

ANALYZING THE LOSS OF MEANING IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF MIAN MUHAMMAD BAKHSH'S SAIF-UL-MALOOK

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Abstract

This research investigates the complexities of meaning transfer in the English translation of Saif-ul-Malook, a renowned Punjabi Sufi text rich in spiritual symbolism and cultural depth. The study focuses on the phenomenon of loss of meaning that occurs when mystical poetry, deeply rooted in indigenous linguistic and cultural contexts, is rendered into a global language. The research particularly examines two dimensions of loss: general semantic loss at lexical and metaphorical levels, and spiritual loss, where the mystical essence, symbolic layers, and experiential depth of the original text become diminished in translation. The theoretical and methodological framework is grounded in Lawrence Venuti's (1995, 1998) concepts of domestication and foreignization, which serve as the analytical lens for evaluating the strategies employed by the translator. The study concludes that a balanced application of both strategies could better preserve the aesthetic, cultural, and spiritual integrity of Sufi poetry in translation. This research contributes to the field of Applied Linguistics and Translation Studies by highlighting the challenges of translating mystical texts, demonstrating the implications of translation strategies for cross-cultural communication, and providing insights into the preservation of spiritual meaning in world literature. It underscores the translator's role not only as a linguistic mediator but also as a cultural and spiritual bridge.

INTRODUCTION

Translation is a field of Applied Linguistics that is always used as a bridge between the two languages, by connecting them with the wire of translation. The process of translation initially started from the translation of Holy Books, The Bible, and the Holy Quran. Nida (1964), Venuti (1995), and Benjamin (1999) are the prominent figures who laid the foundation of translation studies and they provided with those strategies which may help the English reader comprehends a text with ease.

The present study is subjected to investigate the loss of meaning in English translated text of Saif-

ul-Malook. This study also focusses on the loss of meaning of Sufi text in its English Translation. The researcher looked for those words which have been substituted by the translator but they lost their original meaning after shifting into English language. Translator felt which sort of problem while translating the poetry into paraphrase-style? These all are the part of this study. Translation of poetry is not an easy task, after the completion, if both texts (original and translated) are compared, there will be hell of gap between them. Somewhere, this difference is based on textual

level as well as semantic level, its natural, it is not the translator's mistake (Xian, 2008).

Mian Muhammad Bakhsh is seemed to be fully drowned in the Divine love and the context of the poetry reveals that he has lost his own identity for the cause of the Divine Love. The love that is being narrated here, is not a common form of love, it is the love for the Almighty.

First of all, the researcher has worked on the sentence structure of a text and then he moved towards the hidden problem of loss of meaning. By working on the textual level, many riddles have been solved, the extensive study of both languages highlighted the struggle and faithfulness of the translator. Moreover, he also knew about the use of metaphors, how these expressions have been replaced with the appropriate one. Then the next level is the analysis of the context. This is very significant for conducting a research in the field of translation studies. This reveals the truth of meaning loss while the process of translation.

Objectives of the Study

To analyze the spiritual loss of meaning in the English translation of Saif-ul-Malook.

To investigate the translation strategies employed in the English translation of Saif-ul-Malook.

Research Questions

What specific spiritual themes are diminished or omitted in the English translation **Saif-ul-Malook**?
What translation strategies are employed in the English version of *Saif-ul-Malook*, and how effectively do these strategies convey the linguistic, cultural, and spiritual essence of the original text?

Literature Review

Interaction with the global economy, the need for a theoretical framework, the necessity for foundation scholarships for those who made major contributions to this subject, and the need for practical expertise were these considerations. James S. Holmes (1970) came up with the term "translation studies" as a result of all these motivating causes. According to Holmes (1972) this field is not limited to only language but it also engages with different disciplines under the umbrella of interpretation.

The works of scholars such as Eugene Nida (1964), who introduced the concepts of formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence, aided the field to enhance linguistic comprehension and communicative effectiveness. The closest natural equivalency of a communication in the source language, both in terms of meaning and style, must be recreated in the target language, according to Nida and Taber (1969).

