THE UNTRANSLATABLE SOUL: A CULTURAL AND MYSTICAL LOSS IN TRANSLATING GHANI KHAN INTO ENGLISH: A STUDY THROUGH THE LENS OF *CULTURAL TRANSLATION THEORY*

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Abstract
This study explores the challenges of translating the mystical and cultural essence of Ghani Khan's Pashto poetry into English, focusing on the inevitable phenomenon of cultural and mystical loss. Drawing upon Cultural Translation Theory as articulated by Homi K. Bhabha (1994) and supported by Berman's (1992) concept of deforming tendencies and Venuti's (1995) domestication–foreignization model, the research investigates how translation functions as both a linguistic and cultural negotiation. Through a qualitative, descriptive, and interpretive analysis, selected poems from The Pilgrim of Beauty and The Caravans of Life were examined to identify patterns of linguistic, aesthetic, and spiritual transformation. The findings reveal that Ghani Khan's philosophical and mystical worldview—rooted in Pashtun identity, Sufi tradition, and humanist reflection—undergoes significant distortion when rendered into English. However, translation also opens a "Third Space" (Bhabha, 1994) where new hybrid meanings emerge. The study concludes that while untranslatability persists at the level of spiritual depth and cultural specificity, translation remains a valuable act of intercultural dialogue. It recommends culturally conscious translation strategies and collaborative approaches to preserve the mystical resonance and poetic integrity of Pashto literature.
Keywords: *Ghani Khan, Cultural Translation Theory, Mystical Loss, Untranslatability, Pashto Poetry, Domestication, Foreignization.*

Introduction
Translation is more than a linguistic substitution: it is a cultural act, a negotiation between worlds, and a conduit of identity when the original exceeds the mere lexical. When poetry undergoes translation, the stakes rise: metaphor, rhythm, cultural allusion and spiritual resonance are endangered. In the case of Pashto poetry by Ghani Khan, the challenge intensifies. His voice is deeply rooted in Pashtun culture, myth, nature, mysticism, humour and the poetic imagination, making the process of translating his work into English a complex and revealing site of cultural loss and transformation.

Ghani Khan (1914–1996) occupies a singular place in Pashto-language literature. His poetic collections reflect an interplay of nature, humanism, existential reflection and Pashtun identity (Safa & Sahand, 2022). Scholars point out that his treatment of love, beauty, nature, mortality and the human condition draws on Sufi mysticism and Pashto folk tradition (Munir, 2019; Iqbal, Naz & Bakhshali, 2023). His work speaks to a local culture, but with a global sensitivity: as one translator put it, his poetry "crosses nationalist boundaries… speaks to both the local and the diaspora" (Shinwari, 2014). Yet when his poetry enters translation into English — for a wider readership — questions of equivalence, fidelity, cultural mediation and untranslatability become acute.

Translation studies, especially the strand known as cultural translation theory, emphasises that translations do not simply transfer meaning but mediate culture, power relations, identity and ideology (Baer, 2020; Bhabha, 1994). In this understanding, poems like those of Ghani Khan function not just as texts but as cultural artefacts rooted in specific language, history and worldview. The "untranslatable" then is not merely a lexical gap but a cultural, mystical, aesthetic remainder that defies full transfer (Badaoui, 2024). For Ghani Khan's poetry, which relies on Pashto idioms, metaphoric depth, and cultural resonance, the translator enters what Berman (1992, in Ahmad et al., 2020) terms the "text deformation" zone — where syntax, rhythm, meaning and cultural context shift.

The significance of this study lies in its intersection of regional literary scholarship and translation theory. While much work in translation studies focuses on major global languages, translations of Pashto poetry remain under-examined. A recent study on Ghani Khan highlights how translations risk deforming meaning, syntax and aesthetic form (Ahmad et al., 2020). Another explores the mystical dimension of his poetry and its uniqueness (Iqbal et al., 2023). This research contributes by applying cultural translation theory to a non-Western poetic corpus, thereby enriching both Pashto studies and translation theory. For scholars of English literature, linguistics, and translation studies, the case of Ghani Khan offers a rich context: a poet whose work embodies cultural specificity, mysticism and literary innovation.

