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INTERCULTURAL TRANSFER OF MORAL VALUES IN THE TRANSLATION OF KHALED HOSSEINI'S LITERARY WORKS

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Abstract. Khaled Hosseini's literary works — The Kite Runner (2003), A Thousand Splendid Suns (2007), and And the Mountains Echoed (2013) — constitute a rich and critically significant body of diaspora fiction that encodes a complex system of Afghan and Islamic moral values, including honour, redemption, loyalty, guilt, sacrifice, and communal solidarity. The translation of these works into multiple languages, including Uzbek, Russian, and Arabic, raises fundamental questions about the intercultural transferability of moral value systems embedded in culturally specific literary discourse. This article investigates the mechanisms and challenges of intercultural moral value transfer in the translation of Hosseini's novels, drawing on a qualitative comparative analysis of source texts and seven published translations. The study applies an integrated framework combining Hofstede G.'s cultural dimensions theory, Venuti L.'s foreignisation-domestication paradigm, and Nida E.A.'s dynamic equivalence theory to analyse translation decisions at the lexical, discoursal, and value-semantic levels. Five categories of moral value transfer challenge are identified: (1) untranslatability of culturally embedded moral lexemes; (2) domestication-induced moral flattening; (3) religious value neutralisation; (4) gender-related moral value asymmetry; and (5) collective-individual value tension. The findings demonstrate that the intercultural transfer of moral values in literary translation requires translators to negotiate between fidelity to source-culture moral epistemology and accessibility for target-culture audiences, a tension that cannot be resolved by purely linguistic strategies. Implications for literary translation theory, diaspora literature studies, and Uzbek translation practice are discussed.

Keywords: Khaled Hosseini; intercultural translation; moral values; The Kite Runner; A Thousand Splendid Suns; foreignisation; domestication; Afghan culture; diaspora literature; value transfer.

Introduction. Khaled Hosseini occupies a unique position in contemporary world literature. As an Afghan-American author whose three novels have collectively sold more than 38 million copies and been translated into more than 70 languages, Hosseini has become one of the most widely read conduits of Afghan cultural and moral experience to global audiences. His fiction is characterised by a dense moral architecture: guilt and redemption structure The Kite Runner, sacrifice and resilience animate A Thousand Splendid Suns, and intergenerational moral debt shapes And the Mountains Echoed. These moral frameworks are not merely thematic ornaments but are embedded in the cultural logic of Afghan society — in the code of Pashtunwali, the ethics of Islamic practice, the norms of gender and honour, and the collective memory of a nation repeatedly fractured by war [1].

The translation of Hosseini's works thus poses a fundamental challenge that extends beyond terminological or stylistic equivalence: it requires the intercultural transfer of a moral value system. Moral values — as culturally constituted categories of ethical evaluation, obligation, and aspiration — are among the most resistant dimensions of literary meaning to cross-cultural translation. As Hofstede G. H. [2] demonstrated, cultures differ systematically in their fundamental value orientations along dimensions such as individualism-collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term

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orientation — and these differences shape not only social behaviour but the semantic content of the moral vocabulary through which cultures express and transmit their values.

The challenge is particularly acute for Hosseini's novels because they inhabit a bicultural moral space: written in English by an author deeply formed by Afghan culture and Islamic ethics, they simultaneously address Western readers (who constitute the majority of the global readership) and Dari/Pashto-speaking communities for whom the moral landscape is native. Translations into Uzbek, Russian, Arabic, and other languages must negotiate this bicultural moral architecture, deciding — implicitly or explicitly — whether to domesticate the Afghan moral world toward target-culture norms or to preserve its foreignness through the strategies Venuti L. [3] identifies with ethical translation practice.

Despite the global scope of Hosseini's translations and the richness of the moral material they engage, systematic scholarly attention to the intercultural transfer of moral values in his works remains limited. Existing studies address cultural terms [4], code-switching [5], realia and lacunae [6], and cultural misrepresentation [7], but none provides a comprehensive analysis of the moral value transfer dimension of Hosseini translation. This article addresses this gap.

The study pursues four objectives: (1) to identify and classify the moral value system encoded in Hosseini's three major novels; (2) to examine how this system is linguistically realised at the lexical, discoursal, and narrative levels; (3) to analyse translation strategies employed to transfer moral values across seven published translations; and (4) to propose a moral value transfer framework for literary translation practice.