Roman Jakobson (1959) has classified nature of translation into three different categories; intralingual, interlingual, and intersemiotics, the purpose is to make the reader aware of the function of translation, he opines that translation goes beyond the linguistic expressions, it can involve the reinterpretation of text on cultural or sometimes symbolic grounds. Itamar Even-Zohar (1990) says that polysystem theory of translation includes the translation of different genres of literature, which sometimes depends upon the historical and contextual background of the system of both texts (source and target), sometimes it only shapes cultures of nation through the translation of text. This is how, this field expands its boundaries, sometimes it shares the cultural interests and sometimes it remains marginal, only confined to the text.

The concept of "loss of meaning" has been at the heart of translation studies for decades, reflecting the inevitable compromises that occur when a text moves from one linguistic and cultural system into another. Translators are therefore confronted with the task of negotiating between fidelity to the source text and intelligibility for the target audience. This negotiation almost always results in a degree of semantic, stylistic, or cultural reduction that scholars broadly define as loss of meaning (Nida, 1964). While some losses may be minor and inevitable, others fundamentally alter the interpretative framework of the source text, especially when dealing with literary or sacred works that rely heavily on cultural metaphors and spiritual connotations.

Lawrence Venuti (1995) promoted the foreignization technique by demonstrating the idea of maintaining the cultural distinctions between two foreign languages. He claims that cultural features of the source text should be

translated into their original form using this idea of foreignization; otherwise, they will be assimilated into another language and lose their true meaning. Because religious and mystical literature are already highly symbolic and context-based in their original language, this approach applies to their translation.

The translation of Sufi poetry is not only a linguistic or cultural challenge but also an ethical one. If the translation dilutes or distorts the mystical message, it risks misleading readers about the essence of Sufism. Venuti (1995) critiques domestication precisely because it erases the cultural alterity of the source text, thereby misrepresenting its original voice.

Unlike secular poetry, Sufi poetry serves a didactic and spiritual purpose, aiming to guide readers toward inner realization (Schimmel, 1975; Ernst, 1997). If a translation reduces such texts to mere aesthetic pleasure, it risks distorting the author's original intent. As Venuti (1995, 2012) argues, adopting a foreignizing strategy enables the translator to affirm the sacred function of these works and to respect the worldview they embody. Punjabi Sufi literature, exemplified by the works of Mian Muhammad Bakhsh and others, represents an intellectual and spiritual heritage that cannot be separated from its cultural and historical roots. Translation of such works, therefore, demands sensitivity not only to language but also to symbolism, metaphor, and religious philosophy. The frameworks provided by translation studies whether equivalence, Skopos theory, polysystem theory, or Venuti's strategies of domestication and foreignization offer valuable tools for navigating the challenges of preserving meaning and cultural integrity in translation (Muhammad, 2006; Schäffner, 2010; Bassnett, 2014; Venuti, 2012).

At the same time, the discussion of "loss of meaning" underscores that no translation can ever fully replicate the original. Yet, through awareness of translation strategies and ethical considerations, translators can minimize distortions and foreground the cultural richness of the source text. This is especially important in the case of Sufi poetry, where spiritual metaphors risk being diluted if stripped of their cultural and mystical

contexts ((Bassnett, 2014; Venuti, 2012; Bausani, 2002).

To sum the above debate, the translation is the only process that helps the reader get the meaning. This knowledge is both scientific as well as theoretical in nature. It provides the window for the reader to view any literary or scientific text. It also establishes rules for the translator how he can make it more readable and transparent. If translation is carried out seriously by the interpreter, he can also convey the figurative language of the source text to the target text.

Research Methodology

This is a qualitative type of research. First of all, let's breakdown the above all expressions, the first one is systematic analysis, it refers to the systematic way of conducting a research; which strategy is going to be adopted and how will be applied, these all questions are associated with the term systematic. Now the second phrase is, qualitative analysis; which refers to quality-oriented analysis of the text. Means it does not need any scale, or numeric values, it only evolves around the linguistic expressions and their application. Conducting this kind of qualitative research carries, research questions, objectives, research design, data collection and appropriate application of theory (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014). According to Venuti, the translation from any language should carry the culture of Target Text, there is no room for the strange language of Source Language because it puts the foreign reader into difficulty (Venuti, 2008; 1998). This analysis will help the researcher to getting know about the product of translation, process of translation and strategies of translation.

