A Study of the History of Translation from Persian into Urdu

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Abstract

Persian language was under such an attention during the ruling of Moguls in India that it became the royal language of Mogul emperors. In 1800 AD, Fort William College was established by Lord Wellesley in Calcutta. After a while, an Indian branch was opened in this college by John Gilchrist and some books were translated from Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit, and Hindi into Urdu. Among these translators who have translated some stories from Persian into Urdu, Mir Aman Dehlavi, Heidar Bakhsh Heidari, Mir Sher Ali Afsos, Mir Bahadur Ali Hussaini could be mentioned. Mir Aman Dehlavi translated “Ghesseh-ye Chahar Darvish” and “Akhlagh-e Mohseni”, written in Persian, as “Bagh-o Bahar” and “Ganj-e Khubi” respectively. Furthermore, Mir Sher Ali Afsos translated “Gulistan-e Saadi” as “Bagh-o Urdu”. In addition to the above mentioned translations, a couple of other Persian works were translated into Urdu, as well. Actually, Fort William College was the first publication and translation office, founded by Britons. Masnavi Manavi-e Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi, the poems and sonnets of Khaje Hafez-e Shirazi, "Bustan and Gulistan-e Sheikh Saadi-ye Shirazi", Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, Collection of poetries of Farid ud-Din Attar, Nishapouri, Amir Khusrow Dehlavi, Bidel Dehlavi, Ghalib Dehlavi, and Allama Iqbal-e Lahori are some of the works and ballads translated from Persian into Urdu.

Keywords: translation, translation from Persian into Urdu, Fort William College, Persian
Introduction

Persian language was considered the royal language during the ruling of the Timurid Empire. Numerous poets and writers in the Indian subcontinent and Pakistan have had poems in this language and they have created indelible works. Amir Khosrow Dehlavi, Bidel Dehlavi and Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib are among those who helped Persian language and poetry flourish in the Indian subcontinent.

No doubt, Persian writers and poets’ works translated into Urdu in different historical periods. Fort William College, Delhi College and Ottoman society in India can be mentioned here. With the help of creativity and exquisite art of writing, writers and translators working in the above-mentioned places or offices could translate Persian ballads to Urdu and thus, they could help readers who were not familiar with Persian language know this language well and promote it.

Significance of the study

Translation can play a role of bridge which can help create a cultural relationship among nations and countries. As a technique it can help meaning transfer from one language to another and from one culture to another. We should take this important point into consideration that, although Urdu owes Persian language a lot during its formation and although some terminologies have been transferred from Persian to Urdu during different periods, there are some Persian that have lost their original meaning and are being used with a quite different meaning in Urdu.

Writers and poets have created works in Persian and then translators have translated them into Urdu. Of course each translator has translated them, based on his/her creativity and translation experience. Considering the importance of those translated pieces and with the aim of helping Persian and Urdu language researchers, the writers of the present article have investigated some translations done by translators in India, Pakistan and Iran in different periods. Moreover, considering the fact that there is a need for the translation of Persian literary works, the writers have selected the most important or outstanding translated works, books and ballads which have been translated into Urdu will be briefly pointed out.

First, classic Persian works that have been translated into Urdu are considered. The importance of “Fort William College”, an office helping to improve translation and its techniques, has also been mentioned. But, for sure, blank verses and Persian language stories should not be forgotten as they have had a crucial role in promoting Persian literature and poetry and there have been some translators in the current era who have translated the recent Persian literary works. The main purpose of presenting these translated works (from Persian to Urdu) is to pave the way for more translations and to help researchers get to know such works.

During its growth and improvement, Urdu language and literature has well benefited from Persian proverbs, metaphors, expressions and terminologies. Masnavis in Deccani poems have been mostly taken from Persian and Arabic. Stories and anecdotes, too, have been taken from Old Persian stories. Prose translations began in 1635 AD with “Subrus” but researchers concluded that “Sharh Tamhidat Hamedani” was actually the Persian version of “Tamhidat Hamedani” which was written in Arabic by Ayn al-Quzat Hamedani. The Persian version was written by Khwaja Banda Nawaz Gaisu Daraz and it was Shah Miran Jee Khoda Nama who translated it into Urdu.
A copy of this translation was found in 1603 AD and it can be concluded that prose translations in Urdu started much earlier than versified translations. Later, the famous poet, Asadollah wajhi, translated Fattahi Neyshabouri’s “Dastoor Ul ushaq” into Urdu which was known as the story of “Subrus”.

