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The Problems & Pleasure of Translation

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Abstract

Translation is a journey from one language to another. Translation Studies find place in the curriculum of many disciplines – Linguistics, English Literature, Comparative Literature, Culture Studies, Semiotics and other disciplines. In the modern era, translation is regarded as a glocal activity. It is global and at the same time local. The translation of Literature poses a good deal of problems for the translator. The translator comes out of this problematic only when he finds translation a creative activity and enjoys it. Actually, translation is a creative work and any creative work gives pleasure to the creator as well as the reader. Translation is like a race of hurdles. When we cross the hurdles and achieve the destination, we get pleasure, so translation certainly gives pleasure.

Human beings all over the world communicate among themselves through different and numerous languages. That creates the problem of communication and the need for communication among different communities of the world through transference or substitution of meanings from one language to another and hence the birth of translation took place. Translation is a journey from one language to another. It is a kind of linguistic bridge building. In the 21st century translation is considered as an important aspect and the component of language learning. While learning a new language, translation helps us a lot. For example – While teaching different shades of words like smiling, giggling, laughing, etc we can certainly take help of our language. By using translation in teaching, we can master first and second language or source language and target language. Translation Studies find place in the curriculum of many disciplines – Linguistics, English Literature, Comparative Literature, Culture Studies, Semiotics and other disciplines. Questions about translation are intimately connected with the question about the nature and the origin of language.

Translation is an operation performed on two languages, source language and target language. Jakobson regards translation as the interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language. Any language works on different levels. It works mainly on phonetic, syntactic and semantic level. Translation should find equivalence in all levels. Meetham and Hudson say,

Translation is the replacement of a representation of a text in one language by a representation of an equivalent text in second language. Texts in different languages can be equivalent in different languages (fully or partially equivalent) in respect of different levels of representation context, semantics, grammar, lexis etc) and in different ranks (word for word, phrase for phrase, sentence for sentence. (Meetham and Hudson).

A translation is a work of art in its own right, but it is worthy to be called a translation only if it gives as much feel of the original as possible.

The literary translations from one language to another have not only enriched the literary traditions of Literature but also brought about a dialogue between two cultures, their people and societies. 'Translation is finding expressions in another language preserving the semantic and stylistic equivalence matching grammatical structures and cultural contexts.' (Zoubi and Bhargava: 68)

In Sanskrit, the term 'Chhaya' is used for translation. (Bapat: 50) It means an image, a reflection, suggesting similarity to, and not identity with, the original. It is imitative and creative, faithful and free in re-building or re-structuring a given pattern or an indeterminate mass of meaning. That is why, a translated literary work is viewed not as an exact replica of its original but rather as a version of it.

Several scholars in different places at different points of time have described translation variously. For instance, Theodore Savory defines translation as an 'art'; Eric Jacobson defines it as a 'craft, while Eugene Nida describes it as a 'science'. In fact, Translation is more than all these art, craft and science.

In the modern era, translation is regarded as a glocal activity. It is global and at the same time local. Translation is local activity in a multi-lingual and multi cultural country like India. Translation is creative; it recreates SL text in a new way in the target language. Translator's originality lies in an 'original' recreation of the 'original'

A good translation is not only a journey from one language to another but also it is a dialogue between two cultures. The duty of translation is to carry the transposition of culture. The translator should not only give the lexical equivalents of words but keep in mind the socio-cultural matrix. For example, the ritual of *Kanyadan* is related only to Hindu marriage system and Hindu mythology. To translate it properly so that a foreigner will understand it is a challenging and difficult task. While translating a text into T.L. from S.L., the equivalence will have to be established on the linguistic level, syntactic level, stylistic level, pragmatic level, semantic level and cultural level as culture plays very important role in translation. Translation should aim at bridging the gap between two languages and two cultures. The translator should possess linguistic ability and cultural inwardness. His role is the role of a comparatist. In the present times translation is viewed as transformation and transposition of culture rather than purely linguistic activity. Since language is to some extent culture-oriented, translators face the problem of translating certain culture-based words into another language with a different culture. For instance, Lord Krishna's *Raskrida* is difficult to translate into English. Similarly, the translation of 'love-play' for 'lila' seems to be inadequate and something is missing in such translation. Words like *Dharma*, *Moksha*, *Toran*, and *Pradakshina* are problematic for translation. In the same way, the term 'gentleman' cannot be translated fully in Indian languages. Sometimes the real sense of the original terms evaporates as soon as they are translated.

