

## PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF TRANSLATION

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### Abstract

*Numerous books dealing with the theoretical aspects of translation are being written now-a-days without much caring for the practical aspects of translation. Translation of a literary work always seems to be more difficult as compared to non-literary scientific or technological works. Difficulty in translation of a literary work also depends on its genre or form. Translating fiction and drama written in prose is easier than translating poetry or poetic creations. Translating symbols in poetry sometimes seems challenging. Use of mythological references in poetry also makes translator's task complicated. Translation may look different when translated from a secondary source. Sometimes even translating ideas from a book may create something new and original. An academicians-cum-translator may spoil or improve the original work by the might of his scholasticism knowingly or unknowingly. If the translator himself is the writer of the original, his task becomes easier. Translation, no doubt, is a creative activity.*

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Translation and translation studies in the modern era have become an integral part of the curricula of almost all the universities across the world. Das (2010, p. 172) states that "Till 1963 there was no translation centre, no association of literary translation, no journal exclusively devoted to translation studies in U.S.A.". It was only after 1963 that one finds translation studies emerging as a part of the literary exercises. Since then, numerous conferences, seminars, and workshops on translation and translation studies are being organized all around the world with a view to ensuring that translation and translation studies get prime importance in the world of literature, for the basic intention of all the academicians and translators is to translate classics of literature written in the language of one country into the language of another country, so that no reader may remain unfamiliar with any work simply because of the reason that it is written in any foreign language.

Das (2012, P. 13) writes that "The history of Translation Studies in the West begins with the Romans. Eric Jacobson, maintains in the book, *Translation, A traditional Craft* that translation is a Roman invention". Although translation of the world classics had started way back during renaissance in Europe, but the rate of translation has accelerated in the twentieth century enormously thereby taking the driving seat in the world of literature.

Numerous books on translation studies are available now-a-days, but only a few of them deal with the practical aspects of translation, for most of them deal with its theoretical aspects. Translation has been defined by Das (2012, p. 3) as "a transference of meaning from the Source Language (SL) to the Target Language (TL)". Thus, translation is a conversion of meaning of a certain text from one language into another language. A translator while translating certain work faces many problems and challenges, which need to be paid attention to.

When a translator decides to translate a book, he suddenly realizes that there is a lot of difference between the theory and practice of translation. The foremost skill a translator is supposed to possess is that he must have a complete command over both the languages, i.e., the 'source language' and the

‘target language’. He must have a thorough knowledge of the syntax and grammar of both the languages, so that, first of all, he fully understands what he is going to translate and, secondly, how to translate it. It is well said by Das (2010, p. 170) that “Translation is a scholarly activity and the translator has to be instinctively bilingual”. Since this pre-condition for a translator is laid down by each and every translation theorist, therefore, it is needless to elaborate it further.

Literal translation or ‘word for word’ translation, as some scholars call it, should normally be avoided, for it may spoil the meaning of the text. Since the basic objective should be to translate the meaning of the ‘source language’ into ‘target language’; therefore, having a proper idea and understanding of the meaning of the text in the ‘source language’ is one of the foremost prerequisites for a translator. When he understands the meaning of the text in the ‘source language’ correctly and minutely, and knows its equivalent in the ‘target language’ exactly, he can translate it in a better manner.

Translation of a literary work seems to be more difficult and tiresome as compared to a non-literary scientific or technological work, which will do well if literal or ‘word for word’ translation is done, as the basic intention of the scientific translation is to convey its actual meaning. The scientific or technological language is like Mathematics, where ‘2+2’ is always ‘4’. Similarly, in scientific translation, the translator has to convey the correct and exact meaning of the text and does not have to add or delete anything to it, for scientific text never connotes anything—it does not have any hidden, suggestive, or intended meaning—in fact, it has one and only one meaning which needs to be conveyed accurately by the translator. So, it is easier for the translator to translate a technological, technical or scientific work.

In literary translation, the situation gets tougher, for the language of a litterateur is found to be connotative. He connotes and intends to say a lot more than he actually says in written words. Further, understanding of a literary work varies from man to man, which depends on, and is determined by many factors, such as, his birth, his upbringing, his status and place in the society, his occupation, his financial status, his education, his friend circle, geographical situation of his country, history of his race and nation; and apart from these, numerous other factors too shape his understanding. So, the meaning of a literary work may be ‘something’ to a person and ‘something else’ to another person. One can say that the translator may be quite confused while translating a literary text. But, it is his duty to arrive at the correct and intended meaning of the writer in order to ensure that he translates the work correctly. He, thus, has to be a critic and a creative writer, who possesses a feeling heart and understands literature well simultaneously. What Das (2012, p. 58) writes in this connection is worth-noting: “Translator is a reader, an interpreter and a creator—all in one”. So, it may be said that the translator must be a man of high sensibility.

