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**Translating the Untranslatable: An Examination of Semantic Loss in the Translation of Bulleh Shah's poetry**

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**Abstract**

*The current research basically highlights the problems of translating Bulleh Shah's poetry. It is explained how different translators of Bulleh Shah misunderstood the message conveyed by him. This paper's importance lies in its assessment of both foreign and indigenous translations of his works. The scholars have scrutinized the chosen texts from his poems. After analyzing the textual data, it is evident their deviations have been made by both local and international interpreters from the meaning and sense of authorship itself. In addition to that, their translations do not catch up with what Bulleh Shah means semantically hence showing visible gaps compared to the source text. Our findings conclude that Shah's profound philosophical ideas, use of metaphors as well as cultural and religious references make it impossible to render his poetry into English exactly which causes semantic losses especially while turning his religious thoughts expressed in verse.*

**Keywords:** *Untranslatability, semantic loss, Bulleh Shah, religious and cultural metaphors*

**Introduction**

There has been a lively debate amongst scholars over the translatability of poetry, with people having divergent views. Some scholars argue that it is possible to translate poems since there are language universals that exist beyond individual languages. On the other hand, others assert that translation is impossible due to different understanding of reality in various communities (Samuel & Samuel 2007). The present study has taken a Monadist perspective and thus contends that, essentially, poetry cannot be fully translated because of its inherent features. Moreover, Bulleh Shah's work further complicates translation because it is rooted in Islamic and South Asian cultural backgrounds.

The strategies of translation among which are domestication, foreignization, formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence as well as syntactic and lexical choices made by translators determine the extent to which the original essence is preserved in the target text (Nida, 1964; Venuti, 1995). It has been generally agreed upon that translating poetry often results in loss of its inherent qualities. According to Robinson (2010), Frost observed that much of the subtle beauty of a poem was lost due to translation (p.24).

Jacobson also underlined the problem, stressing that translating poetry does not merely involve translation of meaning but also preservation of form and phonetics (Pirnajmuddin & Medhat, 2011). Translating religious poetry specifically Bulleh Shah presents a more challenging task than drama or prose due to the bond between content and form that is intricate in nature (Samuel & Samuel, 2007). His poems explore deep religious and philosophical themes like God's nature, human beings' soul, and why we exist at all; they thus contain certain concepts which are hard to be translated into English with the same density and sonority. To illustrate these challenges, this study will analyze selected verses from Bulleh Shah's poetry, demonstrating how the rich and layered meanings of the original text are frequently lost or diminished in translation.

#### *Research Questions*

What is lost, semantically when these religious themes are translated into English from his (Bulleh Shah's) poetry?

#### *Significance of the Study*

Overlapping colonial theory, postcolonial writing and etymology to re-evaluate both foreign as well indigenous translations were made on poetry Bukkah Shah the significance of this research lies in its structure. This study further dives into some of his selected verses and aims to reveal how the numerous translators attempted at translating Shah as seen through what might have gone right for them, or where they slipped in doing justice to a translation.

Their results suggest that native as well non-native translations often deviated from the literal meaning and original sense by producing less semantically deep, poetic or philosophical target texts.

#### **Literature Review**

The translation of poetry is always a complex endeavor — filled with more losses and questions than gains, which can result in discussions about whether it actually possible to translate the poem at all (Abbas 2018). Many scholars have tried to grapple with untranslatability in different ways. Linguistic and cultural untranslatability There are two major channels of...untranslatability to be identified (Catford 1965). When translation is performed directly, it becomes Linguistically Untranslatable for the Source Language (SL) and Target Language (TL). Cultural untranslatability = when SL has culture-specific references / concepts and the TL does not have equivalents. In translation, they usually occur together – and rendering the material in it is significantly complicated.

According to Bassnett (2002), Popovic too focuses on the untranslatability, but yet he does not make a distinction between linguistic and cultural. In a similar fashion, however, he states that linguistic untranslatability arises when the TL lacks structural (form), functional (use) and semiotic/meaningful correlates of the ST elements. It is replaced by what he describes as 'an expressive identity' (Bassnett, 2002:32), and Baugh also argues that a translated text may not

follow the specific vocabulary or grammar from another language. What this suggests is that a good translation should convey the content and spirit of what was said.

When the linguistic and cultural context is out of step, however (as it almost always will be), translating shifts to balancing these high-level expressions in other languages with their counterpart across language that has nearly identical meaning(features) related to measured meanings/stylistic features on separate axes(Direction 1, Direction2,...). This is very essentially true for when the poetry that I am translating belongs to Bulleh Shah, philosophical in nature and so metaphorically rich with cultural-religious depictions. Such things often have no real equivalent in English and so are famously difficult to translate.

