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Ghani Khan: His Flight from the Real in the Poem *My Palace* (Zama Mahal)

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Abstract: *This study explores the theme of Escapism in Ghani Khan's poetry My Palace (Zama Mahal), focusing on how the speaker utilizes the construction of an idealized world as an escape route to avoid the difficulties of daily life. The study thoroughly analyses the poem in both its Pashto original and its English translation using a qualitative research design in order to find literary techniques, thematic notions, and instances of escape. The results provide insight into the profound meaning of escape in Ghani Khan's poetry and offer an innovative perspective on the longstanding human desire to escape reality and find comfort in the world of the imagination. This research contributes to the existing body of knowledge on Ghani Khan's literary legacy, highlighting a theme that has received limited scholarly attention.*

Key Words: Ghani Khan, Poetry, Escapism, My Palace (Zama Mahal), Poetic Analysis

Introduction

Escapism is a complex phenomenon deeply embedded in human culture and psychology. Escapism is a psychological technique that people use as a coping mechanism to escape the difficulties and stressors of daily life. Collier (2022) observes that Escapism has become an essential aspect of modern life, often manifested through excessive engagement in electronic pursuits and other activities. It offers a mental escape from the tedious, difficult, and stressful aspects of life and acts as a haven from the sometimes overwhelming reality of existence. While the concept of Escapism can take on various forms, such as daydreaming, intense reading, or even engaging in various artistic endeavours, its essence remains consistent – the desire to transcend the confines of reality, even if only momentarily, to seek solace in a world of imagination.

Different sources define Escapism as "*habitual diversion of the mind*" (Merriam Webster). Random House is "*the avoidance of reality*" and "*an inclination to or habit of retreating from unpleasant or unacceptable reality*" (World Dictionary). Actually, Escapism is a diversion, an avoidance strategy, a tendency, or a routine; it can be neutral, harmful, or healthy. It refers to anything a person does to avoid, forget about, or step back from the real world. This kind of detachment frequently occurs when someone is physically, emotionally, or mentally transported to another level of consciousness. In literature, Escapism refers to the literary theme and technique of offering readers a temporary break from the challenges and struggles of life by immersing them in alternate, imaginative worlds, thereby providing solace and a fresh perspective on the human experience (Smith, 2018, pp. 267-283). It enables readers to transcend the constraints of everyday existence and explore the realms of imagination, frequently revealing profound insights and offering a means of emotional and intellectual escape.

Numerous researchers have studied the works of Ghani Khan and other writers from a variety of angles. The romantic overtones of Ghani Khan's poetry have been compared to those of prominent romantic poets like William Wordsworth (Rehman, 2016) and John Keats (Babar, 2005), among other literary and philosophical analyses. He was inspired to write by a variety of things, including the complexity of modern

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life (Iqbal et al., 2014), religion, and its fictitious representatives (Bacha and Sheema, 2010), as well as the human heart's search for beauty while filled with love and other positive emotions (Mehnaz and Zeb 2022).

The poem *My Palace* by Ghani Khan provides evidence of his lyrical talent and study of Escapism. The poem, which was initially written in Pashto with the title *Zama Mahal* and then translated into English in the collection of poetry "*The Pilgrim of Beauty*" with the title *My Palace* (Sahibzada, 2001, pp.43-48), explores the universal yearning to flee from reality and find comfort in dreams and fantasy. *My Palace* is a thought-provoking commentary on the ongoing appeal of Escapism in poetry through evocative language and vivid images. In the poem *My Palace*, the speaker's endeavour to disappear into an idealized, imagined world filled with beauty, nature, and sensory delight is indicated by a number of things and activities that appear throughout the poem.

Escapism is a topic that permeates the poem's images and deeds. In order to weave a rich tapestry of feelings and interior experiences, the skilfully written poem *My Palace* makes use of sophisticated imagery, symbolism, and metaphors. Ghani Khan investigates the beauty, fragility, and enigma of human emotions as well as the inventiveness of the poet's imagination through the construction of a metaphorical castle. The poem's beautiful language and complex metaphors transport readers into the poet's emotional world, where they are left in amazement at the breadth and complexity of human existence.

Ghani Khan was born in Hashtnagar, Charsada Peshawar, in the current Pakistani province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Abdul Ghani Khan (1914–1996). He was a man of many talents; he was simultaneously a painter, poet, critic, and philosopher. Following his early schooling, he pursued additional studies at the art academy at the university founded by Rabindranath Tagore in India, as well as chemical engineering in the United States of America. He wrote his literary book "*Da Panjray Chaghaar*" 1949–54 while serving a short period of time in prison. Also wrote "*The Pathan: A Sketch*" in 1958 in English, which is his best-known work. His poetry reflects the richer experiences he gained by observing and interacting with various nations and cultures (Dinakhel and Amin, 2023, pp. 75). The choice of Ghani Khan's works was influenced by his distinctive artistic style and method as well as his love of the natural world. Ghani Khan promotes harmony between man and the natural world. If nature provides physical perfection, it should be revered and deserving of devotion; its songs should not be interfered with or disturbed (Khan and Iqbal, 2022). Escapism is a powerful literary theme that allows writers and readers to explore the limits of reality, imagination, and human conditions.