Venuti's framework of Domestication and Foreignization does not like the outdated practices of transparency and honest translation. This fluency brings the strange words of other language which are not fit for the strategy of Domestication. For example, the textual analysis of Saif-ul-Malook, will provide us with the strange words of Source Language, Punjabi, but, in Venuti's opinion there is no benefit of bringing these cultural-specific words in English language. In this way, English language will replete with such kind of

amalgamation and it will lose its own identity. In order to preserve the culture of English Language, Venuti has adopted a rude style for other languages.

This research aims at finding those words that are loaded with cultural context and when they are interpreted, their idea changes. Venuti's model of Domestication and Foreignization is very appropriate for conducting this kind of analysis. This theory contains a systematic way of analyzing words, it has different strategies according to the use of those words. For example, the strategies of Domestication helps the researcher find those words that are reader-friendly. Domestication informs about the fluency of the text. On the other hand, Foreignization leads the researcher to find those words that are still representing the culture of Source Language. Foreignization helps the researcher identify the transparency, and faithfulness of the translator with the source language.

This methodology applies the lens of critic on the target text, as the source text is a divine text and it carries the divine themes, spiritual ideologies, but the target text has lost the real themes and meanings of the source text. The techniques of Domestication guides that how many words have been transferred from source text to target text, which have given the fluency to the reader of the foreign language, but they have lost the spiritual meaning of the SL. Similarly, the techniques of Foreignization throw light on those words which remained same in both texts. This theory provides information about the use of the words, about the transformation of the expressions, and about the loss of meanings of original text.

The analysis works on different factors of the texts, these factors can be categorized in two ways:

Intra-Textual Factors:

These factors include the textual elements of the text, for example, words of a text, sentence structures, symbolic expressions, and sentence structure of a text. Here the study analyzes the use of words, their particular tone, and how these

- 1: Sense-for-sense
- 2: Naturalizing
- 3: Free

words symbolize the whole idea of a source text. Extra-Textual Factors:

These factors revolve around the contextual use of words of a source text. Here the context of every verse, idea behind the use of every word is of main focus. When there is a talk about the context, this study also goes deep in the context of every verse to find the loss of meaning.

Foreignization:

This theory is applicable at word level, identifying the sentence structures, transfer of words of source text into target text and it works on the word-for-word translation of a text. It works the source text and its message. Whether it is reader friendly or author friendly?

There are following strategies of this Technique:

- 1: Word-for-word
- 2: Faithful
- 3: Alienation
- 4: Formal Equivalence:
- 5: Resistant

These strategies enable the researcher identifying those words that are only transferred, means they are only shifted from one language to another but they do not convey the sense. They help the researcher analyzing the mood of translator whether he has conveyed the words (word-for-word) or has interpreted (sense-for-sense) them. How much he is faithful to the source language? Is Target text alienating for the reader or not? Has Translator made the target text resistant free or not?

Domestication:

The theory of Domestication works on the idea of comfort of the reader, how a reader feels at home while reading a foreign text. It identifies those words and phrases or sometimes the idea that helps in making a target text more readable and fluent which is transparent and which does not bring the strange words of Source Text.

There are following strategies of this Technique:

- 4: Dynamic Equivalent
- 5: Fluent

These strategies help the researcher finding those words that are more natural and fluent for a foreign reader of Target Text. This study also guides in investigating the level of understanding for a foreign reader. Is Translator successful or not while conveying the sense of Sufi Text? These strategies also guide the researcher in finding equivalence between both the texts while transferring the spiritual themes or they have some sort of imbalance?

Data Analysis

Title:

The book “Saif-ul-Malook,” which is originally written in the Punjabi language, is replete with lots of divine themes, and it's the great struggle of a translator who has tried to convey the same themes in a language other than Punjabi. The Punjabi version, “Saif-ul-Malook,” is source text (ST), and its English translation by Saeed Ahmad is Target Text (TT). Undoubtedly, Saeed Ahmad has tried to make the reader comprehend the overall theme of the source text, but there are certain meanings

and themes that are still ambiguous for the readers of the target text.