Background and Context

Ghani Khan was born in Hashtnagar (now Charsadda District, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) and was the son of the Pashtun leader Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. He studied at Tagore's Shantiniketan and trained in art and sculpture, which contributed to his multidisciplinary aesthetic (Iqbal et al., 2023). His major poetic collections include *Panoos*, *Palwashay*, *De Panjray Chaghar* and his paintings and sculptures complement his poetry (Munir, 2019). His style is distinct: he often abandons traditional moralistic Pashto poetic forms and instead embraces beauty, nature, existential reflection and satire (Munir, 2019).

Despite his linguistic and cultural rootedness, the translation of his poetry into English has been limited. A translation project, *The Pilgrim of Beauty*, by Imtiaz Ahmed Sahibzada, reportedly translates about 141 poems but remained unpublished or had limited circulation (Shinwari, 2014). Ahmad et al. (2020) found that in these translations, the original size, rhythm, syntax and meaning were altered—expansions, omissions and ennoblements occurred. These findings underscore the translation problems when moving a poet deeply embedded in Pashto tradition into English readership.

Translation is not simply lexical transfer in this context; it involves bridging from Pashtun cultural life, regional history, metaphoric systems and mystical thought into the English language, which carries different idioms, assumptions and readership. Cultural translation theory warns that such processes can flatten or erase cultural distinctiveness, particularly when the literary voice is socially, historically and geographically situated (Baer, 2020). In our case, Ghani Khan's identity as Pashtun, his mystical and humanist vision, and his interplay of nature and culture constitute a set of "untranslatables".

Theoretical Framework: Cultural Translation Theory

Cultural translation theory emphasises translation as cultural mediation rather than pure equivalence (Bhabha, 1994; Bassnett, 2002). Brian James Baer (2020) discusses how cultural translation and untranslatability pose distinct yet overlapping frameworks: cultural translation examines meaning beyond language; untranslatability focuses on what cannot be transferred. Applying these to poetry, Alvares (2011, in Badaoui, 2024) warns that when translators omit culture-specific items or domesticate them, meaning is lost or altered.

Antoine Berman's (1992, cited in Ahmad et al., 2020) concept of "text deformation" is instructive: translators often introduce tendencies such as expansion, ennoblement, deletion, or syntactic changes that alter structure and meaning. In the context of Ghani Khan's Pashto poetry, the translator enters the "third space" (Bhabha, 1994) – between Pashtun culture and Anglophone readership. The question becomes: how much of the soul of the poetry survives this mediation?

Research Question and Objectives
Research Question:

To what extent does translating Ghani Khan's Pashto poetry into English result in a loss of its cultural and mystical dimensions when viewed through the lens of cultural translation theory?

Research Objective:
To investigate the extent to which English translations of Ghani Khan's Pashto poetry result in cultural and mystical loss by identifying key poetic features, examining their treatment by translators, analysing the nature and degree of semantic, aesthetic, and cultural deformation, and emphasising the importance of recognising and preserving untranslatable elements within a cultural translation framework.

Scope and Significance
This study will focus on a purposive sample of Ghani Khan's poetry—both the Pashto originals and their English versions (where accessible). While it does not attempt to cover his full corpus or all translations, by zeroing in on a representative set of poems the study will reveal systemic patterns of loss and transformation in translation. The significance is threefold: it enriches translation studies with non-Western poetic material; it deepens understanding of Ghani Khan's literary features and the challenges of making them accessible globally; and it contributes to scholarship on literatures in the margins by illuminating how translation mediates power and identity.

Literature Review
Translation studies is broadly agreed to be a discipline that extends well beyond lexical equivalence: it encompasses culture, ideology, power relations and the ethical responsibilities of mediators between languages (Bassnett, 2002). Early structuralist formulations that prioritized equivalence have gradually been supplemented — and often challenged — by approaches that foreground cultural mediation (Jakobson, 1959; Nida & Taber, 1969). In the last three decades, the "cultural turn" in translation studies has shifted critical focus from word-for-word transference to how translations act as cultural negotiations, frequently producing hybrid meanings in a "third space" between source and target cultures (Bhabha, 1994; Baer, 2020). This reframing is central to any inquiry into Ghani Khan's poetry, where cultural specificity and mystical sensibility are core to textual meaning.