The poem *My Palace* stands out as a brilliant diamond in his body of creative brilliance, a poetic masterpiece that resonates with the fundamental principles of Escapism. Individuals turned to escapist fiction in the 1930s, a time of skyrocketing unemployment rates and the Great Depression, for the sake of mental peace. Recreational opportunities increased despite the dire economic circumstances. In order to keep the population happy despite the harsh realities of the day, popular culture, especially escapist literature, was essential. Escapist reading provided relief from the Depression's uncertainties, fears, and deteriorating self-esteem. Popular culture, as escapist fiction, flourished and developed during this time, in contrast to many other businesses, as people sought ways to escape the depressing reality they were confronted with as unemployment rose (Romer and Pells, 2020).

Yustisiana 2018 stated that Escapism is the act of running away from the unpleasant, tedious, laborious, frightening, or mundane parts of daily life. It can also be used to describe the steps people take to assist in alleviating on-going feelings of sadness or Depression. Escapism is the propensity to seek—or the act of seeking—distraction from what is typically required to be endured. Sigmund Freud 1917 stated the importance of escape while realizing that people cannot survive on reality's finite satisfaction alone. Kalia 2022, the most common modern type of Escapism, according to Graham Collier, is excessive engagement in electronic pursuits. Language expert and influential novelist J.R.R. Tolkien (1973). Stated "*The Lord of the Rings*" 1954–55, which is a classic example of escapist fiction. This academic investigation goes into Ghani Khan's *My Palace Zama Mahal*, going beyond linguistic and cultural bounds to examine the subtle Escapism that is present in the poem. This intellectual journey will provide a profound appreciation for his artistic expression and the pervasive relevance of escape in his work. *My Palace* becomes a channel for reflecting on the timeless human desire to transcend reality and find consolation in imagination.



Problem Statement

Nemours researchers investigated the poem *Zama Mahal (My Palace)* from different perspectives. Therefore, this study focuses on analyzing Escapism in *Zama Mahal (My Palace)* and is concerned with a meticulous examination of Escapism as a thematic element within *Zama Mahal (My Palace)*.

Research Objectives

1. To analyze the idea of Escapism in *My Palace (Zama Mahal)* by Ghani Khan.
2. To identify the specific words, phrases, and literary elements in the specific poem that enhance the depiction of Escapism.

Research Questions

1. How does the poem *My Palace (Zama Mahal)* by Ghani Khan portray the notion of Escapism?
2. How have different words, phrases, or literary structures helped in the depiction of Escapism in the poem *Zama Mahal*?

Significance of the Study

This study makes a significant contribution to the literature on Ghani Khan's literary legacy by carefully examining the escapist tendency in his lyrical corpus, specifically in the poem *My Palace (Zama Mahal)*, a topic that has, up to now, received insufficient attention from scholarly circles.

Delimitation of the Research

The primary focus of this research is narrowly circumscribed Ghani Khan's *Zama Mahal (My Palace)* with a pronounced concentration on the dissection of the theme of Escapism confined exclusively within this solitary composition. This study does not cover all of Ghani Khan's writings; instead, it focuses only on the mentioned poem.

Literature Review

Within the realm of literature, the concept of Escapism has persistently captivated the human imagination. Susmitha 1982 stated that Keats defines "poetry primarily as a form of escape" and "poetry is not the vehicle of philosophy, religious teachings or social and political theories but the incarnation of beauty". In poetry, poets use different literary techniques and create different environments to give pleasure and sense to the reader. Realities are always hurtful and harsh. To face these realities, one should have the space to flay from them, and that can be only by imagination. Malik 2019, the real world is transient, and the world of imagination is permanent. The melodies in this world are more delightful than the tunes we hear. Imagination has served as a conduit for authors and poets to transcend the boundaries of reality through the written word. Escapism has a significant role in everyone's life.

Safa and Sahand 2022, Ghani Khan is a prominent figure in Pashto poetry, standing as an exemplar of a poet who skillfully interweaves the theme of Escapism into his literary creation. Nestled within his body of work lies a treasure trove of verses, each functioning as a gateway to realms where the ordinary loses its hold. Ghani is comparable to an ocean from which pearls could never be determined. He reminds a dream that has never been articulated. He is a stunning philanthropist living in the miserable Pashtun tribe's land. Although there are a few publications in world literature about this poetry, not enough has been written about this amazing individual. Though there is still more to learn about his poetry, he has been a significant and renowned poet among Pashtun poets and the first whose poetry is prominent in the music world of Pashto (Safa and Sahand, 2022). Analyzing all of the world's well-known poets will show that they all write about human subjects in their poetry. Humans are the origin of civilizations and advancement. Ghani Khan emphasizes human and humanistic principles and positive human relationships primarily in his poems.

However, his conception of the human condition differs from that of other famous thinkers, such as Aristotle (Aristotle, 1976, p. 75), Plato (380 BEC), and Sartre (1944), who saw humans as an instance of suffering for other humans. Sahand and Safa 2022, Ghani Khan was not prioritizing any of the

characteristics that previous philosophers had noted. For example, while he is in favour of wisdom, he is opposed to both wisdom and rationality. The Greek philosopher Plato serves as a metaphor for wisdom in Pashto poetry. But in the verse that follows, Ghani Khan also criticizes Plato's philosophy and wisdom.

Oh, Plato! Leave your philosophy.

Your philosophy sees drops only, while the universe is an ocean of drops.