Beginning with the analysis of the title, the name of the source text is “Saif-ul-Malook,” and the Title of its English Translation is “Great Sufi Wisdom.” The word “Saif” is originally an Arabic word which means “king/ruler” and “Malook”, which is also an Arabic word refers to the meaning “Sword”. On the other hand title from the English text “Great Sufi Wisdom” which is not similar to that of source text. Title of target text shows that this very book contains the sea of divine language and themes but the title of source text says this very book is about the story of the ruler who is a warrior and who is the hero of war field. Infact, Mian Muhammad Bakhsh, poet of the source text, is the narrator who is telling about the journey of a king, the whole journey is adventurous and this journey is being narrated by the poet in the form of verse. This journey is not just a travelogue but a journey towards eternity so the poet Mian Bakhsh has uttered all the verses in context of divine love.

Verse 1:

Source Text	Target Text
مٹھا میوہ بخش اجیہا، قدرت دی گھت شیری	Favour me such a sweet fruit full of Your blessings.
جو کھا وے روگ اُس دا جاوے دور ہووے دلگیری	He, whosoever eats it, feel free from suffering

Explanation:

Difference between the meaning of Source Text and Target Text is visible. Through these verses a reader of ST can analyze that Bakhsh wanted his book to be the cure of sinful souls. The word “مٹھا میوہ” means the happiness or a pleasure when you get in return of your good deeds. Its like a product of crops that a farmer gets as a result of his hard-work. There is a visible Loss of meaning in this verse. Poet is praying for

something else but the translator has entirely changed the meaning.

Moving towards next word in the next line of verse which is “کھاوے”. Here the contextual meaning of the word “کھاوے” is reading reading of Saif-ul-Malook for eternal peace. In other words, the person who will read this book for internal change will get the benefits. Same goes for the next word which is “روگ”. It refers to the pain of soul. Simply, it means the people who have unrest souls and they cant find internal peace in this world this book will help them cure their anxiety depression. Third word “دلگیری” also refers to the depressed souls who feel betrayed in this world and they eagerly want to meet their Almighty. There is a huge difference of meaning between what the poet has said and what the translator has translated. It is very clear from the analysis of the verse that translator couldn't cope with the actual

meaning of source text. Main idea of the verse was something else and translator portrayed it in a simplest form.

Mian Muhammad Bakhsh, in his celebrated work Saif-ul-Malook, employs rich symbolism to convey the essence of Sufi spirituality. In the verse, “he presents divine wisdom and remembrance of God as a “sweet fruit” that nourishes the soul in the same way that ordinary fruit sustains the body. The metaphor of sweetness reflects the Sufi notion of dhawq (taste), which describes the inner delight and spiritual joy experienced when the seeker comes closer to the Divine. By referring to this fruit as “قدرت دی گہت شیری” (a secret sweetness of nature), the poet emphasizes the hidden mysteries embedded in creation by divine power, mysteries that are veiled from the ordinary eye but revealed to the spiritually awakened heart. The continuation, “جو کھا وے روگ اُس دا جاوے” (whoever eats it, his illness departs), highlights the healing potential of divine love and remembrance,

which cure the soul of its inner ailments such as pride, greed, and envy. In Sufi thought, these moral and spiritual weaknesses are seen as diseases of the heart that distance the human being from God, and thus their removal through the “consumption” of divine wisdom becomes essential for spiritual growth. The final part, “ہوے دلگیری” (and the sorrow of the heart is removed), draws attention to the deepest form of grief in Sufism, the pain of separation from the Beloved.

The poet here is failed in conveying the actual meaning of the text. His only concern is with the surface meanings of source text.