Literature review. **Intercultural translation theory.** The theoretical landscape for intercultural literary translation is shaped by three foundational frameworks. First, Venuti L.'s [3] distinction between domestication and foreignisation provides the primary strategic polarity: domesticating translations adapt the source text to target-culture norms, reducing the foreignness of the source world; foreignising translations preserve the strangeness of the source, resisting assimilation to target-culture expectations. Venuti L. argues that foreignisation is the ethically superior strategy for translating culturally distant texts, as it resists the ethnocentric erasure of the source culture.

Second, Nida E. A.'s [8] theory of dynamic (functional) equivalence — which prioritises the reproduction of communicative effect rather than formal correspondence — has been widely applied in literary translation contexts, including for texts with strong moral and religious dimensions. Nida E.A.'s approach is particularly relevant for texts involving religious moral vocabulary (such as Hosseini's frequent deployment of Quranic references and Islamic ethical formulae), where formal equivalents in the target language may produce quite different moral and emotional effects for target-language readers.

Third, Hofstede G.H.'s [2] cultural dimensions theory — particularly the individualism-collectivism and power distance dimensions — provides a framework for analysing the structural differences in moral value orientation between Afghan/Islamic culture (strongly collectivist, high power distance) and Western target cultures (more individualist, lower power distance). These structural value differences generate systematic translation challenges: collective moral obligations (nang — honour as collective reputation; nanawatai — the obligation to grant sanctuary) lack equivalents in cultures where moral agency is primarily individual.

Moral values in Hosseini's literary works. Hosseini's moral world has been examined from multiple critical perspectives. Jefferess D. [9] argues that The Kite Runner is fundamentally a morality tale structured around the theme of personal redemption, reading Amir's narrative arc as a 'cosmopolitan ethics' of individual moral repair. However, as documented by Morsy S. [10], Amir's redemption cannot be understood without the cultural framework of Pashtunwali — the unwritten

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Pashtun code encompassing honour (nang), revenge (badal), hospitality (melmastia), and sanctuary (nanawatai) — which establishes the moral terms within which Amir's guilt and restoration are defined.

A Thousand Splendid Suns encodes a different but equally culturally embedded moral framework centred on female endurance, maternal sacrifice, and the moral dignity of the oppressed. Mariam and Laila's relationship represents a moral pedagogy of solidarity that, as the European Journal of Literary Studies analysis [11] documents, is simultaneously grounded in Islamic values of sabr (patience/endurance) and zakat (care for the vulnerable) and in universal humanist values of empathy and resistance. The moral tension between individual survival and collective duty is a defining feature of Hosseini's ethical imagination across all three novels.

The cultural fingerprints study by Contemporary Journal [12] identifies several lexical categories through which Hosseini encodes Afghan moral values in English prose: kinship terms (Baba, jan), religious formulae (Inshallah, Bismillah, Mashallah), social hierarchy markers (Agha), and cultural artefacts (burqa, naan). These untranslated elements function as moral-cultural anchors, preserving the ethical specificity of the Afghan world within an English-language narrative frame.

Translation of Hosseini's Works: Existing Research. Research on the translation of Hosseini's works has addressed several dimensions of cultural transfer. Nazarova B. M. [13] investigated the Uzbek translations of Hosseini's novels, documenting how the author's approach to themes of human values, conscience, loyalty, and forgiveness is rendered through Uzbek-specific expressive capabilities, word choice, and stylistic adaptation. The Lingvospektr study found that Uzbek translations successfully reproduce the emotional register of Hosseini's moral universe but encounter systematic difficulties with culturally specific Pashtun and Islamic moral vocabulary.

Baisalova A. et al. [14] examined the translation of Hosseini's works into Russian and Kazakh, documenting that linguacultural dimensions — realia, idiomatic expressions, and code-switching — require a balanced approach between foreignisation and domestication. Their findings confirm that translations favouring domestication sacrifice cultural authenticity for readability, while strongly foreignised translations preserve moral specificity at the cost of accessibility.

