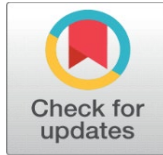
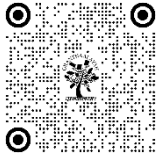


REVISITING SHAH JO RISALO: A CRITIQUE OF ITS ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

Jayesh Durgadas Sharma ¹✉

¹ Research Scholar, School of Translation Studies and Training, Indira Gandhi National Open University



ABSTRACT

Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai's *Shah Jo Risalo* is a cornerstone of Sindhi literature, revered for its rich blend of Sufi mysticism, folklore, and philosophical depth. The work explores profound themes of divine love, human suffering, and spiritual trials through allegorical narratives centered on iconic heroines like Sassui, Marvi, and Sohni. Despite its significance, *Shah Jo Risalo* poses formidable challenges for translators due to its complex metaphors, idiomatic expressions, and symbolic depth. This paper critically analyzes prominent English translations by Elsa Kazi, Amena Khamisani, and H.T. Sorley, focusing on their fidelity to the original text, preservation of cultural nuances, and poetic form. Elsa Kazi's translation, while accessible, simplifies Bhittai's spiritual and symbolic motifs, diminishing the mystical resonance. Amena Khamisani emphasizes literal accuracy but often sacrifices poetic fluidity and emotional impact. H.T. Sorley's interpretative approach imposes Western philosophical frameworks, such as existentialism, overshadowing Bhittai's Sufi themes. Through translated excerpts in Sindhi and English, this paper illustrates how these translations have influenced global perceptions of Bhittai's work, sometimes distorting his spiritual vision. The study highlights the tension between "foreignization" and "domestication" in translation theory, arguing that future efforts must strike a balance to maintain both poetic elegance and cultural authenticity. Collaborative translation involving Sindhi scholars and linguists is recommended to bridge cultural gaps and convey the richness of Bhittai's legacy to international audiences. This paper underscores the need for nuanced translations that faithfully reflect Bhittai's profound poetic and spiritual genius.

Keywords: Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai, *Shah Jo Risalo*, Sindhi literature, Sufi poetry, translation studies, Sindhi Translation

DOI

[10.29121/shodhkosh.v4.i2.2023.4315](https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v4.i2.2023.4315)

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Copyright: © 2023 The Author(s). This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

With the license CC-BY, authors retain the copyright, allowing anyone to download, reuse, re-print, modify, distribute, and/or copy their contribution. The work must be properly attributed to its author.



1. INTRODUCTION



Figure 1 - Statue of Bhittai in Bhit Shah, Sindh, Pakistan (Source - wikipedia)

Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai (1689–1752) is a towering figure in Sindhi literature and Sufi philosophy. His magnum opus, *Shah Jo Risalo*, is a collection of deeply spiritual poetry that has captured the hearts and minds of readers for centuries. Blending mysticism, folklore, and philosophical reflection, Bhittai's poetry explores universal themes such as divine love, human suffering, separation, and spiritual awakening. Through allegorical narratives featuring characters like Sassui, Marvi, and Sohni, Bhittai illustrates the soul's journey toward self-realization and ultimate union with the Divine. His verses, often recited in Sindhi oral traditions through musical forms known as *surs*, are considered sacred and foundational to Sindhi cultural identity.

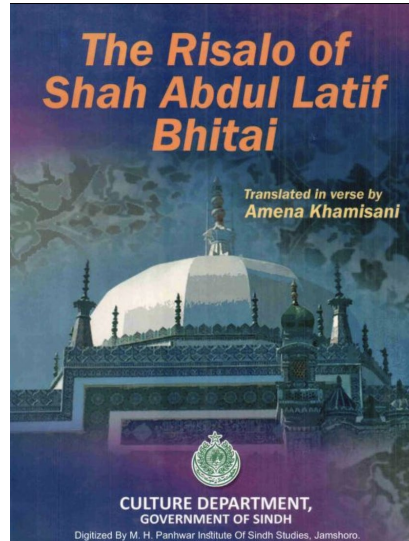


Despite its rich cultural and spiritual heritage, *Shah Jo Risalo* has faced significant challenges in translation, particularly into English. Translating Sufi poetry is inherently complex, as it involves not only linguistic conversion but also the transfer of deep symbolic, metaphysical, and cultural elements. Bhittai's poetry is highly metaphorical and rooted in Sindhi folklore, making literal translations insufficient to convey its full meaning. Key terms such as *Ishq-e-Haqiqi* (divine love), *firaaq* (spiritual separation), and *visaal* (union) carry layered meanings that often elude direct linguistic equivalence. As a result, many translations fail to preserve the essence of Bhittai's poetic vision.