Translator has translated the verse by following the method of:

- 1: Word-for-word
- 2: Literal
- 3: Faithful
- 4: Formal Equivalence

Verse 2:

Source Language	Target Language
لے لے گئے سُن دے لذت، پی پی مست پیالے	Absorbing the words of poetic wisdom, they feel elated.
خالی رہ گئے مٹ محمد خانے مجلس والے	O Muhammad (Bakhsh)! Nothing is left but empty meeting places, blank pages.

Explanation:

This Verse is highly mystical, and there is a historical reference in this very verse. The poet is repenting over the absence of the companions of the Holy Prophet who have gone, and now there is no individual left who is intellectually capable of providing the core of religious knowledge.

Analysis of the Translation says that this verse has not been translated exactly by the translator. The first word is “لے لے گئے” which means to get the knowledge of religion and mystic secrets. The second word is “سُن دے” which not only means the words but appreciative words that are uttered for

the love of the Almighty ALLAH. The third word “لذت” is very appropriate to show the excitement level of a lover when he gets the minor share of beloved’s love. The fourth and fifth words are

“مست پیالے پی پی” which give the meaning of “meetings with the people who are en-drowned in the sea of religious knowledge” These people don’t bother their own identity and they are lost in the sea of divine love. It refers to the intensity of love for the Beloved; it also refers to the thirst for Mysticism. When a lover is eager to meet his beloved and he cannot find a way out of this problem, and he becomes crazy for his beloved, and all the time calling the names of his beloved, this situation is called “مست”. Because the lover is passionate for meeting and his heart is filled with the intensity of love for his beloved. The sixth words is “محمد خانے مجلس والے”. It indicates the historical reference; when the Holy Prophet and His companions used to sit in the mosque and this sitting has a vital role in our religion because Muslims use the references of those sittings for their worldly issues and they solve the problem

under the guidance of extracts taken from those discussions. Here the last word is “محمد”, the poet used this allusion for the Holy Prophet (PBUH). Here the strategies of Domestication have been used by the translator; they are following:

- 1: Sense-for-sense
- 2: Free
- 3: Fluent
- 4: Dynamic Equivalent

The translator has not completely followed the pattern of sense-for-sense translation. While conveying the sense he didn't even consider the contextual meaning and theme of the SL. For example, those words which give the meaning of

spirituality, have been omitted by the translator in TT. This whole verse is not as simple as the poet has translated it. The poet has written the word “محمد” for the Holy Prophet but the translator, interpreted as “Muhammad Bakhsh”. The poet has portrayed the picture of company of the Holy Prophet and His companions and he misses those days and their absence but the translator could not translated it properly. He also quit few words while translation to make the reader of TL free. But while translating it he did not maintain the balance of the meaning and theme.

Verse 3:

Source Text	Target Text
قدرت تھی جس باغ بنائے جگ سنسار تمامی،	It is He who created all the gardens and created the whole universe.
رنگ برنگی بوٹے لائے کچھ خاصے کچھ عامی۔	It is He grew the variety of trees in those gardens. Some trees are special and some are common.

Explanation:

Translation is a difficult process particularly when target language is entirely strange and reader of the target language is unknown to the dynamics and context of source language. This problem of change of context, meaning and theme is almost present in the translation of every verse. The Poet is praising the Mastery of the Almighty who created the whole universe and then he renovated the universe and the earth with human beings and animals. Every human is different from the other human being in physic color and nature. But the translator just interpreted its literal meaning. This is the reason why the meaning and theme of the text has been changed.

The first line of the verse has three words which identify the main context or the central idea of the whole verse; the first word is “قدرت”. “قدرت” refers to the Divine Power. It refers to the Presence of the Almighty, Who have control over all the universe. The second word is “باغ”, which

means the universe and the earth. The poet has used the metaphor here. The poet has used many metaphorical words in this verse and the

prominent or key word of the verse is “باغ”, this is the representation of the universe which means that whole universe is like a garden in which different trees and plants (human beings) are planted to decorate the universe. The third word is “جگ سنسار تمامی”, this word means the whole universe. The Almighty made the whole universe, and everything in this universe is like a plant and flower because they are the beauty of this garden (universe). “رنگ برنگی بوٹے” means different kinds of human beings. All the human beings are different from each other and this is the beauty of The Almighty that He has created all the man unique. “رنگ برنگ” means every person has different face texture, appearance and nature from the other person. “کچھ عامی کچھ خاص” Symbolizes that every person has different status. “کچھ خاصے” means some people are special because they are the purest souls. And some are common or ordinary because of their deeds and actions.