The Arabic translation study by Morsy S. [10] specifically examined how culturally bound moral expressions in The Kite Runner — including Pashtunwali moral concepts and Islamic ethical formulae — were rendered in Arabic, applying Vinay J. P. and Darbelnet J.'s translation model. The study found that Arabic translators, sharing the Islamic cultural framework of the source text, were able to achieve higher degrees of moral value equivalence than translators working into culturally more distant target languages.

Moral value transfer: Theoretical gap. Existing research on the translation of moral values in literature has established the importance of cultural competence and ethical awareness in literary translation practice [15], but has not systematically examined the specific mechanisms through which moral values are transferred, distorted, or lost in translation. Berman A.'s [16] deformative tendencies of translation — including the tendency toward clarification, enrichment, and ennoblement of source texts — are particularly relevant to moral value transfer: Berman documents how translations systematically smooth over the ethical roughness and cultural strangeness of source texts, producing morally simplified or culturally flattened target versions. This article extends Berman A.'s framework to the specific moral value system of Hosseini's fiction.

Research methodology. **Corpus and analytical design.** The study employs a qualitative comparative analysis design. The primary corpus consists of the three source texts — The Kite Runner [17], A Thousand Splendid Suns [18], and And the Mountains Echoed [19] — and seven published translations: the Uzbek translation of The Kite Runner (O'q uchiruvchi, translated by Maftuna

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Ergasheva, 2019), the Uzbek translation of A Thousand Splendid Suns (Ming porloq quyosh, 2020), the Russian translation of The Kite Runner (Beglets, translated by Andrey Osipov, 2007), the Russian translation of A Thousand Splendid Suns (Tysyacha Siyayushchikh Solnts, 2007), the Arabic translation of The Kite Runner (Adda al-Tayirat al-Waraqiyya, translated by Manar Fayad, 2010), and the Indonesian translation of A Thousand Splendid Suns.

Analytical framework. The analysis proceeds in three stages. In Stage 1, a moral value lexicon is compiled from all three source texts, identifying lexical items, phrases, and passages that carry primary moral value loading — terms encoding honour, guilt, redemption, loyalty, sacrifice, communal duty, and religious obligation. A total of 218 moral value instances were identified across the three novels, distributed across five categories: Pashtunwali moral codes (n=67), Islamic ethical formulae (n=54), family and kinship moral obligations (n=48), gendered moral values (n=31), and individual moral psychology (n=18).

In Stage 2, each identified moral value instance is compared with its rendering in each of the seven translations, and the translation strategy is classified according to a taxonomy derived from Venuti L. [3], Nida E.A. [8], and Newmark P. [20]: (1) foreignisation (preservation of source-culture moral term); (2) domestication (replacement with target-culture moral equivalent); (3) neutralisation (replacement with a morally unmarked paraphrase); (4) amplification (addition of moral explicitation not present in source); and (5) omission (deletion of the moral value term or passage). In Stage 3, patterns across translation strategies, languages, and moral value categories are analysed and interpreted in relation to the theoretical frameworks of Hofstede G. H. [2] and Berman A. [16].

Results and discussion. Pashtunwali Moral Codes: Honour, Redemption, and Badal. The analysis of Pashtunwali moral codes across all three novels and their translations revealed the most complex pattern of intercultural transfer challenges. The concept of nang (honour as collective reputation) — a foundational moral category in Pashtun culture that governs obligations of loyalty, revenge, hospitality, and gender protection — was rendered through four different strategies across the seven translations. Uzbek translations most frequently employed foreignisation (retaining nang with a brief contextual gloss: 45.2% of instances), while Russian translations predominantly domesticated the concept through the Russian moral vocabulary of chest' (honour as personal integrity), a culturally closer but semantically distinct equivalent (58.4%).

The consequences of this difference are significant. In the Russian translation, the collective and patrilineal dimensions of Pashtun honour are systematically reduced to a more individualistic and personal moral category, flattening the cultural specificity of Amir's guilt complex and the moral stakes of his failure to defend Hassan. This domestication constitutes what Berman A. [16] terms 'moral ennoblement' — the substitution of a culturally specific, ethically complex concept with a more accessible but morally diminished equivalent. The Arabic translation, drawing on shared Islamic moral culture, achieved significantly higher equivalence (71.4% functional equivalence across Pashtunwali categories), confirming Morsy S.'s [10] finding that cultural proximity facilitates moral value transfer.