Shah and Gul (2021), the use of escape as a means of guiding readers away from the harsh facts of life and towards a better world is a technique employed by poets. It is frequently the perfect world that poets create in their minds, filled with all of the objects of desire that they have considered. In summary, it's either a utopia or a dystopia, depending on the poet's mental state. Poetry is "the spontaneous overflow of enormous feelings that are recollected in serenity," Wordsworth, "Simon Lee", especially if we closely examine Ghani Khan's Modernist characteristics and parameters are evident in the language and style of poetry. Poetry is most likely the most difficult medium for expressing thoughts and emotions. It transports both the poet and the reader to a new universe when imaginations are incorporated. A realm that exists outside of the tangible world, where every building exists entirely inside of a single person's mind rather than out of clay or bricks. This is how creativity has the potential to change the entire world for a poet and reader. Ghani Khan is a prominent romantic poet of Pashto Language (Babar, 2005) who uses different literary techniques to transfer the reader to the world of imagination. Furthermore, rather than poetry, Escapism in fictional narratives is also used by writers for the sake of pleasure in the modern age.

Ravasi 2019, explores self-conscious Escapism in contemporary American novels, with a focus on the works by Michael Chabon, Jonathan Lethem, Thomas Pynchon, Junot Díaz, and Jennifer Egan. It investigates how these novels question conventional ideas of Escapism by weighing the advantages and disadvantages of immersing oneself in fictional settings. The three main topics covered by the thesis are intertextuality and the portrayal of escapists. As a way of highlighting how we interact with fiction, it puts these works in the context of modern literature. Ahmad and Aryan 2013 conducted a study that focuses on the similarities in the poetry of Akhtar Sherani and John Keats despite historical and cultural gaps and contrasts some of their poems to show how similar their love elements are. The study challenges readers to broaden their perspectives and intellectual horizons by challenging conventional wisdom.

In his paper, Bacha (2011) highlighted Ghani Khan's exquisite and captivating imaginative abilities, stating that "Ghani Khan, on his poetic imagining wings, glides to the land of bliss." He speaks of the ideal realms of pleasure, contentment in mansions, music, and the company of beloveds, or masti (wantonness). However, he is also conscious of the brutal facts of life. In addition to his admiration for poetry, life, beauty, and love, Ghani Khan is like Coleridge's interest in supernaturalism. Ghani Khan held Samuel Taylor Coleridge in high regard. Despite being highly influenced by Coleridge's visionary poetry, he did not hold a positive impression of his contemporary, William Wordsworth (Shah and Gul, 2021).

Jennifer Soong examines the idea of Escapism in modern poetry in her essay "Escapist Poetry" 2013, focusing in particular on the works of poets Adam Spott, CA Conrad, and Steve Orth. Soong emphasizes that these poets employ Escapism as a sophisticated coping method to deal with the overwhelming and frequently depressing features of the world, not simply as a way to escape from it. She notes that their poetry makes use of vivid and occasionally bizarre imagery, humorous language, and a sense of dark humour to address problems like political indifference, social injustice, and personal struggles.

According to Soong, this type of escape enables these poets to face and address the problems of the modern world by enabling them to construct imagined worlds where they can express their feelings and provide original viewpoints on current problems. In the end, Soong's essay clarifies how poetry's use of Escapism may be a sophisticated and thought-provoking approach to confronting the challenges of our times. *Zama Mahal* (*My Palace*) is a work of imagination; the materials used to build his Palace are all imaginative; he created a palace for himself that is so fascinating that people stare at it as a marvel; in reality, a whole palace cannot be built with the white sand of a river alone; bricks, cement, and wood are required; for him, to escape from the real world of suffering, rejection, and loss to one of creativity and imagination just needed the white sands.

In Malik's (2019) paper, sorrow and suffering are part of everyone's life. He quoted that According to Keats, happiness is an occasional episode in general drama of pain. "Whatever is beautiful must also be



true, and whatever is true must also be beautiful". Truth is not the life as actually lived, but life as one may imagine it. Humans find joy in the beautiful creations of the world. But beauty is short-lived. And this makes us sad and gives rise to melancholy. Sorrows and sufferings are part of everyone's life. The Romantic period, 1798–1837, was a time of political turmoil, and new ways of looking at the world were evolving. It spread the idea that applying reason to art beyond a certain point destroys it and, in turn, impairs the ability of humans to recognize its beauty. The Romantics believed that imagination is a distinct, enigmatic, and creative ability that exists beyond reason. It acts as a synthesizing substance bridging the senses and the mind. Ghani Khan's Poetry reflects a prominent romantic quality of love of beauty in addition to the romantic trait of revolt against power.

In his poetry "Bacha," Ghani Khan implores God to grant him access to natural beauty, such as flowers, a modest garden beside a river, the refreshing shade of wisteria, and a romantic beloved. It is also a sort of uprising against the anxieties, conflicts, and caresses of social and political life. The poet desires to lose himself in the company of nature with his beloved, to get away from the hustle and bustle of life. He asks God to: "Give me a beautiful partner and some flowers, please; A small garden beside the river, allowing me to unwind on the edge In the refreshing shadow of a cascading willow And pen some uplifting ghazals with joy—" (pp.22). As usual, Ghani Khan wants to lose in the arms of Mother Nature. For him, nature is their sole comfort. "Nature can heal and improve many physical, mental, spiritual, emotional, and behavioural health issues," claims Mitten (2009) (p.8).

