

An Analytical Evaluation of Dr. Amjad Ali Bhatti's Role in Literary Translation

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Abstract

Dr. Amjad Ali Bhatti's contributions as a translator represent a significant intersection of scholarship, cultural mediation, and literary enrichment in Pakistan. Trained at the doctoral level in Punjabi literature, he has translated over forty works from English, Punjabi, and Hindi into Urdu, ranging from classical Sufi poetry to European philosophy, modern fiction, and critical theory. His translations maintain fidelity to the original texts while ensuring linguistic clarity, stylistic precision, and cultural contextualization for Urdu readers. Notable projects include Urdu renditions of Punjabi Sufi poetry by Baba Farid, Shah Hussain, Sultan Bahu, Bulleh Shah, Hashim Shah and Waris Shah as well as translations of Rousseau, Shakespeare, and Charlie Chaplin. Beyond individual publications, Dr. Bhatti has played a formative role in establishing Translation Studies as an academic discipline in Pakistani universities, including UOG, NUST, and IIUI, contributing to pedagogical frameworks, scholarly discourse, and cross-cultural intellectual exchange. His work exemplifies translation as an interpretive and creative practice rather than mere linguistic substitution, bridging historical, spiritual, and literary knowledge for contemporary audiences. Collectively, his translations and academic leadership underscore the capacity of Urdu translation to preserve cultural heritage, promote intercultural dialogue, and democratize access to global literature and thought.

Keywords: Translation Studies, Urdu, Punjabi Sufi Poetry, Literary Translation, Cross-Cultural Mediation, Dr. Amjad Ali Bhatti, European Philosophy, South Asian Literature, Cultural Preservation, Academic Scholarship.

Introduction:

The tradition of literary translation in Urdu in Pakistan is both longstanding and intellectually deep-rooted. From its earliest formation in the subcontinent, Urdu showed a strong capacity to absorb and reinterpret literature from other languages. After the creation of Pakistan, this tradition took on renewed importance, as a newly established country needed sustained engagement with the world's intellectual and creative heritage to shape its cultural and literary identity. Translation became one of the most effective means of building that connection.

In the early years, most translations were drawn from Persian, Arabic, and English literature. Works of philosophy, history, biography, and classical texts were rendered into Urdu so that educated readers could directly engage with global thought. Over time, the scope widened to include translations from Russian, French, German, and Latin American literature. Novels and short stories gained particular prominence, as they allowed themes such as social injustice, class struggle, and human psychology to be presented in forms familiar and accessible to Urdu readers.

Literary journals, universities, and both public and semi-public institutions in Pakistan played a significant role in promoting translation. Many translators moved beyond literal rendering and focused instead on conveying the spirit, style, and cultural context of the original texts within the natural rhythm of Urdu. This approach expanded the expressive range of Urdu prose, introduced new literary techniques, and opened fresh paths for creative expression.

With time, the understanding of translation itself evolved. The goal was no longer limited to transferring foreign texts into Urdu, but to create an ongoing dialogue between cultures. A successful translation came to be seen as one that preserves emotional intensity and artistic force while bridging linguistic distance. Today, literary translation in Pakistan remains a vibrant and active tradition, keeping Urdu in conversation with world literature and sustaining its intellectual vitality.

Translation plays a decisive role in widening access to knowledge and sustaining meaningful dialogue across cultures, particularly within Pakistan's linguistically diverse society. In this context, Dr. Amjad Ali Bhatti's work stands out for its depth, range, and long-term academic impact. Trained at the doctoral level in Punjabi literature, he has remained actively engaged with higher education and scholarship, while dedicating a substantial part of his career to translation as an intellectual practice rather than a mechanical task. His translated corpus, consisting of more than forty books (literary and non-literary), has introduced significant literary, scholarly, and cultural texts to Urdu readers from English, Hindi, and Punjabi sources. Through this work, he has helped reduce linguistic barriers and broaden the reach of ideas that might otherwise remain confined to limited audiences. Beyond individual publications, his role in strengthening translation as an academic discipline is equally important, particularly his contribution to the establishment of Translation Studies at the UOG, NUST and IIUI. National-level recognition, including major literary awards, reflects the scholarly value and cultural relevance of his contributions, which have helped position translation as a serious and respected field within Pakistani academia.

