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Dissolving the Self: Hallajian *Fanā* and the Poetics of Self-Negation in Ghani Khan's *The Fairy Princess* and *Question or Answer*

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the representation of self-negation in the poetry of Ghani Khan through the mystical philosophy of Mansur al-Hallaj, with particular focus on the doctrine of fanā (annihilation of the self). While Ghani Khan's poetry has often been approached through aesthetic, existential, and socio-political frameworks, its engagement with radical Sufi mysticism remains underexplored. Employing a qualitative thematic analysis of selected Pashto poems, this paper investigates how Ghani Khan articulates the dissolution of the ego through recurring images of fragility, transience, and decay. The findings reveal that self-negation in his poetry is not portrayed as denial of life but as an existential condition through which authentic vision and spiritual awareness emerge. Drawing on Hallajian Fana, the study demonstrates that Ghani Khan translates metaphysical self-annihilation into lived human experience, thereby reconfiguring fanā as both a spiritual and existential process. By situating Ghani Khan within the Hallajian tradition, this paper contributes to Pashto literary studies and comparative mysticism by highlighting self-negation as a central poetic and philosophical principle in his work.

Introduction

Abdul Ghani Khan (1914-1996) is one of the brightest representatives of Pashto literature. He is known as the Philosopher-Poet of Pashto, although he is remembered as a literary genius and a man of unwavering honesty and dissenting mind (Gandhara/RFE, 2014). His work cannot be categorized: though he was an heir to the cultural heritage of Khushal Khan Khattak and Rahman Baba, Ghani created contemporary poetic idiom, which united mystical aspiration, aesthetic worship, political satire and existential inquiries. Ghani Khan is one of the brightest representatives

of the modern Pashto poetry who manages to integrate the mystic wisdom, philosophical speculation, and ecstatic thinking in his works to the utmost degree.

Opponents observe that the hallmark of Ghani Khan is his continued obedience to beauty as a metaphysical ideal. In one of his prose expressions, he has written: "Beauty, only beauty, is, both God and the beloved" (Khan, 2014, p.197), (quoted in Dawn, 2014). This expression makes beauty the core of his spiritual philosophy: to Ghani, aesthetic experience is neither incidental nor peripheral, the medium through which one is

immediately introduced to the Divine. Beauty is the beloved and the veil in his poems, at once alluring and overwhelming, a form of aesthetic theology of the Sufi traditions which perceive the appearance of the divine in the manifestation of the creation. His poetry was called by the Friday Times to have the power and strength of Khushal Khan Khattak and the Sufi restraint of Rahman Baba, which placed him in the array of Pashto mysticism, although with a more modern touch (The Friday Times, 2014).

His poems tend to shun clerical hypocrisy, mock empty piety and instead glorify immediacy of love, nature and self realization. His conflict between his awe of the inner spiritual path and his attack on the external formalism makes him so interesting to an interpretive scheme of the Hallajian, because al-Hallaj as well faced the limits of institutional orthodoxy. Although his general interest in the fields of spirituality and philosophy have been addressed in numerous researches, not many in-depth studies have been conducted on his special interest in the Sufi ideas. These are among others fana the mystical annihilation of the self, also lies at the core of the Sufi metaphysics as practiced by Mansoor Al-Hallaj. Amongst the most famous and controversial Islam mystic, Mansur ibn al-Husayn al-Hallaj (858-922 CE) is known.

Ghani, in the lengthy literary career authored on diverse topics and wrote widely. His first book, published in the English language in 1947, preceding Independence, The Pathans, is a charming sketch of the Pathans, their social customs and practices, their superstitions, their enmities, feuds, and their views on life. This was succeeded in 1956 by the De Panjray Chaghar (Chirpings of the Cage) which includes poems created in the dates of 15th October 1950 to 27th October 1953 when he was in jail. In 1960-61 a collection of poems by the Panjray Chaghar, with new compositions, was published in Kabul, Palwashay (Beams of Light). In 1978 Panoos (Chandelier) with the selections of the previous works and several new poems appeared. It was followed by the Kulliyat (Collected Works), a collection of his published verse in 1985. In 1995, ten years later, was Latoon (Search), containing all his poems up to that time, except some of which Ghani said he would not wish to be included in, and some which, however, have never been published before. His only attempt in Urdu was published in 1994, Khan Sahib, a little collection of the opinions of a rustic, uneducated Pukhtoon upon several things, as he mixes with highly educated and sophisticated thinkers in his tea-house conferences, a professor of Urdu, an aspiring artist, a professor of art, a medical doctor with intense interest in religion and a bank accountant who belongs to a religious political party. The concerns which Khan Sahib expounds are both absurd and sublime and present typical reactions on the part of his interlocutors. The prevailing elements of the book are humour and satire of the most interesting nature.

Al-Hallaj was born in modern-day Iran and was renowned because of his ecstatic speech and extreme insistence on the directness of divine union. The legacy of al-Hallaj had a significant impact on subsequent Sufi literature. His image is used in Persian and Urdu poets, who call on him as the model of mystic boldness. His jargon of ecstatic destruction offered a pattern of how to describe the union, and his martyrdom offered a model of narrative to poets who have written

about the perils and ecstasies of religious devotion. To the critics of literature, al-Hallaj is the epitome of mystical poetry: the place where words fail to support the gravity of the divine experience, yielding some paradoxical and startling declarations, which disclose and reveal at the same time.

His best known statement Ana al-Haqq (I am the Truth) is the icon of mystical self-annihilation in Islamic thought. It sounded like blasphemy, and thus meant identity with God, to orthodox jurists, but epitomised fana, the state where the ego is utterly destroyed, leaving only God to be speaking through the human tongue, to Sufi interpreters (Basharin, 2016). Mystical consciousness and its poetic embodiment, has been a long-standing characteristic of human culture. Sufism in Islamic spirituality offers a vocabulary which is well developed in describing the inner path of the seeker, the moral requirements of spiritual practice, and radical levels of union and annihilation which may be achieved in high mystical practice.

Self-Negation; first phase of Fana (annihilation) is one of the key technical ideas of Sufi thought, typically meaning the annihilation or disappearance of the individual personality in God. Fana is briefly defined in Encyclopaedia Britannica as the renunciation of self and self-realization in God and elaborates that it is achieved by the Sufi when he manages to empty himself of the earthly world and disappear into the love of God (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2019). Practical Sufi teaching traditionally combines fana with baqa (subsistence or maintenance in God): initially the mystic dies with the ego and is resuscitated into an alternate state of consciousness, which resides and lives in the Divine presence. This system of doctrines, purgation, annihilation, and subsistence, provides a conceptual framework of how to interpret the poetic language dramatizing the loss of self and ecstatic union (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2019). Potryrays the ultimate ego depletion into divinity, the most renowned quote of al-Hallaj, Ana al-Haqq ("I am the Truth").

