

Translation as Paradise for Translators and as 'New Literature' in the Era of Globalization

Dr. S. Chelliah, M.A., Ph.D., D.Litt.
Professor, Head and Chairperson
School of English & Foreign languages
Department of English & Comparative Literature
Madurai Kamaraj University
MADURAI-21
Tamilnadu, India
[**schelliah62@gmail.com**](mailto:schelliah62@gmail.com)

=====
Abstract

This paper is an attempt to make the readers value importance of translation and translators. The Majority of the translators believe that translations serve a very important purpose in bringing the cultural or knowledge gap between two nations, formulating the process to understand the significance of translation in a global content for Globalization has turned, out to be the new era for translation industry and shows how there is no more language barrier due to the globalization by projecting the effect of globalization as having a tremendous linguistic and social impact on translation studies. It finally points out the fact rather obviously that globalization and translation are intertwined.

Keywords: Globalization, Transmission, communication, Adaptation, Multilingual.

The turning of literary texts from one language into another language has been of immense importance to Indian writers and their readers, to language and literature. Translation has been recognized for centuries as a useful exercise for developing students' power of writing and for enriching their language skill. As Basnett puts it, 'Translation' is as old as humanity. In the words of Pratima Dave Shastri, "Translation is a natural act like breathing" (P1), for all of us do indulge in translation almost every moment of life. There is no denying the fact that all the time we translate our thoughts into words and there has been a long tradition of translation. Even though translations are always done, that too, with some different orientations for different purposes, it is generally done with the sole intention of catering to the different needs of the people.

No doubt, to readers, translations reveal other realism of thought and literature. What has to be out and out understood is that translation in literature is the art of rendering the literary sense of one language into another language with fidelity to the feeling, thought and character of the work of art so that the finished product is equal in quality to the original. Though all theorists and practitioners of translation agree that translation is an art, the unanswerable question whether it is a creative art or an imitative one divides them. Many firmly believe that it is a creative art. For example, in his essay “Literary Indebtedness and Comparative Literary Studies”, J.T. Shaw writes:

“Translation is itself a creative art, the translator brings into his contemporary native literary tradition a work written in another language and often at a different time” (P 88)

For Randolph Quirt, translation is a task which is sometimes more difficult than the creative art, but to Tolkappiar, translation is something subsidiary to the creative art. According to Horst Frenz,

“Translation is neither a creative art nor an imitative art but stands somewhere between the two” (P 120)

It is not creative because it does not follow the inspiration of the translator, but rather undertakes to create in the manner of another that has already been created; nor is it an imitative art for it must not only convey the idea of the work translated but must also conform it. The translator must, no doubt, be creative, almost as a maker but at the same time, he is bound to submit to the reality of the writer whom he is translating. Thus, translating is a matter of continuous subconscious association with the original, a matter of meditation. “Two spheres of languages move close together through the medium of the translator to fuse at the moment of the contact into a new form, a new gestalt” (Frenz 120). The translation theory has been advanced by many practitioners whose views are rather confusing and contradictory, for no theory is definite and categorical. The very first to formulate a theory of translation was Dolet who said that “a translator should be true to the sense but truer to the flame” and this idea was echoed by no less a person than Shelley in his *Defense of Poetry* but he hastened to add how impossible it was to preserve the spirit. Truly speaking, translation is like a marriage. Two people- the author of the original and the translator-bring the natures together to create a joint enterprise that is subtly different from their individual natures. Here the personality of the translator always comes into play and a translation can never be like a photo or carbon copy of the original. It involves, according to Dr. Johnson, “the process of change into another language, retaining the sense” (Das 1). Catford defined translation as “the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent material in another language” (P 20). Whatever may be views or definitions about translation, there cannot be any

hard and fast rules in translation. Theodore Savory, for example, expresses his views about translation thus:

- i) “A translation must give the words of the original.
- ii) A translation must give the idea of the original.
- iii) A translation should read like an original work.
- iv) A translation should read like a translation.
- v) A translation should reflect the style of the original.
- vi) A translation should possess the style of the translation.
- vii) A translator should read as a contemporary of the original.
- viii) A translation should read as a contemporary of the translator.
- ix) A translation may add or omit from the original.
- x) A translation may never add or omit from the original.
- xi) A translation of verse should be in prose.
- xii) A translation of verse should be in verse”. (P 50)

Translation in literature is nothing but the art of rendering the sense and the spirit of the source language (SL) text into the target language (TL) text with fidelity. Translation is for communication. In the field of literature, unlike in the field of science, translation does not stop with the communication of mere facts and figures, but it involves aesthetics. The same story or play in the source language is translated by different authors in different versions into the target language, each claiming excellence in its own way. This difference is the difference in the aesthetic rendering into the target language. But this license to have a different aesthetic rendering should not make the translator deviate far from the original, making the translation entirely different from the original. In literary translation, fidelity to the original in thought and feeling, sense and spirit is more important than anything else. It is said that literary translations are the vehicles through which we have an access to the art and cultures of people from different regions.