In 1640 AD, Amir Khosrow’s Masnavi “Hasht Behesht” was translated in Urdu by Malik Khoshnood and it was named “Jannat Singhar”. So it can be concluded that prose translations started at the beginning of the 17th century. Amir khosrow’s masnavi enjoyed a very beautiful rhetoric but Malik Khooshnood could not create this attraction and beauty in his translation. Below we can see what Dr Jameel Jalibi says about “Jannat Singhar:

“Khoshnood has attempted to translate all the distiches on the first section of Jannat Singhar. However, he recognized that it would be a difficult task to translate all the distiches. Thus, he changed the translation method for the sake of ease. Comparing Jannat Singhar, and 'Hasht Behesht', it can be said that the translation has not been done distich by distich (or it can be said that all the distiches have not been translated.)

Some parts of the poems have not been translated and in some parts, some additions have been made. In some sections, the translation is conceptual and in some others, it is literal. Radif and rhymes have changed, as well. The meaning has changed and in some parts, ironies and allusions have changed. This has harrowed the spirit of Masnavi and it has created a gap (distance) in Amir Khosrow and Khoshnood's nature.”

(Jamil jalibi, 1995, pp255-256)

We can say that Khoshnood has done a great job since he has transferred the versified Persian Masnavi to Deccani Urdu. This can be a good beginning for versified translations. Meanwhile, some stories were translated from Persian into Urdu and new form of expressing meaning were found. Thoughts and fictions could enter Urdu literature. Gradually, Persian language lost its dominance and importance. In this era Amin wrote a masnavi called “Behram Husan Bano”. It was written in Persian but since Persian language was less common those days, later he translated it into Urdu. This translation was done by the poet himself in a word-by-word manner. In some parts there are some additional poems added to that. Sultan Muhammad Adil shah ’s era was of great importance regarding the translation of Persian poems into Urdu. At that time; Ibn-Hessam imitation Ferdowski’s Shahnameh, wrote a versified masnavi and in 1640 AD, a poet called Kamal Khan Rostami translated it into Urdu and named it “Khawar Nama”. Khawar nameh is the largest masnavi in Urdu language. It include 24 verses which depict Rostami’s great weiting skill. Taking a look at the translation, we can recognize that Rostami has done a translation understandable to all and quite colloquial. And this helped Rosatmi become a famous writer.

During the reign of Timurids in 1704 AD Shah wali allah Ghaderi translated Sheikh Mohammad Shabestari’s “Ma'rifatul Sulook” into Urdu. This book was about mysticism. Translations continued to exist in the north of Indai and in 1731 AD Fazal Ali Fazli translated Mulla Hussain Waiz Kashifi’s “Rozatolshohada” into and he named it “Karbal Katha”. This is not a word-by-word translation and Fazli has had enough manipulation on it. It was published in October 1965 AD with the help of Malik Ram Anand and Dr. Mukhtar ud din Ahmad. Fazli has utilized a lot of Persian and Urdu words and has created a text which is not that common today. At this time, Ata Hussain Khan Tahsin translated “Qissa chahar darvesh” in prose and it became known as “Nau Tarz e Murassa”. He basically utilized Persian words and expressions. Nau Tarz e Murassa linguistically difficult and in order to understand it, one needed to know not only Persian but also they had to be intelligent enough to comprehend it. Finally in 1958 AD, Dr. Noorul Hassan Hashemi could compile it.
Fort William College is the most important academic center which was established by Lord Wellesley on May 4th 1800 in Calcutta, India. One of the main purpose of establishing this college was to train the officers who came to India at the age of 15 or 16 and they were taught local languages at that college. Wellesley believed that those teenagers could become familiar with the traditions and customs of India and its local languages. Several translators like Mir Amman Dehlvi, Heydar Bakhsh Heydari, Mir Sher Ali Afos, Mir Bahadur Ali Hussaini, Mazhar Alikhan Wala, Mirza Kazim Ali Jawan, Maulana Amanatullah, Shaikh Hafizuddin Ashak, Nihal Chand Lahori and Mirza khan Taish worked at this college and they translated famous books from Persian, Arabic, Hindi and Sanskrit into Urdu.