One of the key tenets of the mystical path is self-negation that may be defined in Sufi terms as nafs-kushi (killing of the self) or fana al-nafs (destruction of the ego). It means the intentional annulment of the lower or nafs ammara, its passions and illusions, in place of the higher self which is the expression of Godly reality. According to Al-Junayd, the process could be described as the dying of the servant to himself and his existence persisting in God, with it being necessary that his seeker have first denied all tasks of selfhood before being united to God. In Ihya Ulum al-Din, Ali Ghazali also gave a similar definition of self-negation, as the deprivation of the will, attachment, and pride, leaving the will of God alone functional. In the case of Mansur al-Hallaj, the self-negation was the only precondition of his ecstatic proclamation Ana al-Haqq ("I am the Truth): He did not say that his ego was saying but that his self was completely destroyed, and that the Divine only was speaking through him. This was further developed by Ibn al-Arabi, into the notion of fana fi'l-tawhid the annihilation of the self in the oneness of God as the mystical experience of the self as having no existence independent of the Divine. This is a paradoxical aspect of self-negation, which modern scholars, such as Annemarie Schimmel (1975), emphasize: it is not the self-destruction of a nihilistic view of the world but a spiritual death, a dying before death through which the seeker is able to live in

God. Through this, self-negation is the means and the entrance to fana since only when the ego is effaced can the mystic be united and subsistence (baqa) in the Beloved.

Objectives of the Study

- To examine how self-negation is represented in Ghani Khan’s poetry through Hallajian*fanā*.
- To analyze the poetic strategies and imagery used to dramatize the dissolution of the ego.

Research Question

- How is the concept of self-negation articulated in Ghani Khan's poetry within a Hallajian mystical framework?
- What poetic images and metaphors are employed to convey the process of ego-dissolution?

Literature Review

Ghani Khan has gained much scholarly attention to his poems because of their philosophical and mysticism. However, he has not evolved his work on the exploration of some of the teachings of Sufi such as fana. In this paper, this gap will be filled by applying the mystical principle of fana of Al-Hallaj to poetic utterance of Ghani Khan.

This review of the literature conducts a survey of three overlapping disciplines on which the current study is based: (1) scholarship on Mansur al-Hallaj and the Sufi teaching of fana (self-annihilation), (2)Studies of mysticism and mystical poetics in world literature and (3) critical work on the poetry of Ghani Khan that implicates the mystical reading, anti-ritualist position, and modernist id It is meant to demonstrate what has been known before, where the convergences of interpretation exist, and, most importantly, where a Hallajian reading of fana in a corpus of Ghani Khan are not yet available, which is why this thesis should be introduced. The concept of fana (self-annihilation) is the pillar of the spiritual aspect, whose foundations lie to a great extent in the analytical works of the mystical doctrine of Mansur al-Hallaj. William Harmless (2008) also gives a historical background of fana in Islamic mysticism after its unspoken meanings of annihilation of ego to symbolic unity with the divine.

Louis Massignon, whose scholarship reintroduced Hallaj to modern Western readers, framed Hallaj as a "mystic pillar" and a "spiritual martyr," arguing that the saint's life and speech exemplified a radical surrender to the Divine that culminated in his famous utterance from the scaffold (Massignon, 1983; see also Basharin, 2016). The terminological and experiential keel of Hallajian mysticism fana as both ontological negation and ecstatic union provides a conceptual repertoire that is particularly useful for reading

poetry that speaks of annihilation, self-loss, and the paradoxical presence of God through absence. Contemporary scholarship on Hallaj underscores that his utterances were interpreted variously by juridical authorities and Sufi exegetes: while some jurists condemned him for blasphemy, many later Sufis canonicalized his state as an exemplary culmination of mystical union (Encyclopaedia of Islam; Basharin, 2016; Massignon, 1983).

Kerr's (1994) article, "The Death of a Sufi-Bahai: The Historical Context of al-Hallaj's Execution", investigates the historical, political, and theological dimensions surrounding al-Hallaj's martyrdom. By situating Hallaj within the Abbasid socio-political context, Kerr demonstrates that his execution cannot be reduced to a single charge of heresy but must be seen as the intersection of mystical doctrine, political threat, and institutional authority. Central to Kerr's discussion is Hallaj's proclamation Ana al-Haqq, the utterance through which he embodied the Sufi doctrine of fanaʾ, annihilating his individual identity so fully that only Divine Truth remained. Yet, as Kerr shows, this mystical realization was perceived by the orthodox establishment not as a testimony to annihilation in God but as blasphemy and a challenge to authority. This tension between mystical interiority and external orthodoxy is critical for your thesis, as it highlights how fanaʾ is not only a spiritual doctrine but also a socially disruptive force. Kerr emphasizes that Hallaj's fanaʾ was inseparable from his public presence, his insistence on teaching mystical truths

openly and his accessibility to the common people. By translating mystical experience into public discourse, Hallaj blurred the boundary between esoteric knowledge and popular piety. Ghani Khan's poetry can be read as echoing this same dynamic. His poems are not cloistered spiritual treatises but accessible, lyrical articulations that translate mystical longing and annihilation into a modern idiom. Like Hallaj, Ghani Khan brings the ineffable into the realm of public language, creating tensions between mystical insight and cultural convention. Kerr's historical reading of Hallaj, therefore, offers a framework for understanding how Ghani Khan's traces of fanāʾ are not only spiritual but also deeply engaged with the lived realities of his time, particularly the tension between individual mysticism and social structures. Another key contribution of Kerr's analysis is the emphasis on martyrdom as a mystical culmination. For Hallaj, death was not the end but the final realization of fanāʾ: the body destroyed, the self erased, and the soul subsisting eternally in God. This reading has strong implications for your project. Ghani Khan's recurrent themes of destruction, loss, and silence can be seen as poetic enactments of this same process, where death or dissolution is not despair but the opening into eternity. In this sense, Kerr provides a bridge between Hallaj's historical martyrdom and the symbolic martyrdom present in Ghani Khan's poetics. The traces of fanāʾ in Ghani Khan's work thus resonate with Hallaj's ultimate annihilation, where poetic metaphors of death and nothingness align with the mystical realization that only the Divine endures. Kerr's article underscores the interpretive duality of Hallaj: mystic versus heretic, martyr versus agitator. This duality mirrors the interpretive challenge in reading Ghani Khan's poetry. His mystical expressions may appear ambiguous, sometimes secular, sometimes spiritual, but when read through Hallaj's doctrine of fanāʾ, these ambiguities resolve into a coherent mystical logic: the annihilation of self and the unveiling of divine presence. Kerr's historical contextualization ensures that your thesis avoids treating fanāʾ as a purely abstract doctrine; instead, it is shown as lived, contested, and transformative, qualities that also characterize Ghani Khan's poetic engagement with selfhood and annihilation.

