

# **Transformation of *Arabian Nights* through Process of Cultural Translation: Selected Tales from Richard Francis Burton and Husain Haddawy**

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## **Abstract**

The research deals with the application of Homi K Bhabha's concept of cultural translation on the selected tales of Arabian Nights. The process of cross-cultural translations helped in the transformation of tales and contributed to its thematic density. The perception of different translators, readers, and audiences of tales played an important role in this transformation and coined an eminent place in world literature. There are multiple versions of the Arabian Nights throughout the world but no single author or continent can claim absolute authority over a specific translation thus giving the story of Shahrazad an independent identity. The research aims to prove that, neither west nor east can claim authority over the tales due to the process of cultural syncretism through translation in different languages. This research focuses on the fact that both selected versions are unique manuscripts and Shahrazad's tale is beyond original.

**Keywords:** Cultural translation, Post-colonial space, cultural syncretism, Arabian Nights, transformation through translation, world literature

The famous story of Arabian Nights holds a prominent place in world Literature due to its ever-evolving framework. It is a collection of Middle Eastern and Indian stories of uncertain temporality and authorship. Different cultures and ethnicities coexist in the main corpus of tales with the Nucleus story of kind King Shahryar turning into a ruthless murderer of womankind due to infidelity of his wife. Impact of his wife sleeping with a slave and infidelity of his brother's and demon's wife made him think of women as

untrustworthy creatures. In consequence to that, he decided to marry a virgin every night and kill her the very next morning, until, Shahrazad volunteered to marry him to stop that mass murder of women. Multiple cultures merged in the book of Arabian nights due to its adaptation in different languages. The frame narrative technique is an Indian art of storytelling in which several stories thematically revolve around main Indian Nucleus tale of Shahryar and Shahrazad. While, embedded stories are Greek, Persian, Turkish and Chinese in origin.

The book of One Thousand and One Arabian Nights is not only a collection of tales but has its own story as it evolved and transformed through time and space. Migration of Arabian Nights from east to the west and its reverse journey from west to east added a lot to its ever-evolving framework. The story of Nights dates back to 6th century Persian Collection of stories known as *Hazar Afsanaeh* which was later translated in Arabic in the 8th century. Two oldest Arabic manuscripts of Nights that dates back to 8th century are *Alf Laiylah Wa Lailah* while another is *Al-Khurafa*. These tales are expected to be passed on by Muslim travellers and invaders as they travelled through Persia and India to Arab. Later, it passed on to Egypt in the 12th century and later in Syria in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This 16th century Syrian Manuscript reached France where Antoine Galland became the first European translator of Arabian Nights. Galland translated and appropriated the Arabian nights corpus to the extent of adding Orphan Tales. The Orphan tales are expected addition from other sources by Galland since these tales cannot be traced back to any previous *Night's* manuscript. Renowned tales such as “Voyages of Sindbad”, ‘Ali Baba and forty Thieves’ as well as

‘Aladdin’ is missing in any previous manuscript. As the tales reached England, Burton translated his version of One thousand and one Nights (1886-88) which he claims to be “Uncastrated Version” of the Arabian Nights in his introduction to translation.

By the end of 19<sup>th</sup>-century, Arabian Nights got universal attention due to its adaptation in movies and different famous writers started using the reference to Arabian nights in their works of art. Middle Eastern researchers got unsatisfied with the Arabian Nights reception as an account of Muslim history and cultural representation of East. So Mushin Mahdi, an Iraqi-American Islamologist and Arabist came to the forefront to against the treatment of nights as representation of East. He was a leading authority on Arabian history, philology, and philosophy. Mahdi wrote critical addition on *One thousand and one Nights* in 1984. Later, Husain Haddaway rewrote the tales and translated work of Mahdi into English and published in 1990.

