

Translation of Literary Texts: An Experiment

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ABSTRACT

The present research endeavour is an attempt to emphasize that the translation of a literary text assists in a clear understanding of the original text for a stranger. Literary texts as a part of the curriculum reflect human values and are essentially included for percolating human upliftment. Translation enables reaching a larger number of target groups and contributes to conceptual understanding. It helps in wiping out existing cultural barriers by creating a canvas that propagates multiculturalism, making it a bridge across cultures even though the translation of poetry poses a challenging task with the linguistics varieties and variants. The researcher experimented with the translation of the poem “The Felling of a Banyan Tree” by Dilip Chitre into Marathi and Hindi languages from English and the translation of her Marathi poem Gandhari into the English language. Eventually, it is an effort to prove the fruitfulness of the translation of literary texts in the interests of humanity.

KEYWORDS

Culture; literary text; poetry; source language; target language; translation; utility.

Introduction

Literary translation as a branch of translation amplifies bright opportunities to juxtapose and establish a cordial rapport between two distinct cultures. Widely acknowledged to be a significant platform for intercultural communication, translation promotes understanding between diverse cultures. The current research attempts to highlight the indispensable value of translations of literary texts and how far they enable transparent reception. It is well known, that literary texts as a part of the curriculum reflect a relevance to human wellbeing and are included for study, in order to percolate and disseminate human values and overall upliftment of humanity.

With the pros and cons therein, translation enables reaching out to a larger target group and contributes to promoting common understanding among members of the human race. It has proved to be efficacious in wiping out cultural barriers through framing a canvas for propagating multiculturalism and building bridges across cultures.

As a trilingual poet, writer and an enthusiast for environmental protection, I have seen literature as a powerful tool for raising environmental awareness, both as a part of the curriculum as well as beyond the curriculum. With this objective, I have focused on the theme of environmental protection in literature. For this, I owe deeply to the field of translation, which

has made literature available, by switching between English into Marathi and Hindi and also translations from Marathi and Hindi languages into English, for a wider readership. Of the many such texts, a poem titled "The Felling of the Banyan Tree", by the renowned poet, Dilip Chitre has greatly appealed to me. The poem was prescribed in the curriculum of Swami Ramanand Teerth Marathwada University, Nanded a few years ago. This simple but profound poem with existentialist overtones, advocating for a natural environment, occupied a special space in my mind and became an all-time favourite poem. While teaching the poem, I was faced with demands for translation of the poem into Marathi. Thus, the thought of translating "The Felling of the Banyan Tree", occurred to me. I was convinced that, "The significance and relevance of translation in our daily life is multidimensional and extensive" (Goswami 36). Along with this topic of concern on environmental awareness, another topic of my interest was bringing feminism onto the floor for a larger number of readers through the translation of my feminist poem, "Gandhari" originally composed in Marathi, in an innovative vein.

Given the fact that "India is a multilingual and pluri-cultural nation" (Goswami, 37) the need for translation becomes evident. More so, for nurturing the principle of Unity in Diversity and for standing as one integrated nation. Hence, the translation of diverse literatures into different Indian languages is a dire necessity. In fact, translation widens the scope for reaching diverse communities and reinforces the universal elements across world literature. What started initially, as an enterprise for spreading religious messages across different cultures, later in the modern age has entered the literary sphere and since then the domain of translation has been growing in scale and impact.

More recently, translation has enabled the information revolution in both the technological and cultural spheres. Owing to the incessant flow of knowledge, back and forth across multiple languages, the world today has been integrated into one family. Against this changing paradigm, the relevance of translation is recognized more than ever. Given the acknowledgement of the growing significance of the field of translation, one realizes that the target of reaching more and more readers to disseminate ideas and spread an understanding of numerous texts gains immense socio-contextual importance. The intention behind the translation of "The Felling of the Banyan Tree", falls in this context.

Nature of Problem

While engaged in the teaching of the poem "The Felling of the Banyan Tree", a few of my students demanded its translation into their mother tongue, Marathi as they found the poem very interesting. Later few Urdu-speaking students desired to have it in Hindi as well. Being fairly fluent as a tri-lingual poet in Marathi, Hindi and English, I responded to their demand enthusiastically and thus undertook the task of facilitating my students with the opportunity to read and appreciate the poem in a language close to their heart.