Amila Buturovic's "Spiritual Empowerment Through Spiritual Submission: Sufi Women and Their Quest for God" (1997) provides critical insights into how Sufism enables the marginalized, particularly women, to access divine transcendence through self-negation and submission. This argument aligns significantly with the present thesis on Ghani Khan's poetry, which is examined through the Hallajian lens of fana (annihilation of the self in God). Buturovic emphasizes that Sufism, unlike the rigid and patriarchal structures of Islamic jurisprudence, centers on taste (dawq), an inward, experiential, and highly personal journey toward the Divine. This inward subjectivity echoes Ghani Khan's own poetic voice, where the search for God is depicted as an interior battle between ego and surrender. The article further highlights how Sufism historically empowered women by offering an alternative discourse beyond the exclusionary male-dominated space of the ulema. Buturovic contrasts Rabi'a's humility with Hallaj's audacity in declaring Ana al-Haqq ("I am the Truth"). While Hallaj is punished for collapsing the boundary between self and Divine, Rabi'a chooses a perpetual yearning without claiming union. This tension parallels Ghani Khan's oscillation between intoxicated longing and despair. In poems such as Question or Answer! and Pious Priest and Madman, Ghani Khan dramatizes the struggle between ego, surrender, and the elusive experience of divine truth. His voice stands between Hallaj's ecstatic identification and Rabi'a's humble distance, showing both the dangers and beauty of fana. Thus, Buturovic's article strengthens the thesis's interpretive framework by situating Sufism as a path of inner unveiling, one that privileges submission, longing, and annihilation over legalistic religiosity. The findings confirm that Ghani Khan's poetry, when read through a Hallajian lens, participates in the same spiritual dialectic: the obliteration of the self, the painful persistence of yearning, and the paradox of finding divine empowerment through surrender.

The English literature has developed a rich mysticism used in the literary criticism where the works of T. S. Eliot and medieval mysticism literature have been criticised. The Western canon theorists of mysticism are also useful in analysing the mystical language in poetry. The Varieties of Religious Experience by William James defines ineffability, poetic quality, transiency, and passivity as phenomenological characteristics of the mystical state (James, 1902/2002), and the stages of the mystical state of passivity, illumination, and purges as phenomena described by Evelyn Underhill in her book Mysticism (Underhill, 1911 /1999).

These models are extremely reminiscent of the Sufi terms fana and baqa, which proves the universality of the mystical frameworks across traditions. Critics have demonstrated in the literature studies that poets like T. S. Eliot and W. B. Yeats coded mystics experience in phrases like paradox, apophasis, and systems of symbols (Schuchard, 1992; Unterecker, 1969). This kind of work justifies a methodological approach, making the poetry of Ghani Khan an object not, in an absolute sense, of metaphor, but of equal structural consistency with those mystical traditions.

Meanwhile, an essay by Sister Corona Sharp of 1982 discusses the intentional dependence on John of the Cross as worked out by Eliot and finds that the theological ladder (purgation, illumination, union) influences the form and symbolism of Four Quartets (Sharp, 1982). Switching to the topic of the medieval mysticism, Jane Duran (2009) presents an example of a visionary mystic and a master of words and humbleness that could become an entire epistemic system of divine knowledge accessible, meditative, and communal (Duran, 2009).

Defining Mysticism: A Survey of Main Definitions by Zarrabi-Zadeh (2008) contains one of the most extensive and critical accounts of the conceptualization of mysticism in the intellectual traditions of both the West and the East. The article discusses the problem of definition of the mysticism itself and the different dimensions on which the scholars have applied to understand the mystical experience. Regarding fana, the self-destruction in divine unity that was the main concern of Hallajian philosophy, the analysis by Zarrabi-Zadeh provides the much-needed theoretical framework to understand the writer of the Zen-poetic poem, Ghani Khan, in his quest to explore the relationship between transcendence and self-effacement. His multidimensional perception of mysticism places it not only as a kind of experience but as a process that is whole and includes doctrine, consciousness, and existential transformation the concepts of which echo the Sufi version of fana fi-Allah (annihilation in God). Zarrabi-Zadeh (2008) starts by stating that one of the most controversial aspects of study of religion was the definition of mysticism. He brings into focus the fact that Inge (1899) and Scholem (1941) observed that no single definition of mysticism could be used to describe its scope and variety. This challenge is similar to the interpretive elasticity of the mystic verse of Ghani Khan that does not clog itself with rigid dogma but, on the contrary, is the living, experiential mysticism that resembles the Hallajian loss of ego. In each case mysticism is a state of consciousness instead of belief-system--an attribute which predisposes fana as being not only a metaphysical ideal but an existential becoming. Zarrabi-Zadeh (2008) notes that in his survey of thinkers in William James to Bernard McGinn, he reminds that mysticism entails a god-human encounter, which entails preparation of, and response to, the immediate presence of the Divine. Such a model as the one developed by McGinn in which mysticism is defined as the preparation of, the consciousness of and the response to the immediate or direct presence of God is relevant to the Hallajian framework in particular. The declaration of Aana al-Haqq (I am the Truth) by Hallaj did not imply a metaphysical identification of identity but a state of utter self-destruction in the awareness of god. This experiential experience reflects the impassible experience of Divine Presence that erases the self, which McGinn and Zarrabi-Zadeh, according to them, is the principal essence of mysticism. The annihilative consciousness of Ghani Khan is reflected in the poetic

voice of the annihilators by dissolution of self, and by the shattering of what is known as the mirror of the ego, and by the desire of a merger with something beyond individuality. The dichotomy of mystical experience and mysticism as doctrine is also one of the differences that make the paper a valuable contribution to the knowledge of the Sufi-modernist synthesis of Ghani Khan. According to Zarrabi-Zadeh (2008), even though several scholars like William James, Otto and Stace confuse mysticism with mystical experience, some like Rufus Jones consider it a doctrine of history. But he thinks that this one-dimensional approach is not adequate. Rather, mysticism needs to be seen as a multi-dimensional process, which encompasses experiential, theoretical, practical, social, and ontological aspects (pp. 84-85). This observation will enable us to think of the poetry of Ghani Khan not solely as a personal or even an experience, but as philosophical and cultural, as an expression of the Pashtun identity through the prism of self-denial and spiritual renunciation. His mysticism is an inner (batin) and outer (zahir) one, which reflects the Hallajian paradox between closeness to God and alienation to the world. The fact that Zarrabi-Zadeh focuses on the experiential essence of mysticism is very similar to the Hallajian perception of fana. According to him, mystical experience is the foundation or root of mysticism, and the other dimensions are the ones that turn around this experience (p. 86). This experiential centrality is parallel to the concept of fana held by Hallaj as not the intellectual abstraction, but a lived experience of dissolution in the Divine. Equally, the mysticism of Ghani Khan, and its mysticism of this type, with its use of paradox, pain, ecstasy, represents an existential experience of fana. His poetic character dances back and forth between defiance and submission, the dialectic of divine intoxication (sukr) and annihilation of Hallaj. The poetry of Ghani Khan can be interpreted as a performance of mystic experience instead of commenting upon it through the theoretical framework proposed by Zarrabi-Zadeh. Another topic that is covered in the article is the essentialist and constructivist debate in the study of mystics. The essentialists (Dreu in this case Stace) consider the mystical experience as a universal experience that transcends the historical and cultural context, whereas the constructivists (Dreu by this case Katz) consider such experience to be affected by the religious setting (pp. 86-87). Zarrabi-Zadeh comes to the conclusion that both perspectives shed light on various aspects of mysticism but the experiential aspect of this phenomenon is the primary one. Such a balance is crucial in the case of a Hallajian reading of Ghani Khan: his poetry discovers in his poetry, even though it is largely based on Islamic Sufism, a way out of orthodoxy and a yearning of all men to be dissolved in love. The essentialist slang of the Ana al-Haqq by Hallaj; the proclamation of the divine immanence, is in Ghani Khan mixed in with constructivist touches of cultural, linguistic, and historical identity. Therefore, the fana of Ghani Khan is metaphysical and sociocultural and is conditioned by his Pashtun ethos but transcends it. Zarrabi-Zadeh (2008) refers to the criticism of Bernard McGinn towards the term union and his inclination towards the notion of presence. This change of union to presence reflects the transcendence of the dualistic structure of lover and Beloved in Hallaj. In fana, neither is there union of two entities, but only divine presence in which the self is effaced. Poems of Ghani Khan also repudiate dualism: the self and the beloved are absorbed in a singular consciousness, which is the ecstatic annihilation of Hallaj. It is not the love, beauty, and truth that the poet seeks but its dissolution he wants to be lost in what he refers to as Ishq, the fire of being that is devoured by God. This interpretation is possible through Zarrabi-Zadeh discussion of the multidimensionalism of mysticism, including experiential, theoretical, practical, social, and ontological aspects of mysticism, which can be used to approach Ghani Khan as a mystic and a philosopher-poet. His mysticism works at the following levels: the experiential, in his ecstatic expression of love; the theoretical, in his reproach of hypocrisy and dogma; the practical, in his invitation to self-understanding; the social, in his conception of shared spiritual manifestation; and the ontological, in his subversion of the self in the Divine nature. In this perspective, the poetic voyage of Ghani Khan may be regarded as a Hallajian performance of fana: annihilation of the ego and the discovery of the unity with the divine.