To conclude, Arabian Nights was originally a part of oral tradition so the stamp of authorship cannot be given to a specific representation of tales. This journey from one custom to another, the sensibilities of readers, translators and audiences impacted the evolution of Arabian Nights by adding thematic density thus giving it a more universal appeal. “Arabian Nights phenomenon”, as Richard Van Leeuwen termed it is a large body of work with a history of translation and retranslations into multiple languages across cultures. The main focus of this research will be to reanalyze the frame story of Queen Shahrazad and King Shahryar and selected tales by Burton’s *Arabian Nights* (2003) collection and *The Arabian Nights* (1990) by Hussain Haddaway, as the universal body of art that transcends the barriers of times and spaces. The variations in

translations of the tales are due to cross-cultural translations and specific time periods.

### **Transformation through the Process of Cultural Translation**

The Arabian Nights is an amalgam of multiple cultural and literary traditions. Multiple translators and readers helped in the transformation of Shahrazad's tale due to transition across cultures. Every translator translated the tale according to their Spatio-temporal sensibility of the foreign world of magical fantasy and historical reality but neither of them can claim authority over the text. Shahrazad's tale reached into the post-modern space and postcolonial times transforming through centuries through translation in different languages. This newly formed identity and the universal recognition of Arabian Nights is solely achieved due to rapid cultural translations through time and space. Bhabha describes the newness through the process of cultural translation in his essay, 'How newness enters the world: Postmodern space, postcolonial times and the trials of cultural translation' in *The Location of Culture* (1994) as follows:

A newness that is not part of the 'progressivist' division between past and present, or the archaic and the modern; nor is it a 'newness' that can be contained in the mimesis of 'original and copy'. In both these cases, the image of the new is iconic rather than enunciatory; in both instances, temporal difference is represented as epistemological or mimetic distance from an original source. The newness of cultural translation is akin to what Walter Benjamin describes as the 'foreignness of languages' [...] I want to foreground the 'foreignness' of cultural translation (303).

The frame story of Shahrazad in the Arabian Night's corpus is a centuries-old story

yet new as it is still popular in Postmodern world and literary traditions of all times. The 'Foreignness of cultural translation' in foreign Languages made the corpus of Arabian Nights new. The title of this collection changed as it was translated through different languages from Iranian *Hazar Afsaneh* to Arabian *Ailf Lailah wa Laila* to Egyptian *Bulaq version* and later French *Les Mille et Une Nuits, Contes Arabes Traduits en Français*, to English *Arabian Nights*. Along with that, there are multiple translators like Galland, Burton, Lane, Muhsin Mahdi and Husain Haddawy who translated this text. The text of Arabian Nights is not so Arabian or eastern as it was translated into foreign languages. The translation from culture to another over the period created a new corpus of tales. This process of historical transformations makes the text foreign to the natives and alien to the foreigners. Cultural meaning cannot be converted into foreign language in its entirety of concepts when translated. In this regard, Homi. K Bhabha *Location of culture* (1994) states that "the 'foreignness' of language is the nucleus of the untranslatable that goes beyond the trans-ferral of subject matter between cultural texts or practices" (199-245). For instance, certain terms like *Harem, Caliph, Hammam,* and slave girls were alien to western readers and even translators as they were the outside observers to the alien culture. Different foreign Translators attached their sense of perception to traditions they failed to comprehend. Frame story of both selected translations differs, when king Shahryar's brother Shahzaman saw the incidence of infidelity in the garden of Shahryar's harem. Burton translated this place as "pleasure gardens" while Haddawy simply describes it as 'garden' of queen's palace. The difference in translation is because of different perception of 'harem' for

both translators. The readership Burton was writing for were curious English men in the era of colonization wanting to learn about the customs of exotic east so he described it as 'pleasure garden' in contrast, Haddawy translated in the period where harem no longer exists and his readership belongs to the era of a post-colonial globalized world where rapid mass-migrations the curiosity no longer exists. Hence, the transfer of meaning between two semiotic systems can never be same Burton's translation was more exalted than the original for the sake of translation of not only a text but alien culture into a different language. In this regard, Homi. K Bhabha in the book *Location of culture* (1994) explains that "transfer of meaning can never be total between systems of meaning" he further explains that in the process of translation "the 'given' content becomes alien and estranged; and that, in its turn, leaves the language of translation Aufgabe, always confronted by its double, the untranslatable - alien and foreign". (199-245)