Bassnett (2002) also notes that translating texts from distant historical periods or contexts is particularly challenging. The further removed the original text is from contemporary experience, the more difficult it becomes to preserve its meaning and form. This historical distance often results in a loss of contextual relevance, which can affect the translator's ability to convey the text's original nuances accurately. Translators might face the dilemma of either preserving the formal elements of rhyme and meter at the expense of meaning or focusing on the meaning while sacrificing structural aspects.

The challenge is further compounded by the musicality of poetry. According to Shamlu, a poem is not just a collection of words but an expression that carries its own unique musicality (as cited in Pirnajmuddin & Medhat, 2011, p. 5 or 1333). Venuti (2012) draws on Schleiermacher's perspective, which highlights the difficulty of balancing the musical elements of a poem with its semantic content. Venuti argues that if translators prioritize preserving the melodic aspects over the deeper meaning of the text, the result can be an awkward and disjointed translation. The natural rhythm and tone of the original language may be lost, replaced by clumsy expressions in the TL.

Moreover, languages differ significantly in terms of meaning, syntax, and historical development. Raffel (1959) points out that modern languages are complex systems where all features are interrelated, and languages evolve over time in their lexicon, phonology, and syntax. This evolution complicates the translation of literary texts, especially when attempting to replicate specific stylistic features in a new language. Nida and Taber (1964) emphasize that the tension between form and content becomes particularly pronounced in poetry, where specialized forms are integral to the message being conveyed (as cited in Niknasaf & Pishbin, n.d., p. 2).

Despite these challenges, some researchers argue that translatability does not necessarily entail transferring both form and content. Instead, content and form are intertwined in poetry, and achieving a balance between them is crucial. Tailanyo (2007, p. 1) asserts that figurative language is an "inalienable part of the text as a literary piece," a notion that is particularly relevant for translating Bulleh Shah's work. Bulleh Shah's poetry presents a considerable challenge for translators due to its extensive use of poetic devices and references to culture, religion and history. The intricate language and layered meanings employed by Shah make it difficult for both local and foreign translators to fully capture the essence of his verses. Consequently, numerous translations may fall short in accurately conveying the original meaning and depth, resulting in diverse deviations and interpretations across different translations.

*Cultural and Linguistic Nuances*

Bulleh Shah's verses reflect the rich heritage and language of 17th-18th century Punjab. His writings are deeply intertwined with the vernacular expressions, colloquialisms, and cultural allusions of that era. These facets, which are specific to the Punjabi milieu, present considerable difficulties in translation. When rendered into other languages, these idiosyncratic and cultural subtleties often lose their original essence and depth, posing challenges in conveying the true essence of the poetry (Mir, F., 2006).

*Sufi Mysticism and Metaphorical Language*

Bulleh Shah's poetry is deeply rooted in Sufi mysticism, specifically the idea of Wahdat ul Wajood, or the Unity of Being. This notion emphasizes the interconnectedness of all existence with the divine. Bulleh Shah employs metaphors, allegories, and symbolic language to convey these mystical concepts with great subtlety. Translating the profound and multi-layered meanings of these metaphors is challenging due to the lack of direct equivalents in other languages. Consequently, the original metaphors' intricacy and depth may be compromised in translation (Schimmel, A.).

*Religious and Philosophical Context*

Bulleh Shah often incorporates Islamic theology, Sufi philosophy, and local religious customs into his poetry. These references are situated within a specific religious and philosophical framework that may not directly translate into other linguistic and cultural contexts. Translating such references requires not just linguistic expertise but also a profound comprehension of the underlying religious and philosophical concepts. Without this contextual understanding, translations may struggle to accurately capture the original meanings and implications (Asani, A. S., 2002).

*Semantic and Aesthetic Losses*

The translation of poetry always runs the risk of losing the original poem's beauty and meaning. Bulleh Shah's poetry is known for its complex rhythm, rhyming patterns, and musicality, all of which contribute to its overall impact. The deep layers of meaning found in each word and phrase in the original language often cannot be perfectly translated into another language. This can result in a translated poem that fails to fully capture the unique beauty and meaning of the original work (Robinson, D., 2010).