Ghani Khan's poetry has been investigated from multiple critical angles modernist form, aesthetic philosophy, cultural critique, and mystical sensibility.

Liaqat Iqbal and colleagues (2014) read Ghani as a modernist poet: his free verse, economy of diction, and rejection of fixed roles (e.g., clerical authority) align him with global modernist tendencies and make his poetry receptive to philosophical readings that emphasize rupture and self-invention. This modernist profile helps explain why his poems often dramatize interior conflict and existential longing rather than simply devotional consolation. Regional and journalistic work further clarifies Ghani's public profile as a poet of beauty and anti-ritualism. Hafeez (2019) illustrates how Ghani Khan metaphors; wind, flame, water, star reflect the conceptual mapping of self and cosmos, which symbolize the process of spiritual identity formation.

The foundations of Sufism, as Ahmad and Zeb (2020) argue, lie firmly within the Qur'an and Hadith, where concepts such as self-purification, humility, divine love, and the annihilation of the ego are central. Their study reinforces that Sufism is not an external borrowing but an authentic Islamic tradition, with fana—the dissolution of the self in God—emerging as a core mystical principle. This grounding is crucial for understanding Ghani Khan's poetic vision, as his recurrent emphasis on love, humility, and self-effacement can be read as an extension of this Qur'anic and Prophetic framework of Sufi spirituality.

Munib Ahmed et al. (2021) note mystical themes of divine love, fate, mortality and beauty as the core ideas of Ghani Khan poetically reimagining Sufi themes in their non-moralistic tradition in his Pashto literary research. The thematic analysis employed by Jamil et al. (2024) to compare mystical elements in Ghani Khan and W.B. Yeats generates spiritual longing between the two and highlights that both have a cosmic insight.

Building on this foundation, Omid (2022) traces the growth of Pashto theosophy and mysticism during the Mogul era, identifying six defining features: introspection, the centrality of the sheikh, the use of poetry as spiritual expression, opposition to tyranny, humanitarianism, and unconditional love of God. He situates major figures such as Bayazid Roshan, Rahman Baba, Hamza Shinwari, and eventually Abdul Ghani Khan within this long-standing mystical tradition. Omid's historical analysis highlights that Pashto literature has been steeped in Sufism for centuries, suggesting that Ghani Khan's poetic traces of fana are not isolated but rather rooted in an enduring cultural and spiritual inheritance. Iqbal et al., (2022) present an ecocritical study of Ghani Khan's poetry, arguing that his natural imagery is more than descriptive ornamentation, it becomes a medium of spiritual awareness. They identify three stages in his treatment of nature: sensory observation, reflective thought, and mystical insight. This tripartite process strongly resonates with the journey toward fanāʾ, where external reality gradually leads the seeker into deeper dissolution of self and unity with the Divine. Their findings confirm that Ghani's engagement with nature participates in a broader mystical pedagogy. Complementing this, ecocritical work argues that Ghani Khan's nature imagery is not merely descriptive but constitutes a layered spiritual pedagogy: Iqbal et al. (2022) demonstrate that in Ghani's nature poems the poet moves through phases—physical observation, intellectual reflection, and mystical apprehension, thus linking natural perception to moments of spiritual awareness that resemble stages preparatory to self-annihilation. Iqbal et al., (2022) present an ecocritical study of Ghani Khan's poetry, arguing that his natural imagery is more than descriptive ornamentation, it becomes a medium of spiritual awareness. They identify three stages in his treatment of nature: sensory observation, reflective thought, and mystical insight. This tripartite process strongly resonates with the journey toward fanāʾ, where external reality gradually leads the seeker into deeper dissolution of self and

unity with the Divine. Their findings confirm that Ghani's engagement with nature participates in a broader mystical pedagogy. The authors insist that ecological attunement in Ghani becomes a pathway to the ineffable, where the object world participates in revelation. This convergence between nature-as-revelation and Sufi notions of tajallī (manifestation) strengthens the argument that Ghani's imagery can be read in Hallajian terms: the world reveals the Divine when the self ceases to insist on separateness (Iqbal et al., 2022). Omid (2022) traces the history of Pashto theosophy and mysticism during the Mughal era, arguing that themes of annihilation, union, and divine manifestation were already established in the region's literary imagination. By situating Ghani Khan within this long tradition, Omid's work suggests that Ghani did not invent mystical tropes but reinterpreted them in a modernist idiom. For a Hallajian reading, this historical grounding is vital because it shows that the vocabulary of fanāʾ had local precedents in Pashto poetics, making Ghani's reworking of the theme both authentic and innovative. Several scholars have examined Ghani Khan's engagement with beauty, escape, and philosophical introspection, framing these tendencies as part of a modern, sometimes iconoclastic mystical sensibility. Other recent studies highlight Ghani's philosophical breadth and the plurality of readings his oeuvre allows. Safa and Sahand (2022) emphasize that Ghani's poetry draws on both existentialist and Sufi metaphysical vocabularies, often reconciling Eastern metaphysics and Western existential concerns within a uniquely Pashto idiom (Safa & Sahand, 2022). Such hybrid philosophical textures matter to a Hallajian reading because they show that Ghani's conceptual apparatus is already comfortable with paradox and dialectical negation, features that characterize fana (the negation of ego) and baqāʾ (subsistence in the Divine) in Sufi theology. While The Pashto Academy's PATH Journal (2022) study on Ghani Khan's diction investigates his adoption of borrowed and recontextualized words. It finds that Ghani frequently employs terms connoting dispersal, absorption, and diminishment, which function as lexical markers of mystical thought. These linguistic patterns are crucial for identifying the textual presence of fanāʾ, since they indicate how the poet encodes self-loss and divine immersion within his very choice of vocabulary. The study thus provides a philological basis for linking Ghani's poetic language with mystical processes of annihilation. To add more nuances to the image, Safa and Sahand (2022) situate the opposition between Western existentialism and Eastern Sufi metaphysics in the poetry of Ghani Khan and show his complex philosophical vision. Safa and Sahand (2022) investigate the philosophical dimensions of Ghani Khan's poetry, concluding that his verses combine elements of existential questioning with Sufi metaphysical speculation. Their work emphasizes Ghani's comfort with paradox, negation, and dialectical thought, which aligns with the structure of Hallajian fanāʾ. This combination of existential and mystical inquiry demonstrates that Ghani's poetry is not merely symbolic but structurally suited for staging ego-dissolution and transcendence. Their analysis provides theoretical support for reading Ghani within a Hallajian mystical framework. Despite recognition of mystical elements in Ghani Khan's poetry, scholarship has largely confined itself to modernism and existentialism, often generalizing mysticism. What remains unexplored is a focused Hallajian reading of fanā, creating a clear gap in Pashto literary studies regarding the interplay between Hallaj's mysticism and Ghani Khan's poetic voice.