The events in which the Nucleus story of Shaherezade and King Shaheryar unfolds are similar in both the selected translations of *Arabian Nights* (2003) by Burton and *The Arabian Nights* (1990) by Haddawy but what makes both translations different are the choice of metaphors used to describe the scenes. Burton focuses more on sensual aspects since he introduced his translation as 'uncastrated version of Nights'. In contrast, Haddawy's language is plain and in prose form. The depiction of sensual scenes differs in both selected translations, Haddaway focuses on what event occurred comparatively Burton focuses more on how the events unfolds in detail. For instance, in the nucleus tale when Shahzaman the younger brother of the Sultan Shahryar saw

extramarital affairs of Shahryar's wife and slave girls and their involvement with the slaves. Burton in the *Arabian Nights* (2003) describes the scene as follows:

As the queen who was left alone, presently cried out in a loud voice, 'here to me, O my lord Saeed! And then sprang with a drop-leap a big slobbering blackamoor with rolling eyes which showed the whites, a truly hideous sight. He walked boldly up to her and threw his arms around her neck while she embraced him as warmly; then he busied her and winding his legs round hers, as a button-loop claps a button, he threw her and enjoyed her. ...all fell to satisfying their lust and remained so occupied for a couple of hours... and the blackamoor dismounted from the queen's bosom. (7-9)

In the passage above Burton made use of the imagery of "Button-loop" and "Button" to describe the scene and to give it a vivid sensual and dramatic description. Along with, focusing on the detailed description of Saeed's physiognomy by using a lot of adjectives like 'big', "slobbering" and "hideous" to describe a black slave and the way he jumped from the loop. Burton not only indicated the scene of Queen Infidelity but gave a vivid description of how the event occurred. This vivid description of sexually explicit scenes is clearly due to Burton anthropological approach to the translation. Burton's intention for translation was to depict an unravished version of manners and customs of the east. Burton in *A Plain and Literal Translation* elaborates about his function of footnotes to his translation of *Arabian Nights* for Victorian audiences, he states that his work "will form a repertory of Eastern knowledge in its esoteric phase" for any student, who then "will know as much of the Moslem East and more than many Europeans who have spent half their lives in Orient lands" (I: xix). Ironically Burton as a Victorian rebelled against

the codes of Victorian morality by publishing an uncensored version of the translation. As in *The Arabian Nights: a Companion* (2010), Robert Irwin remarks about Burton as an, “eccentric and embittered outsider, at odds with the Foreign and Colonial offices, as well as with the Church and with most of the literary and academic world” (35).

Haddawy on the other hand only focuses on the incident that took place with an apt description. Haddawy made no use of metaphors, flowery diction unlike Burton’s “button- loop” metaphor or time-span of the incidence and explicit adjectives to describe the scene. Only the word black slave is mentioned in this translation by Haddawy without any reference to physical features of Masud or detail description of the scene in contrast to Burton’s use of adjective “hideous black moor”. The same passage is translated by Haddaway in *The Arabian Night* (1990) as follows:

While, the lady called “Mas’ud, Mas’ud!” and a black slave jumped from a tree to the ground, rushed to her, and, raising her legs went between her thighs and made love to her. Mas’ud topped the lady...when they were done they got up and washed themselves” (7).

Arabian Night’s critics criticized Burton’s use of language in his translation as an orientalist’s description of the exoticised east. But this is merely a superficial observation since the act of translation encounters two different cultures languages and semiotic systems so the text of translation becomes entirely new and the meaning shifts and changes. In this regard, Homi. K Bhabha in his essay, “DissemiNation: Time, narrative and the margins of the modern nation” in the book *Location of culture* (1994) explain that, “The transfer of meaning can never be total between systems of meaning” or even

within the same system as “the language of translation envelops its content like a royal robe with ample folds . . . [it] signifies a more exalted language than its own and thus remains unsuited to its content, overpowering and alien.” (199-245)