Hypothesis

Currently, literary translation has emerged as a fruitful branch of translation having greater reach to the readers in the target languages. In fact, it is believed that literary translation from the source language into the target language has benefitted greatly for the understanding of a text under consideration. Hence, my experimentation with the translation of poems is supposed to contribute to an enhanced perception of the poems chosen. It would provide me with an opportunity to test how far the finished products in the

process of translation would stand to test of establishing ease and comfort of reading and appreciating the said poems in the readers of the target language.

Objectives

1. To translate the English poem, "The Felling of the Banyan Tree" from the source language, English into the target language, Marathi and the target language, Hindi
2. To translate the Marathi poem "Gandhari Houch Naka Koni" from the source language, Marathi into the target language, English
3. To facilitate readers with an appreciation of the poems in the target language, for a much deeper understanding of the text under consideration

Methodology

Experimental, by undertaking translation through the application of an evaluative, analytical and interpretative method

Scope

Translation of the poem, "The Felling of the Banyan Tree" from English to Marathi and Hindi and the translation of the Marathi poem "Gandhari Houch Naka Koni" from Marathi into English

Analysis

I Translation of Poetry

Of all forms of literary translations, the translation of poetry presents an intricate task, owing to its amphilingual status. However, the translated text is the reflection of its original at its best. It is taken for granted that the ideal critic of translations must be competent in both the Source Language (SL) and the Target Language (TL). Besides, the translations are intended for people who do not know the source language (SL). However, the readers unacquainted with the source

language (SL) may not have the ability to judge the quality of a translation.

As far as a common reader is concerned, he/she may like a work of translation but may like it for the wrong reasons:

He is not in a position to determine whether the translation is faithful to the original or not. He does not know how much of the original spirit of the text is retained, how much destroyed or distorted, and how much is translator's own gift. (Das, 38)

Most of the translators of Indian poetry into English are Indians. Quite often, it is the authors themselves who undertake the task. However, the translation of poetry is not an easy task. The challenge starts with the translation of the title itself. Moreover, while travelling through the thematic and structural levels, one has to retain the essence of the original poem including the cultural nuances of the poetry under translation as expressed by the poet, while restraining from the temptation to carry out a word-for-word translation. Here I am going to elaborate on my experience of translating "The Felling of the Banyan Tree," by Dilip Chitre into Marathi as well as the Hindi language.

II "The Felling of the Banyan Tree" by Dilip Chitre

Dilip Chitre who belonged to the modernist movement was a renowned bilingual writer who contributed to the corpus of Indian writing in English. He lived in Baroda and Bombay now Mumbai. After completing his education in the metro cities of Baroda and Mumbai, he went on to work as a teacher, a painter and a magazine columnist. Dilip Chitre spent some of his valuable years in Ethiopia and the USA. His major works, which were originally written in Marathi came to be translated into English. They are *An Anthology of Marathi Poetry* (1945-1965) and *Says Tuka* (1991). His only

English poetry collection is *Travelling in a Cage* (1980). Key themes explored by Chitre in his poetry are exile, alienation, self-disintegration and death. As a modernist, he probes into the urban sensibility and upholds cosmopolitanism. Making use of symbols, Chitre's poetry depicts oblique expressions and ironic tones, two major characteristics that define his style.

"The Felling of the Banyan Tree", reveals the anti-environmental act of cutting down the ancient banyan tree that resplendently fulfilled its role in nurturing ecosystems in the backyard of the poet's ancestral house. The massacre of the banyan tree significantly implies the cutting down of roots which lay enmeshed

in the lap of nature, indicating a transformative move towards a different modern culture of Mumbai as a metropolis.

On June 5, 2018, the World Environment Day, the thought of translating the poem with the motif of reaching out to environmental awareness groups occurred. Hence, the translation endeavour was undertaken. Translating the poem into the Marathi language was not sufficient as a large number of my students hail from Urdu speaking community. This, inspired me to translate it into Hindi so that they could also understand it well. Below are included the versions of the original English poem, its Marathi translation and Hindi translation.