Yousafzai [2018](#) stated that despite being a fervent supporter of liberty and freedom, Abdul Ghani Khan was a victim of both external and domestic colonialism during his lifetime. As a result, a significant portion of his writings—both poetry and prose—reflect anti-colonialism or a protest or struggle against the colonial rulers and their British Raj policies. His poems, essays, and columns in the Monthly Pakhtun, his 1947 speeches in the Indian Parliament of British colonized India, and his first book, *The Pathan*, all make plain the need to resist the British colonists. Raising his voice in opposition to the brutal policies of the British rulers, he inspired his people to revolt and secure their rights through revolution as an anti-colonialist. Frantz Fanon's (1925–1961) resistance concept and that of Ghani Khan are very similar.

Ghani Khan is an ardent critic of hypocritical politicians and rulers, empty religious leaders, pseudointellectuals, and hypocritical societal norms and laws. He also constantly points out the shortcomings in the system. However, a significant number of his works convey a powerful message of revolt and resistance against the colonial system. He advises his people to band together, overthrow the British government, and use force and violence to break free from colonial constraints. Furthermore, Ghani Khan is an enthusiastic supporter of freedom and an anti-colonialist; his poetry and prose encapsulate a message of liberation from the British Raj (Sahibzada, [2001](#)). He accommodated the issues of anticolonial speech and the Pakhtuns' opposition to the British overlords. He was struck by the cruelties of colonialism when he was born in 1914, which negatively impacted both his academic and professional prospects. Due to financial limitations, his father was unable to finish his degree after the colonial overlords imprisoned him.

The diction and style of Ghani Khan's poetry exhibit several modernist motifs and conventions. Some of the characteristics of his poetry include the use of verse liber, economy of words, and the use of allusions. His rejection of all forms of authority and suspicion of orthodoxy are some of his main themes. He particularly criticizes the character of Maulvi, whom he sees as a symbol of parochialism and conservatism. In this context, Shaheen 2005 states that "*Ghani Khan is the most important, the most modern poet, who revolted against the traditions in the genuine sense, not only in his period but also in the 20th century*" (pp. 143–144). His poetry is characterized by intellectual liberation and ideological revolt. These are the qualities that set him apart from all other modern and romantic poets and made him seem more contemporary. His sophisticated manner and profound thinking make him stand out. As a poet and writer, Ghani Khan developed a distinct style that he used to explore his subjects and portrayals. His works can be categorized into many phases, and his inventiveness spans multiple literary dimensions. Thus, it can be concluded that Ghani Khan is a poet whose works are primarily written imaginatively.

However, he has also included intellectual ideas in his poetry. Although it should be mentioned that although Ghani Khan's poems are imaginative and about fantasy, there are other instances in which he

incorporates philosophical ideas. The study goal is not to label Ghani Khan as a philosopher, modern, or romantic poet. Poetry that expresses philosophy rather than fantasy and emotion has contributed to the global dissemination of the writings of those great philosophers. Ghani Khan, it can be inferred that he is asking questions about life, death, and existing on Earth's surface, among other things, and that he has done so in a very poetic and straightforward manner that is unappealing to everyone. This may be a singular example of Ghani Khan's ability and inventiveness. He is the only poet from the Pashtun tribe who wrote about intellectual ideas in his poems. As a result, he is referred to as a philosophical poet. Ghani Khan's views, however, are grounded in his poetic reality (Safa and Sahand, 2022).

In summary, the examination of Escapism in Ghani Khan's poetry, particularly in *My Palace (Zama Mahal)*, offers a profound understanding of his literary prowess and philosophical depth. Ghani Khan's life, shaped by the tumultuous colonial era of India, significantly influenced his poetic expression, and his distinct writing style enabled him to transcend the temporal constraints of his time. Throughout this review, we have explored how Ghani Khan's poetry served as a vehicle for Escapism, allowing him to grapple with the challenges of his era and convey his innermost thoughts and emotions. His philosophical musings, rooted in Pashtun culture and personal experiences, added layers of complexity to his work, creating a rich tapestry of ideas and sentiments. In his poetry, Escapism represents a profound exploration of the human spirit's ability to transcend adversity through creativity and imagination. This study enhances our appreciation of Ghani Khan's contributions to poetry and his lasting impact on inspiring readers to find solace and inspiration in the realm of dreams and imagination, affirming the enduring power of literature in confronting life's challenges.

Research Methodology

Literary criticism is the focus of this study. Literary criticism is primarily involved with discussing specific works of literature, as Peck and Coyle noted in their book "*Literary Term and Criticism*. 1989" With a focus on Ghani Khan's poem *My Palace (Zama Mahal)*, which Imtiaz Ahmad Sahibzda (2001) translated into English, this section discusses the methodological framework used to investigate the issue of Escapism within his poetry. The components of the research technique include the data-gathering procedure, the theoretical underpinnings that direct the analytical process, and the research design.

Research Design

The current study adapts a qualitative research design to delve into the poetic corpus of intricate themes, emotional nuances, and artistic expressions found within poetry, offering a profound understanding of the subject matter.

Primary Data

The primary data source for this investigation consists of Ghani Khan's poetic works, with a specific focus on *My Palace*. The research entails a meticulous examination of both the original Pashto text and its English translation to discern instances of Escapism, thematic components, and literary devices employed by the poet. The primary data source for this study is the poetry of Ghani Khan, especially the poem *My Palace*. A close reading of the original text in Pashto, as well as its English translation by Imtiaz Ahmad Sahibzda, will be conducted to identify instances of Escapism, thematic elements, and literary devices.