*Translation Techniques in Western Tradition*

Western translation practices have been shaped by different linguistic and philosophical approaches, each offering unique techniques for addressing translation challenges:

**Domestication:** This approach involves adapting the source text to be more familiar and accessible to the target audience. It prioritizes readability and cultural assimilation by modifying cultural references and idiomatic expressions to fit the target culture. Eugene Nida's concept of dynamic equivalence champions this approach, focusing on making the text understandable and engaging for the target audience by aligning it with their cultural norms (Nida, 1964).

**Research Methodology**

This comprehensive research project employs a qualitative approach to delve into the intricate world of textual data, focusing on in-depth analysis and interpretation. The primary objective is

to scrutinize the stylistic nuances present in translations of selected verses from the mesmerizing poetry of Bulleh Shah.

The study meticulously centers on the captivating work of Bulleh Shah, with a particular emphasis on the evocative poem "راڻجھارا ڻجھار ڪردی" as a captivating representative sample. The methodology entails an exhaustive and meticulous stylistic analysis of both the original text and the diverse translations crafted by various accomplished authors.

#### *Research Design*

The research design is qualitative, emphasizing a detailed textual analysis of Bulleh Shah's poetry translations. The primary objective is to identify and analyze semantic losses that occur when translating his complex religious and metaphorical expressions.

By scrutinizing the nuances present in both the original and translated texts, the study aims to uncover the depth of these semantic losses and their impact on the interpretation of Bulleh Shah's work. The analytical framework focuses on examining the style of the texts, with a particular focus on figurative language, lexical choices, religious connotations, and cultural references. The study explores how metaphorical expressions, similes, and other figures of speech are translated and the resulting implications for meaning and interpretation.

Additionally, it delves into the analysis of lexical choices and their impact on either preserving or altering the original text's meaning. Special emphasis is placed on the religious and cultural references present in Bulleh Shah's poetry, as these elements are essential for comprehending the depth and context of his work.

#### *Selection of Corpus*

- This study includes both the original poems written by Bulleh Shah and their translations. Bulleh Shah, a prominent Punjabi Sufi poet from the 17th century, is the main focus of this analysis.
- The poem "راڻجھارا ڻجھار ڪردی" has been selected for detailed examination as a focal point. We will be evaluating three distinct translations of this poem.
- *Prof. Nicholson's translation (TT1)*
- *Kartar Singh's translation (TT2)*
- *Taufiq Rafat's translation (TT3)*

These translations offer varied interpretative perspectives, providing a comprehensive basis for comparative analysis.

#### **Data Collection**

Data collection comprises a detailed examination of each chosen verse from both the original and translated texts. This process is intended to capture the utilization of figurative language, word selections, and religious connotations found in the source text. Subsequently, a comparative analysis is carried out by juxtaposing the translated verses.

#### *Techniques and Tools*

In order to facilitate the analysis, a variety of techniques and tools are employed:

- **Transcription:** The chosen verses from both the original and translated texts are transcribed for the purpose of easy comparison.

- Annotation: Areas of interest, such as metaphorical expressions and religious references, are highlighted through annotation, making these elements more accessible for analysis.

#### *Validation and Reliability*

To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, several strategies are employed:

*Inter-rater reliability:* Several researchers conduct independent analyses of the texts and compare their findings to minimize individual biases and strengthen the credibility of the results.

*Triangulation:* Various data sources and analytical approaches are employed to verify findings and enhance the comprehensive understanding of semantic discrepancies in translations.

These measures contribute to the overall reliability and validity of the research outcomes.

The detailed methodology provides a comprehensive framework for examining semantic losses in the translation of Bulleh Shah's poetry. By concentrating on figurative language, word choices, religious connotations, and cultural references, the study seeks to uncover the complexities and challenges inherent in translating such profound and culturally rich texts. This systematic approach guarantees a thorough analysis of all pertinent aspects of the translations, resulting in sturdy and dependable conclusions that enhance our comprehension of the translation process and its influence on the interpretation of Bulleh Shah's work.

#### *Analysis*

##### *Title difference*

We have selected the poem "Ranjha Ranjha Kardi" by Bulleh Shah, which has been translated by various translators.

<i>Original text</i>	<i>TT1(Prof Nicholson)</i>	<i>TT2(Kartar Singh)</i>	<i>TT3(Taufiq Rafat)</i>	<i>COMMENTS</i>
رانجھا رانجھا کر دی	Repeating my beloved Ranjha, Ranjha.	Remembering Ranjha day and night	The Transformation	Semantic gaps Loss of meaning

##### *Metaphorical Significance of Ranjha in Subcontinental Culture*

Ranjha, the central figure in the beloved Punjabi tale Heer Ranjha, as depicted by Waris Shah, carries profound symbolic importance within South Asian culture. Ranjha symbolizes the eternal lover and seeker, representing the soul's quest for union with the divine. His love for Heer is often seen as an allegory for the human soul's longing for spiritual communion and the divine beloved. In this context, Ranjha transcends his role as a mere romantic figure, embodying the spiritual metaphor for devotion, love, and the ultimate pursuit of spiritual truth (Mir, 2006).

