



## **LITERARY TRANSLATION: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Translation is shrouded in a paradox. It is believed to be absolutely necessary yet at the same time inherently impossible. In spite of this, translation has earned a due respect and significance both in and outside academia and the nature of translation has undergone a thorough change. Today it is the area where all the human sciences get merged. Primarily it is one of the central forces that have had a wonderful effect on the development of the human civilizations. Since these civilizations stem from the communication of which translation is one of the successful forms. It is probably due to this that an ever-increasing number of readers today are showing their interest towards translation and a large number of scholars are working their hands in translating different texts in order to make them within the comprehension of multitudinous readers. It is universally acknowledged fact that in literary texts the process becomes more daunting for here we have words that are always figurative and rendering them into other languages invites holistic understanding of both the languages and cultures from the part of a translator which itself demands a herculean effort. In the light of this, the present paper attempts to elucidate the potential of the translation in guiding the generations towards the harmony. The paper will also look at some issues and challenges that beset a translator in the process of translating a literary text.*

**Keywords:** Literary Translation, change, civilizations, communication, figurative, challenges.

Translation involves the dissipation of knowledge and information across different borders of language and cultures. This gives rise to the consideration related to the accuracy and the naturalness of the message to be conveyed. However, the primary focus of any translation is said to be the aspects of diction, grammatical structures, communication setting and more importantly the cultural context of any text.

The stepping stone of any translation is language. But we know that language is a dynamic and an evolving system of signs and every language is rooted in a particular culture. In order to have access across to these cultures translation is vital. Especially, in a country like India which remains home to linguistically and culturally diverse communities, the role of translation can never be underestimated. With the passage of time the dimensions of translation have widened and today it means translation of cultural, political and historical contexts and concepts rather than the mere linguistic ones. Prof. G R Malik sum up the importance of translation in the following way:

The importance of translation to the present-day world which is shrinking fast and where cultures and literature are coming ever closer can hardly be overstated. Nor is it difficult to appreciate the vital relevance of translation to a multi-lingual, multicultural and multi-religious society like India. (9)

Keeping these points in mind it can therefore, be said that translation has worked wonders in the development of human civilization. The ancient civilizations thrived only due to the force of translation. We have a treasure of culture cum literature of ancients at our hand only due to the translation. The great literary revival known as the Renaissance is nothing but what the modern West borrowed from Muslim Spain through the stroke of translation. The great literary giants of the past and their literature is surviving today only due to the translation. From the religious point of view, the contribution of translation remains a million dollar one. The translation of the Bible into various vernacular languages not only stabilised the society but also helped the masses come closer to each other who otherwise reckoned themselves inferiors against the dominant classes. Bijay Kumar Das rightly mentions:

The history of the translation of the Bible is, in fact, the history of the translation studies in the West in the sixteenth century. The translators of the Bible during the Renaissance period saw both fluidity and intelligibility in the next of the target language (TL) as important criteria, but were equally engaged with the transmission

of literary accurate message. In the sixteenth century, the Bible was translated into a large number of European languages. (15)

This implies the fact that the great literature of the classics survives today only due to the translation. Now if we look at the current era, translation again turns out to be a must needed instrument, for the literature all over the world reaches to every other community that is alien to its author's language. We enjoy the great writers like Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky and Flaubert here in India only due to the translation.

We know that literature is a skilled subject that encompasses the rich use of imagination and the creativity of writer. Against the non-literary subject like journalism, law, social science, where the literal translation can do, here a translator is expected to capture the feel and the aura of the original which itself is a herculean task to perform. Thomas R. Palfrey puts it more aptly:

Literary translation, then, consists of something more than simply "getting the thought involved and rendering the passage in grammatically perfect and idiomatic vernacular," for such a version is all too often mechanical and lifeless, if not a flagrant betrayal of the tone and spirit of the original. (410)

The language of a creative literature embodies some mind-blowing qualities of concretion, vividness and vitality against the languages of some other scientific discourses. A creative writer presents an idea in moving picture and at times explores all the language of the world for his/her literary piece. The situation becomes more daunting when we are to translate poetry. Poets do not just convey the information rather they embed their poetry with an experience and such experience often exploit the literary devices like simile, metaphor, personification, image and symbol. The language poets employ is loaded with the referential meaning where irony, paradox and conceit come to task and the rhyme and rhythm further bestow a kind of music to the literary piece. Together they give rise to the plurisignation and multi-dimensionality of a work of art.

Out of all these features, a literary piece is produced that poses some insurmountable problems for the translator. For him the comprehension of the mere word will not do rather he is required to translate the word along with its import in a particular context and new meaning. He is required to render not only the sentence or the verses of the poem along the sense that arises from the arrangement of words and lines of the poem and but also that which lies between the lines of the poem.

Here a translator's bilingual and bicultural efficiency can come to his rescue for we know creative literature defies complete translation. A good translator can embed a text in a shell by explaining the cultural and specific literary features of one language into another language by taking the help of introductions, footnotes, glossaries that will facilitate not only his job but also the job of readers. These are also called extra-textual devices. Maria Tymoczko labels them as the "paratextual commentary", and she further states:

In contemporary literary works aimed at intercultural audiences, it is not uncommon to find maps, glossaries, appendices with historical information, or introductions describing the cultural context of the work, while experimental formal techniques and multilayered textual strategies may even permit the use of embedded texts, footnotes and other devices constituting more than one textual level. Authors also frequently provide introductions and postscripts, write critical essays commenting on their own texts, or facilitate 'authorized' commentaries on their work. (22)

This implies that a translator may face word arrangement in one language that fails to have a one to one correspondence in any other language. Such a situation can, therefore, be tackled by the adoption of circumlocutions and at times by some lengthy explanations and thus in a roundabout way recreate the relevant context of the word order for which a good translator's bilingual and bicultural efficiency is the thing that is sought out. For it alone can help him in picking up the primary and secondary meanings of the words. It is a well-established fact, that total accuracy involves holistic understanding of original meaning, lexical meaning, syntactic and discourse meaning and the other aspect of good style. Only by this way naturalness can be retained. Ganesh Devy observes:

The translation problem is not just a linguistic problem. It is an aesthetic and ideological problem with an important bearing on the question of literary history. Literary translation is not just a replication of a text in another verbal system of signs. It is a replication of an ordered sub-system of signs within a given language in another corresponding ordered sub-system of signs within a related language. (186)

## **Conclusion**

This implies that translation is a complex subject, the multiple dimensions of which demand a more serious approach. For we know it is absolutely necessary and useful as well. The world's greatest revolutions had their origin in translation. From the Western side, we have the Elizabethan literary renaissance and the dispersion of the Bible as a great outcome of translation. From the Eastern side, translation constituted a major influence on the renewal

of the nineteenth century English literature. Literary translation is still thriving and day in and day out we witness a good traffic of creative literature being rendered from one language into another.

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