The main theme of the verse is that the Almighty has created all the human beings different and unique from each other and they are ordinary or special near the Almighty just because of their actions. This was the whole theme but the

translator has entirely changed the path of interpretation.

The translator has followed the following strategies of translation:

1: Word-for-word

2: Literal

3: Faithful

4: Formal Equivalence.

Verse 4:

Source Text	Target Text
بگناں دے پھل مٹھے کیتے، پتّ اوہناں دے کوہرے	It is at His discretion that there are such varieties of trees whose fruits are sweet but their leaves are bitter.
بگناں دے پھل کاری آون، نفعے پھلاں دے تھوڑے	Whereas there are such varieties of trees too whose fruits do not have much worth but their flowers are highly valuable.

Explanation:

The Almighty has created the universe and He sent human beings on earth in order to make it more beautiful and renovated. The poet has used the metaphor of plants and trees for human beings. He says that some people look very rude from their appearance but they are very soft-spoken and pure by-heart. On the other hand some faces are way too pretty and they apparently look very calm and respectful but when we interact with them, we come to know that this person is very rude he is not happy to see others happy. This is the beauty of the creation of the Almighty who created varieties of human beings and they are different in nature and appearance.

In the first line of the verse, the poet says that some human beings are not good by appearance and the look ugly but the Almighty has gifted them a pure heart and they feel happiness when they help someone. In the next lines he states another side of mirror, there are very beautiful faces and appearances of people, who look very beautiful from their face but their conduct is very ugly that people don't want to meet them.

In the first line of the verse, the first word is "بگناں", which means some people or some

persons. The second word is "پھل مٹھے کیتے" which means the good behavior. The third word is, "پتّ" which means the physical appearance of the person. The fourth word is, "کوہرے" which means the bad appearance or bad attitude of a person. The fifth word is "پھل کاری آون" which means beauty on the face or apparent beauty. The sixth word is "نفعے تھوڑے" which means less fruitful for others or bad behavior with others.

Translator has interpreted these verses in entirely different style and he totally changed the theme of the verses. In the source text the poet is saying something else but in the target text the translator has only followed the literal way of translation.

The poet has followed following strategies of Domestication:

1: Literal

2: Word-for-word

3: Faithful

4: Formal Equivalence

It is very clear from the analysis of the above verse that change of meaning and change of spiritual meaning has been done by the translator while translating the source text into target text.

Verse 5:

Source Text	Target Text
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ریت وجود تیرے وچ سونا، آیویں نظر نہ آوے	Gold is hidden in the sand of your body. You are unable to discover it.
بنجوؤں دا گھٹ پانی دھوئیں، ریت مٹی رڑھ جاوے	Until and unless you do not wash the sand and clay with the water from your eyes, you cannot find the gold.

Explanation:

Every human being has in-built capability of knowing the presence of the Almighty. If a man has the admiration for the love of the Almighty

This feeling of love generates from within the heart of a man, he realizes the love of the Almighty and then he makes these feelings pure through tears. Every person cannot have these feelings of purgation, because every man is not blessed by the Almighty.

Poet says that inner-self of man is always pure and it can be more pure when a person feels embarrassment over his wrong doings and he cries over his wrong doings, he actually washes away all the sins from his soul and gets purity through tears.

The first word is, ریت, which means the human soul which is present in raw form, human soul without any realization is like a sand which has no value. The second word is, سونا, which refers to the level of purity and divinity, it means the purity of human soul. Third word is, گھٹ پانی دھوئیں,

he is like a diamond. The poet uses the word “gold” for that person, he says if a person is sensitive for the divine love, it means he is the true man, because he has what should be required for living a life.

cleansing of soul through the water of tears, tears symbolize the feeling of realization, the feeling of admiration, it means that a person when realized the presence of a Divine power he then looks at his sinful life which is not pure and then he sheds tears because of embarrassment. This feeling, these tears are very pure they develop his whole soul into a pure and innocent soul.