The second purpose of the English of establishing this college was to downgrade Persian language and literature to eliminate this language in India and to replace it with Urdu and English.

Some stories were translated from Persian into Urdu at Fort William College, for instance “Qissa Chahar Darvesh” which was translated by Mir Amman Dehlvi and was named Bagh o Bahar. A prominent feature of this translation was the fact that John Gilchrist had ordered Mir Amman Dehlvi to translate it based on the colloquial style common in the society at that time; that is, a language understandable to the public. Actually, Mir Amman Dehlvi was one of the agent of Delhi culture and in his translation, one can easily see civilization and culture of the era. His translation enjoys a smooth easy type of rhetoric. Some believe that Bagh o bahar has been directly translated from “Qissa Chahar Darvesh”. However an Urdu language researcher, Molvi Mbdul Haq does not agree with the idea, saying it is a literary form of Ata Hussain khan`s “Nau Tarz e Murassa”.

Mir Amman Dehlvi translated Mulla Hussain Waiz Kashifi`s book akhlaghe mohseni into Urdu and named it “Ganje Khobi”. But, it did not become so famous and popular as bagh o bahar did. The reason is that Mir Amaan utilized the culture and the language of Delhi in the form of a story in a very skillful manner. So, in a way, Bagh o bahar can be regarded as a very valuable story depicting Mir Aamana`s creativity.

At Fort William College, Mir Ali Afso translated Saadi`s “Golestan” into Urdu and named it “Baghe Urdu”. He has done a descriptive translation and thus, the terminologies have become a little lengthy. Some word have been added to the text with the aim of transferring meaning correctly. This translation has play an important role in transferring Saadi`s “Golestan” into Urdu. It was published in 1802 AD. Apart from this, Mir Ali Afsos has also translated Khulasat ul Tawarikh into Urdu and he has named it Araish mahfil.

Fort William College played a crucial in improving and promulgating Urdu language. Among different agents of this college, Heydar Bakhsh Heydari was an important figure who translated Persian stories into Urdu very skillfully and creatively.

Tota kahani, Araish mahfil and Golzar Danish are very popular among his translations. Moreover he translated in prose, the story of Laila o Majnoon which was originally in verse.

The language used in Fort William College publications was a language close to colloquial and conversational language. As time passed, language faced some structural syntactic grammatical changes and words were pluralized in a different way. Mir Amman Dehlvi’s Bagh o bahar and Heydar Bakhsh Heydari`s, Araish mahfil have got a role in the improvement and promulgation of colloquial language.

Apart from Fort William College, Delhi College was an institute in which translation played a very important role. Before 1835 AD, Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit were taught in all colleges in India.
After a while, Arabic and Sanskrit lost their importance and Delhi College was the only college where different sciences such as math, philosophy, history, etc, were taught in Urdu. After that another college called “Vernacular Translation Society” was established with the purpose of publishing books with different subjects from western languages into Urdu. But in this college there was not enough attention paid to eastern languages. There is a list of these books in Molvi Abdul Haq’s book Mahroom delhi College.

In 1903 AD another center called Anjuman Taraqqi-i-Urdu (Hind) was established. The first chancellor of this institute was Allama Shibli Noman and the second one was Molvi Abdul haq. Books from Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit were translated into Urdu and they were about the literature. One the most important books which was translated from Persian to Urdu was Hikayat e Roomi which was translated into Urdu by Mirza Nizam Shah Labib in two parts in 1939-1940. Moulavi Abdul Razzaq translated Safarnama Nasir Khosrow into Urdu in 1941 AD. This is the second institute, the first one being Fort William College, which has focused on translating works from Persian into Urdu.