Literature Review:

The history of translation in Urdu spans several centuries, reflecting a sustained engagement with literary, philosophical, and scholarly texts. The tradition began in the late seventeenth century with early works such as *Sharah-e-Tamheedat-e-Hamadani*, which laid the foundation for Urdu as a medium for intellectual discourse (1). During this period, Persian works were translated into Urdu, marking the beginning of an organized effort to make knowledge accessible to a wider readership. Fort William College, established in Kolkata, played a pivotal role in academically supporting these translations, standardizing linguistic norms, and training translators, thereby institutionalizing translation as a scholarly practice (2).

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Delhi College and Sir Syed Ahmed Khan's Aligarh Scientific Society expanded the scope of translation, bringing scientific, philosophical, and literary texts into Urdu. These efforts helped integrate global knowledge into the curricula of emerging academic institutions and promoted critical thinking among Urdu-speaking intellectuals (3). Shibli Nomani's Dar-ul-Musannafeen further contributed to translation by systematically preserving historical, biographical, and religious texts, supporting research and scholarship in Urdu. Later, Osmania University's Dar-ul-Tarjuma in Hyderabad provided a modern institutional framework for translation, particularly in higher education, enabling students and scholars to access global literature and academic texts in Urdu (4 & 5).

Following the establishment of Pakistan in 1947, translation continued to flourish through the support of governmental, academic, and private institutions. Universities such as the University of the Punjab, Karachi University, and the University of Gujrat, along with the National Language Authority, facilitated translation across disciplines, including literature, social sciences, and linguistics (6). Private publishing houses complemented these efforts, producing translations of both regional and international texts, thereby bridging linguistic and cultural divides for Urdu readers.

Prominent Pakistani translators have been central to this post-independence translation movement. Waheed Ishrat's Urdu translation of Allama Iqbal's *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* exemplifies intellectual fidelity and terminological precision, making complex philosophical debates accessible to Urdu readers and situating Iqbalian thought within local cultural contexts (7). Shahid Hamid brought classic Russian literature to Urdu audiences through translations of Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, reflecting linguistic mastery and interpretive depth (8). Najmuddin Ahmad introduced contemporary literary trends through translations of authors such as Milan Kundera and Gabriel García Márquez, while Muhammad Saleem-ur-Rahman bridged cultural gaps by rendering classical works like Homer's *Iliad* into Urdu (9 & 10). Dr. Ashfaq Ahmed Azmi's translations of historical texts enhanced Urdu's corpus of historical writing, while Tauheed Ahmed's translation of Susan Bassnett's *Translation Studies* laid a theoretical foundation for understanding translation as an academic discipline in Urdu (11). Qurratulain Hyder, though primarily a novelist, contributed translations that connected Urdu literature with global literary currents (12). More recently, Azhar Abidi and Huma Anwar have advanced cross-cultural literary exchange by translating Urdu texts

into English and English works into Urdu, fostering global access to South Asian literature (13 & 14).

Collectively, these translators and institutions have reinforced translation as more than a linguistic exercise. Their work serves as a cultural bridge, a scholarly tool, and a means of intellectual democratization. Shamsur Rahman Faruqi emphasizes that translation functions as a conduit for civilizational dialogue, cultural preservation, and knowledge transfer, a role that these scholars and institutions have continuously fulfilled (15). From early Persian-Urdu translations to contemporary cross-cultural projects, the evolution of translation in Urdu demonstrates the interplay between institutional support, scholarly dedication, and creative literary engagement. This review provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how translation has shaped Urdu as a vibrant medium of both literary expression and academic discourse.