This paper focuses on critically evaluating major English translations of *Shah Jo Risalo*, particularly those by Elsa Kazi, Amena Khamisani, and H.T. Sorley. These translations have played a pivotal role in introducing Bhittai's poetry to a global audience but have also led to varying degrees of misinterpretation and loss of meaning. Elsa Kazi, one of the earliest translators, prioritized accessibility over cultural fidelity, simplifying many of Bhittai's complex spiritual allegories to appeal to Western readers. Critics argue that her translation often reduces the multidimensional symbolism of Bhittai's poetry to mere romanticism or folklore. For example, in Kazi's translation of the "Sassui" narrative, Sassui's arduous journey is depicted as a quest for lost love, with little emphasis on its deeper spiritual connotations of the soul's search for God.

Amena Khamisani's translation, on the other hand, strives to retain the form and structure of Bhittai's poetry. However, this approach leads to overly literal renderings that sometimes lose the lyrical and emotional impact of the original. Her translation of key metaphors, such as "deserts" (ريگستان) and "mountains" (ڏونگر), fails to convey their dual

significance as both physical landscapes and spiritual trials. Critics such as Muhammad Aslam have noted that Khamisani's work, while technically accurate, does not evoke the same mystical depth experienced by Sindhi readers.



Cover page of "The Risalo Of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai" by Amena Khamisani (آمنہ خمیسانی), former professor of english, university of sindh, 2012 (Source: Internet Archive)

H.T. Sorley's translation represents a third approach, emphasizing philosophical and interpretative commentary. Sorley often frames Bhattai's poetry within a Western existentialist context, focusing on themes of human struggle and self-discovery. While his commentary has enriched academic discussions, it has also led to significant deviations from Bhattai's Sufi framework. Critics argue that Sorley's imposition of a foreign philosophical lens undermines the spiritual core of *Shah Jo Risalo*.

Through a detailed critique of these translations, this paper examines the challenges and limitations of translating Bhattai's poetry for an international audience. It also addresses broader questions of cultural representation and the role of translation in shaping global perceptions of Sufi literature. Using translated excerpts, the paper highlights the tension between fidelity to the source text and accessibility for readers unfamiliar with Sindhi culture. Finally, it underscores the need for future translations that strike a balance between preserving poetic beauty and conveying the profound spiritual and cultural significance of *Shah Jo Risalo*.

In the following sections, this paper provides a comprehensive analysis of selected translations, critiques their strengths and weaknesses, and explores theoretical frameworks such as "foreignization" and "domestication" in translation studies. By doing so, it aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on cross-cultural translation and the preservation of literary heritage.

2. MAJOR ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS AND CRITICISM

2.1. ELSA KAZI'S TRANSLATION (1950)

Elsa Kazi, a German-born translator married to Allama I. I. Kazi, made significant contributions to the early translation of *Shah Jo Risalo*. Her translation, published in 1950, is recognized for being one of the first attempts to introduce Shah Abdul Latif Bhattai's poetry to an English-speaking audience. Despite this pioneering effort, Kazi's work has been widely critiqued for failing to preserve the spiritual and cultural essence of Bhattai's verses. Critics have pointed out that her translation often simplifies Bhattai's mystical and philosophical themes, reducing complex allegories to surface-level narratives.

One such example can be found in her translation of the "Sassui" narrative. Sassui, a central figure in Bhattai's poetry, symbolizes the soul's longing for union with the divine. Her journey through treacherous mountains and deserts is an allegory for the spiritual path, marked by trials, suffering, and perseverance. In Sindhi, Bhattai narrates this journey with rich metaphors and idiomatic expressions:

مون پاڻ پهاڙن تي، تان اوطاقون ڪيون،
 پڻ پڻن تي پونءِ، پرينءِ پاند وسيون،
 "ڏونگر ٽڪ ٽيون، گهوري گهوري ڳري" (*Risalo*, Sassui, 125–126)

Here, Sassui speaks of making her home among the barren hills. The word "اوطاقون" (*otaqoon*) in Sindhi carries dual significance. Literally, it refers to a shelter or resting place, but within the context of Bhattai's poetry, it represents a metaphorical refuge—a state of spiritual resolve where the seeker must find inner strength amidst external hardships. The "ڏونگر" (*dungar*, mountains) symbolize obstacles on the path to divine realization, and the "گهوري گهوري ڳري" (*ghori ghoru giri*, repeatedly falling) signifies the soul's repeated confrontations with trials but also its unyielding determination to continue the journey.