##### *Importance of Repeating the Name of Ranjha*

The repetition of Ranjha's name in poetry and folk songs serves several important functions. Firstly, it acts as a meditative practice, focusing the mind on the beloved, which in Sufi traditions, equates to focusing on God. This practice reflects the Sufi concept of Dhikr (remembrance of God), where repetition is used to achieve a higher spiritual state. By repeating Ranjha's name,

the poet and the reader are reminded of the soul's yearning for the divine, thus bridging the gap between the earthly and the spiritual (Schimmel, 1975).

#### *Wahdat ul Wajood in Bulleh Shah's Poetry*

Wahdat ul Wajood, or the Unity of Being, is a central concept in Sufism that emphasizes the idea that all existence is a manifestation of the Divine. This philosophy, articulated by the great Sufi mystic Ibn Arabi, posits that there is no true existence except for God, and everything in the universe is a reflection of God's presence.

In Bulleh Shah's poetry, Wahdat ul Wajood is a recurring theme. He uses his verses to express the oneness of all creation and the presence of the Divine in every aspect of life. Bulleh Shah's exploration of this concept is profound, highlighting the unity between the lover and the beloved, the seeker and the sought, and ultimately, between humanity and the divine.

However, this intricate philosophy often gets lost in translation. Translators struggle to convey the depth and nuance of Wahdat ul Wajood due to linguistic, cultural, and philosophical differences. The translations fail to capture the full essence of Bulleh Shah's mystical experiences and the subtle interplay of metaphors and symbols that convey this unity (Asani, 2002). Consequently, the translated versions lack the spiritual intensity and philosophical depth present in the original Punjabi verses.

#### *Repeating my beloved Ranjha, Ranjha.*

Professor Nicholson did not correctly interpret the title of Bulleh Shah's poem, translating it as "Repeating my beloved Ranjha, Ranjha." The word "beloved" is an addition not present in the original, resulting in a loss of the actual meaning. In Bulleh Shah's work, Ranjha symbolizes a path towards Allah. Thus, semantically, Nicholson's translation introduces a significant gap from the original sense.

#### *Verse no. 1*

Original text	TT1(Prof Nicholson)	TT2(Kartar Singh)	TT3(Taufiq Rafat)	COMMENTS
<p>رانجھارا نچا کردی نی میں، آپے رانجھا ہوئی سدوئی میٹوں دھیدو رانجھا، ہیر نہ آکھو کوئی</p>	<p><i>I have become myself Ranjha;</i></p> <p><i>Call me now as 'Dhido Ranjha ,</i> <i>Not by the name of Heer but Ranjha</i></p>	<p><i>Remembering Ranjha day and night</i></p> <p><i>I have become Ranjha myself</i> <i>Call me dhidho Ranjha</i></p> <p><i>No more I be addressed as heer</i></p>	<p><i>Ranjha Ranjha I cried till Ranjha is only there,</i></p> <p><i>Im transformed now Heer has disappeared</i></p>	<p><i>lexical meaning missed</i></p> <p><i>Lake of original sense</i></p> <p><i>Semantic loss</i></p>

The above lines have been taken from the poem, "رانجھارا نچا کردی نی میں آپے رانجھا ہوئی" which has been translated by Prof: Nicholson, Kartar Singh duggle, Taufiq Rafat as under:

#### *TT.1*

*I have become myself Ranjha;  
Call me now as 'Dhido Ranjha ,  
Not by the name of Heer but Ranjha*

According to Professor Nicholson, he has managed to capture the essence of the verse effectively. He closely interprets the words, but Bulleh Shah suggests that he misses the original meaning. In Bulleh Shah's view, Ranjha represents the source of love, emphasizing that there is no one else but Ranjha. Bulleh Shah dissolves his own identity in the pure love of Allah. The translator, however, has overlooked several aspects of the original text.