"The Felling of the Banyan Tree"

-Dilip Chitre

My father told the tenants to leave
Who lived in the houses surrounding our house on the hill
One by one the structures were demolished
Only our own house remained and the trees
Trees are sacred my grandmother used to say
Felling them is a crime but he massacred them all
The sheoga, the oudumber, the neem were all cut down
But the huge banyan tree stood like a problem
Whose roots lay deeper than all our lives
My father ordered it to be removed
The banyan tree was three times as tall as our house
Its trunk had a circumference of fifty feet
Its scraggly aerial roots fell to the ground
From thirty feet or more so first they cut the branches
Sawing them off for seven days and the heap was huge
Insects and birds began to leave the tree
And then they came to its massive trunk
Fifty men with axes chopped and chopped
The great tree revealed its rings of two hundred years
We watched in terror and fascination this slaughter
As a raw mythology revealed to us its age
Soon afterwards we left Baroda for Bombay
Where there are no trees except the one
Which grows and seethes in one's dreams,
Its aerial roots looking for the ground to strike.

III Translation of the Poem into the Marathi language

वटवृक्षाची कत्तल

माझ्या वडिलांनी (आमच्या) किरायेदारांना घर सोडायला सांगितले
जे टेकडीवर आमच्या घराच्या भोवतालच्या घरांमध्ये होते विसावले
एकानंतर एक सर्व वास्तु पाडून नष्ट करण्यात आल्या
आता केवळ आमचे घर आणि वृक्षराजी शिल्लक राहिल्या
माझ्या वडिलांनी सर्व झाडांची कत्तल करविली जरी आजी म्हणाली झाडे तोडणे गुन्हा
औदुंबर, कडुलिंब आणि तोडण्यात आले शेवगा पण महाकाय वटवृक्ष बनून समस्या होता उभा
ज्याची पाळेमुळे आम्हा सर्वांच्याच आयुष्यापेक्षा खोलवर रुजली होती
त्याला काढून टाकण्याची आज्ञा माझ्या वडिलांनीच दिली होती
आमच्या घराच्या तुलनेत वटवृक्ष तीनपट उंच होता
त्याच्या बुंध्याचा परीघ पन्नास फुटांएवढा होता
त्याची अस्ताव्यस्त हवाई मूळे जमिनीपर्यंत पोहोचली होती
जवळपास तीस फुटांपासून प्रथम फांदी कापायला घेतली होती
सात दिवस फांद्या तोडून तोडून प्रचंड ढीग होते साचले
कीटक आणि विहग अधिवास सोडण्या दीनवाणे बाध्य झाले
नंतर तोडणारे हात त्याच्या महाकाय बुंध्याशी आले
पन्नास 'पुरुष' कुऱ्हाडी घेऊन तोडतच राहिले
त्या महान वृक्षावर दोनशे वर्षांपूर्वीच्या वर्तुळाकार खुणा दिसत होत्या
आम्ही भीतीने आ वासून आणि आकर्षणातून त्या न्याहाळल्या होत्या
आमच्या दंतकथा शास्त्राने त्याचे वय समजले आम्हाला
लगेच त्यानंतर आम्ही बडोदा सोडून आलो मुंबईला
जिथे स्वप्नांत वाढणाऱ्या झाडांव्यतिरिक्त नाहीत झाडे कुठली
मूळे ज्यांची धरणीच्या भेटीच्या अभिलाषेने हवेत आहेत लटकती.

IV The Hindi Translation of the Poem "The Felling of the Banyan Tree"

बरगद के पेड़ का कत्तल

मेरे पिताजी ने (हमारे) किरायेदारों के आवास छोड़ने लगवाए
जो पहाड़ी पे हमारे घर के आजू बाजू में रहते थे बसेरा बनाए
एक के बाद एक हर आवास को बेदरती से तोड़ा गया
केवल हमारा घर और वृक्षों को बचा हुआ हमने पाया
मेरे पिताजी ने हर वृक्ष कटवाया दादी बोली, 'तू पाप से भरमाया
सहजन, कल्पतरु और नीम तोड़े गए, महाकाय बरगद समस्या बनके रह गया
जिसकी जड़ें हम सब की जिन्दगी से बढ़कर थी जमीन में टिकी
उसको निकाल फेंकने की आज्ञा मेरे पिता की जवान से छूटी

