



TRANSLATION: BUILDING BRIDGE IN LITERATURE OF DIFFERENT LANGUAGES AND CULTURES

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ABSTRACT

Language is the main element of translation as well as literature. The literature in any language encompasses the entire culture of the society of that language. Culture is one of the sources in production of language. Language comes from culture. Language is an indivisible part of culture. Translation is very closely associated with both language and culture of the society. So it is a linguistic as well as cultural activity. Language affects thought processes and it creates a distinctive system of beliefs pertaining to and peculiar to culture. This shows a direct connection between translation and culture. A clash and a compromise between two languages in translation lead to the cross-cultural communication. This clash and compromise take place among bilinguals and bicultural whose system of beliefs undergoes a liberalizing process of cultural assimilation. Translation helps to share the ideas, thoughts and culture of each other and builds the bridge between two societies of different culture and language.

INTRODUCTION

Language is related the shared cultural knowledge and the same time it is the part of thought process and thought content. The relation between language and culture can be seen clearly in the language which is contained within culture; so it would not to be far from truth to say in the words of Ward Goodenough

“That a society’s language is an aspect of its culture ... the relation of language to culture is that of part to whole.” Translation is linguistic and cultural activity that’s why it easily builds the bridge between two cultures. [1980: 83]

As language comes from culture and translation is linguistic activity it transfers the meaning from one language into another language. As it states by Sussan Bassnatt

“Beyond the notion stressed by the narrowly linguistic approach that translation involves the transfer of ‘meaning’ contained in one set of language signs through



competent use of the dictionary and grammar, the process involves a whole set of extra-linguistic criteria also.” (2002: 22)

The transmission of meaning from one language to another language needs linguistic as well as cultural knowledge of both languages.

Two languages and two cultures are mostly different from each other. And here the translation becomes difficult to get the equivalent words from SL into TL. The translation should not give the lexical equivalent of word but should keep the socio-cultural matrix. Language is never a mechanical sound system but each word is charged with memory, associations and literary allusions. Since language is to extent cultural oriented, translating certain culture based words into another language with different culture creates difficulty in translation. For instance ‘*pindala kawala shivne*’, ‘*haat piwale karne*’, and ‘*shivdhanushya pelne*’ these idioms are bound to culture and so difficult to translate. The same way we don’t get semantic term in English for *raskrida*, *krishnleela*, *laxaman resha*, *bhishma pratidnya* and *bhagirath prayatna* as these all words are bound to culture. Even after these difficulties the translator translates the text and tries to convey the true meaning of SL into TL.

A noted soviet semiotician, Juri Lotman, views language as a ‘Primarily Modeling System’ and describes literature and art in general as ‘Second Modeling System’. For the later are derived from the former so he declares - “No language can exist unless it is steeped in the context of culture and no culture can exist which does not have at its center, the structure of natural language”. (1978: 211) The language is a means for spreading the culture all over the world. And the people of that culture spread their language wherever they go. Translation is linguistic activity and as language comes from culture, doing translation as just on language level may fail to carry the essence of original. As Susan Bassnett says,

“Language, then, is the heart within the body of culture and it is the interaction between the two that results in the continuation of life energy. In the same way that the surgeon operating on the heart cannot neglect the body that surrounds it, so the translator treats the text in isolation from the culture at his peril”. (2002: 23)

Culture and language are closely intertwined. For instance the word *jata*, in Marathi, with the utterance of this word *Mahadeva’s* hair or any *rishi-muni’s* hair come in front of our eyes but when it is translated in English as matted hair this translation doesn’t bring the same feeling among us. But it may connect the content of today’s parlour’s. To fill in the cultural gap between two languages explanations, footnotes, borrowings etc may be restored to wherever required. The differences between languages and cultures create the problems of translation.

