

ISSN 2347 – 503X

Research Chronicler

International Multidisciplinary Research Journal

Vol I Issue II : December 2013

Editor-In-chief

Prof. K. N. Shelke

www.research-chronicler.com

Research Chronicler

A peer-reviewed refereed and indexed international multidisciplinary research journal

Volume I Issue II: December – 2013

CONTENTS

Name of the Author	Title of the Paper	Download
Dr. Archana & Dr. Pooja Singh	Feminine Sensibility Vs. Sexuality: A New Dimension	1201PDF
Dr. Akhilesh Kumar Dwivedi	Interrogating Representations of History: A Study of Mukul Kesavan's <i>Looking Through Glass</i>	1202 PDF
Dr. A.P. Pandey	Problems and Promises in Translating Poetry	1203 PDF
Dr. Ketan K. Gediya	Generation Divide among Diaspora in Jhumpa Lahiri's <i>Unaccustomed Earth</i>	1204 PDF
Dr. Nisha Dahiya	Patriotic Urge in Sarojini Naidu's Poetry	1205 PDF
Md. Irshad	Shashi Deshpande's <i>That Long Silence</i> : A Study of Assertion and Emotional Explosion	1206 PDF
Dr. Shanti Tejwani ICT	: As an Effective Tool for Teacher Trainees	1207 PDF
Dr. Manoj Kumar Jain	Differences in Stock Price Reaction to Bond Rating Changes: With Special Ref from India	1208 PDF
Maushmi Thombare	Bahinabai Chaudhari – A Multidimensional Poet	1209 PDF
Prof. Deepak K. Nagarkar	Death as Redemption in Arthur Miller's <i>Death of a Salesman</i>	1210 PDF
Dr. Vijaykumar A. Patil	Zora Neale Hurston's Theory of Folklore	1211 PDF
Dr. Jaiprakash N. Singh	Dalitonki Vyatha-Katha: Dalitkatha	1212 PDF
Raj Kumar Mishra	Traces of Hindu Eco-Ethics in the Poetry of A.K. Ramanujan	1213 PDF
Dr. Nidhi Srivastava	A Comparative Study of Values and Adjustment of Secondary School Students With and Without Working Mothers	1214 PDF
Sanjeev Kumar Vishwakarma	<i>Pinjar</i> : From Verbal to Audio-visual Transmutation	1215 PDF
Swati Rani Debnath	W.B. Yeats: Transition from Romanticism to	1216 PDF

	Modernism	
Sushil Sarkar	Environment and Woman: Reflections on Exploitation through Eco-Feminism in Mahasweta Devi's <i>Imaginary Maps</i>	1217 PDF
Book Review		
Sangeeta Singh	Goddess in Exile: A Sad Tale of Female Existentialism	1218 PDF
Poetry		
Bhaskar Roy Barman	On The Marge	1219 PDF
Dr Seema P. Salgaonkar	Entrapped	1220 PDF
Jaydeep Sarangi	I Live for My Daughter / Writing Back	1221 PDF
Interview		
Prof. Masood Ahmed	Interview with Poet Arbind Kumar Choudhary	1222 PDF

Problems and Promises in Translating Poetry

Dr A.P. Pandey

R.J. College, Ghatkopar (W), Mumbai (M.S.) India

ABSTRACT

This paper tends to focus on the alarming difficult course that a translator undergoes while translating poetry. A little casual approach towards translation of a poem can do blunders and hurt the feeling of readers. The translation of a poem demands considerable amount of perseverance, as the translator is required to bring out the flavor and taste of the original work with required poetic associations such as imagery, symbols, assonance, metrical composition, figures of speech etc. Since language is a culture oriented body, the translator faces the problem of translating certain culture specific words into other language. Hence he should discourage the practice of translating such words which otherwise will create much misunderstanding and will do more damage than good to the readers. Despite these barriers, translation is indispensable and need to be carried forward to promote communication across the world.

