

## An Investigation of Philosophical Thoughts in Ghani Khan Poems

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### ABSTRACT

Ghani Khan who lived from 1914-1996 is considered as one of the influential poets in Pashto literature who could speak five languages. He was a drawer and politician as well. We can imply from Ghani Khan's several poems that he has discussed about philosophy. Ghani Khan has a passion to discuss about philosophical conceptions which philosophy talks about such as death, rationality, social values, individual freedom, and other topics. He has shown compromise to some of the Western and Eastern philosophical values hence evident from discussing in his poems. Specifically, there are signs of Western Existentialism and Eastern Sufi Metaphysics in his poetry. However, there is a contradiction in his and those of other philosophical views. Ghani views all those philosophical views according to his own view while different from those of other philosophers. For instance, believers of existentialism view life as sorrow, fright, and Nihilism whereas for Ghani Khan life is itself a joy and what he can do and should do is to spend a pleasant time. He depends everything in the universe on his lord Allah. The most important part of his view is that he considers life as a blessing from the lord thus trying to lessen the human fear from death. Consequently, most of his poetry is for the betterment of humans and establishing good relationships between them.

### KEYWORDS

the significance of philosophical thoughts; the poetry and philosophical thoughts of Ghani; existentialism

### INTRODUCTION

Ghani Khan is the oldest son of Khan Abdul Ghafar Khan, the political leader of Pashtoons living in 1890-1988. He was born in Hashtnagri, Peshawar. After completing his primary studies in Otmanzai, Ghani Khan went to England and studied drawing and literature for two years there. After that, he went to the United States of America and started his engineering in Louisiana, USA but his father was sent to the prison during that time. Thus, he came to India and started his studies as a student at Tagura Arts Institute. Afterwards, he as his father joined politics. As a result, he was selected as a member of parliament of India via the people of state Sarhad. He founded a political group. In 1948, he was captured by Police and was put in jail. After being in prison for six years, he quitted his political activities and worked as a leader of the people in his own region. An anthology of Ghani Khan poetry named „Latoon,, which means „Investigation,, was written in 734 pages. The „Pathans-askech,, is his other book written about the history and culture of Pashtoons. Ghani Khan who was not only a poet but an artist could speak Pashto, Arabic, Urdu, English and Persian languages. He passed away in 1969 at the age of 82.

We can frankly say that Ghani Khan is an undiscovered treasure of Pashtun tribe. He can be considered as a book which has been left unturned and no one has ever realized his main and foremost purposes. Ghani is like an ocean to which no one could even take out the pearls of that ocean. Ghani Khan is resembled to a dream which has never been interpreted. He is a beautiful philanthropist on the unfortunate land of Pashtoon tribe. There are some writings about this prominent poet in Pashto literature but not enough has been dedicated to this great personality. However, he has been an influential and a popular poet among Pashtoon poets, and he is the first Pashtoon poet whose poetry is on the top in the music world such as YouTube and others, there is still more to explore about his poetry.

### **Objectives of the Study**

It is very rare that we find poets with more thinking power rather than their imaginative power. Nonetheless, Ghani Khan had equal thinking and imaginative power. Looking at the existence of philosophical thoughts in Ghani Khan poetry, we are going to discuss the following questions in this study.

1. What is philosophical thought?
2. What philosophies exist in Ghani Khan poems?
3. What philosophies are Ghani Khan philosophy similar to?
4. Which philosophical schools have Ghani Khan been influenced by?
5. What are his own particular philosophical views?

### **RESEARCH METHODS**

In this study, we discussed the poems of Ghani Khan in order to look for the philosophies he has embedded in his poetry. A methodology of explanation and comparison through a literature review was utilized in this study. Many of his poems are discussed according to some general questions of philosophy such as Existentialism. In addition, poems of Ghani Khan are comparatively studied with some other philosophers such as Heraclitus, Kierkegaard and Sartre.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### ***Poetry and Philosophical Thoughts of Ghani Khan***

The task of philosophy is to make people think about their surroundings and universe. However, the universe and all its living and non-living beings are unlimited and as secretive that we cannot imagine about. Similarly, we cannot discover all the universe even if we human spend millions of years in detecting that. The secrets of the universe and all this ambiguity is described in Ghani Khan poetry as below: (12: 3)

*In one small quantity of color,  
Exists ocean of multiple colors  
In one single drop of melody  
There are grief and intoxication too  
In one single instant of life,  
Exists lives of hundreds of years  
In one handful of soil  
Lie pleasure and grief too  
In one handful of ashes,  
Lie the cities of light,*

*The lips of each flower,  
Represent the secrets that of Thoor mountain  
Laughter and proudness both exist  
Inside the muddy skin*

*This idol of mud and that rhythm of the infinity  
That glamour of the infinity before that single drop*

We face philosophy when we deeply think about ourselves and our surroundings. Specifically, we pose questions such as what life and death are, what good and bad are, what justice is and what independence does each individual need? Philosophy is thinking about such thought-provoking questions. These and other philosophical questions are pictured in Ghani Khan poetry as follow:

Where do we come empty-handed from?  
Why do we want to be uselessly brave?  
Why should we establish religion, belief, and cause fright and worry?  
Where will we go empty-handed when run out of breath?  
In which country and on which way?  
There is all this noise, cry and grief.  
Oh! What fire is this that burns the universe.  
What is life? What is death and what is home for?  
Whom for, what for and how much unrelieved?  
What is dignity? How much is power? what is wealth?  
When it is good for me, why not for others?