Burton was criticised by his Victorian contemporaries for his unravished translation of *Arabian Nights*, as Racheal Kurlander in the research entitled *The Arabian Nights in Translation: how the world of Scherezade was epitomized by the west* (2016), refers that ‘Kennedy describes Burton’s *Nights* as “a daring bid to provoke a confrontation with those forces in British society that he identified with moral intolerance and intellectual pedantry’ (317). In the same research Racheal quotes, Burton when charged with an act of vulgar translation posits, “I will walk into court with... my Shakespeare and my Rabelais under my arm, and prove to them that, before they condemn me, they must cut half of them out, and not allow them to be circulated to the public.” (Nurse 183) Burton rebelled against rigid codes of Victorian society by using the guise of translation of eastern work of art to encounter taboo subjects in Victorian times. Burton posits his idea of cultural relativity and cross-cultural translation in his introduction to the translation that “we must remember that grossness and indecency, in fact les turpitudes, are matters of time and place; what is offensive in England is not so in Egypt” (xvi). Burton should not solely be seen as a white man on his civilizing mission against Orientals in reality, since, he was Othered in his ‘own’ society as he rebelled against the norms. The most quoted of Burton’s contemporary criticism by researchers and scholars of *Arabian Nights* corpus as is of Stanley Lane Poole in the review “*The Arabian Nights*” *The Edinburgh Review* 164.135(1886). As follows:

Probably no European, ... 'in Orient lands', has ever gathered together such an appalling collection of degrading customs and statistics of vice as is contained in the notes to Captain Burton's translation of the 'Arabian Nights'. It is bad enough in the text of the tales to find that Captain Burton is not content with plainly calling a spade a spade, but will have it styled a dirty shovel; but in his notes he goes beyond this, and the varied collection of abominations which he brings forward with such gusto is a disgrace and a shame to print literature." (183)

Burton's translation can be treated as a hybrid text that contains elements of orientalism at the time it was published for the specific readership in a specific context. But, Burton's text in a new changed context as compared to Haddawy's text we see the unfolding of story and events are same just the expression of language in translation is different. Burton and Haddawy both translated the uncensored version of the text. The scenes Burton is most accused off by his contemporaries and other scholars of were already present in previous versions of Arabian Nights. Since, sexually explicit scenes were not an addition to the text by Burton. Text of translation itself is not an orientalist falsification but the elaborative footnotes added by Burton to make his reader understand the foreign culture can be taken as orientalist. In this research Burton selected tales are reanalyzed as a work of fiction rather than an anthropological account. This rereading forms a new unique identity to Burton's tales in a different era. As the context changes the text flows from one culture to another, the shape of the text can never remain constant as stated earlier in Bhabha's words "In the act of translation the 'given' content becomes alien

and estranged; and that, in its turn, leaves the language of translation". (LC 1994).

Burton usage of imagery symbols and metaphors and poetic language is not specific to the depiction of east as exotic sensuality or blackamoor as hideous barbarian. But, his overall style of translation is elaborative of minute details which is by no means limited to sexually explicit scenes. Haddaway in Introduction to his translation commented upon Burton's language of translation as a modulation between literary and colloquial. He further explains that the literary aspect is marked by, "metaphors and similes, formulaic epithets, parallelisms, and rhymed prose... including the jingling rhymes" (Nights1990). Textually, that can be traced in frame tale when both brothers Shahryar and Shahzaman, heartbroken by the infidelity of their wives decided to leave their throne to go on a recluse voyage. They took an oath to be in service of Almighty and to not return to the throne until they see someone who is in the worst state than them. On this lonely wandering, they reached an Island and suddenly saw a Jinni appearing out of the ocean with his wife 'a stolen bride' chained in a cage. In the tale of Jinni and his wife Burton describes the beauty of jinni's wife and the who account in poetic language as follows:

She rose like the morn as she shone  
 through the night And she gilded the  
 grove with her gracious sight:  
 From her radiance the sun taketh  
 increase when She unveileth and shameth  
 the moonshine bright.

Bow down all beings between her hands

\* As she showeth charms with her veil

undight.