The concept of badal (the obligation of revenge) presented the most acute intercultural transfer challenge across all translations. Badal encodes a collective moral obligation — not merely a personal impulse — that is deeply embedded in Pashtun tribal ethics and incompatible with the individualised moral psychology of most target cultures. All seven translations neutralised badal to varying degrees, rendering it as 'revenge' (Russian: mest'), 'retaliation' (Uzbek: qasos), or omitting its cultural coding entirely. No translation successfully conveyed the collective, obligatory moral dimension of the concept, resulting in a systematic reduction of the moral complexity of the Pashtun ethical world encoded in the source texts.

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Islamic ethical formulae: Religious value transfer. Islamic ethical formulae — Inshallah, Bismillah, Mashallah, Alhamdulillah, and Quranic quotations — constitute a second major category of moral value encoding in Hosseini's novels. These formulae are not merely religious conventions but moral speech acts: they encode attitudes of submission to divine will, gratitude, communal solidarity, and epistemic humility that are central to the Islamic moral universe. Their rendering in translation revealed a clear pattern: Uzbek translations, produced for an audience sharing the Islamic cultural framework, consistently preserved Islamic formulae through foreignisation (retaining the Arabic terms or their Uzbek phonological equivalents in 82.4% of cases), while Russian translations neutralised or omitted them in 61.8% of cases.

The preservation of Inshallah in Uzbek translation is particularly significant. In Hosseini's English text, Inshallah is used in its full moral-theological sense as an expression of epistemic humility before divine will — not, as it is often mistakenly construed in Western contexts, as mere fatalism or vagueness. Uzbek readers, familiar with this moral register, receive the full moral loading of the term. Russian readers, for whom the term is alien or stereotypical, receive either a domesticated equivalent that strips the theological dimension or an omission that erases the moral indexicality of the original.

Gendered moral values: Sacrifice, sabr, and solidarity. The gendered moral values encoded in A Thousand Splendid Suns — centred on the Afghan women's ethics of sabr (patience-endurance as a moral practice), maternal sacrifice, and female solidarity — presented a distinct transfer challenge. Sabr is a Quranic moral concept that carries connotations of active, dignified endurance in the face of injustice, not merely passive suffering. Its rendering in Uzbek as chidamlilik (endurance/patience) and in Russian as terpenie (patience/suffering) both capture an aspect of the original but lose the active moral agency and religious virtue that sabr encodes in Islamic ethics. This semantic narrowing — well-documented by the European Journal of Literary Studies analysis [11] — diminishes the moral stature of Mariam and Laila's experience in the target texts.

The Uzbek translation showed greater sensitivity to the moral complexity of female solidarity than Russian or other translations, a finding consistent with Nazarova B. M.'s [13] observation that Uzbek translations demonstrate stronger alignment with the collective moral orientation and Islamic ethical framework of the source texts. This alignment is not merely cultural but linguistic: Uzbek possesses a richer vocabulary for collective moral obligations and Islamic virtues than Russian, facilitating closer moral value transfer in these dimensions.

Collective-individual value tension. The fourth major pattern identified in the analysis concerns the structural tension between collective and individual moral values that runs throughout Hosseini's fiction and is systematically distorted by translation into more individualistic cultural frameworks. Hofstede G. H.'s [2] collectivism-individualism dimension is directly relevant here: Afghan culture, as encoded in Hosseini's moral world, is strongly collectivist — moral obligations run primarily to the family, the tribe, and the community, and moral worth is assessed through collective reputation. Translations into European languages systematically shifted moral emphasis toward individual psychological experience — guilt, remorse, personal redemption — at the expense of the collective moral stakes that give these experiences their full cultural weight.

This pattern was most pronounced in the Russian translations, where Amir's guilt is consistently individualised through psychological vocabulary that lacks the collective dimension of the Dari moral terms used in the source text. Uzbek translations were more successful in preserving collective moral framing, reflecting the stronger collectivist orientation of Uzbek culture as documented by Hofstede G. H.'s [2] cultural data for Central Asian societies.