Secondary Sources

A comprehensive review of existing scholarly literature, research papers, academic articles, and critical analyses concerning Ghani Khan's poetry and the theme of escapism supplements the primary data. These secondary sources provide diverse perspectives and insights. Extensive review of existing literature, research articles, academic papers, and critical analyses related to Ghani Khan's poetry and the theme of Escapism will be conducted.

Theoretical Framework

This study employs fundamental concepts such as allegory, symbolism, and metaphor to analyze how Ghani Khan used literary strategies to portray the theme of Escapism in his poetry. This integration of



literary analysis and theme exploration forms the theoretical framework of the study. The Reading Response Theory, originated by I.A. Richards 1960 (Das, 2007, p. 214), has been incorporated into this framework to enhance it and highlight the dynamic interaction between the reader's interpretation and the text. This theory, which recognizes the subjectivity of interpretation, focuses on the investigation of how readers affect the comprehension of Escapism in *My Palace*, both in the Pashto and the English translations. By including this, the qualitative research approach is better equipped to explore the complex aspects of *Escapism* found in Ghani Khan's poetry by allowing for a more thorough analysis of subjective reactions, emotional nuance, and varied viewpoints.

Data Analysis

Extensive content analysis is used in the data analysis phase to identify reoccurring themes and symbols connected to the escapist theme in Ghani Khan's poem *My Palace*. This thorough analysis includes Imtiaz Ahmad Sahibzda's English translation of the original Pashto text as well. To enable a sophisticated examination of the literary subtleties and emotional complexities present in Ghani Khan's creative expressions within the framework of this thematic focus, the goal is to carefully classify poems that reflect Escapism.

Content Analysis

A comprehensive examination of Ghani Khan's poem *My Palace* entails the identification of recurring motifs, symbols, and themes connected to Escapism. This analysis involves the systematic categorization of verses or lines that explicitly or implicitly convey the notion of Escapism. The content of Ghani Khan's poem *My Palace* will be examined thoroughly to identify all the related elements that are present in the poem.

Interpretation of Findings

The findings derived from the analysis are interpreted within the broader context of Ghani Khan's life, cultural milieu, and the historical era during which he composed his poetry. This interpretative endeavour seeks to provide a profound insight into Ghani Khan's perspective on Escapism and its profound significance within the canvas of his poetic works.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are meticulously observed throughout this research, encompassing the principles of proper citation, due acknowledgement of sources, and the upholding of intellectual property rights. All references cited within the study adhere to the prescribed guidelines of APA 6th edition. Throughout the study process, ethical rules, including correct citation and acknowledgement of sources, shall be scrupulously followed. Every source consulted for this research will receive due credit.

This research methodology establishes a structured and rigorous approach for the examination of Escapism within Ghani Khan's poetry, with a primary focus on *My Palace*. It employs a qualitative research design to ensure a comprehensive and in-depth exploration of the subject matter. The overarching objective is to make a substantive contribution to the existing body of knowledge regarding Ghani Khan's poetic oeuvre and the theme of Escapism.

Results and Discussion

Ghani Khan is a sculptor who created tangible objects out of clay, and he also created some imaginary works of art that are far more exquisite, durable, and long-lasting than his tangible creations. This includes his Palace, which he constructed out of the white sand of the sea and covered in flower petals. Rabab's tunes served as the foundation for the walls, which he then constructed and decorated with his young dreams. He used to write his father-in-law a letter regarding his marriage when he was employed at a sugar mill in the Indian province of Bengal. In a letter in reply, his father-in-law begged him to at least construct a house for his daughter. Then, on a page, Ghani Khan penned the poem "My Palace" (Zama Mahal) and addressed it to his father-in-law. After reading this, he wrote back to him, stating, "Ghani, you

are flying in the skies. Descend upon Earth". It's also claimed that his father-in-law afterward permitted him to wed his daughter (Shah and Gul, 2021).

My Palace by Ghani Khan is a beautifully crafted poem that weaves together vivid imagery and emotional depth to create a metaphorical portrayal of a personal world built by the speaker. The poem utilizes intricate symbolism and rich language to depict the construction of a palace in a setting adorned with natural elements. Throughout the poem, the poet emphasizes the amazement and disbelief of the world as they witness the creation and transformation of this Palace. The speaker describes how they painstakingly build a palace with white sands from the river, capturing the reader's attention. The Palace is not a physical structure but a symbolic representation of the speaker's inner world, dreams, and emotions. The poet employs various metaphors and symbols to portray the Palace: petals of the rose create a carpet, melodies from the rabab form its walls, and the dreams of youth manifest as colours on its walls. These elements signify the beauty, fragility, and transience of human experiences. The Palace is further enriched with the presence of flowers, birds, scents, and sounds. The flowers represent various emotions and states of being. The bulbul, a nightingale, is invited as a caretaker, signifying the close relationship between nature and the poet's emotions. The poem underscores the astonishment of the world as they observe the intricate details and emotions woven into this Palace.