Research Methodology

The design type used in the current investigation is the qualitative, interpretive, and exploratory, which is based on the main purpose of the investigation, which is the awareness of the way mystical topics, especially the doctrine of the self-annihilation used by Mansur al-Hallaj, are reflected in the poetry of Ghani Khan. The design used during this study is mindful of subjectivity, meaning-making, and cultural context unlike quantitative research, which is based on measurement, statistics, and numerical description of the data. The poetry of Ghani Khan is more

than a treasure trove of philosophical and spiritual ideas, and it is rather an anthology of aesthetic verses. To get its full richness, it is necessary to go deeper than numbers and become acquainted with language, symbolism, imagery, and philosophical undertones. Literary research is particularly inductive to qualitative research since it can enable the researcher to read between lines, in texts. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative design is best suited when the researcher aims at exploring complex concepts and phenomena by the meaning that individuals or groups attach to a social or human problem. The issue with Ghani Khan, in the case, is the relative disregard of his mystical aspect, especially, the remnants of Hallajian annihilation and mystical union in his poetic voice. Such a design therefore offers a flexible, interpretive and descriptive structure that allows one to examine both the overt themes and those that are hidden concerning mystical thought. Moreover, the present research is an exploratory one. Exploratory research is conducted when the area of focus is a relatively under-studied area, and new knowledge is required. Although Ghani Khan has been examined in the frames of modernism, existentialism, and socio-political criticism (Ahmed, 2019; Khan, 2020), the usage of the mysticism of Hallaj as a theoretical instrument has not been developed yet. This design is quite suitable as well as necessary in a study that aims to reveal mystical themes in literature.

Sampling Technique

Sampling is described as the process through which a researcher will choose data sources to be analyzed. In this research, the purposive sampling technique which is referred to as judgmental sampling or criterion-based sampling will be used. In the purposive sampling, the researcher has the freedom to select material that is most pertinent to the research questions and objectives (Patton, 2002). Contrary to random sampling, in which all the population elements have an equal opportunity of being selected, a purposive sampling technique recognizes that not all the data may be of equal importance in a particular research. It is simply inadvisable and unattainable to discuss each of the many poems in the extensive poetic collection of Ghani Khan. Rather, the purposive selection of twenty poems has been done, each with a dense coverage of the mystical themes. The motifs of ego-dissolution, divine union, and ecstatic yearning are also recurring in these poems and are at the centre of the doctrine of fana by Hallaj. The choice of these particular poems will make the analysis of the study focused, relevant, and meaningful. Purposive sampling is also congruent to the interpretative nature of qualitative research. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), the quality of a qualitative research flourishes on information rich cases, which enable the researcher to come up with more in-depth knowledge regarding the subject of inquiry. The poems taken here are of such cases that are full of information and would constitute a lot of textual evidence in analyzing the way Ghani Khan describes mystical experiences. The other motive of using purposive sampling is because of the cultural and language peculiarity of the poetry written by Ghani Khan. The fact that his works are written in Pashto is essential because it is important to have the original translations and thorough interpretation. This allows the researcher to focus more on the linguistic specificity and interpretative depth of the poems because the sample size is small and allows the researcher to concentrate on the themes and dominant motifs within the poems with appropriate accuracy and thoroughness.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical approach of this research is based on the mystical philosophy of Mansur al-Hallaj (858-922 CE), a famous Sufi mystic the doctrine of which, the fana (annihilation of the self), has influenced the Islamic mystiques. The mysticism of Hallaj revolves around the fact that, the ego has to be erased so that the human being can have a union with the Divine. His popular declaration, Ana al-Haqq (I am the Truth) does not represent any blasphemy but the destruction of

selfhood to the point that there is only God left (Massignon, 1982). This fana paradigm offers a prism according to which the poetry of Ghani Khan can be defined. Ghani Khan uses imagery of dissolution, yearning, and transcendence often and these imagery are reminiscent of the mystical principles of Hallaj. With this theoretical background, it can be understood that the analysis will be grounded in the established mystical discourse and will also provide new insights into Pashto literature.

Analytical Framework Model

The study applies the thematic analysis as the main analysis method to analyze the chosen poems. Thematic analysis is a technique of identifying, analyzing, interpreting patterns of meaning (themes) of qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is applied extensively in the research of humanities as it enables the researcher to proceed in a systematic manner through the raw data (text of poems) to more generalized interpretations and conceptual understandings. The thematic analysis is selected on a number of reasons. To start with, the poetry of Ghani Khan is full of metaphor, imagery and symbolic language with the power to be recognized in the patterns and extracted in the themes. The thematic analysis will allow the researcher to find out common motifs like ego-dissolution, spiritual intoxication, longing, and union with the divine and relate them to the mysticism philosophy developed by Hallaj. Second, thematic analysis is practical and flexible, which can be both inductive (data-driven) and deductive (theory-driven). In this work, analysis has been combined with both: themes in the poem Ghani Khan have been identified inductively, and deductively connected with needless to say, the doctrine of fana of Hallaj. Braun and Clarke (2012) suggest that thematic analysis can be quite useful in situations when the researcher seeks not only to describe the contents of texts, but also to interpret them. This is in line with the current study where the objective of the study is to not only make an account of the mystical themes in the poetry of Ghani Khan but also to give an interpretative explanation of the same with the philosophy of Hallaj. Thematic analysis therefore gives us a systematic but free method to the richness and complexity of mystic in poetry.

The thematic analysis in this paper involves six steps which were described by Braun and Clarke (2006):

1. Familiarization with the data through constant reading of the chosen poems of Ghani Khan in order to have a profound understanding.
2. Producing first codes crossing important phrases, metaphors or images that refer to annihilation, ego-loss or divine union.
3. Themingatic search splitting codes into bigger themes (fana, longing, love and transcendence).
4. Themes Reviewing themes narrowing down to coherent and consistent themes with the poetic data and the philosophy of Hallaj.
5. Themes definition and naming stating what each of the themes means in connection with the objectives of the research.
6. Creation of the report combining themes in the larger analysis and discussion chapters.

Data Analysis and Discussion

This chapter presents the thematic analysis of Ghani khan's poetry, guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2019) framework. The analysis aims to explore traces of fanā, the Sufi concept of annihilation of the self, through a Hallājian lens. Drawing on the works and philosophy of Ḥusayn

ibn Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj, the chapter examines how the poetic voice in khan's work reflects, resists, or reimagines the mystical dissolution of the ego.