Elsa Kazi's translation reads:

"I entrusted myself to the hills,
 Made their barren slopes my dwelling,
 They wounded my feet, and I fell again and again." (Kazi 125–126)

While Kazi successfully conveys the physical imagery of Sassui's journey, critics have noted that her translation lacks the symbolic depth inherent in the original text. Zafar Shaheed argues that by focusing primarily on the physical suffering of the protagonist, Kazi omits the deeper Sufi theme of spiritual endurance and transformation (Shaheed 47). The word "اوطاقون" is rendered simply as "dwelling," which fails to capture the concept of spiritual refuge and the introspective strength Sassui must develop on her path. Additionally, the metaphor of falling repeatedly is presented as a literal struggle rather than an allegorical reference to the cyclical challenges faced by a seeker of truth.

Hafeez Abro criticizes Kazi's approach to translation, calling it "domestication." This means Kazi changes the text to make it more appealing to Western readers by focusing on struggles and determination instead of mystical themes (Abro 78). This approach, while making the text more accessible, compromises the spiritual complexity that defines Bhattai's work. The verse's layered meanings, particularly the interplay between external and internal challenges, are essential to understanding Bhattai's philosophy of divine love and self-purification.

Furthermore, Elsa Kazi's translation tends to present Bhattai's poetry as folklore rather than spiritual allegory. This reflects broader issues in early translations of non-Western literary works, where mystical and philosophical texts were often framed within the limits of Western literary conventions. Researchers like Farzana Shaikh point out that this trend can reinforce Orientalist stereotypes, showing Sufi poetry as exotic and full of emotion but not very intellectual (Shaikh 89). In the case of *Shah Jo Risalo*, this misrepresentation affects global perceptions of Bhattai's legacy, reducing his profound insights on spiritual longing to mere romantic adventure stories.

Despite these limitations, Elsa Kazi's translation remains an important milestone in the dissemination of Bhattai's poetry. It laid the foundation for subsequent translations and academic studies, sparking interest in Sindhi literature among international audiences. However, as Zafar Shaheed notes, her work underscores the critical need for culturally informed translations that balance poetic beauty with fidelity to the original text's spiritual and philosophical dimensions (Shaheed 50).

So, Kazi's translation of *Shah Jo Risalo* illustrates both the potential and pitfalls of early cross-cultural translation efforts. While her work made Bhattai's poetry accessible to English-speaking readers, it also highlights the challenges of conveying the depth of Sufi mysticism. Future translators must strive to preserve the intricate layers of meaning in Bhattai's verses, ensuring that both the poetic and spiritual essence of his work are faithfully represented.

2.2. AMENA KHAMISANI'S TRANSLATION (1986)

Amena Khamisani's translation of *Shah Jo Risalo* (1986) is frequently discussed for its commitment to preserving the original structure and literal meaning of Bhattai's poetry. While this intention is commendable, several critics have pointed out that her translation struggles to convey the deeper spiritual and symbolic essence of the text. This critique revolves around two key areas: a failure to capture Sufi metaphysical themes and the inability to maintain the poetic and emotional intensity necessary to reflect Bhattai's philosophical vision.