The history of translation originated with the Roman conquest of Greece. Though the conquest was a political victory, it was a cultured rout. The Roman writers had to model their literary works after the Greek masterpieces. But they were very particular to keep their stylistics superior to that of the Greeks. Hence, their translation was unique. Eric is therefore justified in calling translation a Roman invention. The Elizabethan age was an age of translation. In his *Translation- An Elizabethan Art*, F.O. Matthieson analyses the works of four translators Hoby, North, Florio and Philemon Holland. Apart from these writers, poets like Dryden and Pope also indulged in translation Dryden in his *Preface to Ovid’s Epistles* speaks of such three types of translations as i) metaphrase ii) paraphrase and iii) imitation. ‘Metaphrase’ is word- for word translation whereas paraphrase is ‘translation with latitude’ and imitation is a different kind where the translator is to transcreate. Here in imitation, the translator is at liberty to add or omit and he takes hints from the original and develops them on his own accord. In the

nineteenth century also there was an attempt to describe translation. Theodore Savory in his *The Art of Translation* called it an art while Eric Jacobson named it a traditional craft and Naidu called it a science. The present century is called the age of translation par excellence.

Nowadays globalization has made the world a small place. It is inhabited by hundreds of communities with different languages, social set-ups, cultures, attitudes and their own specific world views. The technological boom has opened up the possibilities and opportunities of interaction /communication among these communities. Translation is the only means to meet this need. India is and has always been a bi/multilingual country but the globalization has made the whole world multilingual. This means people know two or more languages with various degrees of proficiency. Speaking two languages involves a fair amount of translation. Translation is, in fact, an interdisciplinary subject and a text-bound activity. No doubt, the modern age is the age of translation. The electronic explosion has demolished the barriers of time and space. The world has become a global village and knowledge is just a click away. Translation has established itself as a powerful tool for communication, acting as a unifying force and a means for national integration thereby bringing people closer to each other and developing a sense of appreciation for each other's language and culture.

There is no denying the fact that translation does perfectly introduce us to the forms of literature in other languages to which we cannot have access otherwise. Mastering all languages and learning their literatures and philosophical ideas in ones' life time seems impossible. Translation also helps in saving us the trouble of learning different languages and enables us to appreciate various literatures of the world. Honestly speaking, the translator is one who helps us to see the world concept by transporting us to the realm of world literature. Translation has been with us throughout the history of civilization. It has been a major instrument for the conservation of a tribute's culture as also for disseminating culture and enriching or culture with external inspirations. Indeed, no language or culture can sustain itself if it shuts itself away from the external world of affairs. As far as India is concerned, it is also true that translation has helped it to retain its unity. No doubt, translations, transcreations, adaptations inspire all. Much has been said about Kamban's immortal adaptation of Valmiki's Ramayana and how the poet made the story of Rama from Ayodhya reflect the best in Tamil culture documented since the Sangham period. Almost all the languages of India began to have literal translations. Bengali had Pratap Chander Roy's superhuman endeavours in publishing a translation of the Mahabharata. Tamil gained a literal translation of the Ramayana by C.R. Srinivasa Iyengar and the eighteen Parvas of the Mahabharata got published by M. Rengachariar with the help of a team of translators.

A global interest in Tamil literature – Dravidology- has also entrusted translators and institutions to go for large- scale programmes of literal translations. Translating literature means the crossing of the linguistic, cultural and psychic divide between man and man. No wonder, in this impossible task, a translator is often found wanting and hence a generalization is flung at the whole tribe. Language itself is, of course, “a translation of thought by speech sounds” R.V. Jahagirder rightly holds:

“If languages were just an expression of thought by Speech – sounds, there would be no grammar to tax the memory and no dictionaries to tax the money of the truant and the poor. But mutual intelligibility has asserted a sort of social censorship over language with the result that the domain of language is ruled not by an unintelligible anarchy nor by an uncontrollable despotism but by a beneficent and organic oligarchy” (P1).

Speaking well of the great possibilities of conveying well in English what is found in Tamil religious texts. T.N. Ramachandran said that “communication” was important, and renderings should be as literal as possible. Free translation is often both a ‘butchery and a treachery’. Any translator of religious texts has to source himself in the original and be full of the culture in which the original text was brought into being. Thus, Tirukkovaiyar of Manickavachakar should not be seen merely as romantic clap- trap but as the very image of Eros and odyssey in love. These sentiments got echoed by S.N. Kandaswamy who gave illustrations from his renderings of Sundarar’s hymns into English. Tirukkural and its translations into world languages was the subject of several eminent scholars Dr. A.A. Manavalan dealt with the thirty-six English translations and focused on one single Kural:

“Posthumous fame shows whether one had lived
a just life on earth or not” (Tr. K.P.S. Iyengar)

According to Dr. Manavalan, the title ‘nadunilaimai’ of the decade was variously rendered as equity, impartiality, fairness, rectitude, uprightness, justice and equality. Such lexical variations occur with the texts as well. Dr. Ranganayaki Mahapatra listed the translation of Kural. In World Languages and stated:

“Tirukkural’s relevance to men of all walks of life across the boundaries of time and culture makes it irresistible. And its language – terse and cryptic, offers scope for ever fresh avenues of interpretations according to one’s level of understanding and grasp of the philosophy of Kural”.