And she floodeth cities with torrent

tears when she flasheth her look of...’light.(11-12)

In order to describe the charm and beauty of jinni’s wife who is an unnamed character Burton used poetic language. Ornate diction is used to compare her beauty to sun and moon. Burton’s style overall is explicit. His ‘language of translation’ as previously referred in Bhabha’s words, “envelops its content like a royal robe with ample folds... [it] signifies a more exalted language than its own and thus remains unsuited to its content, overpowering and alien”. In contrast to Burton, Haddawy translated the same passage in plain prose without using poetic verses or ornate diction in *The Arabian Nights* (1990) as follows:

She had a beautiful figure, and a face like the full moon, and a lovely smile. He Look her out, laid her under the tree, and looked at her, saying, “Mistress of all noble women, you whom I carried away o your wedding night, I would like to sleep little.” “Then he placed his head on the Ring woman’s lap, sank into sleep, and began to snore. (81)

The *Tale of the Enscorcelled Prince* is another story on the wife’s betrayal. Enscrolled prince is married to his cousin wife described by both Burton and Haddawy as a clever woman, who with the art of her smooth words and sweet tongue wins her husband’s trust. She very cunningly used to flatter and serve him enough food and drugged drinks

to make him sleep. After tricking him into thinking that she cared a lot about him and is faithful to him only she used to have extramarital affair with a “dirty grumpy black man in tatters”. The instant she notices the intoxicating effect of the drug on her husband cousin wife used to adorn herself with the most beautiful jewelry, silken robes and pleasant fragrances for the meeting with her lover. But one day the prince was resting in his chamber and the servants mistook him for sleeping and started gossiping about Prince’s adulterous wife. The Prince listened to the gossip of the servants about his wife’s occasional disappearance from the palace. The passage is translated by Burton in *Arabian Nights* (2003) as follows:

Nay, more, doth she not drug every night the cup she giveth him to drink before sleep-time, and put Bhang into it? So he sleepeth and wotteth not whither she goeth, nor what she doeth; but we know that after giving him the drugged wine, she donneth her richest raiment and perfumeth herself and then she fareth out from him to be away till break of day; then she cometh to him, and burneth a pastille under his nose and he awaketh from his deathlike sleep.” (17).

Burton paid a lot of attention in the depiction of how the event occurred and mentioned word “Bhang” to give vivid description of the oriental atmosphere the tale is set in. But Haddaway on the contrary reports the same account in precision in the following words in the book *The Arabian Nights* (1990) as follows:

She places a sleeping potion in the last drink he takes, offers him the cup, and when he drinks it, he sleeps like a dead man. Then she leaves him

and stays out till dawn. When she returns, she burns incense under his nose, and when he inhales it, he wakes up. What a pity!” (57)

In the same story when the prince after hearing the servant’s gossips tricked his wife by pretending as if he is asleep but later when she leaves the house he followed her. Haddawy translated the scene when prince saw her lover, precisely as the incident occurred in plain language in these words as, “I saw my wife standing before a decrepit black man sitting on reed shavings and dressed in tatters” (57). But in comparison to Haddawy’s pointing towards the incident that occurred in one sentence, Burton describes the scene with vivid imagery in figurative language in the paragraph as Follows:

Lo! My fair cousin had gone in to a hideous negro slave with his upper lip like the cover of a pot, and his lower like an open pot; lips which might sweep up sand from the gravel-floor of the cot. He was to boot a leper and a paralytic, lying upon a strew of sugar-cane trash and wrapped in an old blanket and the foulest rags and tatters (18).

Despite all these differences in translation and similarities both the texts; *The Arabian Nights* (1990) by Haddawy and *Arabian Nights* (2003) should be read as fragment of larger body of work as Bhabha’s in *The Location of Culture* (1994) refers to language of translation do not necessarily needs to strictly imitate the original “a translation, instead of making itself similar to the meaning of the original, it must... form itself according to the manner of meaning of the original, to make them both recognizable as the broken fragments of the greater language, just as fragments are the broken parts of a vessel.”(69) Hence, in accordance to these concepts of “fragments” as broken

parts of the vessel” both translation are of equal importance in giving Arabian Nights corpus a new identity in global contexts as each translation is a fragments in a vast corpus of translations and retranslation historically. Soha El-Samad1 in the article *A Cultural Median: One Thousand Nights and a Night before 1700* (2018) states about intercultural quality of Arabian Nights that “it is apparently an efficient cultural medium to help bridge the gap between cultures” (81).