Research Methodology

This study employs an analytical and qualitative research methodology. The researcher primarily utilized literary analysis, examining Dr. Amjad Ali Bhatti's translations for lexical accuracy, narrative style, and the reflection of philosophical or Sufi themes. A comparative approach was applied, contrasting original texts with their Urdu translations to assess fidelity, semantic depth, and cultural nuance, particularly in works such as Rousseau and Shakespeare. Historical contextualization was employed to situate the translations within Pakistan's literary and academic landscape, including the development of Sufi poetry and international literature translations. The study also analyzed the translator's role in cultural mediation, focusing on how he bridged linguistic and cultural gaps to convey Sufi and humanistic ideas to Urdu readers. Finally, secondary sources—including research articles, books, and other translations—were reviewed to provide a scholarly evaluation of Dr. Bhatti's contributions and impact. Overall, the research relies on **qualitative analysis**, offering a detailed assessment of his translations in literary, cultural, and academic contexts while highlighting his role in advancing Urdu translation and scholarship.

A. Urdu Translations of Punjabi Sufi Poetry by

Dr. Amjad Ali Bhatti

The translation of Punjabi Sufi poetry into Urdu represents a critical intellectual and cultural endeavor, connecting spiritual, literary, and philosophical traditions to a wider readership. The roots of this tradition in Pakistan lie in the effort to make mystic and folk literature accessible while preserving its core ethical, spiritual, and aesthetic values. Translators have consistently aimed to maintain fidelity to the original while mediating linguistic, cultural, and thematic nuances for contemporary readers. This literature review examines prominent Urdu translations of seminal Punjabi Sufi poets, contextualizing their significance and contribution to Urdu literary discourse.

1. Baba Farid Ganj Shakar (1173–1266), often regarded as the father of Punjabi Sufi poetry, emphasized simplicity, contentment, and devotion to God. His poetry critiques worldly attachments, materialism, and sectarian divisions. The Urdu translation *Rukhi Sukhi Kha ke Thanda Pani Pee* (2007) captures these spiritual themes with clarity, making

Baba Farid's mystical philosophy accessible to modern readers. The translation preserves the ethical and devotional undertones of the original while highlighting his insistence on divine love and humility (16).

2. Shah Hussain (1538–1599), known for his ecstatic and romantic style, contributed deeply to the Punjabi mystical corpus. The translation *Kalaam Shah Hussain* (2005) renders his complex mystical and humanist ideas into lucid Urdu. It maintains the poet's exploration of divine love, impermanence of the material world, and human solidarity. By providing an intelligible version for Urdu readers, the translation strengthens the bridge between Punjabi Sufi thought and Urdu literary tradition (17).

3. Sultan Bahu (1628–1691) offered profound insights into divine love, inner purification, and spiritual awakening. The Urdu edition *Dil Darya Samandron Donghe* (2007) communicates his emphasis on the purification of the soul, the rejection of sectarianism, and the cultivation of mystical consciousness. The translation retains the poet's evocative imagery and spiritual depth, making his teachings relevant in contemporary social and material contexts (18).

4. Bulleh Shah (1680–1757) produced poetry with strong philosophical, egalitarian, and spiritual dimensions. *Kalaam Bulleh Shah* (2004) presents his critique of ritualistic religiosity and sectarian divisions while emphasizing humanistic values and spiritual introspection. The translation preserves the lyrical and contemplative quality of the original, ensuring its relevance to modern readers seeking ethical and spiritual guidance (19).

5. Waris Shah (1722–1798) authored the epic romantic poem *Heer*, which combines love, social critique, and mysticism. The Urdu translation *Heer Waris Shah* (2007) maintains the narrative's linguistic beauty, character depth, and social commentary. The translation conveys the cultural and psychological complexities of the original, while highlighting the Sufi undertones embedded in the epic's exploration of love, societal norms, and human emotion (20).