When a language exists in a particular culture it is very difficult to understand the meaning of linguistic text which is to be comprehended on line with particular culture. Cultural words



create problems as the impact of them gets lost in the process of translation. For instance English words ‘cousin’, ‘uncle’, and ‘aunt’ have a numbers of corresponding words in Indian languages and therefore, translation of these words into Indian languages becomes ambiguous like- “My uncle came yesterday.” Here we don’t get father’s brother or mother’s brother because in Marathi father’s brother is called ‘*kaka*’ and mother’s brother is called ‘*mama*’, just calling uncle is not sufficient but use of paternal uncle and maternal uncle may solve the problem. But in Hindi a term ‘*samdhi*’ and Marathi term ‘*iwai*’ explains the relationship between two persons whose son and daughter get married and become husband and wife respectively. In English we have no equivalent words for these Hindi words ‘*samdhi*’ and his wife ‘*samdhan*’ or Marathi words ‘*iwai*’ and his wife ‘*iinbai*’.

Certain food items of Indian words of common use in everyday conversation based on culture cannot be translated accurately into another language. For instance the Indian food items like *halwa*, *puri*, *pavbhaji*, *pakoda* and *kheer*. The same way foreign words like pizza, Manchurian and burger don’t have equivalent words in another language so; these words are borrowed as it is in another language. Translation moves between two languages and two cultures, playing on the uncertainty of meaning both in SL and TL. So while translating any literary text from one language into another language the translator has to keep his eyes on cultures of both languages. Ashok Chaskar states, “Culture and literature are mutually related. Literature is more than a realistic of human life. It highlights the whole panorama of human life by subsuming in it the cultural traits, institutions, social stratification and power structures of a society. Thus, literature enshrines in it all the cultural aspects of a society including its beliefs, knowledge, values and practices.” (2010: 4) Translation carries one culture’s cultural aspects into another culture with its ideas and values.

Translation of literature is in practice from ancient ages up to now and it plays an important role in building bridge between two cultures. Ramayana, Mahabharata, Quran and Bible all are religious and holy books but all are translated into other languages as all these books are part of culture oriented literature. Ancient time the Greek literature was translated into Latin and many European languages; Sanskrit literature was translated into many Indian languages as well as foreign languages. For instance Aeschylus’, Sophocles’, and Euripides’ Greek dramas are translated into many languages of the world. Kalidas’ *Shakuntal* and Meghduta and Shudraka’s *Mrichchhkatika* are translated into many Indian languages as well as foreign languages. Greek and English languages and its cultures are different from each other but the translation of Greek dramas into English enriches English language. The same way translation of Sanskrit dramas into English, Latin into English and French into English or Hindi build bridge between the cultures.

We are very well familiar with the literature which is written in Sanskrit, Greek and Latin language. We don’t know these ancient languages but we know the literature which is written in these languages. It is possible only because of translation. Kalidas, Shudraka, Bhasa,



Homer, Virgil, Ovid, Dante and Pindar are translated into many present languages. Translation enriches the literature as well as the language of TT. The problem of equivalence makes the translator to borrow the words from ST into TT as not finding the equivalent in TT. For instance Hindi words 'saree', 'curry', 'masala papad' and 'halwa' are borrowed in English. Italian and Chinese words chips, cake, and noodles are borrowed into Hindi and Marathi as it is.

Translation is communicative activity as any other linguistic act. It is not merely lexical equivalent of words of one language to that of another but more than that. The work of translation is equally different as that of two different cultures and customs. Translating any type of literary text is challenge for translator. In translation the translator has to go for two different languages. Two different languages never equal on the different level like grammatical level, syntactical level, semiotactic level and structural level. Idioms and idiomatic phrases provide an obvious difficulty in translation of literary text. Equivalence of words in two or more languages is hard to come by in literary and some time in non-literary text. Translation of literary text involves not only the transference of meaning but a host of associations charged with the meaning which need to be translated from SL text into TL text. Translator has to keep his eyes on language as well as culture of SL and TL while translating any text.