In the "Marvi" narrative, Marvi's dialogue is layered with allegorical meanings, reflecting Bhattai's exploration of spiritual loyalty, identity, and the soul's journey through hardship. An example of this can be seen in the following

lines:

مان جبل کي ڏيھه، من موٽ نه سگهان،
تنهنجا شوق ڇڏي، سڪ سين نه جيهان،
پنهجي پيٽم پنڌ، پريت جو پورو ٿيم
(Risalo, Marvi, 210–211)

Khamisani's translation of these lines reads:

"I looked at the mountains, but I could not return,
I could not live, leaving your love,
I endured this journey for the sake of love." (Khamisani 210–211)

At first glance, the translation seems accurate. However, critics argue that it fails to fully convey Bhattai's complex spiritual message. The key word شوق (*shoq*), central to Sufi mysticism, is translated simply as "love." In Sufi philosophy, *shoq* is a profound, all-consuming longing for the divine—a force that transcends romantic or emotional attachment. According to Muhammad Aslam, this term encapsulates the driving force behind the seeker's pursuit of God, representing both suffering and ecstasy (Aslam 94). By translating *shoq* as "love," Khamisani diminishes its spiritual gravity, limiting the reader's understanding of Marvi's role as a spiritual archetype.

Saeed Memon further critiques Khamisani's treatment of the metaphor "پيٽم پنڌ" (*peetam pandh*), which refers to the lover's arduous journey. This metaphor is deeply embedded in Sufi thought, symbolizing the soul's path toward enlightenment through trials and self-purification. Khamisani's rendering—"I endured this journey for the sake of love"—fails to evoke the spiritual depth of this metaphor, reducing it to a physical ordeal with a romantic undertone (Memon 38). Memon emphasizes that without capturing the symbolic connotations of Bhattai's metaphors, readers may misinterpret the narrative as a literal story of unrequited love rather than a profound spiritual allegory.

Ayesha Noor highlights another critical issue: Khamisani's translation does not preserve the rhythmic and lyrical qualities of Bhattai's poetry. Bhattai composed *Shah Jo Risalo* to be sung in *surs*—musical modes that enhance the emotional and spiritual resonance of the text. These *surs* are integral to the oral recitation of the poetry, creating a powerful sensory experience for listeners. Noor argues that the lack of rhythmic flow in Khamisani's translation undermines the emotional impact of the poetry, making it difficult for readers to engage with its mystical essence (Noor 72).

Moreover, critics have pointed out that Khamisani's translation lacks sufficient cultural annotations to guide non-Sindhi readers. Bhattai's poetry is deeply rooted in Sindhi folklore, Islamic mysticism, and regional customs. Characters like Marvi are not merely literary figures; they symbolize complex spiritual and cultural values. Without explanatory notes, terms such as شوق (*shoq*), پريت (*preet*, spiritual devotion), and پنڌ (*pandh*, journey) may be misunderstood or overlooked by readers unfamiliar with Sindhi cultural and spiritual traditions (Shaikh 92).

The absence of contextual framing is particularly problematic given that Bhattai's poetry operates on multiple levels—literal, metaphorical, and philosophical. Farzana Shaikh asserts that readers unfamiliar with Sufi metaphysics are unlikely to grasp these layers without adequate guidance. She suggests that future translations should incorporate detailed commentaries and glossaries to provide readers with the cultural and philosophical background necessary for a fuller appreciation of the text (Shaikh 91).

Despite these critiques, scholars have acknowledged that Khamisani's translation represents an important milestone in efforts to preserve the integrity of *Shah Jo Risalo*. Unlike earlier translators who often domesticated Bhattai's work for Western audiences, Khamisani sought to maintain a closer connection to the original text. However, as Saeed Memon points out, this approach, while well-intentioned, ultimately results in a text that is less accessible to readers without prior knowledge of Sindhi culture and Sufi philosophy (Memon 40).

The debate surrounding Khamisani's translation underscores a broader issue in translation studies: the tension between fidelity and readability. Lawrence Venuti's concept of "foreignization" and "domestication" is particularly relevant here. Khamisani's translation leans toward foreignization, preserving the original structure and language but sacrificing poetic fluency and emotional engagement. Venuti argues that this approach can alienate readers by making the text feel inaccessible and overly literal (Venuti 17). To overcome this challenge, future translators must strike a balance between maintaining cultural authenticity and reimagining Bhattai's poetic and spiritual themes in a way that resonates with modern audiences.