The selected texts are significant in making Arabian Nights a ‘cultural medium’ or a liminal zone as it was only possible through cross-cultural translation helping the collection achieve independent identity. Along with that no translation is apt in the transference of meanings across cultures. The cultural context of a translated text, the time-period and the language of translation plays a significant role in making it different and unique than the original. As Bhabha states in the newness through the process of cultural translation in his essay, “How newness enters the world: Postmodern space, postcolonial times and the trials of cultural translation” in *The Location of Culture* (1994) as follows:

Translation is the performative nature of cultural communication... the sign of translation continually tells, or ‘tolls’ the different times and spaces between cultural authority and its performative practices... The ‘time’ of translation consists in that movement of meaning, the principle and practice of a communication that, in the words of de Man ‘puts the original in motion to decanonise it, giving it the movement of fragmentation, a wandering of errance, a kind of permanent exile’. (303-338)

Act of translation is a way of cultural communication between different cultures. The cultural context and the time period in which translation takes place give a different meaning to the text of the translation. The time-period and cultural realm in which different translators translated Arabian Nights endowed it with a new meaning in a particular context. This process of translation in turn helped in the survival of the tales and the transformation of Arabian Nights as a global folktale. Intentions of translator and temporal aspects of translation impacted on shaping the perception of the readers of the translated text. The western translators from Galland to Burton treated Arabian Nights as a true depiction of Arab life and each one of them claimed their translation as an accurate and authentic depiction of the east. Richard Francis Burton translated the text in the Victorian era of colonialism during 1884-1888. The period in which Burton translated western audiences were curious about the lands and cultures that were alien to them this curiosity contributed to setting of the intention of translated text as a factual account. It is evident in the history of translation and retranslations of The Arabian nights over a longer period of times Europeans used to study the text of the tales as the factual depiction of east and to study the lifestyles of people that were alien to them. Burton also added footnotes to the text to explain the cultures of people who were colonized. Burton's addition of footnotes to the translation can be taken as a flaw in the act of translation of a text making it less pure but unique. Haddaway in his introduction to *The Arabian Nights* (1990) criticized that, the Burton's "pseudo-archaic style" is entirely *Alien* to the original Arabic version since "Burton follows a general Victorian tendency to archaize and make more colorful the "rude" works of primitive times and

places.” (43-52) The intension behind Burton’s use of language “as the Arab would have written in English” (Burton) is to create an illusion of authenticity and to add something to English literature since Burton believed that, “the translator’s glory is to add something to his native tongue.”

Haddaway criticised earlier translations, he mentions how Burton came across many Arabic words which he could not comprehend so entirely dropped those words out of the text. Some passages depict entirely different meanings since Burton was not a native Arabic speaker but still he claimed his text as the original translation of Arabian Nights. Bhabha started his chapter eleven “How Newness Enters The World: Postmodern space, postcolonial times and the trials of cultural translation” by referring, “Translation passes through continua of transformation, not abstract ideas of identity and similarity” (303). The purpose of this research is not to conclude which translation is better but it focuses more on transformation of the Arabian nights in the liminal space of cultural differences by the application of Homi K. Bhaba’s the process of cultural translation in transnational forms a new identity that is double as Arabian Nights shifts from the parent Indo-Iranian culture to foreign western world to acquire identity that contains elements of both but yet unique and independent. In this regard, in *The “Arabian Nights” and the Question of Authorship* (2005), Ibrahim Muhawi states that “Burton’s “translation,” for example, is arguably not just a translation but a new work altogether—an attempt at creating a canonical Nights which never existed before”. (223-337)