Furthermore, difficulty in translation of a literary work also depends on the genre or form of literature one intends to translate. It is, generally, believed that translating fiction and drama written in prose is a very simple task for a translator. Prose, being the medium of common conversation, is easy to comprehend and translate. But, when it comes to translating poetry or poetic creations, it gets difficult, for ‘connotative’ or ‘suggestive’ or ‘symbolic’ language comes into play. Poetry contains a lot of symbols, images, figures of speech, and many other embellishments; and the translator must be able to understand them correctly, failing which he may commit the mistake of misinterpreting the poetry to be translated. He must be able to comprehend the real meaning of the poetry. One can argue that it is the job of a critic to bring forth the real meaning of the poetry, but it must be kept in mind that in order to ensure correct translation, the translator must have a critical bent of mind; if he doesn’t have it, he cannot be a good translator of poetry.

It is also said that a poet can translate poetry better than anyone else, for he, being a poet himself, can understand the real meaning of the poetry to be translated and, thus, can translate it better than a non-poet translator. But, it is also a fact that all the translators can't be poets, and all the poets can't be translators, so, some way out may be found out to solve the problem. One can thus, affirm that a translator must be a learned man who must possess a good knowledge of at least the given subject or the genre of the work he is going to translate. But, it may also be added that some sort of qualifications may be fixed for the translators in this connection. When one says qualification, one doesn't intend to mean educational qualification, as it is true that academically-learned people can prove to be more illiterate than the illiterate people themselves; and even illiterate or less-learned people can be intellectually sounder than the so-called intellectuals. History also bears witness that all the great poets and writers in the past throughout the world were not very learned people, so far as their educational qualification is concerned, but their writings or poetry was so great that generations-after-generations their creations are taught in the schools, colleges, and universities; but their real estimate is yet to be deciphered, for it is fathomless. Dante, Homer, Virgil, Shakespeare, and Hindi poets, like, Kabīrdās, Sūrdās, Tulsīdās, to name a few, were not great 'academicians' or 'scholars' in the truest sense of the words in the modern usage, but still they are recognized as the greatest poets ever in the history of world literature. So, one can say that translating poetry is the most difficult task when it comes to considering translation genre-wise.

The translator faces another difficulty when he has to translate symbols, especially, 'private' or 'personal' symbols in poetry. Abrams (2012, p. 177) writes, "Various English Romantic poets employed private symbols in their poetry; Shelley, for example, repeatedly made symbolic use of objects such as the morning and evening star, a boat moving upstream, winding caves, and the conflict between a serpent and an eagle. William Blake, however, exceeded all his contemporaries in the use of a persistent and sustained symbolism, both in his lyric poems and prophetic epics". So, translating symbols becomes difficult for a translator, for he has to understand the real context and meaning of the symbols under-translation. Knowledge of the poet's history or his past personal life may be helpful in such a case, as the symbols might have been drawn from some incidents in his life that might have imprinted great impressions upon his mind, for it must be kept in mind that, psychologically, the personality of a man is a complex admixture and expression of so many impressions he receives from time to time during the course of his life. Sometimes, 'imagery' in a poetic creation may prove to be perplexing for the translator. While describing an image created by a poet, the translator must secure even minutest of the details in his mind, which will enable him to translate it correctly.

Use of mythological references in poetic creations makes them further difficult to comprehend. Many poets, like John Keats, have used Greek mythology in abundance in their poetry. Someone who translates the works of John Keats and other English Romantic Poets of the 19<sup>th</sup> century must have to look out for the places and names of the mythological characters in some reference book or encyclopedia. Although it is not possible for a translator to have a thorough knowledge of all the mythologies of the world, yet he is supposed to know, at least, the mythology of the language he has to translate from. He may, one can say, take help of some book or guide or reference book that may be helpful in finding out a reference to the mythology that might have found place in the work to be translated. Further, the knowledge of mythological stories will be helpful in enriching his translation and it would be easier for him to understand and translate the work better.

Knowledge not only of mythology, but also of histories of both the countries is expected of a good translator, for knowledge of history of both the countries and their languages will make him understand the work in a better way. Sometimes the translator may commit some mistakes in translating some context, if he doesn't have a good knowledge of history. So, if he has a fair

knowledge and understanding of world history, he can visualize and understand things better and translate the work vividly.

Knowing the history of translation is also considered important by some of the scholars like Long (2011, p. 64) who feels that “The study of translation history reminds us that translation is a human activity that has been going on since language began to evolve and may be affected by all kinds of external events, as unexpected as they are uncontrollable”.

The most difficult thing for a translator irrespective of the genre he is translating is to find an equivalent word or phrase to every word, idiom, or phrase written in the ‘source language’. Some way out must be looked out for to translate such words and phrases for which one cannot find an equivalent word in another language. This very point has also been discussed by many-a-scholar many-a-time, so it is better not to drag the point any further.