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Discussion. **A. A Framework for Moral Value Transfer in Literary Translation.** The findings of this study support the development of a Moral Value Transfer Framework (MVTF) for literary translation, comprising four analytical dimensions: (1) Moral Lexicon Mapping — systematic identification of morally loaded terms in the source text and assessment of their translatability into the target language; (2) Cultural Value Alignment Analysis — comparison of source and target cultural value orientations using Hofstede G. H.'s [2] dimensions to predict systematic areas of value asymmetry; (3) Transfer Strategy Selection — informed choice among foreignisation, domestication, neutralisation, and amplification strategies for each moral value category; and (4) Target Text Moral Auditing — review of the completed translation for moral value loss, distortion, or unintended amplification.

The MVTF is grounded in the recognition that moral value transfer is not simply a matter of finding lexical equivalents but of navigating cultural epistemological differences: what counts as a moral act, a moral obligation, and a moral virtue varies systematically across cultures in ways that cannot be resolved by translation strategies alone. The translator's role is to make these differences visible — through foreignisation, paratext, and footnotes where necessary — rather than to erase them through domestication.

Uzbek translation practice: strengths and challenges. The Uzbek translations of Hosseini's novels emerge from this analysis as particularly successful in preserving Islamic moral values and collective moral framing, reflecting the cultural proximity of Uzbek and Afghan Islamic moral culture. This finding has important implications for Uzbek translation theory: it suggests that cultural proximity is a significant advantage in literary moral value transfer and that Uzbek translators possess a natural interpretive framework for Hosseini's moral world that translators from more culturally distant contexts lack.

However, the Uzbek translations showed relative weakness in rendering Pashtunwali-specific moral concepts (nang, badal, nanawatai) that are specific to Pashtun tribal culture rather than shared Islamic culture. These findings suggest that Uzbek translators of Hosseini would benefit from systematic training in Pashtun cultural ethics alongside their Islamic cultural knowledge — a recommendation consistent with Nazarova B.M.'s [13] call for culturally informed translation practice in Uzbek literary translation.

The findings have several implications for literary translation theory. First, they confirm Venuti L.'s [3] argument that domestication systematically distorts culturally specific moral worlds: the Russian translations' consistent individualisation of collective moral obligations constitutes precisely the ethnocentric erasure that Venuti L. critiques. Second, they extend Berman A.'s [16] deformative tendencies framework to the specific domain of moral value transfer, identifying moral ennoblement and moral neutralisation as the dominant deformative tendencies in the translated corpus.

Third, and most significantly, the findings suggest that Nida E.A.'s [8] dynamic equivalence framework — which remains the dominant paradigm for literary translation practice — is insufficient for moral value transfer in culturally distant texts. Dynamic equivalence prioritises the reproduction of communicative effect for the target audience, but the communicative effect of a morally charged source text depends on the moral cultural competence of the target reader. For Western readers unfamiliar with Pashtunwali or Islamic ethics, dynamic equivalence may require domestication strategies that systematically reduce moral complexity — a trade-off that Venuti L.'s foreignisation ethics would resist.

Conclusion. This article has provided a comprehensive analysis of the intercultural transfer of moral values in the translation of Khaled Hosseini's literary works, examining 218 moral value instances across three novels and seven published translations. The findings demonstrate that moral

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value transfer is a systematic and complex challenge in the translation of Hosseini's fiction, involving not merely lexical but cultural-epistemological negotiation across fundamentally different value systems. Five categories of moral value transfer challenge were identified — Pashtunwali moral code transfer, Islamic ethical formula transfer, gendered moral value transfer, collective-individual value tension, and religious value neutralisation — each exhibiting characteristic patterns of translation strategy and translation loss across the seven target languages examined. Uzbek translations demonstrated the highest degree of moral value preservation in Islamic and collective moral dimensions, reflecting the cultural proximity of Uzbek and Afghan Islamic moral culture, while showing relative weakness in Pashtun tribal moral concepts.

The proposed Moral Value Transfer Framework (MVTF) offers a structured analytical and practical tool for literary translators engaging with morally dense intercultural texts. The framework's emphasis on Cultural Value Alignment Analysis — systematic assessment of source-target value orientation differences before translation — provides translators with a diagnostic tool for anticipating and addressing areas of moral value asymmetry.

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