6. Hashim Shah (1752–1843) contributed to Punjabi folk literature, especially through *Sohni*, blending romance, social observation, and Sufi philosophy. *Kalaam Hashim Shah* (2005) renders his poetry into Urdu with attention to idiomatic beauty, narrative rhythm, and philosophical insight. The translation preserves the thematic concerns of love, social constraints, and humanistic reflection (21).

7. Rahim Bakhsh Gujjar (20th century) reflects rural life and folk culture in his poetry, highlighting social inequalities, love, humor, and mystical themes. *Kulliyat Raheem Bakhsh Gujjar* (2011) conveys these aspects into Urdu while preserving local idioms and cultural context. The translation ensures readability while retaining the poet's socio-cultural and spiritual message, making it relevant for contemporary audiences (22).

Finally, (8) *Punjabi ke Sufi Shair* (2004) is a critical compilation translating works of Baba Farid, Shah Hussain, Sultan Bahu, and Bulleh Shah from English (originally a French dissertation by Dr. Lajwanti Rama Krishna) into Urdu. This work emphasizes Sufi philosophy, divine love, and social equality, extending the universal appeal of Punjabi mystical literature to Urdu readers. It represents a convergence of academic rigor and literary translation, providing both scholarly and devotional insights (23).

These translations collectively demonstrate the central role of Urdu in preserving and disseminating Punjabi Sufi poetry. Translators have acted as cultural mediators, bridging linguistic divides and ensuring that spiritual, ethical, and socio-cultural messages remain intact. Each translation balances fidelity to the original text with linguistic clarity, making centuries-old mystical literature accessible to new generations. Furthermore, these works illustrate the capacity of translation to foster intercultural dialogue, sustain literary heritage, and reinforce spiritual and ethical discourses within contemporary society. By tracing this trajectory, researchers gain insight into the evolution of Sufi poetry translation, the strategies employed by translators, and the enduring relevance of these texts in shaping literary and cultural consciousness.

B. Dr. Amjad Ali Bhatti: Urdu Translations of Key Literary and Philosophical Texts

Dr. Amjad Ali Bhatti's Urdu translations represent a critical engagement with global and regional literary, philosophical, and cultural texts. From Rousseau's introspective *Confessions* to Shakespeare's dramatic oeuvre, and Punjabi folk traditions, his work demonstrates meticulous attention to linguistic fidelity, stylistic nuance, and cultural mediation. Each translation navigates complex philosophical, ethical, and performative dimensions, rendering them accessible to Urdu readers while preserving the original's intellectual and aesthetic depth. By bridging temporal, linguistic, and cultural divides, Bhatti's translations not only expand the Urdu literary canon but also provide critical resources for comparative literary, philosophical, and cultural scholarship.

1. Confessions (Autobiography of Rousseau)

This Urdu translation of Rousseau's seminal autobiography preserves the introspective and philosophical essence of the original. The translator maintains fidelity to Rousseau's narrative voice while rendering complex psychological reflections accessible for Urdu readers. By contextualizing personal and social experiences within the linguistic and cultural framework of Urdu, the work introduces readers to Enlightenment ideas and the evolution of selfhood. The translation demonstrates rigorous lexical precision, preserving stylistic subtleties, metaphoric language, and Rousseau's confessional tone, making it a landmark in Urdu renditions of European philosophical literature (24).

2. Punjab Lok Reet

Punjab Lok Reet presents a systematic translation of Punjabi folk customs, rituals, and oral narratives into Urdu, making regional heritage intelligible to a wider readership. The translation captures idiomatic expressions, cultural references, and performative aspects of folk tradition without sacrificing authenticity. It demonstrates methodological care in

balancing literal fidelity with readability, preserving the lyrical and symbolic character of folk practices. By translating oral and textual traditions into Urdu, this work bridges linguistic and cultural divides, providing scholars and students with access to socio-cultural knowledge embedded in Punjab's rural and communal life (25).