TT.2

*Remembering Ranjha day and night  
I have become Ranjha myself  
Call me dhidho Ranjha  
No more I be addressed as heer*

It has translated by Kartar Singh The phrase "Remembering Ranjha day and night" conveys a continuous and intense focus, which is somewhat retained but could be emphasized more in the interpretation. "I have become Ranjha myself" indicates a deep, almost mystical transformation. The interpretation retains this but could elaborate on the spiritual or emotional depth of this transformation. "Call me Dhidho Ranjha" and "No more I be addressed as Heer" indicate a complete change in identity, signifying a profound union with Ranjha. The interpretation captures the literal change in name but might not fully convey the cultural and spiritual implications of such a change. The names "Dhidho Ranjha" and "Heer" are culturally significant. While the interpretation uses the same names, explaining their cultural and symbolic meanings could bridge the gap for readers unfamiliar with the context. While the literal meaning is preserved, the emotional, spiritual, and cultural depths of the original text might not be fully conveyed in a straightforward interpretation. Adding more context and elaboration on these aspects could bridge the semantic gaps.

TT.3

*Ranjha Ranjha I cried till Ranjha is only there,  
Im transformed now Heer has disappeared*

The above lines has been translated by Taufiq Rafat in these lines Intensity of Devotion, the repetition of "Ranjha Ranjha" in the original line emphasizes the intensity and persistence of the devotion. This might not be fully captured in the interpretation. A more nuanced translation could convey the relentless nature of the cries. We find Transformation and Presence in it "Ranjha is only there" implies that the presence of Ranjha has become all-encompassing, overshadowing everything else, including the self. The interpretation conveys this but could highlight more the idea of complete immersion or union with Ranjha. Another gape has found Identity Disappearance "Heer has disappeared" signifies not just a transformation but a complete dissolution of the previous identity. The interpretation "Heer has vanished" captures this idea but could be more explicit about the totality of this change. Emotional and Spiritual Depth is the original lines carry a profound emotional and spiritual weight, depicting a journey from individual identity to complete union with the beloved. The interpretation could be expanded to reflect the depth of this spiritual metamorphosis. While the core meaning is retained, emphasizing the



relentless devotion, the all-encompassing presence of Ranjha, and the total dissolution of Heer could bridge the semantic gaps more effectively.

Verse no. 2

Original text	TT1(Prof Nicholson)	TT2(Kartar Singh)	TT3(Taufiq Rafat)	COMMENTS
<p>راٹھا میں وچ، میں رانجھے وچ، ہو رخیال نہ کوئی میں نہیں اوہ آپ ہے اپنی، آپ کرے دلجوئی</p>	<p>Ranjha in me, I in his heart, None else is there on lines! chart;  I am not T, he all in all, And he himself would come, console.</p>	<p>I am in Ranjha and Ranjha is in me. There is no distinction left.  I am nowhere; he himself is there, himself he has empathy for me</p>	<p>We are synonymous one heart, a single thought,  I am expunged, and Ranjha stands out clear</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interconnectedness</li> <li>• Exclusivity</li> <li>• Poetic Flow and Metaphorical Language</li> </ul>

#### TT.1

Ranjha in me, I in his heart,  
None else is there on lines! Chart;  
I am not T, he all in all,  
And he himself would come, console.

The original lines "Ranjha in me, I in his heart" signify a deep mutual connection and unity. The interpretation retains this idea but could emphasize the profound spiritual bond more explicitly. Exclusivity is a semantic gaps in it "None else is there on lines! Chart;" suggests that their union is absolute, with no room for anyone else. The phrase "not even in the margins" attempts to convey this, but it might lack the same sense of total exclusion. "I am not T, he all in all," implies a complete dissolution of the speaker's identity into Ranjha. The interpretation "I am not myself anymore, he is everything" captures this but could further stress the totality of this transformation. Comfort and Assurance: "And he himself would come, console" implies that Ranjha will personally provide comfort. The interpretation "he will come himself to comfort me" retains the meaning but could emphasize the personal and intimate nature of this assurance. The original lines have a poetic structure and metaphorical language that might be lost in the straightforward interpretation. Preserving the poetic quality and metaphors can help maintain the original's emotional and aesthetic impact. The literal meaning is mostly preserved, emphasizing the deep spiritual bond, total exclusion of others, complete identity dissolution, and personal comfort, along with maintaining the poetic quality, could bridge the semantic gaps more effectively.

## TT.2

*I am in Ranjha and Ranjha is in me.*

*There is no distinction left.*

*I am nowhere; he himself is there,*

*himself he has empathy for me.*

Let's break down the original lines and analyze the potential semantic gaps and loss of meaning:

*Interconnectedness*

The phrase "I am in Ranjha and Ranjha is in me" signifies a profound spiritual connection and unity. However, it may not fully convey the depth of this spiritual merging, which goes beyond physical presence and suggests a state where the identities of "I" and "Ranjha" are completely intertwined. Similarly, the phrase "There is no distinction left" emphasizes the complete erasure of any separation between the speaker and Ranjha. However, it might not fully capture the totality of this erasure, where not even a trace of individuality remains, signifying the obliteration of any form of individual identity due to the complete unity.