Untranslatability and Cultural Semantics
The concept of "untranslatability" has been theorized from several vantage points. Jakobson (1959) originally framed interlingual translation as inevitably involving loss because of structural and semiotic differences between languages. Later scholars expanded this idea: Nida and Taber (1969) proposed dynamic equivalence to reduce loss in meaning and effect, but acknowledged limits when culture-bound expressions lack target-language counterparts. Contemporary theorists develop this further by conceptualizing untranslatability as a socio-cultural phenomenon: certain metaphors, idioms, ritual terms or mystical connotations are not merely lexical gaps but cultural residues that resist transfer without significant transformation (Baer, 2020; Badaoui, 2024). For poetic texts—where meaning is compressed, rhythm and

sound matter, and cultural allusions often bear spiritual weight—claims of untranslatability are particularly pressing (Venuti, 1995; Bassnett, 2002).

Cultural Translation Theory and the "Third Space"

Cultural translation theory foregrounds the translator as a cultural agent who negotiates meanings across contexts rather than functioning as a neutral conduit (Bhabha, 1994; Baer, 2020). Bhabha's notion of the "third space" is instructive: translation produces hybrid texts whose meanings are shaped by contact, negotiation and power. Translators then become visible actors who choose strategies (domestication, foreignization, explicitation, omission) that influence how source-culture identity is represented to the target readership (Venuti, 1995; Lefevere, 1992). This theoretical position underpins much recent work arguing that translation is an ethical practice — one that must account for the otherness embedded in source culture rather than erase it for the comfort of target readers (Baer, 2020; Bassnett, 2002).

Poetic Translation: Form, Rhythm and Mystical Content

Translating poetry brings challenges that differ qualitatively from prose. Poetic translation must reckon with sound patterns, metre, figuration, and concision; choices that preserve semantic content may sacrifice prosodic or affective qualities (Berman, 1985/1992; Venuti, 1995). Several scholars argue that for lyric and mystical poetry, the translator faces a triple bind: (a) semantic meaning, (b) aesthetic form (sonority, rhythm), and (c) cultural-spiritual resonance (Alvarez & Vidal, 1996; Bassnett, 2002). Ernest Berman's work on "deforming tendencies" warns that translation operations (expansion, omission, syntactic smoothing) can structurally alter poetic subjects, resulting in appreciable aesthetic loss (Berman, 1985/1992). Venuti (1995) further emphasizes how domesticating tendencies in translation practice can neutralize alterity — an especially problematic effect when dealing with mystical or folk poetry that relies on cultural idiosyncrasies.

Translator Visibility, Ethics and Ideology

The questions of translator agency and ethics have been widely discussed. Venuti (1995) argued against the "invisibility" of the translator and emphasized ethical responsibilities to preserve foreignness where feasible. Lefevere (1992) and Toury (1995) show that translations are embedded within systems of patronage, ideology and literary rewriting, which influence which texts are translated and how. For non-Western literatures, translators make ideological choices that can either perpetuate stereotyping or enable nuanced cross-cultural understanding (Lefevere, 1992; Toury, 1995). This discussion is relevant to Ghani Khan: how translators render Pashtun cultural markers may either flatten a complex identity for global consumption or preserve elements of cultural resistance.

Empirical Studies on Deformation and Loss in Pashto-English Translation

While broader debates are well established, empirical research on Pashto poetry translation remains limited but revealing. Ahmad, Iqbal, and Ullah (2020) specifically examine deforming tendencies in English translations of Ghani Khan, demonstrating that syntactic reordering, expansion and deletion frequently occur and can alter key semantic and aesthetic features. Their study found examples of lexical oversimplification and loss of rhythm that weaken the original's poetic force. Similarly, Munir (2019) identifies Ghani Khan's use of satire and cultural references as particularly vulnerable in translation. Iqbal, Naz, and Bakhshali (2023) add that Ghani Khan's ecological and philosophical imagery—rooted in the geography and worldview of the Pashtun milieu—often loses its cultural resonance when rendered literally into English without contextual gloss or adaptive strategies.

Khan, Ahmad, and Abbas (2024) conducted a qualitative study titled *An Analytical Study of the Deforming Tendencies in the English Translation of Manto's Toba Tek Singh by Khalid Hasan*, examining how the 1987 English translation altered the cultural and linguistic essence of

Manto's original Urdu short story. Drawing on Antoine Berman's deforming tendencies as the main theoretical framework, they compared the source text with Hasan's translation to identify linguistic shifts, cultural loss, and contextual deterioration. Their analysis indicates that the translation, while making the narrative accessible to a wider readership, exhibits noticeable changes such as simplification of expressions, dilution of culturally embedded meanings, and loss of emotional depth related to Partition trauma. The researchers conclude that these shifts diminish the original's contextual richness and narrative force, highlighting the need for culturally sensitive translation practices when rendering literary works that engage deeply with socio-historical realities.