On August 14th, 1917 AD, a translation bureau was established and it was called “Shoba Talif o Tarjuma” in Hyderabad. Almost seventeen books were translated from Persian into Urdu. Then after the separation of India and Pakistan the official academic language changed, the translation bureau was ignited, and very precious books were burnt. After Pakistan could become an independent country, many private and public offices were established in order to help promulgate translation into Urdu. Among them Anjuman Taraqqi Urdu Pakistan Karachi, Scientific society of Pakistan, National book council, National book foundation, academy adabiyat Islamabad, Iqbal academy, Adara Taalif o Tarjuma Punjab university, Shoba Taalif o Tasnif o Tarjuma Karachi university, Majlis Taraqqi Adab Lahore, Markazi Adab board, Muqadtra Qaumi Zaban can be mentioned.

Among the poets, works by Bīdel Dehlavī, Amir Khosrow, masud saad salman, Mirza Ghalib dehlvi and Allamna Iqbal can be mentioned. Persian language was the royal language of the Timurid kings for centuries and poets and writers attempted to create their own works. After the dominance of the English on the subcontinent, Persian language deteriorated but still there were many people who tried to translate works in prose and verse into Urdu.

Below the poems which have been translated from Persian into Urdu are mentioned:

- Golestan and boostan by saadi
- Masnavi manavi by maulana jalaluddin rumi
- Poems by hafez
- Attar of Nishapur`s works
- Mantaqut-Tair
- Bīdel Dehlavī`s poems
- Amir Khosrow dehlavi
- Bidel dehlavi`s poems
- Allama Muhammad Iqbal and ghalib dehlavi.

Poem of twentieth century writers were translated into Urdu as well.

Noon Meem Rashed was the first Hindi, or better to say Pakistani, poet who attempted to translate poems by Nima Yooshij, Sohrab Sepehri, Mehdi Akhavan-Sales, Ahmad Shamlou, Fereidoon Tavallali, Siavash Kasrai, Nader Naderpour, Forugh Farrokhzad.

Noon Meem Rashed travelled to Iran twice and to accept his friend Dr Jamil Jalibi’s request, He transferred Iranian poets’ poems to Urdu and his translations were published in 1987 AD with the name of jadid farsi shayari.

In this book sixty poems in verse composed by nineteen Iranian poets have been translated. Actually he had translated eighty poems but since they did not have access to the original version of the Persian poets at the time of the publication of the book, those poems were not included in the book.
In 2010 AD, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Fakhar-ul-Haq Noori published the rest of the rest of the translations with their Persian version with the name of jadid farsi shayari.

There were also other poets, besides Noon Meem Rashed who translated Iranian works, poems and stories into Urdu. One of them is Hamid Hassan Ghaderi who translated Saeed Nafisi`s short stories into Urdu. His translations were published in 1944 AD with the name of irani afsaney. Later Dr. Moeen Nizami, the head of the Persian language and literature department, Punjab university, pointed to the fact that for the first time in 1996 AD, twenty four short Persian stories were translated and they were called nai irani kahanian. Then in 1997 AD, seventy five Persian poems in verse were translated into Urdu and they were called “nazmein tera tawaf karti hain” Dr. Moeen Nizami translated most of the short stories of post-revolution writers.

Bazal Haq Mahmood translated into Urdu a selection of short Persian stories and named it mehram-e-raaz. Dr. khawaja hamid yazdani was a prominent Persian language and literature professor. He wrote about Allama Iqbal`s poems and it was published in Iqbal Academy in Lahore. He also translated some short stories of Iranian story writers into Urdu. His translation was named pas parda gorrya and published in sang e meel publishers Lahore.

Muhammad athar masood translated into Urdu a selection of Persian stories and named it “parbat ke us paar”. He translated works of Yousef Etsem Zadeh, Jamal Mirsadeghi, Amin Faghiri, Fereydoon Tonekaboni, Monir Ravanipor.

Muhammad athar masood translated eleven short stories from Jamal Mirsadeghi and in Urdu he named it jamal kahanian. Muhammad athar masood has also studied Jamal Mirsadeghi`s life and his works. He has used Persian books to conduct his researches and studies.