Please remember the following points: The line "I am nowhere; he himself is there" signifies the disappearance of the speaker's individual identity, leaving only Ranjha's essence. However, the line might not fully convey the existential shift where the speaker's self is not just physically absent but metaphysically transformed into Ranjha's essence. Additionally, the original line "himself he has empathy for me" suggests that Ranjha personally feels compassion for the speaker, but it might not fully capture the intimate and self-reflective nature of this empathy. Emphasizing the profound spiritual unity, complete erasure of individual identity, and the deeply personal nature of Ranjha's empathy, while maintaining the existential and mystical quality, can bridge the semantic gaps more effectively.

## TT.3

*We are synonymous one heart, a single thought,*

*I am expunged, and Ranjha stands out clear*

These lines poetically describe a merging of identities where one becomes indistinguishable from the other, leading to a loss of individual meaning. Here's an interpretation "We are synonymous one heart, a single thought", this suggests a profound unity, where two individuals share the same emotions and ideas, becoming indistinguishable from one another. "I am expunged, and Ranjha stands out clear", this indicates the speaker's identity is erased or overshadowed by Ranjha, emphasizing the dominance or clarity of Ranjha's presence. "Loss of meaning" this phrase captures the essence of the transformation. As individual identities blend and one becomes absorbed into the other, the original meanings attached to each person are lost or transformed.

## Verse no. 3

Original text	TT1(Prof Nicholson)	TT2(Kartar Singh)	TT3(Taufiq Rafat)	COMMENTS
جو کوئی ساڑے اندر روتے، ذات اساڈی سواہی جس دے تال میں نیو نہہ لگایا، اوہو جیہی ہوئی	Whatsoever is seen in me, My caste and creed is not of me, For I, with whom, knitted in love, Transmuted me into his Love.	I am nowhere; he himself is there,  himself he has empathy for me	Since he is inside me, he is all that exists,  That which I show to the world is just veneer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ambiguity</li> <li>• Unclear relationship</li> <li>• Unspecified reference</li> <li>• weakening the poem's impact</li> </ul>

## TT.1

Whatsoever is seen in me,  
My caste and creed is not of me,  
For I, with whom, knitted in love,  
Transmuted me into his Love.

Here are the semantic gaps in the poem, line by line:

Whatsoever is seen in me?

- **Ambiguity of Observation:** It is unclear what specific qualities or attributes are being observed in the speaker. The phrase "whatsoever is seen" is broad and unspecific.
- **Perspective:** The poem does not clarify who is doing the seeing and what their perspective or context is.

My caste and creed is not of me:

- **Disassociation:** The poem does not explain how or why the speaker's caste and creed are not a part of their true self. There is a gap in understanding the nature of this disassociation from societal labels.
- **Identity:** The exact relationship between the speaker's true identity and their societal labels (caste and creed) is unclear.

For I, with whom, knitted in love:

- **Identity of "Whom":** It is ambiguous who "whom" refers to (e.g., a lover, a divine being, or an abstract concept of love). The reader does not have enough information to understand this relationship fully.
- **Nature of Connection:** The nature and depth of the connection described by "knitted in love" are not detailed. The metaphor suggests a close bond, but the specifics are missing.

*Transmuted me into his Love:*

- *Identity of "His":* The poem does not clarify who "his" refers to (e.g., a deity, a lover, or a personification of love). This creates ambiguity around the agent of transformation.
- *Process of Transformation:* The poem does not explain the process of being "transmuted" into love. The mechanics and implications of this transformation are not explored.
- *Personification of Love:* The capitalized "Love" suggests personification, but without further context, the significance of this transformation is unclear. The reader is left to infer the meaning.

These semantic gaps result in ambiguity and a potential loss of meaning, as the reader might struggle to fully grasp the intended message and emotional depth of the poem.

TT.2

*I am nowhere; he himself is there,  
Himself he has empathy for me*

*Original Text:*

"I am nowhere; he himself is there, himself he has empathy for me."

