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Embodying the Tribal Ethos: A Literary-Anthropological Study of Pakistani Tribal Society in Jamil Ahmad's *The Wandering Falcon*

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ABSTRACT

*The study deals with the anthropological analysis of the literature of Pakistan's tribal society as presented in 'The Wandering Falcon' by Jamil Ahmad as viewed by Akbar S. Ahmed. Much of the novel is based on Ahmad's personal experiences as a bureaucrat in tribal areas, and his lived experiences include cultural concepts including nang (honour), tribal justice systems, exile and opposition to central authority. The book is an ethnographically rich text that poses a crucial question: "how well does literature reflect a tension between tribal traditions and modern state governance without oversimplification or cultural distortion?" This study aims to understand the mechanisms used by *The Wandering Falcon* to develop tribal identity and to resolve the paradox of a conflict between indigenous tribal systems and outside state systems. The qualitative textual analysis methodology is applied using Akbar S. Ahmed's anthropological and theoretical analysis, considering the novel as a text that is a kind of narrative ethnography. The method provides an in-depth analysis to explore cultural codes in fictional representation. The key results imply that the novel is not just a romanticisation or a condemnation of tribal existence, but a complex combination of continuity, displacement, and resistance. It focuses on the ways in which tribal justice and social order continue even in the face of greater state involvement, leading to hybrid and sometimes contradictory realities. The study finds that *The Wandering Falcon* is a literary fiction and ethnographic testimony that can provide insight into a system of socio-cultural organization that is dwindling. It has implications for postcolonial literary studies as well as for anthropology, because it shows how narrative can preserve, interpret and critically engage with marginalized cultural worlds.*

Keywords: Tribal society, Ethnography, Akbar S. Ahmed, Jamil Ahmad, Nang, State governance, Cultural conflict

1. Introduction

In the history of Pakistani journalism, both bureaucrats and military officials as well as western journalists have always represented the tribal areas as either dark clouds of uncertainties or distresses, but not the life of the tribes. The region, formerly known as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), was for decades a semi-autonomous area governed by tribal rules, instead of the central state, along the rough and tumble Afghan border. In these societies, the words "honor" (nang), "community" (qaum), and "tradition" (jirga) created intricate social frameworks, indeed, they were the social glue that bound them together, and without which they would have disintegrated (Resistance 52, Ahmed). However, in the national story they have often been perceived as backward or as rebellious, an image that is easy to reduce and misrepresent their social reality.

In this context, the novel *The Wandering Falcon* (2011), by one of the few writers to make a real literary intervention in the years since, is perhaps one of the only ones to have done so. Based on his many years of experience as a civil servant in the tribal areas, Ahmad provides a remarkably sympathetic, first-hand account of a world that is quickly disappearing under the weight of state consolidation, globalization, and of course war. The novel traces through tribal lands, an interwoven story about an enigmatic figure named Tor Baz, and the traditions, conflicts and fighting spirit of these lands. Rather than exoticizing tribals life, Ahmad dignifies it, enriching it with rich narrative that bears a resemblance to anthropological narratives of tribal society—particularly that offered by Akbar S. Ahmed (Ahmed 14).

Akbar S. Ahmed's theoretical introduction (in *Millennium and Charisma Among Pathans and Resistance and Control in Pakistan*) will help you understand not only the values Pakistan's tribal groups uphold but also the techniques of governance that are used among the tribal groups in Pakistan, especially the Pashtun and Baluch. These are the ideals of nang, ghairat and qaum through which Ahmad's story could be critically refracted, effected by its use and misuse. Ahmed also condemns the Pakistani state's "invasion" of tribes (in *The Wandering Falcon*, *Millennium* 112; *Resistance* 91), as evidenced by its erasure, displacement, and resistance.

This paper suggests that *The Wandering Falcon* is more than a novel, fictionally recreating the tribal life experience, it's a literary ethnography with close parallels to the social and political life in Pakistan's tribal region. The re-examination of the novel in this study will follow the anthropological model provided by Akbar S. Ahmed to hopefully uncover how literature can serve as a cultural text and a cultural interpreter with the intent of foregrounding the issue related to the need of a critique of the nature of state-tribe relations in the literature of Pakistan of the modern period.

