attention is paid to certain lines and images, which relate directly to the theoretical issues of the paper. The frameworks of masculinity theory by Connell and the approach to ideological contradictions in literary texts by Belsey are used to guide the analysis, although the cultural logic of Pakhtunwali as posited by Ahmed (1980), Barth (1959) and Lindholm (1982) is also referred to.

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5.0 Analysis and Discussion

5.1 Go My Child! Proceed Apace!: The Construction and Burden of Hegemonic Masculine Expectation

Go My Child! Proceed Apace! (p. 297) is, on its surface, the most traditionally masculine of the three poems under examination: a stirring call to arms in which a father or a collective paternal voice urges a son to embody the fullest ideals of Pakhtun manhood. The poem opens with a declaration that frames masculine identity as a binary choice between supreme achievement and heroic self-sacrifice:

Either of this ravaged land,
I shall make a khan of you,
Or this head of mine, so proud,
On the field of battle give!

The alternation between making and sacrificing — between producing a Khan and offering a life - defines the general logic of hegemonic Pakhtun masculinity as theorised by Ahmed (1980): a man gains his social validity by being ready to sacrifice all to the good. It is the personage of the khan that represents this logic a man who has won authority by his courage, honour and service to his people. The ultimate goal of masculine teaching in the moral economy of Pakhtunwali is to become a khan of one of their sons.

In spite of this, it is the rhetoric of the poem which starts showing how there is a need for continuous assertion and performance of hegemonic masculinity in times of uncertainty, according to Connell (1995). Not a confident masculine power, but a nervous power, the nervous power that must be constantly strengthened against the danger of failure and retreat, is indicated by the insistent repetition of the poem, — 'Go my son, proceed apace,' 'Never accept defeat,' 'Never do Pukhtoons withdraw', speaks not of a protected masculine authority but of a concerned one, one that must be reinforced against the threat of failure and retreat. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) argue the more desperately and loudly the assertions of masculine authority are made, the more they proclaim the precariousness of the terrain where they are made.

Imagery used in the poem supports this interpretation. The recurring image of the battle field - 'On the field of battle give,' 'On each field that I have fought,' 'All my foes from off the field' - finds the true masculine identity only in the sphere of physical struggle which is not subject to any emotional discrepancy, to any moral uncertainty, to any doubt of self. It is not the example of flexible, relational masculinity that the father who demands the courage of tiger and threatens to to 'sacrifice his head' if the son fails is not offering a model of flexible, relational masculinity but a crushing imperative that permits for no middle ground between heroism and disgrace. The emotional illiteracy required by hegemonic masculinity - the foreclosure of vulnerable and dependent and emotional is not an expense that individual males sustain but a structural attribute of the patriarchal culture, which conditions all of its members.

This is especially important to the last lines of the poem. The self-identification of the speaker — 'I'm a panther of the hills, / And have always preyed on him!, puts the male self not within the context of social relations and duties but as a lone predatory creature, one characterized by confrontation and subjugation. The father who desires to make a khan of his son is a person himself, who is entirely characterized by martial aggression. It is the bequest of hegemonic Pakhtun masculinity: a paradigm of selfhood that cannot accommodate the relational, emotional, or moral aspects of human life. According to Belsey (2002) the gaps and contradictions of the

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dominant cultural ideology can be seen in literary texts, and the gap in this poem between the nobility of its aspirations and the dehumanizing narrowness of the masculine is precisely such a contradiction. The poem does not directly criticize the hegemonic masculine ideal it expresses; instead, it voices that ideal so completely and insistently that its internal tensions become visible to the reader.

5.2 The Chivalrous and Honour-bound: Satire, Hypocrisy, and the Performative Collapse of Masculine Honour

If Go My Child! Proceed Apace! voices hegemonic masculine expectation from within, The Chivalrous and Honour-bound dismantles it from without through a devastating exercise in satirical irony. The subject of the poem, who is referred to as my cousin, is presented as having embodied Pakhtun masculine honour in how he presented himself but who systematically betrayed this honour in his behaviour. The first lines determine the pretention of the cousin to intellectual and social power:

My cousin is a Plato
Of profound and rational thought,
And when he mounts the stage to speak,
The lion he outroars!

The hyperbolic praise, comparison with Plato, the roar of a lion, is ironical in its acclaim. The appeal to Plato is especially acute, as it invokes the ideal of the rational, self-governing man, to be found in the Western philosophical tradition, only to reveal it as a performance that is entirely reliant on favourable conditions. The important expression 'when he mounts the stage to speak': the masculine authority of the cousin is theatrical; a performance acted on the stage in front of a submissive audience instead of an expression of sincere moral content.