*Points of Semantic Loss:*

- *Existential and Spiritual Emphasis:*
  - *Original Intent:* The original text likely emphasizes a profound sense of self-negation and divine presence, suggesting that the speaker feels utterly absent while the divine presence is overwhelmingly real.
  - *Loss in Translation:* The translated phrase "I am nowhere" might fail to fully convey the depth of self-negation and existential insignificance felt by the speaker. The original might carry a stronger spiritual connotation, implying a deeper mystical union with the divine where the self is entirely dissolved.
- *Divine Presence and Empathy:*
  - *Original Intent:* The phrase "he himself is there" and "himself he has empathy for me" are intended to highlight the omnipresence of the divine and its direct, personal empathy towards the speaker.
  - *Loss in Translation:* The repetition of "himself" in the translation might create a redundancy that dilutes the profound significance of divine empathy. The original might use a more nuanced or poetic expression to emphasize the personal and intimate nature of divine compassion.
- *Poetic and Mystical Nuance:*
  - *Original Intent:* Bulleh Shah's poetry often intertwines deep philosophical insights with Sufi mysticism, using language that is rich in metaphor and symbolism.
  - *Loss in Translation:* The translated text may lack the poetic rhythm and mystical nuances of the original, resulting in a more straightforward and less evocative rendering. The subtle layers of meaning that convey the speaker's mystical experience and the profound relationship with the divine may not be fully captured.

## TT.1

*Now put aside the sheet in white.*

*Put on the beggar's gown abligh;*

*Whitish garments would be stained,*

*No stain can stick to gown restrained.*

The passage seems to be a poetic or metaphorical expression. To analyze it for semantic loss, let's break down its meaning and implications.

*Original Passage*

"Now put aside the sheet in white. Put on the beggar's gown abligh; Whitish garments would be stained, No stain can stick to gown restrained."

*Paraphrased Interpretation*

1. First Line: "Now put aside the sheet in white."
  - Meaning: Abandon or leave behind something pure or unstained (symbolized by the white sheet).
2. Second Line: "Put on the beggar's gown abligh;"
  - Meaning: Wear something associated with humility, poverty, or degradation (the beggar's gown).
3. Third Line: "Whitish garments would be stained,"
  - Meaning: Pure or unstained things are susceptible to being dirtied or corrupted.
4. Fourth Line: "No stain can stick to gown restrained."
  - Meaning: The beggar's gown, already in a degraded state, cannot be further stained or corrupted.

*Analysis of Semantic Loss*

When rephrasing or translating such text, semantic loss may occur if the nuanced meanings, symbolic implications, or emotional tones are not fully preserved. For example:

1. Symbolism:
  - Original: Uses specific symbols (white sheet, beggar's gown) to convey purity versus degradation.
  - Possible Loss: Simplifying these symbols may lose the depth of the contrast between purity and humility.
2. Tone and Emotion:
  - Original: The language evokes a sense of transformation or acceptance of a humble state.
  - Possible Loss: A more direct or plain language might lose the poetic resonance.
3. Cultural and Contextual Nuances:
  - Original: The use of "white" and "beggar's gown" might have specific cultural connotations.
  - Possible Loss: These connotations might not translate well across different cultures or languages.

*Example of Semantic Loss in Paraphrasing*

Original: "Now put aside the sheet in white. Put on the beggar's gown abligh;" Paraphrase: "Leave the clean sheet behind and wear the ragged clothes of a beggar."

- Loss of Poetic Quality: The paraphrase loses the poetic rhythm and imagery of the original.
- Simplified Symbolism: The deep contrast between purity and degradation is not as vividly portrayed.

Justification Semantic loss in this context involves losing the rich symbolism, emotional tone, and cultural nuances when simplifying or translating the text. Preserving these elements is crucial to maintaining the original meaning and impact.

TT.2

*A staff in hand, he has a blanket on his shoulder,*

*What company Sleti has chosen for her!*

*Original Text:*

*"A staff in hand, he has a blanket on his shoulder, what company Sleti has chosen for her!"*

*Points of Semantic Loss:*

*Staff and Blanket Imagery:*

- Original Intent: The "staff in hand" and "blanket on his shoulder" likely symbolize a wandering ascetic or a traveler, indicating humility, simplicity, and possibly renunciation of worldly possessions.
- Loss in Translation: The translated text may not fully convey the symbolic significance of these items. A literal translation might miss the deeper meaning related to the lifestyle and values of the person being described.

*"Sleti" and Company:*

Original Intent: The term "Sleti" could be a cultural or specific reference that carries particular connotations in the original language. The "company" she has chosen implies a significant decision or association, likely reflecting on her values or circumstances.

- Loss in Translation: Translating "Sleti" and the context of her chosen company might lose the cultural or personal significance intended by the poet. The reader may not fully grasp the implications of her choice without a better understanding of the term and context.