If all the popular poets of the world be investigated, it can be revealed that all of them focus on the topic human in their poems. It is the human who is the source of civilizations and improvement. For this purpose, what Ghani Khan mostly highlights in his poetry is human, humanistic values, and good interpersonal relationships between humans. Nevertheless, his view of human is distinct from other great philosophers such as Aristotle who believed humans as a rational animal, Plato who considered humans as political animals and Sartre who viewed humans as a hell for another human. In fact, Ghani Khan was not giving priority to any of those features mentioned by other philosophers but he was preferring the spirituality of humans. This means that he considered human as the fate and result of his spiritual and abstract feelings. In relation to this, Ghani has read the following poem.

*In this bosom lie together  
Both the deepest spates of hell  
And the gardens of the heaven  
Of which ascetics dream  
Mountains grim as dark Tatara  
Teeming with unbridled passion  
And a vast of Pacific Ocean  
Drunken with the wine of love*

*There is so much color in it  
Of the essence of the Spring  
That a single flash illumines  
All the world with light and laughter  
    And the awful darkness in it  
Hopeless tears and ebon darkness  
Is enough to shroud in sorrow  
All the world with but a sigh.*

Ghani Khan's view of life is not only to eat, drink and beget off-spring but he believes on the superiority of spirituality. He favors the life of love, harmony, and civilization. Some of his verses from his poem named 'life' are as follow:

*If our life is licking milk,  
This the dog does to perfection;  
If it is just begetting off-spring,  
This the bull can even do;  
Life is not just appetite,  
Nor majestic places;  
Heaps of rubies piled on high,  
Nor our friends, when times are good,  
Nor the loved ones, and their smiles,  
Nor yet gardens in full bloom.  
Life is one continuous movement,  
To achieve a lofty goal;  
It is stumbling and regaining  
Of the feet as one proceeds;  
It is part an intense feeling,  
And part a moving tune;  
A few tears and some laughter*

Life and death are two contradictory phenomena. When humans think about life, they will imagine death simultaneously. This is due to the fact that life and death are two opposites. However, the death is one of the terrifying secrets for humans. Nonetheless, for Ghani Khan, death is not a fear but it is the opposite of life simply. Greek philosopher 'Heraclitus' thinks similarly. He believes that life and death, being asleep and awake, oldness and youth, are all the same since they switch from one to the other. In addition, they are contradictions and thus connected to each other. For example, a way leading toward up is a way also leading toward down (62:1)

Since death is a terrifying phenomenon, Ghani views it as something valuable to rescue people from the fear of death. He asserts that death is favor done to humans by god (Allah) when humans intensely need this it. He believes that death is something that deserves to be experienced. Considering death as a favor, Ghani Khan has expressed it in the poem below:

*Death, it is your great act of piety for man  
You take him to your house or he would be left to himself  
Death is a covenant between the love and the beloved;*

*Death is a secret wedlock between being and non-being  
Death harbors the hidden port of life's ocean;  
Death is helpless and a vision of beauty to itself.  
Death is the only witness of my life and your grace,  
And O strange lord, of night and the crescent (334:4)*

Existentialism, a philosophy type talking about the existence and quiddity of humans is vividly seen in Ghani Khan poetry. Jean Paul Satre who is an existentialist believes that the existence of humans came into existence before its quiddity but in other objects quiddity is first and existence is second. For instance, an artist armed with all his or her tools such as paintbrush, board, ink, and other objects is going to draw a signboard. His drawing has the quiddity even before putting it on the signboard as the artist already had it in his/her imagination. This means the quiddity was first than its existence. On the other hand, for humans, the quiddity is second as the humans were first brought into existence and later they could get the quiddity. (159:5)

The purpose of the Ghani Khan poem below is same as discussed above:

*I made for myself  
From my own imagination  
From my grief, from my happiness  
I made myself a soulmate  
From my discomfort and from my ambition  
From my dreams, from my colors  
I caused myself the sorrow  
From the laughter and the sadness  
From the togetherness and drunkenness  
I made myself a life  
From the hopes and the light  
From the darkness and the curses  
I caused myself the death  
From the yellow flowers of the spring  
From the ruby and the youth  
(641:4)*

Existentialism as mentioned earlier largely deals with fright, death, hopelessness, and sorrow. Specifically, existentialist think that the existence is meaningless and the humans live with sorrow and frustration. As an example, Danish philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard, who is one of the founders of Existentialism asserts as follow:

*„I stick my finger into existence. It smells of nothing. Where am I? Who am I? What is this thing called the world? What does this word mean?„*

On the contrary, there is a strong distinction between these existentialists and Ghani Khan in terms of their views regarding the world. Ghani Khan does not assume the existence as meaningless but he relates the entire existence to the lord and never sees him frustrated. For him, there is no despair and sorrow, but he enjoys the life and his goal from the life is to spend the time pleasantly.