One of the Pakistani translators who has translated short Persian stories and Persian novels into Urdu is Ajmal Kamal. He has translated Houshang Golshiri`s novel, “Shazdeh Ehtejab” into Urdu. His translation was published in 2009 AD. Occasionally some of his translations are published in “Aaj” journal. He has also compiled a selection of short Persian stories translated into Urdu. One of the Persian language and literature professor of Punjab University, Shoaib Ahmed has translated some short stories from Persian into Urdu and he has named the collection “suaghaat”.

This translation which includes twelve short stories was published in 2006 AD. Shoaib Ahmed writes very eloquently and simply and he can covey meaning to the reader very well. An Urdu language and literature professor from the faculty of Orientalism and Oriental studies, Dr. Mrs. Baseera Ambreen has translated short stories from Persian into Urdu, which have been published with the name of “zaib e dastan” in 2014 AD. Dr. Mrs. Baseera Ambreen has translated sixteen short stories written by contemporary Iranian story writers such as Sadeq Chubak, Ebrahim Golsteinan, Simin Daneshvar, Jamal Mirsadeghi, Goli Taraghi, Mahshid Amirshahi, Bijan Najdi, Hassan Tehrani, Shahrnush Parsipur, Monir Ravanipor.

This translator has well attempted to translate in a simple, understandable manner and has successfully conveyed what exists in the Original short story.

What is of great importance is the fact that the well-known Persian language and literature professor from the state university of Lahore, Zaheer Ahmad Siddiqui. has translated Farhang dehkhoda into Urdu. The first volume of this unique translation was published in Lahore, Pakistan. Siddiqui was admired for all the effort he had put in the work. However some scholars believe that the translation of Farhang dehkhoda has not been able to convey the meanings of Persian words to Urdu very well.
This is because some of the terminologies in Farhang Dehkhoda have gradually become obsolete and they are not used in everyday conversations. Some others believe that Persian literature has faced so many changes and today writers do not use old, obsolete words anymore and instead, they try to write in a quite simple, easy-to-understand style. The reason is that the reader today is not willing to see difficult terminologies and easy, tangible style is more favored.

Today much attention has been paid to Persian prose and verse in Urdu. Several short stories have been translated from Persian into Urdu. Moreover, scholars have translated several Persian poems, specially the contemporary and post-revolution poems. Urdu language has benefitted a lot from Persian literature (novels and poems). And it is time for a revolution; a revolution in translating prose and verses of subcontinent scholars so that the Persian scholars can both get to know these writers and poets and can also add to the terminologies in Persian literature. These are some words that have entered into Urdu from Persian but interesting enough, have been forgotten or become obsolete in Persian language. Examples are Roomal, tankhah. There are some other terminologies which have been taken back to Persian but have lost their original meaning. Examples are Saazish, dastkhat, Sarfarosh, Pasmanda which mean “conspiracy”, “signature”, “courageous” and “a mentally retired person”, respectively. All these factors have scholars study words and terminologies in Persian language more and more.

There are some scholars who have had translations from Persian into Urdu. Ajmal Kamal, naiyer masud, Bazal Haq Mahmood, Dr. Aftab Asghar, Dr. Moeen Nizami, Dr. Muhammad Saleem Mazhar, Dr. Shoaib Ahmed, Dr. Mrs. Baseera Ambreen, Dr. Khawaja Hamid Yazdani, Dr. Ghulam Akbar, Dr. Fauzia Iftekhar, Ali dibaj ghezelbash, Athar Masood, Dr Mehr Noor Muhammad khan, Dr Kulsoom Fatima are among those translators. Mehr Noor Muhammad khan and Kulsoom Fatima have translated Dr. Abdulhossein Zarrinkoo `s book, “Ba Karvane-e Holle” into Urdu and the translation was published with the name of “Az Gulistan e Ajam” in 1985 AD.

Many Iranian scholars and professors have translated from Persian into Urdu and vice versa. For instance in 2007 AD, Dr. Mohammad Kiumarsi an Urdu language and literature professor in Tehran University translated poems of thirty Iranian poets into Urdu and named the work “Masir Irani shari”. He has tried to introduce Iranian poets to Urdu language researchers. In 2012 AD, Dr. Kiumarsi translated Urdu poets’ poems and named it Goftegoo dar sokoot (conversation in silence).