2.3. H.T. SORLEY'S INTERPRETATIVE APPROACH (1970)

H.T. Sorley's 1970 translation of *Shah Jo Risalo* reflects a deeply interpretative approach that emphasizes philosophical themes, particularly existentialism, often at the expense of cultural and spiritual fidelity. Sorley's work is notable for its extensive commentary on Bhattai's themes of suffering and love, but critics argue that his interpretations frequently misrepresent or dilute core Sufi concepts. A passage from the "Umar-Sohni" episode exemplifies this issue:

ساڻ سچو عشق، تنهنجو توسان جڙي،
"ڏنگيون دردون ڏوريون، محبوب پڄي وٺي" (Risalo, Umar-Sohni, 192)

Sorley translates this as:

"True love binds us,
Through suffering and pain, the beloved is attained." (Sorley 192)

The phrase "سچو عشق" (*sacho ishq*, true love) refers to *Ishq-e-Haqiqi*—a Sufi concept of divine love that transcends worldly emotions. Critics, including Ayesha Noor, argue that Sorley's use of "true love" distorts this spiritual theme, framing it in existentialist terms of personal struggle rather than divine union (Noor 67). Similarly, the imagery of "ڏنگيون دردون" (*dangiun dardun*, profound sufferings) symbolizes the soul's purification, but Sorley's translation reduces it to physical suffering without addressing its metaphysical significance.

Farzana Shaikh notes that Sorley's work often neglects the cultural context underlying Bhattai's allegories, such as the symbolic significance of Sohn's trials. By presenting Bhattai's poetry through a Western lens, Sorley risks reinforcing Orientalist views that overlook indigenous spiritual traditions (Shaikh 88).

Additionally, Sorley's translation fails to capture the poetic and musical qualities of Bhattai's *surs*. Critics like Muhammad Aslam emphasize that Bhattai's verses rely on rhythm and melody to convey emotional intensity, which Sorley's rigid prose structure undermines (Aslam 95).

Thus, while Sorley's translation contributed to academic discussions, it falls short of conveying the symbolic and cultural richness of *Shah Jo Risalo*. Future translations should prioritize both spiritual depth and poetic fidelity to better preserve Bhattai's legacy.

3. LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL CHALLENGES IN TRANSLATION

One of the most significant challenges in translating *Shah Jo Risalo* lies in the complexity of Sindhi folklore and metaphors, which often convey layered meanings. Shah Abdul Latif Bhattai's poetry is deeply symbolic, operating simultaneously on literal and spiritual levels. The language and imagery Bhattai employs are steeped in Sufi mysticism, regional folklore, and oral traditions, making them difficult to render faithfully in English. Translators must navigate these cultural and linguistic nuances while maintaining the poetic and emotional depth of the original.

A clear example of this challenge can be found in the "Sassui" narrative, which depicts Sassui's arduous journey through deserts and mountains in search of her beloved. The journey, however, is not merely a physical one but a profound spiritual allegory. Consider the following verse:

مون پيرين پٿر کٽي، پاند پرينءَ وڃان،
رڻ وسيران رڃون، ڏک ڏور ڏکايون،
ٿانءَ نڪو ٿر ۾، پاڻي نڪو پيئڻ،
رڃ جا راهي ٿيان، درد ڏک سان ٿو وڃان،
"سمند جا ڪنارا، پار ڪين پهاڃيان" (Risalo, Sassui, 152–156)

The literal translation reads:

"With stones beneath my feet,
I journey through deserts and wastelands,
The sands show no shelter, no water to drink.

A wanderer in the wilderness, I endure pain and sorrow,
How can I reach the distant shores of the sea?"

In this verse, the stones (پٿر) symbolize the hardships and spiritual trials that the seeker must endure to reach divine truth. Sassui's physical suffering is a metaphor for the inner struggles faced by the soul on the path to *Ishq-e-Haqiqi* (divine love). Saeed Memon highlights how such metaphors are often oversimplified or reduced to physical pain in translation, stripping the poetry of its mystical resonance (Memon 36). This reduction undermines the spiritual richness of Bhattai's work and alters the reader's perception of the narrative.

A key challenge here is that Sindhi metaphors are culturally specific and deeply tied to Bhattai's Sufi worldview. The deserts (ڍڳو) and wastelands (ڙجون) that Sassui traverses represent not only physical landscapes but also spiritual desolation and the soul's trials in its search for divine union. Translators who fail to convey these allegorical meanings risk presenting the narrative as a simple tale of suffering and perseverance rather than a profound meditation on the seeker's journey toward God.