1.1 Thesis Statement

In the story *Wandering Falcon* by Jamil Ahmad, the author reveals the harsh reality of the centuries-old patronages of the Pakistani tribal society in terms of sex, honor, justice and independence of individuals. The novel, as both a narrative and an ethnography, according to the present study, is a record of a vanishing tribal world, threatened (like the post-colonial state and modernity) by the anthropological perspective of Ahmed, namely, his notions of tribal identity, nang (honor) and anti-state and anti-centralization resistance.

1.2 Research Gap

While the focus of the majority of literature and anthropological research has been on *The Wandering Falcon's* ethnographic value, or on its narrative structure alone, very little work has considered their relationship. Very little scholarly work has focused on a systematic study that combines Akbar S. Ahmed's ideas of nang, ghairat, and tribal government with the novel's literary portrayal of a conflict of states and tribes. Furthermore, most previous research tends to either label the novel as fiction or culture, as opposed to a work that straddles the two genres. This gap requires a more cross-disciplinary discussion involving literature and anthropology.

1.3 Research Objectives

1. To evaluate critically the ways in which *The Wandering Falcon* embodies important facets of Pakistani tribal culture, such as judicial systems, honor codes, and tribal sovereignty.
2. To assess the novel's authenticity and its interaction with the social reality of tribal communities by applying Akbar S. Ahmed's anthropological ideas.

1.4 Research Questions

1. How are Pakistani tribal society's customs, morals, and governmental systems portrayed in *The Wandering Falcon*?
2. How does Akbar S. Ahmed's use of anthropological ideas like tribal honour, identity, and

resistance improve our understanding of how tribal life is portrayed in the novel?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it interweaves literary criticism and anthropological investigation to illustrate that *The Wandering Falcon* by Jamil Ahmad represents an archetypal form of broken social fabric of Pakistani tribal society. In this study, the novel is placed on the context of a socio-cultural analysis of tribal practices and values in the western border of Pakistan, the theoretical concepts of which follow on the lines of Akbar S. Ahmed specifically the concept of tribal honour (nang), moral virtue (ghairat) and tribal agency. In the pursuit of this agenda, the paper contributes to the growing genre of anthropology of literature and is a welcome addition for readers not only in the field of literary studies, but also for sociologists, political theorists and policy makers interested in the longevity of entrenched and dominated social and cultural groups. And in highlighting the impact of state policy, the modern legal system, and international geopolitics fragilizing traditional tribal ways of living, Ahmad's work becomes an important cultural text in the postcolonial debate over identity within the contours created by state-tribal relationships.

1.6 Delimitation of the Study

To keep the focus and the material fresh, this study is geographically and linguistically confined, it focuses only on *The Wandering Falcon* and does not address Ahmad's other works of fiction and Pakistani fiction in general. The choice of confining the theoretical framework to Akbar S. Ahmed's work is based on twofold reason; it is direct relevant and Ahmed has an insider understanding of the tribal societies in Pakistan. On a cultural front the study is restricted to Pashtun and to some extent Baluch tribal culture and on regional front the study is restricted to the erstwhile areas of FATA. Thematically the research concentrates on honour codes, justice systems, exile and resistance without exploring alternative theoretical streams like feminism, psychoanalysis and linguistic theory.

1. Literature Review

Jamil Ahmad's *The Wandering Falcon* (2011) *The Wandering Falcon* is an award-winning novel which beautifully depicts life in Pakistan's tribal frontier—the same tribal belt that covers a significant part of Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) along the Afghan border. It is a series of interrelated tales set around the enigmatic figure of Tor Baz, a young traveller navigating the savage tribal lands. As it struggles with notions of dignity, justice, exile and survival in a war-torn land that was once governed by the rules of the elders, the story follows Tor Baz and his journey through various families of the tribes. Ahmad displays his ethnographic eye throughout the narrative, giving acutely observed glimpses of tribal culture and gender relations and the fragility of tribal independence in the face of the growing strength of the Pakistani state.

Jamil Ahmad himself was a civil servant who worked for many years in the tribal areas of Pakistan. An in-depth understanding of his subject matter, especially among the tribes, is evident in his first novel because he has been an administrator in the areas where the story is set and respects the indigenous traditions that exist there. Ahmad's narrative humanizes people and their world with empathy and nuance, as opposed to so many outsiders who see the tribal areas through a narrow security prism or through a lens of exoticism.