Hussain Haddaway’s translation, on the other hand, belongs to a different era of Post-colonialism where the readers and audiences are part of a world which is

globally interconnected through the internet so now the expectations of readers differs. Now, *The Arabian Nights* (1990) is perceived as an aesthetic work of art rather than a historical account of Muslim world. The reception by audience differs in accordance to context and the aim of the each translator. Haddawy's presence in the liminal zone between being an Arab boy alienated to the world of Arabian Nights and an English Translator made his approach the text of translation differently. He commented upon his liminal presence and how it impacted his translation and his role as a translator in the introduction of his book, as follows:

The translator, who stands astride two cultures, possesses neo different sensibilities, and assumes a double identity, a translation is a journey of self- discovery...By translating the work, one translates oneself; the little Arab boy who listened to the Thousand and One Nights has become the English storyteller. He may have produced a strange creature, a man with an ass's head, or may even, like Bottom, sport an ass's head of his own. What does it matter so long as he has dreamed, in one Baghdad or another, a dream in the lap Of' a fairy queen. (61)

The selected texts are individual works of art having an independent identity of their own. But as far as the question of superiority of one narrator over the other is concerned it is only Shahrazad who among several narrators and translators of tales enjoys the mark of authority over the text for centuries. The learned narrator, "Shahrazad had read the books of literature, philosophy, and medicine. She knew poetry by heart, had studied historical reports, and was acquainted with the sayings of men and the maxims of sages

and kings.” (Haddawy 14-15) Her acquaintance with all the cultures of the world without judgment makes her superior to all the storytellers external to the text.

The translators outside the texts contributed to the density of framework of her tales, these translators lose their significance as the time passes. But, narratives of Shahrazad keep evolving and transforming by incorporation into other works of arts since the only reader or audience that remained constant through the process of transformation through hearing of tales is Shahryar who was once curious but later evolved as a learned man who learns his miss-calculation. The readers and narrators outside the text-only mimic the structure and relationship of Scheherazade and Shahryar inside the text. The king Shahryar as in-text audiences cures his madness by learning from and the experiences of humanity across the world belonging to different ethnicities, religions and temporality non-judgmentally. In the same way, the readers and audiences through different parts of the world should move beyond the treatment of this Arabian Nights corpus as a depiction of east or construct by the west to cure. The Scheherazade as a narrator tells the story to both delay her death and to bring the judgmental audience Shahryar back to sanity. Letting Shahryar realise through catharsis at first by relating to the tales that are similar to his situation. Later, listening to the tales from far off fantasy lands, opposite to his situation to judge his miscalculation of situation. He never questions which culture or race is superior or inferior but he aesthetically appreciated the view of six slave girls of creed, colour and shape in the tale of *‘The Man of Al-Yaman and His Six Slave-Girls’*. In the book of the *Arabian Nights* by Collins classics, Burton in the tale of *‘The Man of Al-Yaman and His Six Slave-Girls’* depicts the divinely

feminine beauties from all the races of the world. This tale of the man of Al-Yaman was narrated by Mohamed Al Basri to the Caliph Al-Maamun. He begins the story as follows:

(Man of Al-Yaman) has six slave-girls like moons one and all; the first white, the second brown, the third fat, the fourth lean, the fifth yellow and the sixth lamp-black; and all six were comely of countenance and perfect in accomplishments and skilled in the arts of singing and playing upon musical instruments... one day, he sent for girls and called for meat and wine; they eat and drank and was mirthful and made merry. (134)

On hearing the tale the caliph asks the poet if he could buy these slave-girls from their master. The poet inquired the master but the Man of Al- Yaman could not depart from his concubines though the Caliph offers the most expensive price but the master of these girls even after sailing them to caliph misses them too much and writes a letter to caliph about his present condition in the poetic verses. He claims the after bidding farewell to these six slave girls he feels as if he has said farewell to all of the humanity. The content of the letter is in these poetic verses:

Captured me six, all bright with youthful blee;

Then all six be best salams form me!

They are my hearing, seeing, very life;

...Whose loss hath turned my sleep to insomy:

...Alack, O longsome pining and O tears!

