

Translation: A Reincarnation and Recreation

S. Nazeema Begum

Assistant Professor, Department of English, Ethiraj College for Women, Chennai

Translation is both a process and product

Translation is a subject for research and aid to research

Translation is both data on creativity and a creative work. - Hartman (1981)

I. Introduction

Translation is an anglicized form of a Latin word. In it, 'trans' means 'across' and 'laturn' means 'to carry'. In literal terms, it is an art of carrying across boundaries and barriers without losing the materials that is carried over. In literary terms, to translate means to make another language like one's own, to preserve meaning and significances across vocabularies, grammars and syntaxes. In other words it is an art of carrying across of the matters of one Source language into a Target language.

With the explosion of communication technology and with the increasing interaction between languages and cultures and also with the relationship between power-knowledge ideologies becoming evident, one can easily see the crucial role that translation is playing in our cultures.

In the Indian contexts, translation assumes added significance in the view of the fact that India is a multilingual country. Indian culture is a mosaic of different sub-cultures in their linguistic plurality comprising different lingual regions, their regional literature and felt styles. Indian literature has had a rich tradition but for translation a large number of master pieces in each one of the Indian languages will remain locked up treasures to the readers not acquainted with the languages in which they are written. Even national integration will remain a Utopian ideal if the best that is produced in the country is not disseminated through translation.

A literary work assumes epic proportion because it survives the ravages of the great obliterators – Time. It survives because it has something eternal which appeals to people across the boundaries of time and space. Generations of writers wish to draw their subject matters from the inexhaustible treasure house of the epics. But then, they invest the stories with their own interpretation, which is essentially a reflection of the contemporary mores and social, moral and cultural environment. And the success and acceptability of the new creations depend entirely upon the sensitivity of the writer. *The Mahabharata* at the end of Chapter VI says,

As the clouds sustain everything and everyone, the Mahabharata will provide sustenance and inspiration to all future generations of poets and writers. Translation is not a matter of words only says Goethe "it is a matter of making intelligible of a whole culture". Translating a literary text is indeed an act of cultural transmission, and a network of such acts of transmission eventuates in transfusion of cultures among different linguistic communities. As Ezra Pound aptly comments, "A Great Age of Literature is perhaps always a Great Age of Translation". Interfusion of cultures is indeed a significant step towards generating a multidimensional plane of creative consciousness which finds embodiment in great works of literary art.

If mankind has not been bestowed with the wonderful art of translation, many new horizons of knowledge could not have been explored and treasures of wisdom belonging to various languages would have gone uninformed to a great mass of monolingual learners. People knowing more than one language naturally become translators and they transmit the source of knowledge from one language into another.

Language has no doubt a fascinating effect on the people to whom it is a mother tongue. But it does not mean that a man should confine himself within the boundaries of a particular language. A man who wishes to make his mother tongue more fertile, argumentative, attributable of new ideas and novel techniques of expression, shall naturally opt for translation. The Art of Translation has become an indispensable necessity all over the globe in all walks of life – academic, commercial, political, cultural and so on. All human enterprises have ever been using translation as an important tool for their development and growth. From time immemorial, the need for translation has been thought of and is practiced by mankind. In *Tolkappiam*, the first available grammatical treatise in Tamil written 2000 years ago, translation is mentioned and the rules are also laid down for it.

Go in all the eight directions, Bring the treasures of art to be obtained here is Subramania Bharati's words to enrich the Tamil language. *The Holy Bible, Thirukkural, Bhagavad Gita*, the lyrics of Omar Khayyam and the verses of Kahlil Gibran have all crossed the boundaries of language and have acclaimed universality.

In the context of Tagore's auto-translation the poet's illustrious admirer Victoria Ocampo had mentioned translation as "the pair of gloves...that blunt our sense of touch and prevent our taking hold of words

with sensitive bare hands...all-important words, because only the poet can build with them a fragile bridge between the intangible and the tangible...”

In view of the above Tagore’s own approach to translation can be considered as reflecting the anxiety of a creative writer in this regards; possibly his keenness to get over the possible hassles imposed by the process of translation led him to insist that translation of a poem was “essentially a reincarnation, the soul of the source language poem assuming a new body in the target language poem. It is worth recalling in this connection what Tagore said in an interview given to Portland Press in Washington on 23 October 1916:

My English translations are not the same. Each country has its symbols of expression. So when I translate my work I find new images and presently new thought and finally it is something almost entirely new, The fundamental idea is the same but the vision changes.

poem cannot be translated, it can only be relived in a different atmosphere.

And again, in an interview given to the *Evening Post* in New York on 9 December 1916 he reiterated:

The English versions of my poems are not literal translations. When poems are changed from one language into another, they acquire a new quality and a new spirit, the ideas get new birth and are reincarnated.

II. Conclusion

Translation is not, in the modern context, secondary to original literature. It has an independent existence of its own. The art of translation is in no way inferior. In fact, creative writing and translation complement each other. It is not reproduction but recreation.

Translation helps one to re-live the past; and discover one’s own Socio-Cultural tradition. And, it enables one to realize the association between the past and the present. Translations enrich the languages too, adding new words and phrases and also styles of writing and norms of living.

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