The satire in the poem is made clear in the systematically contrasting stanza's that immediately follow, which compare the performed authority of the cousin with his actual behaviour when under the pressure. When good fortune is on his side, he is to the forefront of all raids made; when bad fortune befalls him, the transformation is complete and contemptible:

But when fortune forsakes him,
And the tide against him turns,
Crest-fallen, with his ears adroop,
His stomach freely flows!
A chicken-hearted quail a chirp
Most loudly when concealed,
A pie-dog barking bravely
From the safety of its home!

The language used in this image is carefully selected because of the degrading anti-heroic impact. The chicken, the quail, the pie-dog are all animals who had a place in the Pakhtun cultural consciousness as symbols of cowardice, opportunism and the lack of the male virtues of courage and dignity. The cousin who is roaring like a lion in the open, is shown to be a chicken-hearted quail when off his guard-- bravely only when safe, noisily only when secure. It is exactly this that the theory by Connell identifies: the hegemonic masculine ideal of courage and moral authority that is shown to be a performance, a mask that is put on when things are favourable and that is discarded the moment that things turn adverse.

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The most cutting image of a masculine breakdown is the most penetrating image of a masculine breakdown in the lines: that describe the cousin withdraws to the motherly protection, as troubles approaches:

But when troubles descend, he makes
A bee-line for his mother,
And to himself he mutters,
"Let us compromise, play safe!"
He hides himself within the folds
Of mother's baggy shirt;
His tears flow profusely
As with great fear he quakes

The one who shouted louder than the lion is now sheltered in his mother's embrace. This picture is an acting with fatal brevity of what, as Kimmel (2012) describes, is the typical collapse of hegemonic masculine performance under pressure: the withdrawal of publicly assertive performance to privately vulnerable situations, of the performance of fearlessness to the reality of fear. The cry 'Let us compromise, play safe' is the voice of the masculine crisis itself the recognition that the codes of honour and courage cannot be maintained at all, and that it is necessary to abandon. This confession is a wholesome male disqualification in the moral economy of Pakhtunwali where *nang* (honour) dictates that a male must never compromise or retreat.

The satire here of Ghani Khan works through what Belsey (2002) describes as the exposure of ideological contradiction: the poem does not argue against the ideals of masculinity practised by Pakhtun males but rather sets them up against the mirror of actual Pakhtun male behaviour and leaves the reflection to speak itself. The cousin is no special figure of villainy; he is, the poem suggests, a representative one - a *thanedar* (local police official), a sort of co-villager, a man of political connections and social standing; and his moral hollowness is not the result of his own failure, but that of a cultural system in which men of political connections and social rank perform masculine virtue rather than possess it. The satire is not then a personal one: it accuses not the individual of the act, but the social conditions which make the act possible, and even encourage it.

5.3 Oh Young Man!: Collective Masculine Decline and the Lamentation of Lost Dignity

Oh Young Man! (p. 285) shifts from the individual satire of The Chivalrous and Honour-bound to a collective lamentation for the decline of Pakhtun masculine dignity. Instead of discussing a particular representative character, Oh Young Man! Addresses the Pakhtun man, and by extension the Pakhtun nation, in the second person, using a sustained apostrophe, that grieves over what has been lost and calls to do whatever can be done to recover what has been lost. The poem begins with a long natural metaphor of desert:

Like an orchard, withered, dry;
Garden, flower beds, trampled on;
Wilted flowers; the lawn once green,
Seared, looking Autumn brown;
No nightingale to sing its song,
Nor butterfly to float upon
The morning breeze in early Spring;

The withered orchard is a compelling image of a collective masculine failure in the Pakhtun poetic tradition, which has always identified the natural world as a symbol of the moral and social

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status of the community. The list of absences, of no nightingale, no butterfly, no narcissi, no jasmine, reads a list of things which have been emptied out. The fall of the manly honour is laid down on the seasonal sequence of growth and decay: what was once thriving has been permitted to decay.

The fact that the poem directly addresses the Pakhtun man, i.e., the person addressing the audience 'Oh Pukhtoon this is your land! / Oh Pukhtoon this is your land!' carries a dual meaning: it is both an accusation and an appeal, referring to the Pakhtun man as both the protector and the betrayer of the cultural and natural heritage that has been misused. The urgency and desperation of the appeal of the poetic speaker, the feeling that something valuable is being lost that cannot be easily regained, is enacted by the repetition. This is the masculinity in crisis in the most collective of ways, as not the personalized panic of an individual male but the collective panic of a whole community at its own failure to live up to the ideals which define it.