While the novel has been met with considerable interest and acclaim as a literary work, and in fact generated much scholarly interest in the authorial narrative or in the postcolonial nature of the novel (or both), it is not the anthropological aspects of this text that we neglect here. The novel has been well received by critics such as Claire Chambers who has stated that the novel is "free from stereotype" and presents "nuance and empathy" of tribal people. Chambers agrees,

arguing that Ahmad's characters are "vibrantly human" and "entrenched in moral networks that make sense in their own cultural frameworks" (97).

The *Wandering Falcon* has received widespread scholarly attention for its depiction of the tribal areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan and the life and traditions of the Pashtun and other ethnic groups that inhabit it. In his investigation of the concept of Pashtunness in modern Pakistani literature, Kamran Asdar Ali holds that the codes of conduct such as nang and badal (honor and revenge) demarcate the lives of individual Pashtuns and the collective Pashtun identity to an extent that renders the two constantly entangled (Ali 185). *The Borderlands* stakes its claim to narrate the tensions of tradition and modernity, just as Ahmad attempts to his readers through a detailed account of life among tribal people.

In *Making Sense of Pakistan* Farzana Shaikh situates tribal societies in the national frame and elaborates on the danger that such societies face from the state and the entanglements of tribal society with the state (Shaikh 112). Such contextualization strengthens the interpretation of *The Wandering Falcon*, as a story illustrative of the intricate relationship between state power and tribal agency, a tussle that researchers consider to be fundamental to Pakistan's frontier districts. For reviewers like Muneeza Shamsie's *A Borderland Tale*, the ethnographic breadth and the literary quality of Ahmad's work won praise, with critics praising the novel's extension beyond the confines of narrative into a glimpse into an untouched territory (Shamsie). In the same vein, Mubashar Hasan hails *The Wandering Falcon* as an authentic representation of frontier life, and argues that the nuances of tribal justice and social order is presented with neither romanticism nor condemnation (Hasan 57).

In *Pakistaniaat*, Tariq Rahman views the novel as a "narrative of resistance," a resistance that is evident in the novel's tribal characters, both against the encroaching state and the eroding culture (70). Rahman takes Akbar S. Ahmed's anthropological attack a step further in focusing on the resilience and agency of the tribesmen in the face of a changing political climate.

However, it has not been studied in depth in the novel other than by two scholars who have written about the novel from an indigenous Pakistani scholarly viewpoint. *The Wandering Falcon* has primarily been studied as part of postcolonial theory or the discourse of human rights focusing on the marginalisation and eviction of tribal peoples. While these methods are of great benefit, they have the disadvantage of not capturing the internal logic and architecture of tribal societies that Ahmad has carefully rendered. This difference, however, is the starting point of an analysis that has been largely rooted in the works of Akbar S. Ahmed, a former civil servant and foremost anthropologist on the subject of tribal identity, codes of honour and the ambiguous relationship between the state and the tribal areas in Pakistan, who has authored numerous books on the topic.

Ahmed's works, such as *Millennium*, *Charisma Among Pathans* (1976) and *Resistance and Control in Pakistan* (1991), present a very careful scrutiny of tribal social structure and organization with a particular focus on the Pashtuns. Top builds on important concepts like nang (respect), ghairat (moral courage), and qaum (tribe) that he characterizes as the pillars of the tribal life. These values, Ahmed writes, form another code and set of ethics that often conflict with the law and institutions of the centralised state (*Resistance* 85). In his work, he provides a much-needed theoretical framework for understanding Ahmad as a literary figure, but one where he is firmly rooted in the context of real tribal life, and one that speaks to the cultural and political dimensions, as well.

The novel, by Jamil Ahmad, and the anthropological work by Akbar S. Ahmed have some remarkable parallels in themes. The idea of exile and displacement alluded to in *The Wandering Falcon* is reminiscent of Ahmed's claim that an identity based on tribe cannot exist independently

from land and descent, hence, displacement is devastating and scatters the tribe (Ahmed, Millennium 123). This conflict of tribal culture and state law in the novel brings parallels to Ahmed's criticism of the policies of the Pakistani state to integrate the tribal areas into the national law; this can provoke cultural disorientation and resentment. This study therefore fills an important gap in scholarship, bringing together the literary perspective of Jamil Ahmad and the anthropological know-how of Akbar S. Ahmed. The book offers a synthesis of fiction as an ethnographic knowledge site, and indigenist theory, as a means to explore the values, tensions and dynamism of Pakistani tribal society, and its fidelity to lived experience, as captured in *The Wandering Falcon*.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design grounded in textual and interpretive analysis. Qualitative inquiry is particularly suitable for examining literary texts because it enables an in-depth exploration of meanings, cultural representations, and ideological structures embedded within narratives. The research approaches Jamil Ahmad's *The Wandering Falcon* as a literary text that simultaneously functions as a form of narrative ethnography, offering insights into the social organization, cultural values, and political realities of Pakistani tribal communities. Through close reading and thematic interpretation, the study investigates how tribal identity, honor, justice, and resistance are represented in the novel.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