Key Words: Translation, Source Language, Target Language, Culture

I would like to begin my research paper entitled *Problems in Translating Poetry* with an anecdote closely concerned with the problems in the process of translating poetry. It is a Sanskrit *cloak* from the Veda rendered into English by an English translator. The first line of the text – *Prjaapatirswaduhitarm adhawat* - was translated as *Brahma chased his daughter passionately*. This enraged the Indian scholars who asked for clarification as to why this irrational translation was rendered humiliating and vitiating the entire scriptural body of learning. The translator of this *shloka* was questioned who in turn admitted that he had not read the entire *shloka* and that his translation was based on his partial reading of the text. If he had read the entire *shloka*, he would have not made the blunder

of rendering such controversial and ignoble translation. The last line of the *shloka* which was left unread by him was- *prajapatir vai savita-* which means *prajapati stands for sun*. Now the entire meaning of the controversial translation becomes clear that the sun chased his rays in morning which is the natural course of nature. This anecdote throws light on the fact that translation work is all the more a serious and challenging activity and full of problems and promises.

A translator should read the entire piece of writing which he tends to transfer from one language to another. He should be careful and try to understand the spirit and implication of the original text; otherwise he will be tempted to make the kind of translation rendered by the English translator generating utter “sound and fury” of readers. It also establishes that translation

is not at all a fascinating exercise to be easily undergone but full of complexities, problems, challenges and, of course, promises. In the nineteenth century, Romantic poet John Keats acknowledged the great significance of translation which sharpened his creative sensibility and offered an in-depth insight into Greek literature through translated versions of literary corpus. He appreciates the charismatic role played by translation in his one of the poems:

Much have I travell'd in the realm of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdom seen;
Round many western islands I have been
Which bards in featly to Apollo hold.

This is an emotional outburst of Keats which he makes in his poem “*On First Looking into Chapman’s Homer*” on relishing the delicacies of the literary feast of Homer’s masterpieces *Odyssey* and *Iliad* through English translations rendered effectively by Chapman. The knowledge of thus Greek Literature and culture deepened his insight and widened his perception to such an extent that he treated a number of themes in his literary expressions derived from Greek literary reservoir. This shows that translation has been an excellent means of communication in European countries. The Renaissance Age is called golden age in the history of English literature due to its strong outpourings of literary works based on the Greek literature flowed torrentially through the percolating streams of English translation. Similarly, in India too translation is not a new area of interest but an old repercussion where a number of Sanskrit texts have been rendered into translations of regional languages to enable

the common man to have an insight into the classical texts. For instance, the translations of Sanskrit epical works the Ramayana and Mahabharata into Hindi and regional languages show the active engagement of committed Indian scholars with translation activities.

Now in the age of globalization, it is an essential agenda to promote this activity to disseminate the fragrance of knowledge related to science, technology, culture, literature etc across the world. But it is reasonable to mention here that in order to pursue this drive, literatures of other languages need to be rendered into English as it is the link language of the world for every practical purpose. Since it is not possible for one to master many languages at a time, translation is the only safest and surest recourse of activity to be taken up to enter into the domain of knowledge encapsulated in unfamiliar languages. In recent times, there has been an unprecedented boom in translation activity in India. The prominent publishing houses such as Macmillan India, Penguin India, Orient Longman and other similar kinds of publishing houses are keenly interested in publishing English translation of regional writers. The Central and State Academics have generously been sponsoring translation projects in a big way. This tends to encourage the translation activity so that the huge corpus of literature of the world which has so far been remained untouched by the readers might be accessed to contribute substantially to the existing treasure of knowledge. To promote its academic scope and stature, a paper on *Literature in Translations* has been prescribed at the

graduate as well at the post graduate levels invariably by most of the universities in India with slightly varying titles of the papers.