The chapter begins with a synthesis of the poems to establish familiarity with the dataset. It then outlines the process of generating codes and developing themes, before presenting a detailed thematic analysis. Key themes are illustrated with poetic excerpts and interpreted in relation to both the concept of fanā' and Hallājian thought. The chapter concludes with a thematic map summarising the findings and their interconnectedness.

The Fairy Princes

In a palace made of gold, Perched upon a mountain top,

There was a glittering throne once, Of the choicest rubies made,

In perfection's finest hour;

And around it all was laughter, Great merriment and sport,

With flowers in great abundance, Music's moving melodies,

And colours in profusion, Bathed in the light of day. And living in the palace, Was a fairy princess, sprite,

Fashioned from the dreams of youth, Both pretty and petite,

I said to her, "oh princess!

I am your servitor;

And will, as a devotee,

Sit beside your palace door. I'm weary of the world outside, Afraid of pain in store;

Oh hide me from the eyes of grief Within the palace walls;

Or else this little atom

Of existence shall be crushed, Within the great commotion Of the stars up in the sky."

She raised her eyes towards me, Softly glowing in the light, Gentle, very charming,

And in colours, coloured bright. Then slowly they were clouded o'er, With evening's mists of grief;

And someone filled the wine-cup - Made of misty moonbeam light - With vintage wine of grapes.

She said, "come take this palace, And this throne, all that you see! But where will you take refuge? From one's self one cannot flee! Go! Take to your beloved's feet This earthly melody;

Go raindrop! To the river take, This drop of longing, free.

You're grief and you're laughter, You are spring and autumn, sere; But I have in a daydream seen,

A world of beauty, sheer; Which in it's ecstasy will drown You longing and your grief."

I said to her for this accept "My sacrifice supreme;

Come, let us both prepare to leave, And see this world you've seen.

Oh music of the anklet-bells! Come, drown your melody, Within the mystic strains of lute, And tabla's rhythmic beats;

Want come oh beckoning will-o'-the-wisp!

And lower you entity,

Within the coloured sunbeams, As they dance upon the sea." It said, "I am a captive,

Of both color and the light, And much as I would like to go, They won't let go of me;

And nor will both my wings permit, My body to take flight,

My soul to soar, be free."

note (how I read this poem) I read the poem line-by-line and then grouped recurring images and rhetorical moves into themes (following Braun & Clarke's thematic analysis procedure). I then interpreted those themes against the Hallajian framework of fanā (annihilation) → tajallī (divine manifestation) → baqā (transformed subsistence) as described in classical and modern scholarship (Massignon, 1982; Basharin, 2016; entry on fanā). Where the poem uses the drop/river motif or the language of sacrifice, I treated those as direct poetic analogues of annihilation/merging.

Codes; "Weary of the world," "hide me from grief," "cannot flee from one's self,"

"raindrop to the river."

Themes: Spiritual longing: desire to dissolve into river (union).

Emergent Themes, Textual Evidence, and Hallajian Reading

Beauty as ralevation, tajallī in poetic guise

Key textual evidence:

"In a palace made of gold… colours in profusion… Bathed in the light of day… a fairy princess… Fashioned from the dreams of youth… 'A world of beauty, sheer; Which in its ecstasy will drown You longing and your grief.'"

Analysis

A poem begins with one of the most sensually charged scenes ever, a gilded palace, rubies, music, flowers, and light. This abundance of beauty is often understood as tajalli, an expression of the Divine in the world of sense: the created world shows the qualities of the Beloved or God. The princess, who is said to be created out of the dream of the youth, is a representation of this revelatory beauty (tajjali). The beauty that is expressed in her offer of it, her instructions: come take this palace / go raindrop to the river, is that wherein the object of love is the means by which the self may be lost. The sensory world can be the site of divine revelation in Hallajian terms but this requires that it produces the seeker to a point that is beyond the attachment towards the apprehension of the Absolute (Massignon, 1982). The diction of the poem implies that beauty may

be revelatory: the line, "Which in its ecstasy will drown you longing and your grief" does the rhetorical thing of saying that something is annihilation-through-beauty.

Hallajian link

The hallajian is the occasion, following purgation, in which the Divine is manifested through the subject emptied and the world created; the symbolism of the palace fulfills that revelatory role, making beauty a way to annihilate.

External refuge versus inner work "From one's self one cannot flee":

Key textual evidence: Speaker: "Oh hide me from the eyes of grief / Within the palace walls… or else this little atom / Of existence shall be crushed" Princess: "But where will you take refuge? / From one's self one cannot flee!"

Analysis: This cry of the speaker to get outside protection, a palace where he can be safe against psychological torment is instantly refuted by the austere wisdom of the princess: There is no outside protection that will take the inner burden of the self away. Such dialogue parodies an archetypal Sufi teaching: outwardly transferring (running away to the nice things) cannot cause spiritual change. Hallajian fana is no escapism; it needs inner destruction. The paradox that the poet describes includes the following: the palace is beautiful, but the princess understands that the issue lies within. The speaker thinks of salvation as an outer refuge (sit beside your palace door) and the princess wants an inner one. This is the ethical-spiritual point of intersection of the poem: the seeker has to address self-hood instead of pursuing the safety.

Hallajian connection

Hallaj (and subsequent Sufi interpretors) stress that the ego annihilation process is an internal affair, love and surrender taking place in the loss of self, but not in the movement to an aesthetic haven (Basharin, 2016). That teaching is practiced in the poem.

Drop → river: explicit annihilation metaphor (the poem's most direct fanā sign)

Key textual evidence: "Go raindrop! To the river take / This drop of longing, free.":

Analysis: This is the most obvious manifestation of dissolution in this poem a drop that loses itself in the river. The drop/sea or raindrop/river metaphor of mystical poetry in various traditions is canonized as the extinction of individuality into the higher Being. The drop here, symbolizes the drop of longing of the speaker and the river is the whole (Divine or cosmic unity). The call of imperative voice "(Go… take)": is the beckon to submit and blend. Thus, the poem enacts a miniature of fana: miniaturity - motion - absorption. The following picture "drown[ing] you longing and your grief" also teaches us that the destruction is curative and rehabilitative.

Hallajian connection: It is precisely this type of dissolution, the loss of isolated identity of the ego, that Hallajian annihilation aims to achieve: the ego becomes the instrument of the Divine. The drop/river motif of the poem is a sort of poetic index of fana and can be read closely with I description of Massignon of the self anihilation as fusion of the greater reality.

Sacrifice and willing surrender, readiness for annihilation

Key textual evidence; “I said to her for this accept / ‘My sacrifice supreme; / Come, let us both prepare to leave, / And see this world you’ve seen.’”

Analysis: The sacrifice supreme gestures of the speaker move toward an eager destruction the wish to forfeit personal proprieties with a view to share the world of the beloved. It is not a martyrdom, but a sacrifice of the spirit: the traveler sacrifices the self to become a part of the bigger life. The implicates the princess too in the moment of preparing to go, since this deeds the beloved and the seeker momentarily as one in expressing departure out of the ordinary self-identity. The princess, however, is not entirely free to leave, making the picture difficult.