हमारे घर से तीन गुना ऊँचा था पेड़ बरगद का
 उसके तन का घेरा था पचास फीट से भी ज्यादा का
 हवा में लहराती उसकी आडी-तेडी जड़े जमीन को छूना चाहती थी
 लगभग तीस फुट से लेकर टहनियां तोड़ने की शुरूवात हुयी थी
 सात दिनों तक काट काट कर बड़े ढेर बन गए थे
 कीटक और पंछी बेचारे आवास त्यागने पर मजबूर हो गए थे
 बाद में तोड़ने वाले हाथ उसके विशाल तन की तरफ बढ़े
 पचास 'मर्द' कुल्हाड़ी लेकर तोड़ते और तोड़ते रहे
 उस महान वृक्ष पर दो सौ वर्ष पहले के वृत्ताकार निशान दिख रहे थे
 हम डर के मारे अचरज से आकर्षित होकर निहार रहे थे
 हमारी पौराणिकता से हमें उम्र उसकी चली थी पता
 उसके तुरंत बाद हम बड़ोदा छोड़कर मुंबई में हुए आमदा
 जहाँ सपनों में बढते पेड़ों के बिना नहीं है पेड़ और कोई
 जड़े जिनकी धरती से मिलने की चाह में हवा में लटकी हुयी.

**V Translation of my poem Gandhari Houch Naka Koni ("गांधारी" होऊच नका कोणी...)
 from Marathi into the English language**

"Gandhari Houch Naka Koni" is my poem based on the life of an important woman character from the epic *Mahabharata*. In the poem, Gandhari, her roles as a queen, a wife, a mother, and a mother-in-law have been discussed from a feminist point of view. It interrogates the character of Gandhari, and how far her actions carry responsibility and shape the happenings of Mahabharata. This is the question at the heart of the poem. The poem suggests how, being a part of the patriarchal cult, Gandhari's actions and character are influenced by the patriarchs of the clan. The denouement of Mahabharata would have been certainly

different if Gandhari had exercised her agency and made her own decisions with determination, without falling prey to the selfish whims of her male cult. The poem received wide acclaim from the Marathi language fraternity in Maharashtra, and even outside India as well. With the increasing popularity of the poem, I received requests to translate it into English. The English translation was sent to a magazine however it couldn't get published there. The original Marathi poem and its translation into English under the title, "No One Should be a Gandhari" are incorporated here.

"गांधारी" होऊच नका कोणी

गांधारी, तुझ्यात सामर्थ्य होतं,
 स्वतःची गांधारी होऊ न देण्याचं!
 गांधारी, तुझ्यात सामर्थ्य होतं,
 तुझ्या पतीचा धृतराष्ट्र होऊ न देण्याचं!

गांधारी, तुझ्यात सामर्थ्य होतं,
 कपटी बंधू शकुनीचं कपट ठेचण्याचं!
 गांधारी, तुझ्यात सामर्थ्य होतं,
 दुर्योधनाची जिव्हा उखडून फेकण्याचं!
 गांधारी, तुझ्यात सामर्थ्य होतं,
 दुःशासनाचे हात कलम करण्याचं!
 गांधारी, तुझ्यात सामर्थ्य होतं,
 द्रौपदीचं वस्त्रहरण रोखण्याचं!
 गांधारी, तुझ्यात आणखी सामर्थ्य होतं,
 वल्गना करणाऱ्या दुर्योधनाला लगाम घालण्याचं!
 गांधारी, तुझ्यात सामर्थ्य सागराएवढं होतं,
 पांडवांना इंभर भूमी नाकारणाऱ्या,
 दुर्योधनालाच वारस म्हणून बेदखल करण्याचं!
 अन् मृत्युदंडाचं शासनही देण्याचं!
 पण,
 हे निर्बलतेचा आव आणणाऱ्या नारी गांधारी,
 तू पट्टी तर बांधलीसच डोळ्यांवर,
 पण मनानेही आंधळी होऊन बसलीस!
 अन्, अविवेकी पुत्राच्या प्रेमात आकंठ बुडून गेलीस,
 त्या खलाचा शब्द तू प्रमाण मानलास,
 पांडवांच्या तोंडचा घासही हिरावलास!
 गांधारी, तू जीवनभर असत्याची कास धरलीस,
 साक्षात भगवंताशी तू शत्रुत्वाची संधी घेतलीस!
 गांधारी, तू 'गांधारी' नसतीस ना झाली,
 तर टळली असती तुझ्या वंशाची विनाशवारी!
 परंतु गांधारी, हे अगम्य, अकल्पित नारी,
 तुझ्या आंधळ्या पुत्रप्रेमाला,
 कुठलीच तू बांधली नाही दोरी!
 गांधारी, तू आधुनिक युगात अवतरली असतीस तर,
 "मदर इंडिया"च्या नर्गीस प्रमाणेच,
 दुर्योधन, दुःशासनाची नांगी ठेचली असतीस!
 पण, हे कदापि होणारच नव्हतं,
 कारण कौरवांचा नाश म्हणजे धर्मरक्षण होतं!
 अन् असहय, अबला म्हणून तुला जणू अजरामर व्हायचं होतं....