Translation has been variously described by scholars in different places at different points of time. For Example, Theodore Savory defines translation as an “art”¹ and Jacobsen defines it as a “craft”², while Eugene Nida describes it as a “science”³. In fact, translation is more than these- art, craft and science. It is a process of analysis, interpretation and creation which leads to a replacement of one set of linguistic resources and value for another. Some of the thinkers take very light view of translation and pass quite embarrassing comments. Italian critic, Benedetto Croce states “translator is a traitor, falsifier of original”. French saying “Translation is like a mistress, if faithful it is not beautiful, if beautiful it is not faithful” does not hold much grains of truth. Robert Frost feels that “poetry is what gets lost in translation”. A Hebrew poet feels that “Translation of poetry is like kissing one’s sweetheart through a veil”. These views offered by these thinkers seem to be relevant to some extent regarding the translation of poetry. True, the translation of poetry is difficult but proper care and precautions while translating makes it a pleasant exercise in due course of time. Translation of poetry is considered relatively a difficult exercise as it evolves music, melody, feet, metre, figure of speech and other literary devices which need to be retained otherwise the spirit of the poem is irreparably marred. Thus the translator should be extra cautious in order to retain the original spirit and flavor of the

poem. It will be mentioned in the paper how some of the translators have translated prose and poetic expressions so well that the rendered version of translation becomes more forceful than the original.

According to Dr. Johnson Translation is the process of “change into another language, retaining the sense”. A. H. Smith opines “to translate is to change into another language retaining as much of the sense as one can”.⁴

Catford defines translation from the language point of view: “Translation may be defined as follow: the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent material in another language”.⁵

In *Theory and Practice of Translation*, Peter Newmark states that in the process of translation there is some loss of original text is possible and this “basic loss of meaning is on continuum between over translation and under-translation.”⁶

These above definitions lead to form an opinion that translation is in the first place is the transference of meaning from Source Language (SL) to the Target Language (TL). Translation is both linguistic and cultural activity to communicate the meaning of an utterance. It is not merely lexical equivalent of words of one language to that of another but much more. Since each word is charged with memory, associations and literary echoes; it is difficult to find full equivalence of source language in target language. A translator should possess inwardness with both the languages-source language from which translation is to be done, and target language to which the translation is to be

made. He must have mastery over both the languages and words should “obey his calls”. Above all, he should have a feel for the language. Secondly, in the translation of literature, literal translation should be avoided because it fails to carry the transposition of culture. Since the language is culture specific, translator fails to translate certain culture specific words into another language. From example, Krishna’s *Raskrida* or *Raslila* is difficult to translate into English. Similarly, the Love Play for *Lila* is inadequate translation as it does not offer the spirit of the phrase for which it is originally used. A word like **Abhiman** has no equivalent word in English, and *pique* or *pride* is a poor translation of the word, which has a lot of association in Indian context. The Hindi word **Pap** has definitely an equivalent word *sin* in English but hardly we come across any equivalent for **punya** which can give right flavor to our notion.

The term **gentleman** cannot be rendered faithfully in Hindi, even *sambhrant* borrowed from Sanskrit does not really serve the purpose nor does the Bengali *bhadralog*. The translation of **pradakshina path, vedika and toran** as *circumbulatory path, railing and gateway* respectively into English spoils the very spirit and grace of the language. Terms from Indian poetics such as **ras, vakrokti vyanjana** are just not translatable into English as these words offer altogether a different kinds of concepts which cannot be expressed through translation. Similarly, the translation of some English words such as **necktie** as *kanthlagont*, **cigarette** as *dhumra heal dandika*, **train** as *lauhpathgamini*, **postal stamp** as *perssmudrak*, **spectacles** as

netrak, give unnatural flavor to the originals. These illustrations show that it is very difficult to render mutual translation between two languages which do not culturally share common things.

The translation two languages culturally close will be much easier than those which are culturally distanced. All Indian languages share many structural features in grammar with a large shared lexicon, which is Sanskrit based. According to Bh. Krishnamurti, “With shared sociolinguistic and cultural traits, inter-translatability is the highest between any two Indian languages than between two western languages.”⁷ However, one should be careful as Homonyms of Indian languages create problems for the translators. For example, **uphar** in Marathi signifies *refreshment* but in Hindi present or gift. **Uttej** means in Marathi *inspired* but in Hindi it means *angry* or *exited* or *agitated*. **Khali** in Marathi means *below* or *down* but in Hindi it is used in the sense of *vacant* or *empty*. **Shiksha** is *teaching* or *education* in Hindi but *punishment* in Marathi. **Rajinama** stands for *resignation* in Marathi but *agreement* in Hindi. Similarly, the word **ashuddha** in Hindi means *incorrect* while in Kashmir *precious*. **Jal** in Hindi means *holy water* associated with religious note as quite often people use Ganga jal, but the same word in Kashmir means *urine*. If explored, a host of words from different languages can be traced out which are though homonyms but have different interpretation, connotations and meanings. Therefore, the translator needs to be extra conscious and careful while translating such words from one language to another language otherwise he

will create blunders spoiling the true spirit and meaning of the language.