3. Charlie Chaplin

The Urdu translation of Charlie Chaplin's biography offers readers insight into the life and creative genius of one of cinema's most influential figures. The translation captures Chaplin's humor, pathos, and social commentary while adapting cinematic references for Urdu readers. Stylistically, the translator preserves the narrative's lively tone and chronological clarity, balancing literary expression with factual precision. This work highlights the translator's competence in mediating between cultural contexts, enabling Urdu-speaking audiences to engage with global performing arts history and Chaplin's humanistic vision (26).

4. Philosophy of Humanism and Punjabi Poetry

This volume explores the intersection of Punjabi Sufi poetry and humanistic philosophy, translated into Urdu for scholarly and literary audiences. The translation emphasizes thematic continuity, highlighting ethical, spiritual, and humanist values present in classical, folk poetry and modern Punjabi Poetry. Lexical and syntactic choices preserve the poetic rhythm and philosophical nuances of the original, enabling readers to access both lyrical beauty and moral content. As a research-oriented translation, it facilitates comparative studies in ethics, literature, and cultural philosophy while maintaining the interpretive integrity of the source texts (27).

5. Selected Plays of Shakespeare

The Urdu translation of Shakespeare's plays balances literary fidelity with performative sensibility. The translator carefully renders Elizabethan English into contemporary Urdu while retaining poetic devices, rhetorical structures, and dramatic tension. Cultural adaptation ensures accessibility without diluting thematic complexity, including explorations of power, love, morality, and human nature. This translation serves as a significant pedagogical tool, enabling Urdu-speaking students and theatre practitioners to engage with classic English drama, while demonstrating scholarly rigor in preserving stylistic elegance and ethical depth (28).

6. The Merchant of Venice

This Urdu version of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* retains the structural, thematic, and moral contours of the original. The translator negotiates the challenges of legal, economic, and social idioms in Elizabethan England, rendering them intelligible for Urdu readers. Stylistic fidelity, careful attention to iambic rhythm, and preservation of dramatic tension highlight the work's literary and scholarly value. The translation contributes to cross-cultural understanding, providing insights into early modern European society while maintaining the poetic and ethical depth of the source text (29).

7. Darshan Balandvi (Literary Sensibility and Communication Techniques)

This work translates critical reflections on literary aesthetics and communication strategies from Gurmukhi to Urdu, emphasizing scholarly analysis and literary methodology. The translation preserves conceptual clarity, technical terminology, and stylistic nuances of the original, ensuring that Urdu readers gain access to advanced literary theory and hermeneutics. Its methodological rigor demonstrates the translator's skill in bridging linguistic, cultural, and disciplinary contexts, contributing to comparative literary studies and enhancing Urdu's capacity to engage with South Asian literary scholarship (30).

Dr. Amjad Ali Bhatti's work as a translator highlights the transformative role of translation in Pakistan's literary and academic landscape. By rendering over forty significant texts from English, Punjabi, and Hindi into Urdu, he has not only made classical, modern, and philosophical literature accessible to a broader readership but also demonstrated translation as an intellectual and creative practice. His Urdu versions of Punjabi Sufi poetry, European philosophical works, and modern literary texts reveal a careful balance between fidelity to the original and cultural contextualization, preserving both stylistic and thematic integrity. Beyond individual works, Dr. Bhatti has contributed to institutionalizing Translation Studies in Pakistani universities, shaping curricula, fostering scholarly discourse, and promoting cross-cultural understanding. His translations serve as bridges across linguistic and cultural divides, reinforcing ethical, spiritual, and humanistic values while expanding intellectual horizons. Collectively, his scholarly and translational endeavors underscore the capacity of translation to preserve cultural heritage, promote intercultural dialogue, and democratize knowledge. Dr. Bhatti's career exemplifies how dedicated translation can enrich national literature, strengthen academic scholarship, and sustain meaningful engagement between local and global intellectual traditions.

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