स्वतःच प्राक्तन शेवटी तूच घडवलं होतंस,
 दुर्योधन दुःशासनाला तूच गोंजारलं होतंस!
 तुझा तरी दोष काय म्हणायचा त्यात?
 पितृसत्तात्मक पद्धतीत पुरुषांच्या हाती तुझं चरित्र होतं!
 पण तरीही,
 गांधारी, तुझं सामर्थ्य तू ओळखायला हवं होतंस,
 आंधळ्या धृतराष्ट्राच आंधळेपण तू कमी करायला पाहिजे होतंस!
 गांधारी, युगानुयुगे परिणाम करणारं तुझं पात्र होतं,
 हळूहळू विषवृक्ष फोफावू देण्याचं पातक तू केलं होतं!
 गांधारी, आज घराघरात महाभारत होतंच होतं,
 तुझ्याच तर कृपेचं हे सारं द्योतक मानलं जातं!

VI English Translation of the Marathi poem "Gandhari Houch Naka Koni" ("गांधारी" होऊच नका कोणी...)

No One should be a 'Gandhari'...

Gandhari you had the strength
 Not to turn yourself into a 'Gandhari'.
 Gandhari you had the strength
 Not to turn your husband into a 'Dhrutrashtra'.
 Gandhari you had the strength
 To crush the wickedness of your brother 'Shakuni'.
 Gandhari you had the strength
 To uproot the tongue of 'Duryodhana'.
 Gandhari you had the strength
 To cut down the arms of 'Dushhasana'.
 Gandhari you had the strength
 To abstain 'Draupadi's molestation.
 Gandhari you had additional strength
 To control the slander boasting of Duryodhana.
 Gandhari you had the strength as huge as ocean
 To disqualify Duryodhana being your heir,
 And, even to award a death sentence to him
 Who refused even an inch of land to 'Pandavas'.
 But,
 O lady Gandhari, you pretended to be vulnerable
 You not only tied the strip onto your eyes
 But you became blind by your mind even!
 You dipped yourself in the love of your nonsensical
 You remained true to his wicked word
 Who snatched the morsels of Pandavas' mouth.
 Gandhari, for the entire life you abided by untruth
 Thereby secured enmity with the Almighty Lord!

Gandhari, if you hadn't opted to be a 'Gandhari'
 It would certainly have saved your progeny.
 But, Gandhari,
 You, a mysterious, unthinkable lady
 You never tied a rope to restrict blind love for your son.
 Gandhari, if you had been a part of modern age
 You would have crushed Duryodhana and Dushhasna
 Like the 'Nargis' of 'Mother India'!
 But that was not going to happen at all
 As Kauravas' destruction was the defense of 'Dharma'.
 And, as if you were destined to be immortal as a feeble lady...
 At the end, you shaped your destiny
 By showering affection on Duryodhana and Dushhasana.
 Why you could be held responsible for the saga?
 'When your character had been a designed outcome of patriarchal cult!'
 Yet, however,
 Gandhari, you could have recognised your strength.
 You could have diminished the blindness of blind Dhrutrashtra!
 Gandhari, yours had been a character of everlasting impact for ages together.
 Slowly, you committed the crime of nurturing the poison tree.
 Gandhari, today, there is 'Mahabharata' unavoidably in household every.
 This is a surely granted outcome of your mercy nourished wrongly!

Conclusion

The delightful experiment of translating literary texts provided me with immense satisfaction including working seamlessly with three major languages, Marathi, Hindi and English. I realized that during the exercise of translation, translating a title is the most demanding part of the process, requiring care and a grasp of the finer nuances of the language, to find the right turn of expression. On the whole, the translation of a poem has never been an easy process. However, I have tried to apply my efforts to bring out the finished product as a meaningful product to make meaning for the readers in the target language. I have focused on the point of as well for utility of the translated work matters most in the teaching, learning and the level of appreciation ultimately. The readers will decide how far I have successfully travelled in the realms of switching from the source language to the target language in my endeavour to facilitate the academic fraternity which includes students, teachers, readers and researchers at large.

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