The striking image of masculine decadence in the poem comes in its most basic opposition between the past and the present:

Oh one with downcast eyes of shame,
Barefoot, and uncovered head!
Do you know what you were once?
Brightest star of firmament!
When the turban graced your head,
Others, deferentially,
Bared their covered heads to bow;
Filled with honour and with pride,
Were your eyes, so downcast now.

The turban is one of the symbolical objects in Pakhtun masculine culture, which denotes dignity, honour, and social status. A man who wears his turban with pride is a man who has preserved his *nang* (honour); a man who goes barefoot and naked, a man whose eyes are 'downcast now' with shame, a man whose eyes are closed with shame. The use of this image by Ghani Khan is then not simply descriptive but culturally diagnostic: barefoot, embarrassed young man is the embodiment of masculinity in crisis, the structural supports of the masculinity of hegemonic Pakhtun have been removed.

The contrast between 'what you were once' and what you are now is the poem's central temporal structure, creating an idealised masculine past against which the present appears diminished. This tension can be read through Connell's (1995) concept of crisis tendencies, in which established forms of masculinity are challenged by changing gender relations. The 'brightest star of firmament' who once made men bow down before him is now the man with 'downcast eyes of shame' who can do no more. It is not merely a personal failure but a structural one: the social conditions which once served Pakhtun masculine authority have been undermined, and with them the dignity and pride which Pakhtunwali promised to those who believed in its ideals.

The poem's call to action — 'Come collect the dust again, Of this orchard, once so fair; From it once again create, Scented flowers and perfumed air', does not resolve the crisis it diagnoses. The injunction to recreate what has been lost, recognises implicitly that it has been lost, and that it cannot itself produce the transformation of will and identity which it acknowledges has been lost. It is the typical form of male crisis in the poetry of Ghani Khan: the diagnosis without

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the remedy. Belsey (2002) claims that literary works of the greatest ideological value are those that do not attempt a premature resolution, but hold open the contradictions which they expose, instead of papering over them with the false consolation of a pretense. Oh Young Man! Is it just such a text.

5.4 Cross-Textual Patterns: Ghani Khan's Poetic Architecture of Masculine Crisis

Once the three poems are read together one gets a sense of a coherent and structurally sophisticated poetic argument concerning the nature and price of hegemonic Pakhtun masculinity. Go My Child! Proceed Apace! determines the conditions of absolute hegemonic masculine expectation in Pakhtunwali: absolute courage, sacrifice and tribal honour which does not admit of middle ground between heroism and disgrace. The Chivalrous and Honour-bound, exposes the difference between this ideal and actual masculine behaviour, and reveals through biting satirical irony the reality of cowardice, opportunism, and compromise of moral principles. Oh, Young Man! documented the cumulative effects of this gap: a cultural terrain of dried-up dignity, eyes lowered, and the ghost of an ancient masculine grandeur.

The formal variety of the three poems — the martial rhetoric of Go My Child! the satirical irony of The Chivalrous and Honour-bound, the elegiac apostrophe of Oh Young Man! are indicative of the complexity of Ghani Khan dealing with masculinity in crisis. He does not treat of the subject in single lines or with a single register of emotion; he inhabits the ideal of masculinity internally (Go My Child!), externally (The Chivalrous and Honour-bound) and decays with the results thereof above (Oh Young Man!). This formal and tonal range in itself is a considerable feature of his critique: it implies that masculinity in crisis cannot be reduced to one cause or one experience but is a widespread cultural condition which is manifested in different ways in different social registers and emotional positions.

A constant pattern across all three poems is the centrality of performance to hegemonic Pakhtun masculinity. In Go My Child! the masculine subject is characterized by the act of courage and sacrifice publicly shown. Masculine power is revealed in The Chivalrous and Honour-bound, as theatrical, a performance that needs an audience to perform, and collapses when the audience is removed. In Oh Young Man! the erosion of the masculine dignity is registered by visible signs - the turban, the posture, the eyes - the absence of which is the indication of the failure of the masculine performance that once used to be respected. This stress on performance resonates with Connell, who insists that masculinity is not a given essence but a series of practices that must be continually performed and publicly confirmed. When such practices become unsustainable, either through the failure of individuals to practice them, as in The Chivalrous and Honour-bound, or through the decline of social conditions and the loss of values, as in Oh Young Man! it leads to crisis.