*Each and every thing,  
Belong to the Lord,  
The whole universe,  
Belong to the Lord,  
Me came just for one single evening.  
Garden, grapes, and alehouse,  
Are of the lord,  
For a cup of wine  
Love, happiness and intoxication,  
Are of others  
Dancing, laughing, and adornment,  
Are of others  
Flower, narcissus, and blossoming garden  
Are of others  
Me came just for their visibility  
Me, like a little butterfly search,  
Flower, bloom and spring,  
Me, burning like a candle,  
To see, beauty, happiness of my love*

Generally, there is contradiction in Ghani Khan poetry as other fabulous poets. In fact, every poet is addicted to protesting the nature and the simple way of life. Ghani Khan is not an exception to this rule of poetry. While he has expressed agreement sometimes, he does criticize sometimes. For instance, he is a strong believer of wisdom, yet, he is against wisdom and rationality on the other hand. Following is his another poem showing Ghani's anti-rationalist views.

*See the peacock ruined of his own wings,  
Devil ruined of the wisdom he had.  
The shell was sound sleeping at the bottom of the ocean,  
With heart broken by the red pearl it had.  
The flower ruined because of the color and fragrance it had,  
Yet Mansoor was hanged owing to the knowledge he had.  
The moth burnt as having a soft heart,  
The ant ruined of his own wings.  
Ghani is weeping as he is knowing too,  
What a beautiful life would it have been,  
Had it been like that of a donkey. 198.4*

Along the history, there have been different other philosophers who had views against rationalism. In 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, there were philosophers who even believed that philosophy and daily life were not led by wisdom only. One of these philosophers was Fridrich Nietzsche who did not believe on the value of wisdom. He asserted,, Not only wisdom can control the human life,,. If wisdom be compared with other wisdom-related events, it would be revealed that wisdom is not the single source of philosophical thoughts

but there are broader subjects than wisdom in human mind that are used for the benefit of philosophical thoughts. (31.6)

In the poetry of Pashto language, the symbol for wisdom is the Greek great philosopher, Plato. However, Ghani Khan criticizes the wisdom and the philosophy of Plato as well in the verse below.

*Oh Plato! Leave your philosophy.*

*Your philosophy sees drops only while the universe is ocean of drops*

### **Discussion**

Language is the shared medium of reaching out poems and philosophy to the public. It is used by both the poet and philosopher but in different ways. One word may have one meaning in philosophy but for the poet, it may have more than one meanings. Obviously, more direct language is used by philosophers but more indirect and symbolic language is used by the poets. Philosophy is more dependent on rationality. Rationality in turn depends on critical thinking. These two (rationality and critical thinking) are totally contradictory to the human feelings and emotions. Shortly, philosophy is more dependent on rationality, logic and reasons while poetry mostly is dependent on feelings, imagination and ambitions rather than rationality. 38: 2

As a result, we can say that Ghani Khan is a poet whose poems are written mostly in an imaginative manner. Nonetheless, he has not ignored philosophical thoughts in his poetry as well. Our aim is not to call Ghani Khan a philosopher but it should be noted that despite Ghani Khan's poems are imaginative and about fantasy, he has poems where he has embedded philosophical thoughts in his poems as well. Expressing philosophy instead of imagination and feeling in poetry has helped in popularizing the works of those great philosophers of the world.

Regarding Ghani Khan in Pashto language, it can be implied that Ghani Khan has expressed those difficult and prominent terms of philosophy in his poems in a very poetic and simple way. This can be a unique instance of the talent and creativity of Ghani Khan.

### **CONCLUSION**

Ghani Khan is a famous Pashto poet from the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He is the single Pashto poet who discussed philosophical thoughts in his poetry. Therefore, he is called a philosophical poet. However, his philosophical thoughts are influenced by Western Existentialism and Eastern Sufi Meta-physics and but with a difference. Ghani Khan views all these based on his own poetic worldview. His poems are mostly about good wishes and hopefulness, and lacks frustration, worry, sorrow. Ghani Khan poses philosophical questions about the universe and all the nature and creatures and this is a special creativity in Pashto poetry thus people calling him a philosophical poet. This does not infer he is a philosopher but there are philosophical thoughts in his poetry. It is impossible to call a poet a philosopher due to the fact that philosophers rely wholly on rationalism, logic and reasons while poets depend on feelings, imagination, and fantasy. Thus, causing these two to be totally separate ends.

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