The translator here missed the actual theme of the verse and he shifted the meanings from contextual to surface. The loss of meaning, done by the translator, is visible in this verse.

The following strategies of Foreignization has been applied by the translator:

- 1: Word-for-word
- 2: Literal
- 3: Faithful
- 4: Formal Equivalence

Verse 6:

Source Text	Target Text
طلب قصے دی ہو سی، سن قصہ خوش ہو سن	They will be happy to hear who just want to hear the story.
جیہناں جاگ عشق دی سینے، جاگ سویرے روشن	But they will cry early in the morning who have a tint of true love in their hearts.

Explanation:

The translator has again left the reader bewildered by interpreting only words but not the context.

This verse carries a profound Sufi message about the role of longing (*talab*) and love (*ishq*) in

spiritual awakening. The opening line, "طلب قصے دی ہو سی", declares that the desire to listen to a spiritual narrative does not arise randomly. In Sufi thought, *talab* is a divine gift, it is the Almighty Who is, placing a seed of curiosity in the heart, urging the seeker toward truth. The "قصہ" here is not merely a folk tale; it represents the timeless spiritual story of the soul's journey back to its Creator.

The next phrase, "سن قصہ خوش ہو سن", tells us that only those with this God-given yearning will find true joy and nourishment in hearing such a story. For others, the same tale may sound ordinary, but for the seeker, it is a key that unlocks inner doors. This distinction highlights how spiritual wisdom is only "tasted" by the one whose heart is prepared. The line "جیہناں جاگ عشق دی سینے" shifts focus from longing to awakening. Once divine love stirs in the heart, the soul begins to awaken from spiritual slumber. In Sufi symbolism, *ishq* is not a gentle emotion it is a powerful fire that purifies, burns away ego, and makes the heart receptive to divine light.

Finally, "جاگ سویرے روشن" likens this awakening to dawn. Just as night slowly gives way to daylight, the darkness of ignorance yields to the brilliance of truth. For the one who awakens early, life becomes filled with clarity, guidance, and joy.

Ultimately, the verse teaches that divine love and yearning are the true conditions for enlightenment. Without *talab*, the sacred story remains unheard; without *ishq*, the dawn never arrives.

In this verse again the poet did not bother the real meaning of the verse. He followed these strategies:

- 1: Word-for-word
- 2: Literal
- 3: Faithful
- 4: Formal Equivalence

Findings of the Study

This analysis revealed consistent instances where nuance, cultural metaphors, and poetic devices in the original deeply mystical and allegorical language are either flattened or entirely lost in translation. For example, in the original Urdu/Persian imagery, such as describing the "heart a flame with divine longing" (is rendered simply as "the soul desires" losing both the fire metaphor and its passionate intensity. There are examples of loss meaning found in this research, for example, there is a word, "Wahdat" which refers to the Oneness of the Almighty, but the English version has changed the meaning utterly. Similarly, there are many words from Sufi poetry, which convey different meaning but when they are

translated into another language their meanings vary from the source text.

There is another word "Hijr", which is very commonly used by the Punjabi Sufi poets, this word refers to the partition of man from the Almighty, or contextually this word refers to the time partition of Muslims from the Holy Prophet (PBUH) but in English translation, the translator finds the most appropriate word is "separation" or "partition". Similar is the case with the analysis of English translation of Saif-ul-malook, the translator could not convey the contextual and spiritual meaning of the original text.

There is another example from the translation of Heer Waris Shah, there is a line from that poetry, in which the poet wants to say to his beloved that "those people who get their love in this world, for them, this life becomes like Heaven", if any foreign reader reads this expression he will get the idea of worldly love but here the poet means "Divine Love". This is how the conversion of any text changes the meaning.

There are some other examples from sufi writings, for instance, "Night" in the other writings of Mian Bkhs, conveys the meaning of "grave", but when it is translated its meanings and contexts are totally changed.