It is also notable that Ghani Khan's critique of masculine hypocrisy and decline is constantly expressed through images of the natural world: the lion which turns into a quail, the panther of the hills, the withered orchard. This naturalizing imagery in turn is ideologically significant, as Iqbal et al. (2022) have observed in their ecocritical reading of the poetry of Ghani Khan: by perceptually subverting the masculine failure of a certain moral and cultural subject, Ghani Khan implies that the deformation of the Pakhtun masculinity is not merely a moral or cultural deficiency but a violation of a greater natural order. The withered orchard is not only a symbol of social decay, but it is an image of what can happen when the natural vitality of a people is oppressed, distorted, and misdirected by the impossible demands of a strict patriarchal code.

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6.0 Discussion

The textual discussion in this work validates and expands on the current body of scholarship on Ghani Khan and introduces a new aspect of critical analysis. The three poems analyzed here indicate that Ghani Khan is not merely a philosopher, mystic, and aesthete as existing scholarship has emphasized, but a critical and systematic critic of the ideals of hegemonic Pakhtun masculinity in which the poetic method is precisely calibrated to reveal the inner contradictions of the ideals of hegemonic Pakhtun masculinity embedded in Pakhtunwali.

The analysis confirms the main idea of Connell (1995) that masculinity in crisis is not a primary individual phenomenon but a structural phenomenon. The failure of manhood in none of the three poems is ascribed to the frailty or incompetence of certain individuals. The cousin in The Chivalrous and Honour-bound is not a deviation, but a representative figure. The young man in Oh Young Man! is treated as a collective, and not a person. In Go My Child! the father who requires heroism and threatens sacrificial death is he himself who is put in the same strict code of conduct he imposes on his son. In both masculinity in crisis is demonstrated as a by-product of the patriarchal system itself - of a code that promises to grant moral authority but instead results in anxiety, hypocrisy, and emotional deformation.

This observation relates the poetic critique of Ghani Khan as a part of the overall literature on masculinity in postcolonial South Asia. Both Iftikhar (2024) and Zeb et al. (2025) have shown that contemporary Pakhtun and Pakistani masculine identities are dehumanizing by the conflict between inherited honour codes and the social conditions which make those codes more and more difficult to maintain. These findings are anticipated in the poetry of Ghani Khan, who wrote during both the colonial and postcolonial periods, with remarkable clarity: his satiric and elegiac treatments of masculine failure are registered, with poetic precision.

The English translations which follow a strategy in the sense of Venuti (2012) which retain terms and social contexts of a culture, ensure that gendered critique by Ghani Khan does not lose its cultural specificity in the process of becoming available to international theoretical frameworks. The outcome is a body of translated poetry that is both a document of the Pakhtun cultural history and a contribution to the global literature of gender critique - a literature which can be read through the framework of Connell without losing the reference to the historic moral economy of Pakhtunwali.

7.0 Conclusion

This paper has shown through close textual analysis of the three poems by Ghani Khan of the translation of poetry that Ghani Khans translated poetry is a complex and sustained interaction with masculinity in crisis in Pakhtun society. Go My Child! Proceed Apace! brings into being the crushing weight of the expectation of hegemonic masculinity, articulating the demands of Pakhtunwali in such a way as to bring out their dehumanizing narrowness. The Chivalrous and Honour-bound breaks down the performative nature of masculine honour through the satiric use of irony, showing how *nang* (honour) that is meant to make Pakhtun manhood is revealed to be in a state of cowardice and compromise when the conditions that are supposed to keep Pakhtun manliness are withdrawn. Oh Young Man! Takes this criticism to the collective level, lamenting the loss of Pakhtun masculine dignity on a collective level as a cultural disaster being recorded in the publicly visible signs of shame of downcast eyes, bare head and bare feet.

Collectively these poems demonstrate a poet who does not see the Pakhtun masculine identity in these poems as something to celebrate or be nostalgic about but as an object of the unblushing critical scrutiny of a committed cultural critic. The crisis portrayed by Ghani Khan is not a crisis of individual men but of a patriarchal system which has made false promises – a system in which the inherent contradictions are so clearly laid bare that the most fervent patriots themselves may not have been able to do so. It is also shown in the study that translation plays a critical role in ensuring this dimension of the work of Ghani Khan. The translations maintain the cultural particularism of the poetic world of Ghani Khan

and allow making its theoretical implications available to the readers operating within the global frames of the gender studies and the masculinity theory. The fact that this study and the existing scholarship on Ghani Khan have not explored the rich and largely untapped field of inquiry in which he and his literary work fall suggests that there is a rich and largely untapped field of inquiry to which he and his literary work can be applied. Further research should carry this analysis over to the entire corpus of The Pilgrim of Beauty, should engage with the Pashto originals as well as the translations, should consider the work of Ghani Khan, in comparative perspective with other Pashto poets.

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