

Translation Gaining Recognition as a Discipline in Its Own Right

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to explore in the field of translation studies, the possibilities and feasibilities of the study of translation as a discipline in its own right. It has its own set of terms to denote various aspects of the process of translation in tune with its theory and practice and shows how there has been a healthy tradition of translation, that too how long and time immemorial for different purposes from different orientations, thereby catering to the different needs of the people universally recognized as an academic discipline. It neatly analyses how the art of translation has come to be recognized as creative as any other journal of creative writing by driving home the point that translation is bound to play a significantly cementing role in a strife-torn world of ours where language happens to be a challenging barrier. Ensuring cross – fertilization of values right across the barrier of languages.

Keywords: communication, language barrier, translatology

Translation is as natural as breathing. All of us do indulge in the act of translation in some way or other, in a word, almost every moment of life. No doubt, there has been a healthy tradition of translation, that too, for long and from time immemorial, for different purposes with different orientations, thereby catering to the different needs of the people. Translation as an academic discipline may be of recent origin but a vast body of literature for translation was found to be available from Cicero in the first century BC. The art of translation is as creative as any other genre of creative writing. It is bound to play a significantly cementing role in a strife-torn world of ours, where language happens to be a challenging barrier still. It is, no doubt, a dependable window on the outside realms of literary, cultural, aesthetic effort and achievement on the part of man. It alone ensures cross-fertilization of values right across the barrier of languages.

Translation is on the one hand a skill, a craft, a discipline and on the other a tool of interpretation. As Juliane House puts it, “Translation is the replacement of text in the Source Language by a semantically and pragmatically equivalent text in the target languages” (Valarmathi

in “Preface”). This establishes once again the time-proven fact that translation is transcreation of the mood and message of a text in the target, thereby assuring it a parallel co-existence. In the emerging global village of the second millennium, the importance of Tamil was felt to be both as a target language and as a source language. 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 interpretation according to one’s level of understanding and grasp of the philosophy of kural. To the satisfaction of all, the discipline of ‘translation’ has gained an academic prominence in recent times for which language is found to be an essential tool. Language was actually granted to man as a precious gift and words were found to be nothing but ‘precious gems’.

“Translation is as old as humanity” says Basnett. It is nothing but a branch of applied linguistics. It is rather interdisciplinary in nature. Like criticism, translation is always a text about and hence it is a meta text. Translation as an academic discipline is called by different names by different scholars. Nida called it the ‘Science of translation’ while Goffin called it ‘Translatology’. Holmes gave it a widely acclaimed name ‘Translation Studies’. Earlier, the term ‘translation’ was restricted to literary translation solely for effecting cross-cultural understanding but in the present literary scenario, it does cover the range of literary and non-literary translation, interpretation, dubbing and sub-titling under its purview. It was then considered as an important component for teaching of languages and used as an effective tool for a teaching as well as interpreting language, primarily as an academic discipline, thereby helping in building bridges between two languages and two cultures. Translation is done by ‘intuition’ and ‘translator’ needs intuition. Pratima Dave Shastri rightly observes:

“..... translation is an act where all aspects can be incorporated and emphasized according to the nature of the text and its function. The translator needs competence, which may be innate in him but it needs to be cultivated by training and as a skill it comes into practice” (P9)

A translator needs to be cautious as to whom the translation is meant. Translation is no doubt attempted for its utilitarian value. Truly speaking, a translator can overcome the problems posed by transferring one literary text into another language when the special characteristics of a particular text are explained in a note as in the Cankam classics. Cankam classics, the earliest strata of Tamil literature is divided into two thematically. They are poems written with the subject of *Akam* and poems with *Puram* theme. *Akam* poems deal solely with love situations expressed in symbolic imagery. A translator faces problems in transferring the *Akam* poems into another language because of this special quality. *Akam* poems are mostly written by introducing various techniques such as *ullurai* and *Iraicci*. They are said to be a kind of simile. These similies are not used merely to suggest some ideas other than the explicitly stated meanings in the verse. They are expected to conform to rules codified by Tolkappiyar for *akam* theme. Therefore, the primary task before a translator is to decide how these suggestive elements can be put across in a translation so as to make the poem easily understandable to a reader unfamiliar with such convention.

During Pre-independence days and immediately after independence, texts on patriotic themes were very popular. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya's *Anandamatha* has been translated six times in Tamil, four times in Kannada and Malayalam and once in Telugu. Mahesh Kumara Sharma and Tiruchitrabalam Pillai twice translated this novel, indicating the Tamilians' preference for such political novels. Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyaya's short stories and novels dealing with social injustice, women's degradation, child marriage, widow-remarriage were popular in all the regions in the South. *Pollisamaja* has been translated seven times in Kannada and Tamil, once in Malayalam and twice in Telugu, indicating the readers' awareness of the social problems in the villages and identifying them with those of the north, thus bringing about the amalgamation of the needs and interests of the country. Novels based on love have always captured the hearts of the readers. Sarat Chandra's *Devadasa* has been translated four times in Kannada and Malayalam four times in Tamil and four times in Telugu. Sarat Chandra's *Pather Dabi* has been translated five times in Tamil. Tagore's *Gitanjali*, after his winning the Nobel Prize, became the craze for the readers in all the southern languages. There were nearly about ten translations in each Dravidian language. All his short stories, novels, dance-dramas and symbolical dramas were translated later by well-known translators.