In addition to this, one has to take into account the nature and usage of a language conventionally practiced. For example, it is a practice in English to write that *He has taken examination*, but in Hindi this expression is translated as *Vah pariksha de chuka hai*. If its literal translation is rendered without taking into consideration the specific practice of English language it will mean that *Vah pariksha le chukka hai*, which will be a blunder. If one renders a literal translation from Hindi into English without looking into the practice of language, there is the possibility of similar blunder or wrong translation which would be unacceptable. For example, Hindi expression: *mujhe angrezi aati hai* is likely to be translated as: *English comes to me*, which is not in tune with the cultural and linguistic pattern and practice of the source language. There are a number of expressions in English if translated literally create an unpatchable communication gap, for example, *there is no room in car, he is playing on guitar, please sing a song for me* etc. Proverbs and sayings are generally not translatable, as they have got some historical background behind their origin. Their literal translation will not imply or give force for what they stand. But if the translator is conversant with that specific language, he can successfully create the required effect with the rendition of his translation. It is then referred to as sense for sense translation. For example Hindi **Kanjoos** can be translated as a *closed fist* in English or English *broken heart* as **bhagna hriday**. **Herculean task** from English can

be an apt translation as *Bhagirath prayas* in Hindi as both Hercules and Bhagirath were strong characters in English and Hindi scriptural references respectively. The famous Hindi saying **Birbal ki khichadi** can be translated in English as *Penelope's web* as both refers to undue delay caused by Birbal and Penelope purposely to justify their points of view respectively in Hindi and Greek mythologies. These examples have been offered here to show that there can be a fairly good translation if translator has fairly good command over both Source Language (SL) and Target Language (TL) and tries to retain the original spirit.

The translation of poetry is more difficult than that of prose. The level of difficulty is caused due to various associations, images, figure of speech, assonance, rhythm, harmony, and also unprecedented phonological and syntactical and semantic patterns such as rhyming alliteration, versification, morphological parallelism etc. That is the reason why reading of a poem is in itself an act of creating interpretation. Transferring a poem into another language becomes an act of creative transposition. The translator is a guide and a reader and therefore his act of reading becomes co-terminus with his reading of it. According to Hugh Kenner, "As the poet begins by seeing, so the translator by reading; but his reading must be a kind of seeing"⁸. The two great scholars and Indian critics Sri Aurobindo and K.R.S. Iyengar have expressed their deep concern over translating poetry into another language. Iyengar says: Poetry by its very nature is untranslatable. Idea can be translated from language to language, but

poetry is the idea touched with the magic of phrase and incantatory music. Competent translator can, however, play the good broker between the poet and reader, and surpassing the mere prose of the statement can give intimation of the poet's sovereign utterance. Good translator can create trust and it can stimulate interest.⁹

However, if the translator of poetry takes into account both the linguistic and non linguistic aspects of a poem, he may succeed in accomplishing his job to a greater extent. The translator should bear in mind that he has to translate a piece of writing, not to rewrite or produce an interpretation of it.

At this point of time, it is reasonable to give an example of Hindi translation of Edward Fitzgerald's Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam by Harivanshrai Bachchan an eminent writer of Hindi, who translates from English to Hindi and vice-versa:

Ah, with the grape of my fading Life Provide,
And wash the body whence the life has died,
And in winding sheet of Vine- leaf wrapt,
So bury me by some sweet Garden -side.