Would I have farewelled all Humanity; (Burton 151)

Phenomenon of One thousand and one Night can be taken as perfect example of a liminal space where cultural Syncretism took place. Reader is given the opportunity to laugh at Hunch Back tales where human with humanely guilt conscience from different religions gathers to take the responsibility of the murder none of them committed. The narrators and audience external to the text mimic the same function to make this tale as a part of interstitial space. The translators before Galland to Haddaway treated text of Arabian Nights as interstitial space which “provides an agency of initiation that enables one to possess again and anew - as in the movement ...the terrain of other histories, the hybridity of cultures” (Bhabha 338) Culture can never be original or remain the same and culture is in constant flux similarly the text of Arabian Nights as a transnational text of intercultural translations transforms through time. This act of cultural translation of Arabian Nights “works through ‘the continua of transformation’ to yield a sense of culture’s belonging” (Bhabha338) and as the tales travels through translation in it’s “going and coming, there rises the great history of the languages and landscapes of migration and diaspora”. (Bhabha 338).

As the question of authenticity or originality of Arabian Nights is concerned, Charles Stewart and Rosalind Shaw’s viewpoint about syncretism in the article *Syncretism/ Anti syncretism: The Politics of Religious Synthesis* can be taken into consideration. They state that “Authenticity or ‘originality’ do not necessarily depend on purity. They are claimable as ‘uniqueness’, and both pure and mixed traditions can be unique. What makes them ‘authentic’ and valuable is a separate issue, a discursive matter involving power, rhetoric and persuasion” (16). Each translator has some kind of authority over

the text yet the original author is still unknown and the question of the author in a post-modern reading of the text is not important. As in the tale of 'Porter and Three ladies of Baghdad' kept the condition of not asking questions surrounding these mysterious ways before letting them in their house which was a little world of entertainment in these words "he who speaks of what concerns him not Shall hear what please him not" (281). In the same ways, mysterious Arabian Nights entertainments never let the readers ask about the question of originality or authors. Recognition and originality of the Arabian nights as a post-modern work of art is independent of its translators or author as Nights have its independent identity. Each translation in Bhabha's term is a 'fragment' of a larger vessel of series of translations. While through migration from a history of translations across almost all languages of the world Arabian Nights became a universal representation of humanity in all its shapes and forms. The process of trans-cultural translation, despite the agenda of translators and reception of readers in specific periods of times, contributed to the evolution of *The Arabian Nights*. The process of translations is the major cause of Nights survival through history and each translator played an important role in the journey of the tales from pre-Islamic period to post-modern space in post-colonial times.

## **Conclusion**

To conclude, the selected tales from two main texts from Arabian Nights corpus employed in the research are amalgam of multiple cultures across the world from Persia to China, India to Arabia and from Europe to Africa. Along with that translators translated these translation in trans-cultural perspectives according to their own sensibilities and understanding of culture in specific temporal framework. This phenomenon of cultural

translation further led to coexistence, of multiple genera and literary conventions in the tales of Arabian nights making it a liminal zone. The title of Arabian Nights becomes an autonomous work of art that existed on its own and evolved regardless of agendas of translators and various translations and their reception by readers in specific period of time. Though, each translator added to thematic density and Arabian Nights evolution across cultures and transformation through times but the Queen Shahrazad remained the absolute narrator of the tales. Shahrazad takes her chief audience Shahryar on the voyages to far of lands of China, Yamen, Bagdad, Cairo and Turkey where different cultures are practiced and people of different religions coexists. Humanity is presented in all shapes and forms on the basis of different skin color and physiognomy but primal human instincts remain the same. Scherezade narrates to cures the chief audience Shahryar by taking him in the flight of fantasy to the slices of times in historical reality where vices and virtues are depicted irrespective of cast, creed or gender. The chief audience Shahryar only cures himself when he realizes his miscalculation of events that occurred. His curiosity to understand people from foreign lands with non-judgmental eyes led him to cure himself. The readers and translators external to the Arabian Night's corpus should mimic the chief storyteller and her reader to understand the placement of Arabian Nights in trans-cultural perspective and as a global folktale in world literature.

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