Modern times have seen a growing need for intra and inter-cultural understanding across different language groups. Translation can resolve social problems bringing people together, giving them a different sensitivity and sensibility to appreciate each other's language, culture and making them tolerant and respectful to each other's viewpoints. As translation can remove the barriers of communication between two languages, at some point between the prospective call by James Holmes in 1972 advocating translation studies as a legitimate field of research and the founding in 1987 of the first national association, (the Canadian Association of Translation Studies), "Translation Studies gained recognition as a discipline in its own right," says Paul St. Pierre. Along with this recognition came various forms of institutionalization: new journals and associations, international conferences in greater numbers, graduate programs in translation studies etc. More recently, however, this is perhaps "a result of the process of maturation, and questions have arisen relating on the one hand to the disciplinary status of translation studies and on the other to its origins. The two are interconnected, the first pointing to the dependence of translation studies on other disciplines and the second questioning the generality of its concepts" (Pierre in Introduction ix).

Translation is, no doubt, a communication involving bilingual and bicultural dimensions and other social factors. The practical use of translation is to translate standard books into other languages in order to disseminate modern information and knowledge. Students, scholars and academicians have nowadays become acquainted with the translated works of Plato, Aristotle, Shakespeare, Bernard Shaw and Tagore, despite disparities between the languages hampering one's response to an alien literature. The Tamil Translations of P.B. Shelley and John Keats have had a powerful impact on the "New Writing" in Tamil Nadu. Any endeavour in translation not merely enriches one's mother tongue but also develops one's knowledge of source language because translation is nothing but the art of rendering a source language (SL) text into the target language (TL) with fidelity to feeling thought and character of the original, so that the finished product is

approximately similar to the original. Alexander's Tytler's "Essay on the Principles of Translation" is considered as the first theoretical attempt at defining the theory of translation with an emphasis on a systematic and scientific study in English of the translation Process, and Tytler holds rather obviously three basic principles in translation which are as follows:

- i) Translation should give a complete transcript of the original work.
- ii) The style and manner of writing should be of the same character with that of the original.
- iii) The translation should have all the ease of the original composition.

An emphatic correction with the author is the essential ingredient for a good translation. Matthew Arnold in his *On Translating Homer* states that a liking for the author and a sympathetic approach coupled with admiration are the source of inspiration for translation. The translator should "identify himself with the author completely, try to get into his spirit completely and be aware of the characteristics of the original. Then only free justice can be done to his work" (63). In the interlingual communication, the link is the translator who is both the receptor of the original message and the source of the secondary message. Both these messages are embedded in their particular cultural frame and as a result in the cross-cultural communication, there are interferences which signify difficulties that concern both the translator and the translation process. Once a translator is freed from his role as an objective mediator and keeps his receptor's in mind and foresees their possible relations, conditioned by the presuppositions and the behaviour patterns of their culture, only then literary translation becomes possible.

As an interlingual act of communication familiarizing one with the writings of different cultures and traditions, the importance of translation has been accepted universally, rather as an academic discipline introducing one to forms of art in other languages which would otherwise remain inaccessible and widening the capacity for meaning and expression and one's language. It does, no doubt, enrich a scholar's mind and provide him with a current of ideas, thereby providing understanding among the various peoples of the world and revealing the essential oneness of mankind. Translations, therefore, have found a permanent place in literature richly exercising their influence through the ages. In fact, 'translation' is more than such terms as art, craft and science. It is a process of analysis, interpretation and creation leading to a replacement of one set of linguistic resources and values for another. In the process, part of the original meaning is lost but an easily identifiable core is kept. It is "an act of adjustment and a compromising exercise" (Das 2). Commenting on the meanings of the source language as substituted by the meanings of the target language in translation, Catford observes :

"Translation is an operation performed on languages: a process of substituting a text in one language for a text in another. Clearly, then, any theory of translation must draw upon a theory of language – a general linguistic theory" (P 1).

If language has been described by linguistics as “Patterned behaviour”, the translation is an operation performed on two languages: the source language (SL) and the Target Language (TL). Translation is a transference of meaning from the Source Language (SL) to the Target Language. Since meaning is the main goal in translation, there is not much at all in non-literary translations. In literary translation, it has its own theory. Referring to the theory of translation, Henry Mechonnic States:

“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 the social enterprise which we call writing” (Steiner 3).

Thus, the problems of translation are greatly enhanced by linguistic indeterminacy which is the result of perpetual change. In literary translation, the ‘text’ is vital as it is the text that has to be rendered into another language. The translator as he reads the text can produce another translation and as such reading itself becomes a translation in academic circles. As translations are nothing but ‘the windows’ through which one can have a peep at works written in languages other than his own and translation forms the backbone of the study of literature especially comparative literature leading the scholars/translators/teachers and students alike to translate great authors like Edgar Allan Poe, Ibsen, Bernard Shaw, Shakespeare, Tagore, Subramania Bharati, etc. Having already become a complex field with far reaching ramifications, ‘Translation’ has now been accepted and recognized as an academic discipline in its own right.

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