The poet also introduces celestial elements such as the crescent moon, stars, and the laughter of partridges. These elements add a touch of mysticism and magic to the Palace, evoking a sense of wonder and fascination. The poet's ability to infuse life into the inanimate and connect the human experience to the cosmos is remarkable. As the poem progresses, the speaker portrays themselves as the emperor of this personal realm, adorned with a crown of "dismal grief, despair." This juxtaposition of regal imagery with negative emotions suggests the complexities and contradictions within human emotions. The presence of a loved one, described as "innocent and charming, lovely and forlorn," adds an element of melancholy and longing to the poem. Throughout the poem, the repetition of the phrase "The world in great amazement saw, looked on in disbelief" emphasizes the impact of the speaker's creation on the world. It underscores the uniqueness and power of the poet's imagination and emotions, which can captivate and astonish the observers.

Building the Palace

Throughout the poem, Ghani Khan skilfully weaves together nature, emotion, symbolism, and vivid imagery to create a multi-layered exploration of the human experience, imagination, and the interplay between inner and outer worlds. It's important to note that while these lines can be interpreted to suggest elements of Escapism, the poem itself is rich in symbolism and can be interpreted in various ways. The concept of Escapism can be one of the layers through which the poem's themes and imagery are understood.

*"From the white sands of the river,
I a palace slowly built-
The world, in great amazement, saw,
Looked on in disbelief"-.(1-4)*

The poem begins with a description of the source of the Palace's foundation, which is the white sands derived from a river. This image sets the stage for the construction of a metaphorical palace. The choice to build a palace can be seen as an escape from reality, a departure from the mundane world into a realm of imagination and dreams. The beginning of the poem suggests a start-up or escape from reality by creating an imaginative place from the sands of the river as a beginning for the figurative Palace. This can be seen as a symbolic running away from the mundane realities of real life. The poet reveals that they have been constructing a palace, emphasizing the deliberate and patient effort they are putting into its creation. The act of building the Palace implies a deliberate effort to create a personal refuge or escape from the ordinary. Creating a palace can be interpreted as a form of Escapism, where the poet creates an alternate reality or mental refuge through their creative imagination. The poet points out that as they build this Palace, the world watches in astonishment, suggesting that what they are creating is extraordinary and capturing the attention of observers. The world's astonishment at the Palace can be seen as an indication of the poet's desire to break away from the ordinary and mundane. The observers are not just amazed but also in



disbelief, indicating that the beauty or significance of the Palace is beyond their expectations or understanding. The act of spreading a carpet of rose petals within the Palace could symbolize a desire to escape into a more beautiful and idealized environment.

Creating an Idealized Environment

The speaker proceeds to craft an idealized environment within the Palace. The carpet of rose petals, walls made of melodies, and colours of youth's dreams all contribute to the creation of an escapist haven. Each element added to the Palace signifies the speaker's desire to surround themselves with beauty and emotion, detaching from the harshness of reality.

*"And spread in it a carpet
Made of petals of the rose,
Its walls were made of melodies
"Poured forth by the rabab,
And painted in the colours". (5-9)*

The poet metaphorically spreads a carpet within the Palace, indicating an arrangement or decoration, with petals of roses forming the carpet. Creating a carpet from petals of roses can be interpreted as a way to cover the floor with beauty, possibly as a means of escaping from the harshness of reality. Constructing palace walls from melodies suggests the use of art and music as a means of escaping from the constraints of reality. The carpet is fashioned from the delicate and fragrant petals of roses, symbolizing beauty, love, and tenderness. The pouring forth of melodies from the rabab can be seen as a way to escape into the world of music and emotion. The Palace's walls are described as being constructed from melodies, specifically those played on the "rabab," a traditional stringed instrument in Pashtun culture or Pashto music that could be in other world music. This brings in the idea of music, emotion, and artistic expression. The colours representing the dreams of youth can be seen as a form of escaping into a world of idealized possibilities and aspirations. The melodies are likened to a pouring or flowing from the rabab, emphasizing the emotional and sensory impact of music. The act of inviting flowers to occupy the palace space can be seen as a way of surrounding oneself with nature and beauty as a means of Escapism. The Palace's walls are painted with colours, symbolizing the emotions and experiences of youth and vibrancy. Painting the walls with colours that represent the dreams of youth implies a desire to surround oneself with vibrant and idealized imagery, potentially as a form of Escapism. The act of inviting flowers to occupy the Palace's space can be seen as a way to create an alternate, more enchanting reality.

*"Of the dreams of youth, galore;
Each flower I then invited,
To occupy its space,
And asked the bulbul over," (10-13)*

The colours on the walls represent the abundant dreams of youth, suggesting the exuberance, passion, and optimism associated with that phase of life. Inviting the bulbul to care for the Palace could symbolize a desire to integrate the beauty of nature and its carefree existence as a form of escape. The speaker invites each flower, representing different emotions or experiences, to occupy space within the Palace. Enlisting the bulbul as a gardener reinforces the idea of creating a beautiful, cared-for environment as an escape from the challenges of the external world. The flowers are given a place within the metaphorical Palace, indicating their integration into the speaker's emotional and imaginative world. Bringing narcissi to give scent can be seen as an attempt to infuse the environment with sensory pleasures, suggesting an escape from the mundane. The speaker invites the bulbul, a nightingale, to take on the role of a gardener, caring for the Palace. This emphasizes the harmony between nature and the emotional landscape. Introducing more flowers for their scent enhances the sensory experience within the Palace, creating an immersive escape.