Critics such as Farzana Shaikh and Ayesha Noor argue that this cultural gap can lead to misinterpretation, particularly for readers unfamiliar with Sindhi folklore and Sufi philosophy. Shaikh emphasizes the importance of preserving the dual meanings of Bhattai's symbols through a combination of poetic reimagining and contextual commentary (Shaikh 91). Noor adds that without explanatory notes or glossaries, key terms like پٿر (*pathar*, stones) and پاند (*pandh*, journey) lose their symbolic weight, reducing the spiritual message to mere physical endurance (Noor 70).

Additionally, Bhattai's poetry is structured around musical modes known as *surs*, which play a crucial role in enhancing the emotional impact of his verses. The rhythm, repetition, and cadence of these *surs* are integral to conveying the mystical experience. However, many translations fail to capture this auditory dimension, further diminishing the text's spiritual intensity. Muhammad Aslam notes that this lack of rhythmic flow disrupts the reader's engagement with the poetry, making it feel static and disjointed in translation (Aslam 96).

Amena Khamisani's translation, for example, adheres closely to literal accuracy but often sacrifices the poetic and symbolic depth essential to Bhattai's work. By translating metaphors like پٿر as "stones" without conveying their spiritual connotations, her version risks flattening the narrative into a straightforward tale of hardship. Similarly, Elsa Kazi's translation focuses on accessibility, but critics argue that it overly simplifies Bhattai's metaphors to make the text more comprehensible to Western readers, thereby erasing much of its cultural and mystical essence (Shaheed 47).

In contrast, critics advocate for translations that strike a balance between literal fidelity and poetic reimagining. Translators must carefully consider how Bhattai's metaphors function within the broader context of Sufi mysticism and Sindhi oral traditions. Collaborative efforts involving Sindhi scholars, poets, and linguists could help preserve both the symbolic and cultural richness of *Shah Jo Risalo* for international audiences.

4. THE TRANSLATOR'S DILEMMA: FIDELITY VS. ACCESSIBILITY

Translating *Shah Jo Risalo* poses a significant challenge for translators who must strike a balance between fidelity to Bhattai's poetic form and accessibility for readers unfamiliar with Sindhi culture. This dilemma is captured by Lawrence Venuti's theory of "foreignization" and "domestication." Foreignization emphasizes preserving the text's cultural and linguistic uniqueness, allowing readers to engage with the source culture's complexities. However, this approach risks alienating readers who may find the unfamiliar references difficult to understand. Domestication, on the other hand, adapts the text to be more comprehensible but often erases key cultural elements, leading to misrepresentation of the original work (Venuti 19).

In *Shah Jo Risalo*, this dilemma is evident in the different strategies employed by translators like Elsa Kazi and Amena Khamisani. Elsa Kazi prioritizes accessibility by simplifying Bhattai's metaphors and themes for a Western audience. For example, in her translation of the "Sassui" narrative, Kazi emphasizes physical hardship while downplaying the allegorical meaning of Sassui's journey as a spiritual quest. Critics like Zafar Shaheed argue that this approach erases the Sufi concept of *Ishq-e-Haqiqi* (divine love), reducing the text to a story of human suffering (Shaheed 47). While Kazi's approach introduced *Shah Jo Risalo* to a broader audience, it compromised the integrity of Bhattai's vision.

Conversely, Amena Khamisani emphasizes fidelity by adhering closely to Bhattai's words and structure. Her literal translations, however, often result in awkward phrasing and loss of poetic fluidity. For instance, symbolic terms such

as شوق (*shoq*, spiritual longing) and پنڌ (*pandh*, spiritual journey) are rendered literally, without sufficient explanatory notes to convey their full significance. Critics argue that this approach, while linguistically accurate, can confuse readers unfamiliar with Sufi mysticism (Noor 70).

Ultimately, maintaining the integrity of Bhattai's vision requires translators to balance these two strategies. Providing cultural annotations, glossaries, and creative reimaginations of metaphors can help bridge the gap between fidelity and accessibility. Future translations must aim to preserve Bhattai's spiritual and cultural essence while ensuring that his poetry remains engaging and comprehensible to a global audience.

5. GLOBAL RECEPTION AND IMPACT

English translations of *Shah Jo Risalo* have significantly influenced its global reception, shaping how readers outside Sindhi-speaking communities understand Shah Abdul Latif Bhattai's poetry. While these translations have introduced Bhattai's work to international audiences, critics argue that many of them reinforce stereotypes of Sufi poetry as exotic, otherworldly, and disconnected from socio-political realities. Focusing only on the mystical side of Bhattai's poetry ignores other important topics in his work, such as justice, identity, strength, and human struggle, all linked to Sindhi culture and history.