In the introduction, features of the twentieth century Urdu poems have been mentioned and one can study how Urdu poems have developed or changed in twentieth century. One of the most important achievements of Dr. Kiumarsi was to establish the official translation bureau of Lahore. This can, in itself, help translation improve.

Dr. Ali Bayat, the head of the department of Urdu language and literature in the Tehran University, is one of the scholars who has translated from Persian into Urdu and vice versa. “Bidel in The Light of Bergson”, one of his translation works, was published in Lahore (Iqbal academy in 2000 AD. After that he translated “The Struggle For Pakistan” from Urdu into Persian in 2008 AD. His PhD thesis was on the study of translation called “A critical Study on Urdu translations of poems of Hafez”.

Another scholar, Dr. Zeb-un-Nissa Alikhan, has compiled bilingual and multilingual dictionaries. The first bilingual dictionary compiled by her is called “Zeb ul Lughat”, for the compilation of which, Dr. Bayat has cooperated. Two translated books have been compiled by Dr. Alikhan, one of them being “memories”, written by Shahid Bukhari and the other one being “Traditions and customs in different regions of Pakistan”, written by Shahid Hussain Razaqi. She has also compiled a Hazaragi-Urdu-English dictionary and for that, she received a prize in Pakistan. The compilation of this dictionary took eight years but unfortunately, she was not admired by any organizations in Iran.
In 2011 AD, Dr. Farzaneh Azam Lotfi compiled a glossary of allusions "A Dictionary of Allusions - mythical - legendary - historical - and religious references in Urdu -Hindi literature to Persian." taken from stories, novels, history and religion in Urdu language and literature and it was published by Association of Islamic treasures Qom Iran. In 2014 AD, another book called “A selection of divine melodies Gita” got published. In this book, Urdu, Persian and English equivalents for melodies of Gita have been collected and it is thus considered to be a literary translation.

From those Iranians active in translation industry was the author of this article who successfully translated Persian short stories into Urdu. In addition, he translated works of poets like majeed amjad and meera ji into Persian which were published in Pakistan’s Literature Journals such as “Naayaab”, “Jadid Adab” and “majeed amjad: nay Tanazor Me”. In my M.A thesis, I translated Dr. Abdolhossein Zarinkoob book called “Sedaye Bale Simorgh” into Urdu. In my PHD Thesis, I worked on Mirza Ghalib’s works and versifications which are all in field of Ghalib Studies in . In order to develop Urdu-Persian and Persian-Urdu translation, a translation bureau called “Taj Mahal”, located in Tehran, was established in 2018. This can make a good connexion between Iranian culture to Urdu Language and also Hindustani’s culture.

**Conclusion**

In this article, some Persian-Urdu translations were studied chronologically and it can be concluded most of these works have been translated in Fort William College. This college was established with the purpose of teaching Urdu language to young English officers who had travelled to India to make a living. It played a very important role in promulgating Persian and Urdu language and literature. Although the English tried to downgrade Persian language and its traditions by translating them into Urdu, they, in fact, helped improve this language (Persian) because many people were not that familiar with Persian language.

Apart from Fort William College, there were other translation bureaus which helped Persian literature flourish. However scholars’ endeavors should by no means be ignored. Parto Rohilla for instance, is one of the translators who has translated Mirza Ghalib Dehlavi’s works into Persian.

Now more attention must be paid to Persian poems and other works and translators must translate them into Urdu, so that, Urdu scholars and readers can get to know Persian literature. Of course the writers of the present article believe that a good deal of Persian literature has already been translated into Urdu and now what is needed is the translation of Urdu literary works into Persian so that Iranians and scholars, in particular, can make the most of the treasures of Urdu language and literature.

To do so, translation offices and bureaus are needed and students’ and professors’ talents and knowledge of Urdu literature can also be very helpful. But unfortunately, this has not been taken into consideration so seriously and there is a real need for improvement and change.
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