*"As a gardener for its care-
An armful of the narcissi,
And many eglantines,
I brought to give it scent." (14-17)*

The bulbul is seen as a caretaker, tending to the emotional elements within the Palace. The act of bringing

flowers to enhance scent can be interpreted as seeking an escape through sensory indulgence. The speaker brings in narcissi, a type of flower, to add fragrance and sensory richness to the Palace. Inviting jasmine flowers to lend their perfume can be seen as using fragrance to create an escapist atmosphere. The speaker introduces eglantine, another type of flower, to further enhance the scent and atmosphere within the Palace. The act of bringing flowers to add scent to the Palace suggests an attempt to create a sensory environment that allows for an escape from the ordinary world. The jasmine flowers lending their perfume contribute to the creation of an idealized and intoxicating environment, indicative of Escapism. The speaker brings these flowers to infuse the Palace with fragrance, evoking emotions and sensory experiences. Creating a necklace from evening dew suggests capturing a transient and delicate element of nature as a form of escape.

Immersing in Nature's Beauty

The introduction of flowers, fragrances, and sounds like the rabab and bulbul further emphasizes the speaker's Escapism into nature's embrace. By inviting nature's components into the Palace, the speaker seeks to immerse themselves in a world of sensory pleasures, escaping the limitations of the physical world.

*"Invited I the jasmine flowers,
To lend it their perfume;
From branches of the evening dew
A necklace I entwined;" (18-21)*

Jasmine flowers are invited to lend their sweet and alluring perfume to the Palace, heightening its sensory appeal. The act of creating a dewdrop necklace continues the idea of using nature's beauty for Escapism. The jasmine flowers contribute their scent, enhancing the ambience of the metaphorical Palace. The presence of the morning breeze adds to the sensory atmosphere, inviting a sense of escape into a refreshing environment. The speaker uses dew from the evening to create a necklace, possibly symbolizing a delicate and ephemeral adornment. Using dewdrops to create a necklace hints at capturing the fleeting beauty of nature, possibly to provide an escape from the temporal nature of reality. The breezy laughter can symbolize the light-heartedness of an escapist world where troubles are forgotten. The dew necklace is intricately woven, suggesting the delicate and careful crafting of beauty within the Palace. Introducing yellow jasminoides adds to the sensory richness and the concept of creating an inviting, escape-like environment.

Celestial and Mystical Elements

The inclusion of celestial elements like the crescent moon, stars, and partridge laughter adds a mystical dimension to the Palace. These elements enhance the escapist quality of the Palace, providing a sense of wonder and transcendence beyond the ordinary world.

*"The morning breeze
In laughter brought,
The yellow jasiminoides
I sprayed it then with sparkling wine" (22-25)*

The presence of the morning breeze introduces another sensory element, suggesting movement and freshness. The act of spraying the Palace with sparkling wine suggests an indulgent and celebratory form of Escapism. The breeze is described as bringing laughter, implying a joyful and playful aspect to the Palace's environment. The tears of the bulbul being distilled into wine continue the theme of connecting nature's elements to the speaker's escapist pursuits. A reference to yellow jasminoides, another type of flower, adds to the richness of the sensory experiences. The astonishment of the world underscores the contrast between the external world's realities and the internal world the speaker is attempting to create—an act of Escapism. The Palace is metaphorically sprayed with sparkling wine, hinting at celebration, effervescence, and a touch of luxury. Spraying the Palace with sparkling wine could symbolize a desire for an intoxicating escape, a departure from the mundane into a state of celebration or altered reality. The disbelief of the world adds to the sense of detachment from reality and the speaker's intent to create an alternate, escapist reality.



*"From bulbul's tears distilled-
The world, in great amazement, saw,
Looked on in disbelief!
The light of the fair crescent" (26-29)*

The sparkling wine is distilled from the tears of the bulbul, reinforcing the connection between nature and emotions. The observers of the Palace remain in a state of amazement, indicating the lasting impact of the speaker's creation. The observers are not only amazed but also unable to fully comprehend or believe what they are witnessing. The crescent moon's light is mentioned, bringing in celestial imagery and the idea of illumination.

*"The soft couplets of the stars,
The laughter of the partridges,
To these, the chakor danced." (30-32)*

The gentle and poetic verses of the stars suggest a harmonious cosmic presence. The laughter of the partridges contributes to the lively and joyful ambience of the Palace. The chakor, a type of bird, dances in response to the various elements present in the Palace, emphasizing the interplay of nature and emotion.

*"The eyes inebriated
Of the stars up in the skies,
Twinkled over brightly, (33-35)*

The eyes of the stars are described as intoxicated, suggesting a sense of mesmerization and transcendence. The stars are personified, hinting at their emotional state and their role as witnesses to the creation. The stars shine brightly, signifying their radiant presence in the night sky.

Connecting with the Divine

The personification of the stars and their "flames of their own God" suggests a desire for spiritual connection and enlightenment. This pursuit of divine illumination can be seen as another form of Escapism, a search for meaning and solace beyond the limitations of human existence.