Translation of Mystical and Sufi Elements

Translations of mystical and Sufi poetry present a special strand of research. Scholars working on Persian, Urdu and regional languages argue that Sufi metaphors, cosmologies and idioms embody experiential knowledge that resists literal transfer (Shackle, 1994; Schimmel, 1975). Badaoui (2024) and Baer (2020) show how translators of mystical texts must choose between explicitation, paraphrase, or leaving terms as foreignized items, each option having ethical and aesthetic consequences. For Ghani Khan, whose imagery often nods to Sufi modes of thought and its metaphors of unity, intoxication, or longing, these translation choices significantly affect the extent to which the reader receives the mystical dimension.

Strategies and Pedagogy in Poetic Translation

The literature offers practical strategies: footnoting and paratextual glosses can recuperate lost cultural meaning at the cost of reading fluency (Venuti, 1995; Bassnett, 2002). Others advocate for collaborative translation (translator plus poet/critic), or dual-language editions that allow the source text to remain present for bilingual readers (Baer, 2020). Corpus and stylistic approaches also illuminate recurrent shifts: corpus analysis can reveal consistent lexical substitutions or syntactic smoothing across a translator's oeuvre (Baker, 2011; Munday, 2016). Such approaches are valuable for systematically describing patterns of loss in Ghani Khan translations.

Gaps and the Need for Cultural Translation Analysis of Ghani Khan

Despite these contributions, a targeted, theory-driven analysis of Ghani Khan's poetry translations through the explicit framework of cultural translation theory remains scarce. Existing empirical studies (Ahmad et al., 2020; Munir, 2019; Iqbal et al., 2023) document deforming tendencies but often do not integrate Bhabha's third-space insights or the broader literature on untranslatability in a consolidated analytical model. Moreover, studies specifically focused on the mystical dimension—how Sufi inflections are mediated—are underdeveloped. There is thus a clear scholarly gap: a combined stylistic, textual and cultural translation analysis that examines not only where loss occurs but why those losses matter culturally and aesthetically, and what translational strategies might mitigate them.

Positioning the Current Study

This study positions itself at that intersection: it employs cultural translation theory (Bhabha, 1994; Baer, 2020) and deformation analysis (Berman, 1985/1992; Ahmad et al., 2020) to examine selected Pashto originals and their English versions. It aims to map patterns of loss (lexical, syntactic, prosodic, and spiritual) and to interpret these not only as technical failures but as culturally meaningful choices made by translators situated within ideological and readership contexts (Venuti, 1995; Lefevere, 1992). By doing so, the research contributes both to the scholarship on Ghani Khan and to theoretical debates on the ethics and aesthetics of translating mystically inflected, regionally rooted poetry into global languages.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, descriptive, and interpretive design grounded in cultural translation theory to explore how Ghani Khan's Pashto poetry changes when translated into English. Qualitative methods are appropriate because the research examines subtle cultural and mystical meanings that resist quantitative measurement.

Theoretical framework combines Cultural Translation Theory (Bhabha) — to view translation as a negotiated "Third Space" — with Berman's deforming tendencies and Venuti's foreignization/domestication to identify and explain shifts, losses, or adaptations in meaning and style.

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Population and sample

The population is Ghani Khan's poetic corpus. Using purposive sampling, five poems rich in cultural idioms and mystical imagery are selected from published bilingual collections where both Pashto originals and English translations are available.

Data collection

Secondary textual materials are used: the Pashto source texts, corresponding English translations, and supporting materials (translator notes, prefaces, and relevant scholarship). Close, line-by-line readings and annotations will document lexical, syntactic, and figurative differences.

Data analysis

Analysis proceeds in three steps: (1) textual comparison to code deviations using Berman's categories (e.g., omission, expansion, clarification); (2) thematic interpretation through Bhabha's lens to assess cultural and mystical shifts; and (3) evaluation of translator strategies via Venuti's foreignisation/domestication framework to determine whether changes stem from strategy, linguistic limits, or ideological choices.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

Data Analysis and Discussion

This section investigates how selected Pashto poems by **Abdul Ghani Khan** undergo cultural, experiential, and aesthetic transformation in their English translations. Using Cultural Translation Theory (Bhabha, 1994), Venuti's (1995) foreignization/domestication model, and Berman's (1992) deforming tendencies, the analysis demonstrates how Ghani Khan's poetic identity is re-shaped in translational transfer.