The study is informed by the anthropological theories of Akbar S. Ahmed, particularly as articulated in *Millennium and Charisma Among Pathans* (1976) and *Resistance and Control in Pakistan* (1991). Ahmed's conceptualization of tribal society provides the principal analytical lens for examining the novel. The research focuses on key anthropological concepts such as *nang* (honor), *ghairat* (moral integrity and courage), *qaum* (tribal community), tribal autonomy, and resistance to centralized authority. These concepts serve as interpretive categories through which the literary representation of tribal life is analyzed.

Ahmed's framework is particularly relevant because it originates from extensive fieldwork and direct engagement with Pakistan's tribal regions. Consequently, it facilitates a culturally grounded interpretation of the novel and enables a comparison between fictional representation and anthropological understanding.

3.3 Primary and Secondary Sources

The primary source of data is Jamil Ahmad's *The Wandering Falcon* (2011). The text is examined in its entirety, with particular attention paid to episodes depicting tribal customs, honor codes, justice systems, kinship structures, exile, gender relations, and interactions between tribal communities and state institutions.

Secondary sources include scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, literary criticism, anthropological studies, and historical accounts related to Pakistani tribal society. Special emphasis is placed on the works of Akbar S. Ahmed, whose anthropological writings provide the theoretical foundation for the study. Additional critical sources concerning postcolonial literature, ethnographic fiction, tribal identity, and frontier studies are also consulted to contextualize the analysis.

3.4 Method of Data Collection

Data are collected through purposive textual selection. Relevant passages, dialogues, narrative descriptions, and character interactions from *The Wandering Falcon* are identified and categorized according to recurring themes associated with tribal culture and social organization.

These textual excerpts are subsequently organized under thematic categories such as honour, justice, tribal governance, displacement, resistance, and state intervention.

The selection process is guided by the research objectives and research questions, ensuring that the collected textual evidence directly relates to the investigation of tribal ethos and its literary representation.

3.5 Method of Data Analysis

The collected data are analyzed using thematic textual analysis. This method involves identifying recurring patterns, symbols, cultural practices, and ideological constructs within the narrative.

The analysis proceeds through four stages:

1. Close reading of the selected textual passages.
2. Identification of themes relevant to tribal culture and governance.
3. Interpretation of these themes through Akbar S. Ahmed's anthropological concepts.
4. Evaluation of the extent to which the novel reflects, preserves, critiques, or reconstructs the realities of Pakistani tribal society.

Particular attention is paid to the interaction between indigenous tribal systems and modern state institutions. The analysis examines how the novel portrays the coexistence, conflict, and negotiation between traditional cultural values and external political structures.

3.6 Analytical Categories

To maintain analytical coherence, the study employs the following categories derived from Ahmed's anthropological framework:

- *Nang* (Honor and Social Reputation)
- *Ghairat* (Moral Courage and Dignity)
- *Qaum* (Tribal Identity and Collective Belonging)
- Jirga and Indigenous Justice Systems
- Exile, Displacement, and Social Marginalization
- Resistance to State Authority
- Cultural Continuity and Social Transformation

These categories enable a systematic examination of the relationship between literary representation and anthropological reality.

3.7 Validity and Reliability

The credibility of the study is strengthened through theoretical triangulation. Literary evidence from the novel is interpreted alongside anthropological insights derived from Akbar S. Ahmed's scholarly works and relevant secondary literature. This interdisciplinary approach enhances the reliability of interpretations and minimizes subjective readings. Furthermore, the use of textual evidence from multiple sections of the novel ensures consistency and analytical rigor.