For example, a line expressing "self-effacement into Divine Unity" is rendered as "losing oneself missing the theological resonance of "fanaa-baqa." Furthermore, the concept of mystical intoxication ("sukr"), a recurring Sufi metaphor, is often rendered as "drunk", a secular, potentially pejorative sense, rather than the sublime spiritual rapture intended. Thus, the translation sometimes gives ordinary rather than ecstatic or transcendent connotations. Even when key Sufi terms like "Irfan" (gnosis) or "Wahdat-al-Wujud" (Unity of Being) appear, they're paraphrased or omitted, depriving the English-reading audience of core footnotes to interpret the mystic discourse.

Bringing exotic metaphors into familiar English constructs, for example, replacing culturally laden similes ("the rose of divine flame") with generic imagery ("divine fire"). This improves readability but at the cost of spiritual density. Another phenomenon of literal word-for-word rendering has been observed. Occasionally, rare words are

transliterated (e.g., “Irfan”), but without gloss or note, leaving readers unclear.

A Suppressing repetition has been observed in the analysis. A mystical poetry often repeats words or phrases for emphasis (“again, again, oh beloved”). The translator sometimes trims repetition to avoid redundancy in English, even though this repetition reinforces devotion.

The finding is that there is pervasive and systemic loss of both literal and spiritual layers, partly due to prioritized readability or accessibility in translation. The cumulative effect is that the English-only reader receives a version that is serviceable as devotional poetry, but not as a conduit to the original’s mystical potency. The narrative of divine longing becomes flat; the theology is implicit rather than felt; the rhythm that invites trance-like absorption is removed, potentially reducing the text’s capacity to “happen to” the reader as spiritual experience.

The reader might also observe that while some meaning is recoverable via footnotes or translator’s introduction, footnotes are sparse or absent, so unless readers engage with secondary commentary, much meaning remains inaccessible.

This study demonstrates that Saeed Ahmad’s English translation of Saif-ul-Malook consistently loses both literal and spiritual meaning across verses. Poetic metaphors are simplified, rhythmic structures are absent, and mystical symbols are toned down or altered. The translation employs domestication and paraphrase, prioritizing readability over fidelity to form and spiritual depth.

This loss of meaning affects the apprehension of English speakers in terms of Saif-ul-Malook. The original’s power to awaken mystical longing, to reflect dialectic between ego and Divine, and to induce devotional ecstasy is muted. In contexts where Sufi poetry isn’t widely taught, the translation might mislead readers into thinking these poems are devotional texts of generic kind, stripping away the rich Sufi heritage and existential oscillation.

The study also find the strategies, applied by the translator, while interpreting a Punjabi text into English. The Strategies of Foreignization have been repeated applied by the translator.

Foreignization makes the text strange for the reader because this technique favors the source language. This research finds these following techniques of Foreignization, i) word-for-word, ii) Literal, iii) Faithful, iv) Formal Equivalence, and v) Alienation. As the strategies of Foreignization has been applied repeatedly, that is why the study finds; loss of meaning and loss of spiritual meaning in Target Text.

There is a very minimum application of strategies of Domestication. The technique of i) dynamic equivalence, and ii) sense-for-sense has been applied on two or three verses.

New translators should aim to preserve rhyme, rhythm, and metaphor. Use literal translation for key terms (e.g., *fanaa*, *sukr*), with footnotes. Subjectivity in marking “loss of meaning”, some losses may reflect necessary adaptation to English syntax or idiom. Analyst may not have surveyed reader reception to determine whether the translated version still “speaks” spiritually to diverse English-speaking audiences.

This research contributes to the ongoing debate between fidelity vs. transparency in translating mystical literature. It illustrates the stakes: shifting language doesn’t only change words it can recalibrate spiritual affect, literary aesthetics, and even religious identity. This study supports advocating for translations that preserve the eventfulness of the mystical text, not just its semantic content.

This study underscores that in translating sacred poetry like Saif-ul-Malook, the stakes are existential, translations must attempt to convey more than meaning; they must invite experience. Saeed Ahmad’s version, while earnest, often falls short of that invitation.

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