Hallajian connection: Willing sacrifice is a Sufi term of annihilation by love; the struggle which Hallaj experiences is confirmative surrender, ecstatic and sacrificial. The rhetoric of giving in the poem is one that highlights the moral aspect of fana: this is a decision or an action, not an event.

Captivity of the senses, beauty as bond, not simply liberation

Key textual evidence: “I am a captive, / Of both color and the light… nor will both my wings permit, / My body to take flight, / My soul to soar, be free.”

Analysis: In this case of the poem, the promise of beauty is complicated. The princess -a personification of beauty- admits that she is tied up by the "color and the light", and her wings (power to transcend) will not bring her on. This hints at two things at the same time: (a) beauty may be an indication of the Divine (tajalli), but (b) the fixations on beauty may also enslave the seeker. The paradox of the confession of the princess is very strong: the very thing that invites the seeker to destruction (beauty) can turn into a stumbling block in case of clinging to it. The last two lines lend themselves to a sad ending: the creature that we think is most related to light release is tied down.

Hallajian connection: Sufi literature sees the duality of the world: it may bring enlightenment or enslave the seeker depending on the state of the heart. Hallajian mysticism gives the admonition of not confusing the veil with the Real- one must cross the beauty with the Beloved not attaching. The failure of the princess to fly makes the borderline between revelatory appearance and binding attachment dramatic.

The Fairy Princess poem by Ghani Khan is a very symbolic work of literature that dramatizes existential desires of self-rescaping and at the same time shows mystical motifs of ego-destruction and the hopelessness of seeking shelter elsewhere. The symbolism of the golden palace, the diamond throne, and the fairy princess creates a space of beauty and prosperity somewhere in the other world: “In a palace made of gold,

/ Perched upon a mountain top, / There was a glittering throne once, / Of the choicest rubies made” (p.49). This opening description places the reader in a dreamworld which appears to offer them some respite to the agony of the earthly existence. The speaker, tired of the outside world and scared of suffering in the store, pleads with the princess to conceal him in these palace walls, out of the sight of sorrow. His cry represents both existential fear and mystical longing to get beyond the misery of the world by escaping into the world of beauty and eternity. But the reaction of the

princess is a subversion of this desire to run away. She is providing the throne, the palace, and everything so grand, but she is inquiring the most important question: "But where will you take refuge? / From one's self one cannot flee!". In the same vein, the princess is reminding the poet that one cannot escape, there is no way one can escape the burden of being himself or herself. This is in mystical sense or the concept of fana by Hallaj that demands freedom not to be out there in the external palace and in the external paradise but to be within the annihilation of the ego. The symbolism reaches its climax when the princess talks about the dualities of life grief and laughter, spring and autumn, longing and ecstasy; all of them as identical cycles of existence: "You are grief and you are laughter, / You are spring and autumn, sere". Instead of protecting him against sorrow, she demands that life is indeed full of these contradictions, and the only thing more difficult than concealing is confronting it. This paradoxical, coexisting joy and suffering is the way to unite with the Divine, and this paradox is the joy of mysticism of Hallaj. By so doing, the poem of Ghani Khan echoes the mystic annihilation of the self Hallaj described: only by facing and fading into these contradictions can one get anywhere near the truth. The response of the speaker to the princess shows that he is ready to be sacrificed to get to see this transcendent world. He says, "For this accept / My sacrifice supreme; / Come, let us both prepare to leave, / And see this world you've seen" This is movement towards self offering that is the concept of ecstatic martyrdom in which the annihilation of the self is the greatest of unions. However, the princess ends up her hope by saying the following words: ""I am a captive, / Of both color and the light, / And much as I would like to go, / They won't let go of me". She too, the embodiment of beauty and escapism, is a prisoner of life. The transcendence dream fails and the end of the poem is marked by the fact that the seeker and the sought have found themselves in the same cycle of desire and confinement. In such a way, The Fairy Princess plays out the conflict between existent despair and mystic desire. The image of the palace indicates the false havens that man creates to protect him against pain, created by religion, art, beauty. The hint given by the princess of her saying that one could not escape self, is what Hallaj insisted on when saying that the ego needs to be destroyed first in order to be united. In this aspect, the poem reveals the uselessness of the outside hiding and the need of internal disintegration. The voice of Ghani Khan comes out as that which combines the state of existential fear and mystic insurrection, which makes this poem an important gateway into the research of his poetry of fana.

Question or Answer

Come! Hold forth, oh pious priest!

Is life just a question mark,

Or an answer with some meaning?

Is it union with the loved one, Or the eagerness of search?

Is it calm peaceful existence,

Or mere restlessness and strife?

Is it priest who leads the prayer, or beloved's rosy face?

Or the pulpit for the sermon,

or the prayer niche in the mosque? Or, in a drunk, ecstatic world, Coloured dream of a mirage?

Or the struggle for obtaining.

Just a fleeting glimpse of light,

For this world in darkness steeped?

Is life Pharoah and his pride,

Or just madness and joy of youth?

Or Namrood's throne of gold, Or ecstatic Mansoor's death? Or Hussain, with smiling face, Or Yazid, drunk with his pride? Is it spring, or the rose hiding, From the darkness for a while? Is life ecstatic goblet,

Or the mad face of Khayyam? Or grief's broken begging bowl, Or a wattle of sharo thorns,

Or a garden full of flowers, Or a wise head of Bahlol,

Or a flight from grief and darkness, From the prison of one's self?

Is it beauty reaching out?

Or returning to the dust? Music wailing its own death? Or a fire burning bright?

Are there resting spots around For the journey that is life?

Or does breathlessness abound-with life giving breath, deserting fragile citadel of life?

Is it drowning-pails of water, on a Persian water wheel-

Some being filled as others empty?

Or is it light spreading around Of it's grandeur unaware?

Is our life just a question or an answer, Pious priest now come and answer!

Codes: "Is life just a question mark," "ecstatic Mansoor's death," "Pharaoh and pride vs.

Hussain," "light in darkness."

Themes: Self-negation: rejection of false grandeur (Pharaoh, Namrood).

Life as paradox and unresolvable question (ḥayra)

Textual evidence: "Is life just a question mark, / Or an answer with some meaning?" … "Is life ecstatic goblet, / Or the mad face of Khayyam?"

Analysis: The poem predicts uncertainty and the idea of life is not a one-sided truth but it is a multiplicity of polarities. Such a finding reminds of the mystical state known as hayra (bewilderment), where the seeker must face the boundaries of reason.

Hallajian connection: In the case of Hallaj, annihilation frequently involves a throughgoing presence through confusion as the categories of the mind fall in the presence of divine reality. This disintegration is reflected in the unresolved barrage in the poem: life will not allow itself to be narrowed to one, definitive standpoint.

Critique of external religiosity versus mystical union

Textual evidence: “Is it priest who leads the prayer, / or beloved’s rosy face? / Or the pulpit for the sermon, / or the prayer niche in the mosque?”

A direct contrast between the orthodoxy of rituals (priest, pulpit, prayer niche) and mystical love (face of a beloved) is made in the poem. This rhetoric opposition is consistent with the criticism that Ghani Khan has made in general: traditional religion provides form, but authentic sense lies with the beloved.