To ensure trustworthiness, the study employs close textual reading, repeated examination of narrative patterns, and cross-referencing between literary representations and anthropological theories. Such methodological rigor contributes to a balanced and well-supported interpretation of the text.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

As a textual study based exclusively on published literary and scholarly sources, the research does not involve human participants and therefore requires no formal ethical approval. All primary and secondary sources are appropriately acknowledged and cited according to MLA guidelines. The study adheres to the principles of academic integrity, transparency, and responsible scholarship throughout the research process.

3.9 Conceptual Framework

This study conceptualizes *The Wandering Falcon* as a form of literary ethnography through which tribal culture is represented, interpreted, and preserved. The framework assumes that literary texts can function as cultural archives, reflecting social values, power structures, and collective identities. Akbar S. Ahmed's anthropological concepts of *nang*, *ghairat*, *qaum*, tribal autonomy, and resistance provide the analytical foundation for examining how Jamil Ahmad constructs tribal identity and depicts the tension between indigenous customs and state governance. The relationship between literature and anthropology is therefore understood as complementary, enabling a deeper understanding of the cultural realities embedded within the narrative.

3.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the methodological framework adopted for the study. Employing a qualitative textual analysis approach, the research examines *The Wandering Falcon* through the anthropological lens of Akbar S. Ahmed. The methodology integrates literary criticism and anthropological inquiry to explore representations of tribal honor, governance, identity, resistance, and social transformation. Through thematic analysis of the novel and engagement with relevant scholarly literature, the study seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of Pakistani tribal society and its literary representation.

4. Discussion /Analysis

The Wandering Falcon by Jamil Ahmad is a textured narrative, more than a series of connected stories, and it is a socio-anthropological portrait of the tribal borderlands of Pakistan. Each chapter reveals a new aspect of life on the tribe, such as honour killings, gender roles, exile, rebellion and the war between the tribes and statutory law. By focusing on these characters, such as Tor Baz or the different nomadic and settled tribes, Ahmad shows a world being ruled by the laws of the ancestors and where identity is dependent on land, family and dignity. They are entirely in line, theoretically, with Akbar S. Ahmed's work on the tribal societies: *nang* (honor), *pukhtunwali* (Pashtun code), and the force that the tribal societies bring to the formation of the unified state. In this analysis, I will look at significant moments in Ahmad's novel—specifically, “The Sins of the Mother,” “A Point of Honor,” and the travels of Tor Baz— to show that Ahmad's fiction reflects the anthropological truths and theoretical observations Ahmed finds in his work.

4.1 Tribal Justice and Honor

The Sins of the Mother in *The Wandering Falcon* is a good example of how collective tribal justice applies a blockage to feminine bodily autonomy, which is the communal code of *nang* (honor). The Sins of the Mother is a short story of a young couple of tribes who are forced to leave their community because the man does not agree to allow the woman to marry another man. A not-so-happy situation is when a woman goes to select her partner and the tribe is extremely insulted as they are traditional. But their escape is short-lived, as they are both caught by tribal elders and undergo a cruel and public punishment to bring the tribe some degree of honor back. In the scene the elders are all silent watching as the men pick up the rocks and throw them at the woman and man, as Ahmad explains: There, the elders stand silent, watching the men pick up heavy rocks and throw them at the woman and man (Ahmad 11). This is a story of how a sort of tribal justice is the way through which collective honor is preserved, particularly in the area of social mores with regards to women.

Particularly, Akbar S. Ahmed's native experience of *nang* (honor) assists in understanding the rationale behind this tribal vengeance. *Nang* is more than just individual pride, it is social abhorrence of a whole tribe. Any breach — especially against marriage customs — undermines the fabric of the community and needs to be reinstated. This is because Honor is inherited and

collective, and to restore moral balance, justice must be carried out, declares Ahmed (Millennium 42). The couple's decision is not so much an individual defiance, as it is a threat to the tribal identity that needs to be punished. This is a communal sense which is reinforced by Ahmad: The tribe would not tolerate that loss of face, it would undermine their very survival (Ahmad 13).

The tale also shows how tribal justice was steeped in gender. Women have to maintain the honor of the family, and there are rigid restrictions over their autonomy. A woman who is rejecting the in-bred arranged marriage and is choosing the partner of her choice, without the tribal sanction is considered guilty of capital offence. This is why, writes Ahmad, She had broken the rules of her father's house, and with that, the honor of the whole tribe (Ahmad 12). In turning the discussion of the regulation of women (which he associates with the maintenance of nang and social order) Ahmed extends the idea of nuance to the idea that women were compelled to act properly, beaten to it (Ahmed, Millennium 46). Therefore, it is not just a punishment for her, but an affirmation of what is important to the tribe.