The translation of Literature poses a good deal of problems for the translator. Literary translation involves not only the transference of meaning but also a host of associations charged with the meaning, which need to be translated from SL text into TL text. Poetry translation poses formidable challenge to the translator. The most difficult thing in poetry translation is to find equivalent words of literary echoes in the target language. While translating poetry the major problem is about the loss of beauty of language and power of words. A translator may find equivalent word but sometimes it is not the appropriate word. For example, it is quite difficult to capture the beauty of Shakespeare's language in Hamlet (eg. Words! Words! Words!). It is again difficult to translate certain poems which are written in folk languages. Language used in poetry is full of rhyme, rhythm, musicality and various devices. That musicality, the translator has to transform into target language. For example, look at the following translations

"O my love's like a red, red rose
That's newly sprung in June.
O my love's like the melody
That's sweetly played in June" (Robert Burns)
"Mazi Priya Vasantatil Gard Gulabkali Janu
Mazi Priya Madhur Surat Chhedaleli Suravat Janu"

(Marathi Translation – Self)

“*Meri Priya Basantme Khili Gulabkali Jaisi*
Meri Priya Madhu Madhur Suronki Ladi Jaisi”

(Hindi Translation – Self)

A poet like Wordsworth who is highly emotive and gifted with imaginative power and the master of words is really a challenge to translate. Another important problem of translation is that it deviates from the original text at different levels lexical, semantic, syntactical and rhetorical and appropriateness of the choice of form. To translate poetry and then make it like original text is fraught with multiple problems. Sometimes to make the poem more graceful the translator gets deviated so much so that, that he transcreates and not translates. The question is how much liberty the translator should be given? Sri Aurobindo talks of two ways of translating poetry.

One to keep it strictly to the manner and turn of the original, and the other is to take its spirit, sense and imagery and produce them freely so as to suit the new language. [431]

To Aurobindo the second method of translating poetry is preferable. Krishna Srinivas an able translator says,

In ultimate sense poetry can not be translated but its magical web of meaning and imagery can be brought out in the translated version, it can be also transcreation. [52]

But still translation is not a boring or monotonous activity. Actually, translation is a creative work and any creative work gives pleasure to the creator as well as the reader. If a translator translates a poem balancing the music, metre and sense he gives and gets pleasure. Let us look at certain examples

In Marathi a poem *Akashatil Gharis* is written by the poet Datt.

“*Amaryad ha vyomsindhu gambhir*
Madhe chalali ghar hi nav dhir”

Is translated as

“Limitless like the sea
is the sky serene
floating a kite high

like a brave marine.” (Self translation)

Translator takes liberties. In the main poem metaphor is used but the translator uses simile. The main poem has a couplet the translator makes a quartet.

Another example in a poem by Mangesh Padgaonkar.

“*Mala sanga prem mhanaje kay asat ?*
Tumacha ani amacha sagalach same asat.”

Is translated as

‘Tell me, tell me what is love after all?

Isn’t it the same for one and all?’ (Self translation)

Here the translator uses repetition but he repeats different words. The first line in the S.L. poem is in question form and the second line is the answer. But the translator has used second line as a rhetorical question.

Translation of dramatic text poses another kind of problem. Dialogues in dialects of a language that is far removed from the target language are very difficult to translate. For example – In the translation of Shantata *Court Chalu Ahe. (Silence the Court is in Session)*, we find the satire and irony has been lost. In the same way how can we translate the magical words of Shakespeare ‘Thou art soul in bliss’, Fair is foul and foul is fair’ into our languages which are so vastly different from English language? In the same way certain Indian words, phrases, sentences are not translated fully.

The translator comes out of this problematic only when he finds translation a creative activity and enjoys it. Finally, it can be added that a literary translator's job is challenging in that it is, in T.S. Eliot's words 'an intolerable wrestle with words and meaning'. (68) Translation is not a monotonous activity. Actually, it is a creative work and any creative work gives pleasure to the creator as well as the reader. Translation is like a race of hurdles. When we cross the hurdles and achieve the destination, we get pleasure, so translation certainly gives pleasure.

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