Christians and Muslims found new words in Tamil to express their concepts, thereby tapping the latent energy in the language. This enriched Tamil language paving the way for more historicist, flexible and creative approach with the result that tremendous advances got effected in Tamil studies making a healthy co-existence of language with literature with the help of translation. It is very much obvious and

rather undoubtful that if mankind had 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 and people knowing more than one language naturally become translators and they transmit the source knowledge from one language into another. As the art of translation makes one's mother tongue more fertile, argumentative and attributable of new ideas and novel techniques of expression, language is said to have no doubt, a fascinating effect on the translators and that is why translation has become now an indispensable necessity all over the globe in all walks of life – academic, commercial, political, cultural and so on. Nowadays, all human enterprises have started using translation as an important tool for their growth and development. In *Tolkappiam*, which is considered to be the first available grammatical treatise in Tamil written about 2000 years ago, the word translation has an appropriate mention with the normal rules being also laid down for it. The following effective words of Subramania Bharati:

“Go in all the eight directions,
bring the treasures of art to be obtained here.”

did significantly enrich the Tamil language. The Holy Bible, Thirukkural, Bhagavad Gita, the lyrics of Omar Khayyam and the verses of Kahlil Gibran are said to have all crossed the boundaries of language thereby acclaiming universality in all respects. ‘Poetry is what is lost in translation said Robert Frost. But poetry itself is translation of an inner vision and unheard melody. In fact, in every act of perception, there is translation and creation. But translation per se is a complex communicative activity. In the era of globalization, translation can bring humanity together serving as the bridge across cultures and languages and making the intellectual achievements of all the world the common wealth of all humanity, thereby gaining ground as a growing academic discipline in the age of globalization.

It is universally accepted and understood that language is the main vehicle of communication and understanding that differentiates man from animals. Marjorie Bounlton rightly says:

“Man is the only creature that uses
words intentionally and habitually” (P 3)

In the Indian context, the translator has a greater role to play. Several regional literatures of the country can reach all the Indian readers only through translation so to say, India is a Paradise for translators and translation has a great scope in our country. Translation in the modern context is not secondary to original literature in the source language. It is not reproduction but recreation establishing itself to be ‘New literature’. If language has been described by linguists as “Patterned behaviors”, the translation is an operation performed on two languages: the source Language (SL) and the Target Language (TL). Translation is nothing but a transference of meaning from the source Language to the Target Language. Referring to the theory of translation, Henry Mechonnic observes:

“It is a new field in the theory and in the practice of literature. Its epistemological importance lies in its contribution to the ‘theoretical practice’ of homogeneity of the natural union between the signifier and the signified. This homogeneity is proper to that social enterprise which we call writing” (Steiner 20)

Thus, the problems of translation are greatly enhanced by linguistic indeterminacy which is the result of perpetual change. Man’s thoughts and language are, no doubt, inter- connected. They affect and mould each other. In other words, language changes through time.

To conclude, it may be said that the importance of translation lies in the fact that it brings the readers, writers and critics of one nation into contact with those of others not only in the field of literature alone but in all areas of development: science and medicine, philosophy and religion, political science and medicine, philosophy and religion, and so on. Thus, translation helps in the cause of nation building having acquired a new dimension in the present literary scenario particularly with the emphasis on language and role of language in literature, gaining momentum as a discipline firmly rooted in practical application.

Works Cited

1. Boulton, Marjorie. *The Anatomy of Language: Saying What We Mean*
London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959.
2. Catford, J.C. *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*
London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1965.
3. Das, Bijay Kumar: *A Handbook of Translation Studies*
New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2013.
4. Frenz, Horst. “The Art of Translation”. *Comparative Literature: Method and Perspective*
Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1961.
5. Jahargider, R.V. “Introduction” *The Comparative Philology of Indo-Languages* (1932).
6. Savoy, Theodore. *The Art of Translation*
London: Jonathan Cape, 1969.
7. Shastri, Pratima Dave. *Fundamental Aspects of Translation*

New Delhi: PHI Learning Pvt. Ltd. 2012.

8. Shaw, J.T. “Literary Indebtedness and Comparative Literary Studies”
Comparative Literature: Method and Practice (Ed) Newton P. Stallknecht and Horst Frenz, Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1961.
9. Steiner, George. *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*
London: Oxford University Press, 1975.