It is obvious that this is a kind of punishment that is done publicly and that it is a tribal ritual that brings the tribe together. It was as though the stones themselves were fueled by the tribe's anger and shame: "The stones flew with power and purpose; it was like they were carrying the tribe's anger and shame" (Ahmad 11). This is a joint effort to restore the dignity of people as a warning to future rebellious individuals that they are not allowed to defy the authority of tribes. It symbolizes the social and legal nature of tribal justice, the bodies of women be the wager over which the preservation of honour is won or lost.

4.2 Exile and Identity

Tor Baz, the wandering falcon in Ahmed's collection of interconnected tales, represents a powerful metaphor for the liminality and the tussle of identity in the tribal society. A nomadic orphan at heart, Tor Baz doesn't seem to fit into any tribe or society he has found himself in the rugged borderlands of Pakistan and Afghanistan. His life personifies the dispossession and dislocation that Ahmed S. Akbar characterizes as the anthropological lens to make sense of things tribal, and in turn identity and exile.

As early as the first chapter, Tor Baz's ceaseless whimsy is caught: *He had no tribe to claim him, no land that could call him son. He belonged everywhere and nowhere* (Ahmad 7). This description captures his uncertain social position, neither insider nor outsider but a threshold space of exclusion and ambivalence. These spaces are referred to by Ahmed as liminality, or "betwixt and between," places where identity is destabilized, and social hierarchies no longer operate (87). Tor Baz embodies this disposition, drifting between tribes and territories, negotiating mutable boundaries of culture, and existing in a limbo of his own who not quite belonging accomplishes the territory.

The loss of place is thus compounded by loss of land, which, as Ahmed suggests, is constitutive of tribal identity: *Land is not merely property but the source of identity and social bonds; exile severs these connections and destabilizes the self* (Ahmed, Millennium 88). Tor Baz had his roots and identity totally shattered with no permanent place or no one to own him as family. There will be times when Tor Baz contemplates his solitude, Ahmad writes: *Without a village, without a mother, without a name, he was as the falcon—free, but also alone* (Ahmad 9). His very existence revolves around the freedom and alienation of the fragile falcon who stays alone and travels.

Tor Baz's engagement with tribal communities reflect the difficulties of conflicting customs and the roles of insider and outsider in torn settings. Even with his talents and bravery, his outsider status renders him vulnerable, illustrating the unyielding social barriers of the tribal

world. As Ahmad writes, *Wherever he went, he was watched with suspicion, a stranger among strangers* (Ahmad 15). This relates to Ahmed's point that in tribal regions, once displaced, the person not only becomes marginalized but the social identity is closely aligned with tribe, blood and clan (Ahmed, *Millennium* 90).

Tor Baz's story is also a story of the larger historical and political ruptures that plague the tribal borderlands—wars, internal displacement, and the very public ordering of political control, the various territories of exile become transformed. The borderland context of the novel, in its overall story arc and divided geographic spaces, conveys the precariousness and discontinuity of tribal life in this frontier area. By way of Tor Baz's liminal being, Ahmad dramatizes how displacement ruptures both the self and the social.

4.3 State vs. Tribe

A similar tale of the clash between tribal customs and the enforcement of state law and order in Pakistan's tribal areas is vividly narrated in *The Wandering Falcon*, in the story *A Point of Honour*. The story focuses on an aged tribe's elder who's pressured to follow official legal process by state authorities, but follow the way of traditional tribal codes in the end. This narrative sheds light on the intrinsic tribal opposition to state authority, a pervasive motif in the writings of Jamil Ahmad and a substantive subject matter in the academic research of Akbar S. Ahmed.

Ahmad describes such an encounter where government officers impose state authority: *The officers came with their papers and guns, but the elder stood firm, his hand resting on the hilt of his sword, saying, 'Our laws come from the tribe, not from their distant cities'* (Ahmad 72). It points us in the direction of the struggle between the centralized, bureaucratic state and the decentralized, customary justice of the tribes. The refusal to recognize state jurisdiction on the part of the elder illustrates the importance of tribal law and identity in the borderlands represented by reservations.