*"In a trance were mesmerized;
And ecstasy begetting,
Lightened-up in their own souls,
The flames of their own God-
The world, in great amazement, saw,
Looked on in disbelief-" (36-41)*

The stars are entranced and captivated by the beauty and emotions within the Palace. The stars' trance-like state leads to a sense of ecstasy or intense joy. The stars' ecstasy resonates within them, brightening their own celestial beings. The stars' inner illumination is compared to the flames of their divine essence, suggesting a connection between the earthly and celestial realms. The cycle of amazement and disbelief continues, emphasizing the profound impact of the Palace on the world. The observers remain incredulous, unable to fully grasp the depth and significance of the Palace's creation.

*"I alone was then the emperor,
Upon my head, a crown,
Of dismal grief, despair;" (42-44)*

The speaker shifts the focus to themselves, assuming the role of an emperor within their personal world. He himself is considered the emperor of that Palace, which indicates the human desires and the imagination of one. The speaker wears a crown, symbolizing authority, though it's not a traditional symbol of power but one of "dismal grief, despair." Wearing a crown of "dismal grief, despair" could indicate a form of escape through embracing and embodying these negative emotions, possibly as a way to distance oneself from the outside world. The crown's composition of "dismal grief, despair" suggests the complexities of the speaker's emotions and inner experiences.

*"And by my own side, the loved one,"
With a tantalizing air,
And eyes brimful of tears,*

Round her neck, a necklace is worn,
Of dewdrops of the morn," (45-49)

The speaker's "loved one" stands by their side, suggesting an intimate and emotional connection. The loved one exudes a tantalizing or teasing demeanour, suggesting a sense of allure and mystique. The loved one's eyes are filled with tears, implying a depth of emotion and vulnerability. The loved one wears a necklace around her neck, adding visual and symbolic detail to her appearance. The dewdrop necklace could represent the desire to capture the purity and renewal of the morning, suggesting an escape from the troubles of the past. The necklace is made of dewdrops from the morning, symbolizing freshness and renewal.

The World's Continued Amazement

The poem concludes by reiterating the world's astonishment at the Palace and its contents. This ongoing amazement further emphasizes the profound nature of the speaker's escapist creation, which continues to captivate and elicit disbelief.

"Innocent and charming,
Lovely and forlorn
The world, in great amazement, saw,
Looked on in disbelief!" (50-53)

The loved one is described as innocent and charming, highlighting her captivating qualities. The loved one is also depicted as lovely yet carrying an air of loneliness or melancholy. Describing the loved one as "forlorn" implies a sense of sadness or melancholy, and this attribute might indicate a desire for emotional escape or connection. The theme of amazement and disbelief is used again, suggesting that the loved one's presence contributes to the extraordinary nature of the Palace. The world remains in a state of disbelief, underlining the enduring impact of the Palace and its inhabitants.

The poem *My Place (Zamma Mahal)* is a poem in which Ghani Khan reflects on the concept of home and belonging. He describes a place that holds deep sentimental value and where he feels a profound sense of connection. This place, referred to as *Zamma Mahal*, symbolizes a space where his heart finds solace and belonging. Throughout the poem, Ghani Khan uses vivid imagery and metaphors to convey his emotions. He likens this special place to a sanctuary where he can escape the challenges and turmoil of the world. The poet's descriptions evoke a sense of nostalgia, longing, and comfort that he finds within the confines of *Zamma Mahal*. The poem also explores themes of identity, attachment, and the human need for a sense of rootedness. Ghani Khan captures the essence of a place that transcends physical boundaries and becomes a part of the poet's very being. The notion of *Zamma Mahal* represents a personal space where one can truly be oneself, away from the complexities of life. In essence, *My Place (Zamma Mahal)* is a heartfelt exploration of the emotional and psychological significance of a place that holds deep personal meaning. Ghani Khan's evocative language and introspective reflections make the poem a testament to the power of a special place in shaping one's sense of self and belonging.

Throughout the poem, various elements and actions indicate the speaker's attempt to escape into an idealized, imaginative world filled with beauty, nature, and sensory indulgence. This theme of Escapism runs through the imagery and actions described in the poem. If we take Escapism into account and interpret the poem *My Palace*, it can be viewed through the lens of Escapism, where the speaker creates a metaphorical palace as a means of escaping from the challenges and constraints of the real world. The speaker uses rich imagery and symbolic elements to construct a palace that serves as a sanctuary for their desires, emotions, and dreams, allowing them to retreat from the complexities of reality.

Conclusion

To conclude this scholarly investigation, the poetry *My Palace (Zama Mahal)* by Ghani Khan deftly defines escape as the speaker creating an idealized world, escaping from everyday difficulties into a space moulded by nature, emotion, and spirituality. The speaker overcomes ordinary limitations and traverses the complexities of life as a result of the metaphorical Palace, which appears as a haven. Through sensory sensations, connecting with nature, and exploring feelings, this piece of poetry creates an escapist world



that offers comfort, wonder, and the freedom to go beyond the limits of everyday life. This academic study highlights the timeless influence of Ghani Khan's poetry and reveals the complex sides of his creative genius, encouraging readers to find comfort in the realm of their dreams and imaginations. Examining specific objectives and questions, the research examines how *Zama Mahal* presents the idea of escape, identifying language choices that enrich the text. By examining Escapism in *My Palace*, in particular, the research greatly advances the investigation of Ghani Khan's literary legacy and enhances the academic discussion of his creative accomplishments. This focused the research to provide useful insights by exploring the theme of Escapism in depth. It also opens up possibilities for a deeper analysis of Ghani Khan's unique viewpoints and the unexplored aspects of this intriguing literary work.

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