Indian writing in English translation has taken Indian writing at international level. Even it has taken Indian culture at international level. Through this translation now it remains our responsibility to introduce our rich literature to the rest of India and to the whole world. For instance translation of 'Geetanjali' won the Nobel award. Translation from SL into TL and vice versa involves not only two different sets of language signs of semiotics, but also whole sets of extra linguistic criteria which involve the cultural context. Translation of Ramayana, Mahabharata and Bhagwat Geeta not only introduces the Hindu religion to the world but also make it popular all over the world. Translation of religious books help in spreading religion from one continent to another such as translation of The Bible helps to spread Christianity through out the world.

Translation of Tukaram's abhangs' by Dilip Chitre as Says Tuka is itself like a building bridge between two cultures as this translation may somewhere fail to carry the equivalence in two languages but it succeeds in building a bridge between two different cultures. Tukarama's abhangas' translation explains his personality and his concern, the key events that shaped his life and his development as a spiritual person at international level. Two different languages and cultures put some limitations for Tukarama's abhangas' translation. For instance Dilip Chitre translated *thaptoni kele sawadhan* as 'And slapped me gently'. Here the word *thaptoni* is translated as 'slapped gently'. *Thaptoni* carries the positive meaning whereas 'slapped' carries negative meaning. This is the limitation of translation. The same way 'Namdevapai Tukaya swapni bheti, Prasad ha poti rahilase' is translated as 'Thanks to



Namdeo' which is very formal. Tukaram shows his deep gratitude for Namdeo from his abhanga but English translation 'thanks' doesn't carry the same emotion and expression. The word *pamar* is translated as 'poor fellow' which is not the equivalent and there is not any another equivalent word in English for *pamar*. It shows that Dilip Chitre's 'Says Tuka' is a clash and compromise between the two languages (Marathi and English) leading to the cross-cultural communication.

'The Shroud', translation of Premchand's '*Kafan*' explains the translator's adjustment in language for equivalence as Hindi and English languages are much different from each other as these languages are from different cultures. It is faithful to SL, its not any kind of transcreation. The translation is like- what the English reader read is as close as to what Premchand has written in Hindi and Urdu. In order to show his two characters' (Ghisu and Madhva) rustic dialect and lack of education, Premchand make them mispronounce many Persianized words. He shows this by deliberately misspelling the words they mispronounce. For instance in Hindi instead of '*zindagani*', Ghisu says '*jhindagani*'. It is translated as 'life'. On structural level the translator doesn't have any another dialect in English for '*jhindagani*', but word 'life' carries the equivalent meaning, and in translation the content is more important than the form. The word '*wafa*' is uttered by Ghisu as '*wapaa*'. It is translated as 'faithfulness' into English. This is a worth translation as 'faithfulness' is equivalent for '*wafa*'. The words '*wapaa*' and '*jhindaani*' show the rustic style of characters which is not carried in 'faithfulness' and 'life'.

The above instances reveal that translation has a problem of equivalence as it is linguistic and cultural activity. Even after the problem of equivalence we have been seeing the translation of literary text from ancient ages. Translation of literary text is one separate branch of translation studies. The most theories of translation focused on literary translation. For instance the initiators of translation theory, Roman translator theorist Horace and Cicero put forward their theory of translation 'not word for word but sense for sense translation'. It is about translation of literary text. Etienne Dolet, George Chapman, John Dryden, Mathew Arnold, J.C. Catford, Roman Jakobson, Eugenie Nida, Hans J. Vermeer and Holz Manttari contributed to translation theories which are related to literary text.

The history of translation studies reveals that the translation of holy books (Bible, Ramayana, Mahabharata and Bhagwat Geeta) is the beginning of translation that is the part of literature. The concept of translation has undergone a sea change over the years. The theories of translation developed from purely linguistic approach of sixties to textual focus of the seventies to twenties (Equivalence Theory), have now yielded place to the culture base theory (Translational Action Theory and Skopos Theory). Translation of literary text was a nucleus of translation in the past. It builds bridge between two cultures and it will play prominent role in building humanity among human being and all cultures.



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