This conflict and issues surrounding the role of the state in tribal areas is well fleshed-out in Akbar S. Ahmed's ongoing criticism of what he calls the policy of lack of intervention. In the analysis, Ahmed illustrates how the Pakistani state attempts to impose formal legal structures on the tribal areas but frequently do not verify or understand the dynamics and social order of the tribal customs leaving the Pakistani state unable to impose its formal system. As Ahmed points out: *The state's imposition is seen as an alien intrusion that disrupts the indigenous system of justice and social control* (Ahmed, *Resistance and Control* 91). The imposition from outside creates distrust and opposition as tribal sees the state laws as juxtaposition to their values and governance.

The tale also highlights the reduced nature of state power in these areas. Ahmad writes, *The officers left, their faces tight with frustration, knowing that their authority had been challenged but powerless to enforce it* (Ahmad 74). This scene is the very definition of realpolitik in the tribal areas, where the writ of the state is typically only nominal and the tribal elder holds the practical reins of power. Loyalty to the ancestral customs prevails over that to the state law revealing systems of governance that persist and dictate social relations and conflict resolution.

In addition, *A Point of Honour* brings into relief the symbolic value of honor and independence for tribal identity. The elder's position isn't just political, it's cultural, as the tribe seeks to protect the way of life. In the eyes of tribal societies like his own, Ahmed recalls, *Honor is inextricably linked to self-rule*, and state interference is as good as an assault on their honor (Ahmed, *Millennium* 50).

4.4 Autonomy and Resistance

Jamil Ahmad's *The Wandering Falcon* beautifully captures the lives of nomadic communities who face political borders and state encroachments on their way of life. They will not accept restrictions on their movement or their freedom and insist that they have a right to travel the "wild" borderlands between Pakistan and Afghanistan. This kind of resistance embodies Akbar S. Ahmed's missive of tribal societies conducting every effort to maintain cultural integrity despite encroachment of modern state apparatus aimed at diasporizing and eroding native culture.

Ahmad describes the nomadic groups transgressing the broken borders: *They crossed the mountains without papers, without checkpoints, as they had done for centuries before the borders were drawn by others* (Ahmad 36). The emotional bond of the tribes with their land and their free-movement history giving the identity of the tribes is highlighted. The mapping of national boundaries on nomads stabilizes their territories and severely interrupts their mobility, putting the very life of nomadism at stake. But in moving as they have always done, the tribes retain a semblance of independence and defiance.

This persistence, Ahmed explains in his analysis of tribal resistance, is about more than just defiance. The resistance of the tribes comes from its defense of space and identity, for the entry of the state borders pose an ontological challenge to the tribe's life (Ahmed, *Resistance and Control* 101). This freedom to move is not only an economic necessity for nomadic tribes, it is also a social and cultural necessity that preserves their ties to land, kin and history. This resistance manifests, in *The Wandering Falcon*, as the refusal to recognize state borders. As Ahmad puts it: *No fence or border could hold the spirit of those who were born to wander. To cage them was to erase their history* (Ahmad 39). This metaphor stresses how the efforts of the state to dominate are seen as an assault on the tribal identity, which, in turn, leads to an enduring, albeit muted, resistance.

Additionally, the novel depicts the gradual loss of tradition due to the growth of state power and the rise of modernity. Borders, military presence, and laws alien to tribal notion doom the way of life with its traditional customs and social structures. This tension that Ahmad writes about: *The old ways are fading like the footprints in the dust, but the people still cling to their past as fiercely as the mountains cling to the sky* (Ahmad 41). It is a drive for resistance that is as much about mobility as it is about enshrining a way of life that is under threat of extinction.

1. Conclusion

Jamil Ahmad also gives a strikingly realistic picture of Pakistani tribal society which corresponds largely to Akbar S. Ahmed's anthropological approaches as presented in his works. The book examines the ideas of nang (honor), tribal justice, liminality, exile and attempts to resist state penetration and explains, through its colourful stories, how tribal traditions continue to survive despite modernity. At the same time, Ahmad's work is both literary art and ethnographic artifact, addressing tribal experience with nuance, respect, and realism. This hybrid nature of the novel is of great value to both literary and cultural studies, as it recalls and transmits tribal epistemologies and systems of social order usually ignored or misinterpreted. In the end, *The Wandering Falcon* can better lend voice to Pakistan — and its enraged hamlets — while perpetuation of such indigenous ways are forged as legitimate, if also fictional, pathways to sympathy.

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