Cultural and Contextual Nuance: • Original Intent: Bulleh Shah's poetry often uses specific cultural references and imagery to convey deeper philosophical or social messages. • Loss in Translation: The translated text might lack the cultural depth and contextual nuance, leading to a less impactful or meaningful rendition of the original lines

*Suggested Improved Translation:*

To address the semantic loss and preserve the cultural and symbolic richness, consider a translation that maintains the metaphorical depth and cultural context more effectively:

*"With a staff in hand and a blanket on his shoulder, what humble company has Sleti chosen for her?"*

- Symbolism of Staff and Blanket: "Staff in hand" and "blanket on his shoulder" are kept to maintain the imagery of simplicity and humility associated with a wandering ascetic or traveler.
- Humble Company: Adding "humble" before "company" helps convey the implied values and lifestyle choice more clearly.
- Cultural Reference: Keeping "Sleti" as is, or providing a footnote or explanation, helps retain the original cultural reference, ensuring the reader understands its significance.

This approach aims to enhance the translation's fidelity to Bulleh Shah's poetic and cultural context, preserving the symbolic and thematic depth of the original text.

TT.3

*Don the sackcloth, throw the white dress away,*

*For they are covered with stains who whiteness wear*

Verse no. 5

Original text	TT1(Prof Nicholson)	TT2(Kartar Singh)	TT3(Taufiq Rafat)	COMMENTS
جس دے نال میں نیو نہہ لگایا، اوہو جیتی ہوئی تخت ہزارے لے چل بلھیا، سیالیں طے نہ ڈھوئی	He did not translate it	Bulleh, it's all and expression of temperament you must face the truth; He who arrives at his place He forget even salute	Hazara Calls me, in sial no friends are near.  Ranjha, Ranjha, I cried till only Ranjha is here.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Symbolism of White Sheet:</li> <li>• Poetic Imagery and Cultural Context</li> </ul>

## Conclusion

The present research aimed at exploring the phenomenon of untranslatability in Bulleh Shah's Poetry. Firstly, the researchers have already discussed that Bullha's philosophical and ideological standpoint which he has expressed using various poetic devices make his poetry almost untranslatable. A detailed analysis of translations of selected verses from his poetry carried out by local/ foreign translators has shown that they have failed to translate the religious allusions, philosophical thought as well as the profuse Islamic metaphors associated with the original text. Most importantly they have failed to comprehend the religious thought and message contained in his selected verses. As a result, lexical, semantic and syntactic deviations were identified in these translations. Secondly, the study has shown that apart from subtlety of language, the time interval between the original text and the translation is also significant factor because the immediate context in which Bulleh shah wrote his verses was not available to the translators who rendered his verses decades after his death. Furthermore, in poetry translation, there is no way to come up with outright formula or answers as we do in mathematics due to the complexity of language.

Therefore, it is not possible for the translators of the same ST to yield precisely the same translation products, though similarities could be expected. This holds true in regards to the present study as the three renditions of Bullha's poesy has revealed dissimilarities because the translators have picked diverse lexical and syntactical choices depending on their individual interpretation and understanding of the ST. Nonetheless, their renditions, occasionally, show some similarities. We may partly agree with Frost's view regarding the translation of poetry. According to him, poetry is best only when it is lost in translation.

However, Benjamin's (1923) argument is also worthy to note as he claims that even the higher level of a text, is translatable though its meaning may not transferred completely. Benjamin's remarks refer to sacred writing in which deviation can distort the spirit of the original. Therefore, the translator must be careful to maintain this connection intact. As the present study deals with Bulleh shah's two popular poem "رانجھا رانجھا کردی نی میں آئے رانجھا ہوئی" which is replete with the sacred Islamic canons that were in vogue in the golden past, but do not exist anymore. This became the starting point for Bullah who vehemently expressed his voice in the form of who am I (کی جانان میں کون) This is possible only if they obey the commandments of Allah and their actions speak louder than their words. In fact, Bullah gives the remedy in the second verse for the shacking belief of the Modern-day Muslims.

But we conclude this research with the understanding that Bullah's translators have tried their best to translate him, though their translations have shown semantic gaps and a loss of emphasis which provide ample evidence for the untranslatability involved in translating Bullah's Islamic thought. The question of whether Bulleh Shah's poetry is untranslatable is a complex one. While his poetry can be translated, the depth of its cultural, philosophical, and mystical meanings often poses significant challenges for translators. Here are some key reasons and scholarly perspectives on the untranslatability of Bulleh Shah's poetry.

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