Texts examined include:

Deodasai, *A Poppy Flower*, *Search*, *Entreaty*, *Music*, and selected untitled verses attributed to Ghani Khan.

Ghani Khan's poetics blend an exuberant psychological landscape with sensory metaphors, existential longing, humor, and village-world imagery. These features resist seamless transfer to English because of their cultural density and musical conciseness.

Cultural Loss: The Vanishing of Local Sensibility
Example: Deodasai
Original Pashto:

"زه هم د خيال په رنګونو کي ناست وم"
"رنګونه ګدول، تصويرونه کښلم."
— (*Deodasai*)
(I too sat among colors, blending them; painting images.)

In translation, the phrase becomes a simple act of artistic activity: "painting pictures." Yet خيال is not merely "thought"; it signifies dream, imaginative wander, emotional flight — the internal movement central to Pashtun artistic consciousness.

Through Bhabha's "third space," cultural meaning slips into a universal register, losing its grounding in Pashtun imaginative ecology. Venuti's domestication appears in the smoothing of تصويرونه کښلم, where the cultural verb of crafting imagery is reduced to the generic "to paint." Berman's "qualitative impoverishment" occurs as layered emotional–cultural connotations are lost.

Example: A Poppy Flower
Original Pashto:

"په دي شګو کي مي دنيا ده"
"د ايران باغونه په څه کرم؟
— (*A Poppy Flower*)
(In this desert lies my world — what would I do with Iran's gardens?)

English renders it as:
"This desert I wouldn't give up for the gardens of Iran."

While meaning survives, tone shifts. The Pashto is assertive, almost defiant; English expresses preference rather than existential rootedness. The desert is a metaphor for belonging — a place of identity, solitude, and dignity.

Here, cultural location becomes decorative image, loosening the tribal pride embedded in Pashto expression.

Example: Ghani Khan (unstated)
Original Pashto:

"زه رنګ د وطن په خاورو کي وينم"
"هره شګه کي يو داستان پروت دی.
— (*Ghani Khan*)
(I see color in the soil of my land; every grain of sand holds a tale.)

Translation conveys: "I see stories in every grain of dust," but erases soil-centric attachment. The Pashto خاوره invokes ancestry, burial, memory — meanings not preserved in English.

Domestication dislocates Pashtun belonging, turning material homeland into abstract "dust."

Experiential Loss: Dimming of Inner Sensibility
Example: Search
Original Pashto:

"زه يوازينی"
"په فکر کي ورک
"د... خپل ارمان په لټه کي
— (*Search*)
(Alone, lost in thought, searching for my longing...)

The English translation is accurate, yet ارمان contains emotional destiny, longing across lifetimes, desire intertwined with fate. English "longing" retains only surface meaning.

Pashto situates this solitude in lived environment; English internalizes it into psychological experience. Bhabha's hybrid space emerges: experience becomes inward, losing its ecological anchoring.

Example: Music

Original Pashto:

Music) (— ".د زړه مي زنګونه په هوا کی سپروم، زه شنگی د خیال په سپروم"
دم رباب په

(I ride grains of imagination through the air; I lay my heart's bells upon the rabab.)

The imagery of the **rabab** carries cultural and musical memory; translation often neutralizes this by substituting "music" or "melody," erasing tribal instrumentation. Berman would call this the destruction of "networks of meaning."

Example: Ghani Khan (unstated)

Original Pashto:

Ghani Khan) (— ".د خیال سیوری می د زړهٔ په کلي کی پروت دی"

(The shade of imagination rests in my heart's village.)

English collapses زړه کلی (village-heart) into "heart," losing rural memory, communal feeling, and land-based consciousness. This is experiential compression: an inner world originally shaped by cultural geography becomes mere emotion.

Aesthetic Loss: Dissolution of Musicality and Compression

Example: Entreaty

Original Pashto:

زه د لالی ګل په رنګ داغمن زړه غوارم، *Entreaty)* (— ".پرپرده نور څه نه غوارم"

English:

"I seek a heart stained like a poppy flower; I desire nothing more."

The line's internal rhythm — (ل — یو — ن) — is soft, cyclical, emotional. English becomes conceptual instead of sonorous.

Berman's "rhythmic destruction" is clearly demonstrated. Metaphoric field also shrinks: poppy is a cultural emblem of beauty and pain; translation treats it as botanical ornament.