Translating regional languages or dialects is further more difficult. There are numerous words in almost all the languages of the world one cannot find an equivalent for. So, the growing tendency of using regional and local words, idioms, and phrases among the modern writers and poets has made things difficult for translators. It must be kept in mind that regional characters, normally, use slang language which has a social and cultural significance for them; and if the translator doesn’t view it in its cultural context, he may not be able to translate it correctly. For instance, in some parts of India, especially, in Uttarakhand Himalaya, there is a tradition of welcoming marriage processions by singing some songs which have some contents in which the guests attending the wedding-ceremony are called names, but it is taken in a very healthy spirit and nobody feels that he or she is abused through such a language. Regional and local literature is replete with such songs. Cultural significance of such traditional songs must also be understood by the translator, so that he translates the text in its proper context.

As is apparent in the foregone passage that study and knowledge of cultures of different countries is also very important while translating. Culture of every country is obviously different; in fact, every culture is unique in itself, which largely depends on the geographical situation of the country. Bassnett (2011) writes in this connection that “In Literary studies, cultural questions took over long ago from formalist approaches to textual study. From post-structuralism onwards the tidal waves of new approaches to literature that swept through the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century all had a cultural dimension: feminism, gender criticism, deconstruction, post-colonialism, hybridity theory. Literary studies adopted methods from cultural studies, blurring the lines between what had once been distinct fields of investigation”. Bassnett (2011) writes further, “We suggested that translation offers an ideal ‘laboratory situation’ for the study of cultural interaction, since a comparison of the original and the translated text will not only show the strategies employed by translators at certain moments, but will also reveal the different status of the two texts in their several literary systems. More broadly, it will expose the relationship between the two cultural systems in which those texts are embedded”. This very point is also discussed numerous times, so it is better to skip and move ahead.

One of the most important things in different cultures of different countries is their mode of greetings or salutation. The Indian Hindus bless the youngsters by saying ‘*khuśa raho*’, ‘*barē ho jāo*’, ‘*chiranjīvē bhavah*’, and so on; and salute or greet others by using the words—‘*namaskār*’ or ‘*namastē*’—generally to the people of same age or rank; and ‘*praṇām*’ to older people and also to others depending on their higher rank and status in the society in addition to their age; while the British as well the Europeans wish ‘good morning’, ‘good noon’, ‘good afternoon’, ‘good evening’, ‘good night’, and so on to all the people irrespective of their age, rank or status in the society. One should know that all these modes of salutations or greetings are not equivalent in any case, although

the intention is the same in all the languages and cultures. In India, the term ‘*tū*’ is used to address someone younger; the word ‘*tum*’ to either the younger or the people of the same age, usually, friends; and ‘*āp*’ to elders as well as to the people of high rank as a mark of respect. Most of the time, now-a-days, in modern usage, the word ‘*āp*’ is also used even for the children and youngsters with a view to encouraging them to become courteous and reciprocate the same kind of language in their own turn; while in English, one uses ‘you’ to address everyone irrespective of their age, rank or status in the society. Similarly, in Hindi language, one uses the term ‘*vē*’, which is translated as ‘they’ and used as a ‘plural’ in English, but in Hindi, it is used as a ‘singular’ to address elders as a mark of respect, while in English, ‘he’ is used for male and ‘she’ for female irrespective of their age and seniority. So, even if one understands the basic intention behind the words used for addressing and salutation in Hindi and English, one cannot deny the fact that using the term ‘*vē*’ for elders in Hindi and using ‘he’ for male and ‘she’ for female in English cannot be treated as equivalent. Similarly, the idea, feelings, and the respect behind ‘touching the feet’ of someone older or respected in Indian culture cannot be translated into any other language. So, what a translator can do in such a situation is that he may give a footnote while translating such cultural gestures and explain the importance and value of ‘touching the feet’ in Indian culture as compared to ‘shaking hands’ in European culture. Hence, it may be affirmed that culture may or may not be translated correctly by using equivalent words, but can be conveyed by adding separate footnotes at the end of the page, so that the reader can understand the value of such social and cultural gestures. So, having a fair knowledge of the culture of both the countries is very important for every translator, and equally important is the way how he translates or transmits or conveys it from the ‘source language’ to the ‘target language’.