Bachchan in his *Madhushala* (1935) translates the above:

*Priye, madira se dena seench, adhar mere hote mritmlan,
Maroon tab madira se pran, karana mere shav ko snan.
Angoori patton se mrit dehmoond hi shaiya das.
Sula dena mujhko chupchap, kisi madhumay upvan ke pas.*

A literal translation:

Beloved, moisten with vine my lips as they become death withered
When I die, my dear, bathe my body with wine.
Cover my body with vine leaves, of which also having made a bed.

Lay me down quietly to sleep by some vinous garden.¹⁰

Perhaps Harivanshrai Bachchan feels that translation is an animating activity. This is the reason how he translated a number of Shakespearean plays and a sizeable amount of poems from alien land into English. For instance, he translated Robert Frost's poem successfully retaining the spirit of the original poem. The first stanza of the poem is given in original in English, and its rendition in Hindi:

Woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to make,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

[Robert Frost: Stopping by Woods...]

Hindi rendition:

*Saghan gahan manmohak vantaru mujhako
aaj bulate hain
Kintu kiye jo vayade, usaki yaad dilate hain
Mujhe kahan aaram bada hai, maun
nimantran chhalna hai
Are abhee to milon mujhko milon mujhko
chalna hai
Are abhee to milon mujhko milon mujhko
chalna hai.*

Another great poet of Hindi literature Sumitranandan Pant, who was honored with the Gyanpeeth Award, highest literary award in India for his *Chidambara* has translated a few English poems into Hindi. For example, his translation of just two lines of Shelley's Ode *To a Skylark* gives an insight into a successful art of translation which serves the reader with the feast of the original English version:

Shelley's original lines:

Teach me half of the gladness
That thy brain must know.

[P.B. Shelley: Ode to a Skylark]

Sumitranandan Pant's Hindi translation:

*Sikha do naa, he madhupkumari,
Mujhe bhi apane meethe gaan.11*

These two illustrations of well-known Hindi poets have been offered to bring out the fact that creative writers who are involved in the process of poetic composition can be more successful translators. The simple reason behind this success is that they are familiar with the tenets of poetry such as assonance, rhythm, figures of speech, music, melody, meter, feet etc, and while translating a poem from one language to another language, they apply those literary devices spontaneously creating genuine poetic effect for the readers.

The above discussion on the art of translation comes to a concluding note that translation is such an important activity that it cannot be dispensed with in the age of

References:

- 1: Theodore Savory, *The Art of Translation*, London: Cape, 1957
- 2: Eric Jacobsen, *Translation, A Traditional Craft*, Copenhagen: Nordisk Forlag, 1958
- 3: Eugene Nida, *Towards a Science of Translating*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1964
- 4: A.H. Smith, ed., *Aspects of Translation*; (London: Seeker and Warburg, 1988) P. 8
- 5: J.C. Catford, *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*, London: OUP, 1965, P. 20
- 6: R.S. Pathak (quoted) "Untranslatability: Myth or Reality," *Critical Practice*, 1:2 (1994)
- 7: Eds. T. Vinoda, V. Gopal Reddy: *Studies in Translation; Theory and Practice*, Prestige books, New Delhi, 2000, p.12
- 8: Hugh Kenner, *Introduction, The translations of Ezra Pound*, London. Faber and Faber, 1953, p.10.
- 9: Bijay Kumar Das (quoted), *A Handbook of Translation Studies*, Atlantic, New Delhi 2005, p.54
- 10: T. Vinoda and V. Gopal Reddy, *English Translation of Regional Literature*, Prestige Books, New Delhi, 2000, p.15
- 11: Nagendra, *Sumitranandan Pant*, Sahityaratna Bhandar, Agra, 1963, p.77

globalization. But this art itself has a number of barriers which need to be overcome for a pleasant and meaningful translation. Translation is an ongoing activity which matures with constant practice on the part of the translator. In the latter half of the 20th century, with the advent of structuralism, Deconstruction and Reader-response criticism, translation study took a new turn. In recent criticism which denies the author, undermines the text, highlights the reader and emphasizes the "polysemy of interpretation" and pleads for "indeterminacy" of meaning, the art of translation has become increasingly difficult. Despite these obstacles, the translation activity can do wonders if done positively with some dos and don'ts and if a translator tries to explore new techniques and art rather than sticking to the traditional ones.