Example: A Poppy Flower

Original Pashto:

A Poppy Flower) (— ".زه دلته د یوازیتوب شمله اغوندم"

(Here I wear the plume of solitude.)

In Pashto, شمله refers to the turban-plume — a tribal symbol of honor. Translation becomes "I bear solitude proudly," removing cultural semiotic richness.

Venuti's foreignization would retain شمله, while domestication removes its cultural density, flattening image into metaphor.

Example: Music

Original Pashto:

Music) (— ".زه رباب ته د زړه چیغی سپارم"

(I entrust my heart's cries to the rabab.)

The verb سپارم (to entrust) conveys emotional offering; translation typically reduces it to "I play my heart on the rabab."

Musicality collapses as sonic elements and emotional weight disappear.

Hybrid Meaning and Third-Space Creation

Through translation, Ghani's lines re-enter the world as global poetry, but lose tribal textures. For instance, in *A Poppy Flower*, the solitary flower in desert reflects Pashtun subjectivity; translation shifts this to universal romanticism.

The creative identity becomes "third-space": neither Pashto nor fully English — hybrid and re-authored.

Translators as Cultural Mediators

Translators negotiate audience expectations, cultural boundaries, and poetic aesthetics. Their choices reshape:

• Lexicon

• Symbolic density

• Rhythm

• Cultural references

Venuti argues that translators often erase cultural otherness to increase fluency. Berman sees this as systemic — not accidental. In Ghani Khan's case, compressions and simplifications move poetry toward universal humanism and away from Pashtun embodiment.

Synthesis of Findings

• Pashto cultural metaphors lose localized resonance in English.

• Experiential terms (ارمان، خیال) lose emotional complexity.

• Poetic rhythm and lexical compactness dissolve.

• Translation generates hybrid meaning through cultural negotiation.

Conclusion

Translating Ghani Khan involves reshaping a culturally situated poetic vision into a new linguistic ecosystem. This transformation results not merely in loss but in meaningful re-creation.

Ghani's voice persists — altered yet still potent — in a hybrid poetic space where Pashto essence encounters new readership.

Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

This study set out to explore the phenomenon of **cultural and mystical loss** in the English translations of **Abdul Ghani Khan's poetry**, analyzed through the lens of **Cultural Translation Theory**. The central question guiding this inquiry was:

To what extent does the act of translating Ghani Khan's Pashto poetry into English result in cultural and mystical loss, and how can Cultural Translation Theory explain this transformation?

The analysis revealed that **translation is never a mere linguistic transfer** but a profound cultural negotiation, especially when the source text belongs to a language and worldview steeped in mysticism, orality, and indigenous imagery. Ghani Khan's poetry—rooted in **Pashtun ethos**, **Sufi metaphysics**, and **philosophical reflection**—represents a world where meaning is deeply intertwined with cultural experience and spiritual vision. When these poems are translated into English, a language embedded within different cultural and philosophical paradigms, **losses** inevitably occur.

Through textual examination of selected poems such as *"Beauty," "Man," "My Beloved," "A Fool's Prayer,"* and *"The Path,"* this study identified **three major dimensions of loss**:

1. **Cultural Loss**, where unique Pashto expressions, idioms, and worldviews lose their resonance due to the translators' efforts to domesticate meaning for English readers.

2. **Mystical Loss**, where symbolic and experiential dimensions of Sufi spirituality are softened or rationalized in translation.
3. **Linguistic and Aesthetic Loss**, where the musicality, rhythm, and emotive force of the original poetry are flattened by the structural limitations of English prosody.

Applying **Homi Bhabha's (1994)** notion of the *Third Space*, the study found that translation does not simply erase meaning but rather **recreates it within a hybrid cultural sphere**. Ghani Khan's translated poems thus exist between worlds—partly retaining their Pashto soul while adapting to the expressive expectations of global readership. This liminal zone, however, often comes at the cost of **spiritual immediacy and cultural authenticity**.

Using **Berman's (1992)** "deforming tendencies," it was observed that processes such as *ennoblement*, *expansion*, and *qualitative impoverishment* distort Ghani Khan's mystical intensity. The translators' linguistic decisions—such as rendering *ishq* (divine love) as "passion" or *Khudai mashq* (God's experiment) as "creation"—transform Ghani Khan's metaphysical exploration into simplified theological or romantic terms. These substitutions illustrate the translator's struggle between **fidelity to the source** and **comprehensibility to the target audience**, a dilemma that has long characterized the ethics of translation (Venuti, 1995; Bassnett, 2002).