Translation may give the impression of being somewhat different when one translates from a secondary source. Sometimes, it may be a bit away from the original text; sometimes, it may look like a trans-creation and; sometimes, it may be an exact translation of the original work neither spoiling nor improving it. Tagore’s *Gitanjali* written originally in Bangla was translated into English by Tagore himself resulting in making it a world classic, which drew attention of the world of literature and, ultimately, won Nobel Prize for it in 1913. It is through the translation of the songs compiled in *Gitanjali* into many other languages of the world that the whole world was introduced to the Indian Philosophy and a new curiosity to know India and Indian Philosophy was aroused among the readers. Thus, translation of *Gitanjali* not only spread the light of Tagore’s poetry, but also transmitted Indian Philosophy and culture all across the world. So, translation has become so important in the modern world that people all over the world, now, can read classics of the foreign languages very easily and get closer to one another. One can say that a new ‘world literature’ seems to be evolving and developing through translated books in which one finds a glimpse of the history, culture, traditions, religions, faiths, beliefs, etc. of other countries hitherto alien to them.

Inspired by *Rubāiyāt* of Omar Khayyam written in Persian language, Dr. Harivansh Rai Bachchan patterned his work *Madhushālā*, written in 1935 in Hindi, on the *Rubāiyāt* which earned him a lot of name and fame; although *Madhushālā* is not a literal translation, as some people think it to be, yet the idea or concept was translated into Hindi, which added a new dimension to the field of translation. Bachchan, subsequently, translated it into Hindi in 1959 as *Omar Khayyām kī Rubāiyān*. One can, thus, arrive at the conclusion that sometimes even translating ideas from a book may create something new and original.

If the translator himself is the writer of the original work, his task may become easier and he may translate it in a better way, for he knows what he has written and intended to say in the original text. When a writer himself translates his own work, most of the times, he may be found to be deleting, omitting or adding something to the original work, for he himself is the creator and may find

something useless worth-deleting, something inadequate worth-omitting, and something useful worth-adding, because his mind and feelings might have grown mature or his ideas might have changed in between the production of the original work and its translation later on. He, being the writer of original work, seems to be having a license to do so, whereas, a translator does not have as much freedom as the writer himself has. Many writers in the modern world prefer to translate their works by themselves, because they feel their translators may not do justice to their original works.

It is also found that academicians and scholars in large numbers are also engaged in translation activities. A translator may translate a work as it comes to him, but when an academician or a scholar translates a book or any other work; he may spoil or improve the work by the might of his scholasticism knowingly or unknowingly. So, a new difficulty arises and it must be said that the academician-cum-translator should keep his scholasticism away from his work in the same way in which T. S. Eliot wants a poet to keep his personality away from his poetry. Eliot (1962) in his essay 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' says that "Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality". Similarly, an academician or a scholar must keep his personality away from his translation, for translation is an objective work, and subjectivity, in any case, is not allowed in translation. So, every translator should keep it in mind that his basic intention is to 'convey', 'transmit' or 'transfer' and not to 'trans-create' or 'create'.

After going through a few of the qualities of a translator as described above, one may find translation a very tough and complicated job, but it is not so. One can even translate a work written in his own native language very easily with the sole condition that he knows the 'target language' thoroughly and can write it correctly. He can also translate any book written in any other language into his own native language, if he understands the work well. But, it may be said with certainty that if the translator possesses all the qualities as mentioned above, he will be apt to be called a better translator and the work he translates will be a classic example of translation.

Besides all the difficulties faced by a translator as discussed above, some more difficulties may arise which will come to fore only when a translator starts translating a certain text. It must also be added that no principle of translation is fixed. The principles of translation also keep on changing with the changing time. Long (2011) puts it: "translation principles cannot always be defined and adhered to like scientific formulae". It may definitely be said that the theories and principles not only of translation, but also of other things, keep on changing with time; and one cannot always remain adhered or stuck to certain theories or principles. Gentzler (2011, p.19) also writes that "The 'meaning' of a work of art can also never be fixed; it changes as language changes". One cannot agree with Das (2012, p.9) when he writes that "translation has been regarded as a secondary activity as a 'mechanical' rather than a 'creative' process, and therefore, considered lower in status", for translation, now, has taken the driving seat in the world of literature and it is started to be taken and treated as a creative activity; it has no longer remained a secondary or soulless activity. What Snell-Hornby (2011) writes in this connection seems to be worth-noting: "After long years of heated debate, it is now accepted in translation studies that translation as it is understood today goes far beyond the mechanical and 'soulless' activity described by Herbert Kretzmer, performed by a secretary or functionary and needing only knowledge or skill, but no creativity or passion- although unfortunately outside translation studies such prejudices are still widespread".

Translation, no doubt, is a creative activity, as the translator creates an entirely new work in an entirely different language. It is this very act that makes a translation look sometimes inferior or superior to the original text. In such a case, some writers may say that the translation of their work is not up to the

mark, but they can't deny the fact that it is definitely a new creation in new words. Since translation has become a creative activity, there is a lot of scope in the field of translation. It is only through translation that one can bring two different countries having entirely different cultures and languages closer. Furthermore, translation makes literature of one country easily available to the readers of some other country and this very process of translation has been instrumental in accelerating the process of globalization and has also been helpful in turning the world into a small village.

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