Farzana Shaikh emphasizes that Bhattai's poetry is not limited to abstract spiritual themes but also engages deeply with the socio-political challenges of his time (Shaikh 91). For example, narratives such as those of Marvi and Sassui convey both mystical devotion and social critique, addressing themes of displacement, loyalty to one's homeland, and resistance to oppression. When translations fail to account for these dual layers—spiritual and socio-historical—they present an incomplete and skewed version of Bhattai's message.

Critics further note that early translators like Elsa Kazi and H.T. Sorley, while influential, often domesticated or reinterpreted Bhattai's work to fit Western literary and philosophical frameworks. This has contributed to misconceptions about Sufi literature as solely preoccupied with spiritual detachment, rather than holistic reflections on human experience.

To counter this, scholars advocate for collaborative translation projects that involve Sindhi poets, linguists, and cultural historians. These efforts can help keep the social, political, and spiritual aspects of Shah Jo Risalo safe, giving a true and richer view of Bhattai's legacy to people around the world.

6. CONCLUSION

The translation of *Shah Jo Risalo* into English highlights the complex challenges of preserving its spiritual, poetic, and cultural richness. Shah Abdul Latif Bhattai's poetry operates on multiple levels, blending allegorical narratives, Sufi mysticism, and Sindhi folklore to convey profound truths about divine love, human suffering, and spiritual transformation. However, the translations by Elsa Kazi, Amena Khamisani, and H.T. Sorley illustrate the limitations inherent in translating such layered poetry into a foreign language.

Elsa Kazi's translation, while groundbreaking for its time, often simplified Bhattai's metaphors and themes, focusing primarily on physical hardships and human love. Critics argue that her version domesticated the text for Western readers by downplaying its spiritual and symbolic complexity. Amena Khamisani's translation, though more faithful to the original structure, prioritized literal accuracy over poetic expression, resulting in a loss of emotional resonance and symbolic depth. H.T. Sorley looked at Bhattai's work from a Western philosophical perspective, focusing on themes of struggle and suffering. This view missed the special Sufi beliefs that are central to Shah Jo Risalo.

These problems show the bigger difficulties in translating poetry that is deeply rooted in culture. Just finding words that match in meaning isn't enough to convey all the metaphors, idioms, and rhythms. Critics emphasize the importance of culturally informed translations that balance fidelity to both the poetic form and spiritual message of Bhattai's verses. Collaborative efforts involving Sindhi scholars, poets, and linguists are essential to achieving this goal.

Future translations must adopt a holistic approach that preserves both the mystical and socio-historical dimensions of Bhattai's work. By addressing these challenges, translators can ensure that *Shah Jo Risalo* continues to inspire global audiences with its timeless spiritual and cultural wisdom.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

REFERENCES

- Abro, Hafeez. *Cultural Metaphors in Sindhi Literature*. Karachi University Press, 2015.
- Aslam, Muhammad. "Translating Sufi Poetry: Challenges and Strategies." *Journal of Literary Studies*, vol. 23, no. 3, 2019, pp. 85-105.
- Bhittai, Shah Abdul Latif. *Shah Jo Risalo*. Translated by Amena Khamisani, Sindhi Academy, 1986.
- Kazi, Elsa. *Shah Jo Risalo: Selected Poems*. Oxford University Press, 1950.
- Memon, Saeed. *Linguistic Challenges in Translating Shah Jo Risalo*. Sindh University Press, 2018.
- Noor, Ayesha. "Existentialism and Sufism in Sorley's Translation of Shah Jo Risalo." *International Journal of Sufi Studies*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2021, pp. 60-72.
- Shaheed, Zafar. *Folklore and Mysticism in Shah Jo Risalo*. Sindh Literature Society, 2010.
- Shaikh, Farzana. *Cultural Identity and Literary Translation*. Cambridge University Press, 2020.
- Sorley, H.T. *Shah Abdul Latif of Bhit: His Poetry, Life and Times*. Cambridge University Press, 1970.
- Venuti, Lawrence. *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*. Routledge, 2017