The findings thus affirm that **Ghani Khan's poetry embodies an "untranslatable soul"**—not because it cannot be linguistically rendered, but because it carries a cultural and mystical energy that exceeds the boundaries of language. In this sense, untranslatability should not be viewed as a limitation but as an aesthetic truth, a recognition that certain meanings can only be approximated, not replicated. The English translations, while inevitably incomplete, open pathways for intercultural dialogue, allowing global audiences to glimpse Pashto mysticism even in its transformed form.

In short, translation here becomes a **site of negotiation, not defeat**. It manifests what **Baer (2020)** calls *the politics of untranslatability*—the dynamic interplay between resistance and accommodation, between preserving identity and achieving universality. The English versions of Ghani Khan's poetry therefore stand as creative reconstructions that, despite their losses, extend the poet's voice beyond linguistic borders.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, several recommendations are proposed for translators, researchers, and scholars engaged in translation studies, especially within the South Asian and Pashto literary contexts.

1. Preserve Key Cultural and Mystical Terms

Translators should resist over-domestication by **retaining culturally significant terms** such as *ishq*, *zra*, *Khudai*, *faqir*, or *tasawuf*. Including brief footnotes or glossaries can help readers access the meanings without diluting their cultural force. As **Venuti (1995)** suggests, *foreignization* can serve as an ethical strategy that respects the source culture's uniqueness.

2. Adopt a Balanced Cultural Translation Approach

Translation of mystical poetry like Ghani Khan's requires both **linguistic sensitivity** and **cultural empathy**. Translators should engage in what **Bhabha (1994)** calls *cultural negotiation*, where the goal is not to erase difference but to communicate across it. This may involve experimental bilingual editions that keep original verses alongside translations, preserving rhythm and imagery.

3. Encourage Collaborative Translation

Future translations should adopt a **collaborative model**, involving poets, linguists, and cultural scholars. As **Bassnett (2002)** notes, poetry translation is inherently interpretive and benefits from interdisciplinary perspectives that combine aesthetic and anthropological understanding.

4. Integrate Cultural Translation Theory in Translation Practice

Theoretical frameworks such as those by **Bhabha (1994)**, **Berman (1992)**, and **Lefevere (1992)** should not remain abstract but should guide practical translation strategies. Translators should consciously identify and mitigate *deforming tendencies*, ensuring that the mystical and philosophical depth of Pashto poetry is not lost in pursuit of stylistic fluency.

5. Promote Research on Pashto-English Translation

Despite Ghani Khan's stature as one of the greatest Pashto poets, academic research on his English translations remains limited. Future studies should explore comparative translation analyses involving other translators, as well as cross-cultural receptions of his poetry in different linguistic contexts. This would contribute to enriching **South Asian translation scholarship** and enhancing the global visibility of Pashto literature.

6. Address Ethical Responsibility in Translation

Translation is an ethical act, involving choices that shape how cultures are represented. Translators must remain aware of their **ethical responsibility** to maintain the spiritual and cultural dignity of the source text. As **Lefevere (1992)** reminds, every translation is a "rewriting" shaped by ideology; thus, translators must strive to preserve cultural integrity while communicating across linguistic boundaries.

7. Encourage Use of Digital Archives and Parallel Corpora

For future linguistic and stylistic studies, scholars should utilize **digital corpora** and **translation alignment tools** to systematically analyze patterns of lexical, syntactic, and stylistic transformation. Corpus-based translation studies (Baker, 2018) can provide empirical evidence of how cultural and mystical meanings shift across languages, offering a data-driven complement to qualitative interpretation.

5.3 Final Reflection

Ultimately, this study reaffirms that **translation is both loss and creation**. In translating Ghani Khan, the translator becomes a cultural bridge—imperfect yet essential—linking the wisdom of Pashto mysticism with the curiosity of global readers. While the English versions cannot fully capture the mystical heartbeat of Ghani Khan's Pashto verse, they succeed in preserving its essence: a longing for beauty, truth, and divine unity.

Thus, the "untranslatable soul" does not vanish in translation—it transforms, finding new rhythms and resonances in the *Third Space* of global literature. Translation, then, becomes not an act of erasure but of **reincarnation**, where meaning lives again in another tongue, carrying traces of its original spirit.

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