Hallajian connection

Hallaj had criticized shallow orthodoxy and this criticism resulted in his execution (ana al-Haqq). This battle is recreated in the poem and the question is whether the truth is ritual or the beloved.

Mansoor’s martyrdom as mystical exemplar (fanā bi’l-ḥubb):

Textual evidence: “Is life Pharaoh and his pride, / Or just madness and joy of youth? / Or Namrood’s throne of gold, / Or ecstatic Mansoor’s death?”

Analysis: The poem is an open reference to Mansoor al-Hallaj- death the ecstatic Mansoor is contrasted with the pride and terrestrial might of tyrants. Death, in this sense, is neither tragedy nor ecstatic. Ghani Khan appeals to Hallaj as the ideal of the meaning in life: the destruction of self in the Beloved, even to death.

Hallajian connection

Hallaj shahada (martyrdom) is explained as the supreme fana; he destroyed himself to the point of death itself becoming ecstasy. Ghani Khan glorifies this death over the throne of kings hence giving annihilation a better way of existence.

Life as fleeting mirage, drop of light, restless search

Textual evidence:“Or, in a drunk, ecstatic world, / Coloured dream of a mirage?” … “Just a fleeting glimpse of light, / For this world in darkness steeped?” … “Is it drowning-pails of water, / on a Persian water wheel— / Some being filled as others empty?”

Analysis: The image of mirage, some momentary vision, and the cycle of the water-wheel emphasizes the impermanence and instability. Life is described as the drunkenness and fatigue.

Hallajian interrelationship: Mystical annihilation is the only way of going beyond this impermanence. Without fana, life is bound in the loop of filling and emptying, passing lights and mirages. The catalogue of the poem dramatizes the lack of the worldly answers.

Life as annihilation into beauty/light

Textual evidence: “Is it beauty reaching out? / Or returning to the dust? / Music wailing its own death? / Or a fire burning bright?”

Analysis: In this case, beauty is neither permanent, and music is lamenting its death-once again demonstrating the impermanence of forms. But then of fire burning bright, is an energy of consumption, maybe of divinity. The ideas of death and mystical humility are presented in the fact that to be back to dust means to be mortal.

Hallajian connection

There will be a restoration to dust as in fana; the self disintegrates into pure nothingness before God. The burning love is familiar to the ecstatic metaphors of divine passion of Hallaj.

The Question or Answer! by Ghani Khan is an anxious reflection on the meaning of our life, which is set in the context of the endless sequence of oppositions: “Is life just a question mark, / Or an answer with some meaning? / Is it union with the loved one, / Or the eagerness of search? (p.125). These interrogatives that remain unsolved are the indications of the Sufi bewilderment (hayrat) before fana. In the case of Hallaj the way to self-annihilation is the way of destroying certainties, the soul is left in a state of inquiry between question and answer. This agree with the initial research aim, that is the poem can be seen as an instance of self-negation, as the I is destabilized, deprived of any pretension to ultimate knowledge, and thus ready to give up.

The spirituality of the poem comes out of the contradictory images: the priest and his sermon and the rosy face of the beloved, the pride of Pharaoh and the ecstatic death of Mansoor, the spring rose and the thorns of sorrow. Ghani Khan, through the question: Is it the priest who leads the prayer, / or beloved's rosy face" (p.125), implies that ritual power is not able to fulfill the desire of the soul. This longing can only be satisfied by the beloved which is a symbol of Divine presence. This fulfills the second research goal: the verses of Ghani Khan reflect spiritual desire in regard to fana because when deciding to select the beloved one, one has to efface the self before the beauty of God and renounce the need of the ego to the power of the institution.

The mention of Hallaj himself i.e. “Or Namrood’s throne of gold, / Or ecstatic Mansoor’s death?” (p.125) puts fana into the very heart of the poem. The death of Hallaj is the image of existential cession: annihilation in God accepted even by the violence of the world. On the contrary, Pharaoh and Namrood represent the egocentric tendency that lives in drunkenness with his authority. In turn, the weight of choice to be Pharaoh or to be Hallaj, to continue existing in pride or to disintegrate into God is dramatized by Ghani Khan. This specifically supports the third research goal, which is to point out that the greatest freedom is not worldly dominance but the loss of self in Divine union.

The poem ends up with, Is our life just a question or an answer, / Pious priest now come and answer! (p.125), by highlighting that it is up to outside elements to answer this puzzle. The unanswered call is implicit, as the silence of the priest becomes, which reflects the teachings of Hallaj who said that only in annihilation can the soul experience the truth. Even the lack of closure is a surrender in itself: the I is becoming extinct in the infinity of God, where the question and answer merge.

The aim of the both objectives was to identify how self-negation was represented in the poems of Ghani Khan. It was demonstrated that self-negation is the pole around which his mystic worldview turns. Ghani Khan does not present the self as an unchanging and successful self, but rather he reveals the self as a moving, precarious, and finally dissipated self. Significantly, this denial is not denying that one is alive but an appreciation of the fact that the self can only have meaning when purged of its illusions. What comes out of it is a poetics of fluidity: transient pictures of dust, wilting flowers, collapsing thrones that dehumanize the ego of its pretensions. According to Hallajian, this pattern is symptomatic of fana as an existential state of being, and not as a mystical occurrence in isolation. In the same way that Hallaj declared annihilation as the way that led to God, Ghani Khan theatricalizes loss of selfhood as the state of true vision. The discovery indicates that Ghani Khan has possibly contributed to the fact that the metaphysics of self-negation is translated into lived human experiences and hence available to spiritual and common readers.

Conclusions

This chapter is the synthesis of the analysis results presented in its context in the Hallajian mystical concept of fana, self dissolution, self negation (annihilation of the self). This chapter attempts to connect the bigger trends that were brought out by the readings, rather than returning to each poem one at a time. It determines the main findings concerning the formulated research aims and questions, proceeds to the discussion of the theoretical and literary implications, and draws the conclusions about the meaning of the research. Thus, this chapter definitively highlights the richness of the mystical voice of Ghani Khan, but it also shows how his relationship with the idea of fana is leading to a reassessment of not only the Pashto literature, but also the Sufi poetics in general.

The research finds that Ghani Khan poetry reads through the Hallajian spectacles of fana displays three dimensions, which are interrelated and they include: the denial of selfhood, the sanctification of desire, and the acceptance of submission. All these dimensions make a coherent mystical philosophy that does not only agree with the thought of Hallaj but extends it to the contemporary existential terms.

The implications are extensive. First, the image of self-negation by Ghani Khan stresses on the timeless nature of fana, in a world where success in material goods and intellectual arrogance is usually a correlative of identity. The value of this study is therefore two-fold. On the one hand, it expands the academic knowledge about Ghani Khan since it puts him into the mystical tradition of Hallaj, demonstrating that his poetry is not just artistic but highly theological. Conversely, it expands the utility of the doctrine of Hallaj since it shows how fana can be transformed in contemporary literary settings to overcome the existential crises.

The research concludes by affirming the fact that the poetry of Ghani Khan is a breathing expression of fana. His poems encourage the readers to travel outside of the self, to experience the suffering of desire, and to lose themselves in the infinite. By so doing, Ghani Khan is not only a poet of beauty and rebellion, he is a mystic voice who, much like Hallaj is a voice that dares to transcend into the self in the ecstasy of annihilation.

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