

## **Redefining the Role of Woman - A Study of Pradip Bhattacharya's Translation of *Yajnaseni* by Pratibha Ray**

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Literary translation is of huge importance. It helps to shape our understanding of the world around us in many ways. Reading contemporary translations provides fascinating insights into life in other cultures and other countries. In a fast-paced world so rife with misunderstanding and confusion, such efforts to share knowledge and experiences across cultural boundaries should be applauded.

One of the key challenges of literary translation is the need to balance staying faithful to the original work with the need to create something unique and distinctive that will evoke the same feelings and responses as the original.

Daniel Hahn, director of the British Centre for Literary Translation, says:

“There’s not a single word in any of the languages I translate that can map perfectly onto a word in English. So it’s always interpretative, approximate, creative. Anything that is, itself, a ‘linguistic’ quality will by definition be anchored in a particular language — whether it’s idiom, ambiguity, or assonance. All languages are different.”

Urdu language translator Fahmida Riaz outlines her approach thus:

“Every piece you translate comes from the pen of an individual, so you have to give it an individual treatment. I try to retain the ambience of the original culture, rather than the language, as it is reflected in the text.”

Translating novels is just as tricky as translating poetry and there is the need to stay true to the original text while not translating it literally. It’s about recreating the atmosphere of the original novel without translating it word for word. Humour, irony, plays on words and plotlines revealed by implication rather than explanation all serve to make this even harder.

A further complication is the assumed knowledge of the reader. References to customs, practices and traditions may be easy to understand when reading a novel in one's own language, but how does a translator deliver that level of built-in knowledge to a reader in another country who may be unfamiliar with the original language's cultural quirks?

Pratibha Ray is a well-known name in the literary and cultural circles of Odisha. She was born on January 1, 1943 at Alabol, a remote village in the Balikuda area of Cuttack district. Pratibha's voice is a self-searching one, in the quest of true identity. In her works, the woman is redefining her role and determining parameters for herself and the society, in every walk of life and perhaps revolutionizing the concept of womanhood itself.

Pratibha mostly attributes the boldness, revolt and humanism in her literature to the impact of her Gandhian teacher-father on her. The search for a "social order based on equality, love, peace and integration" continues, ever since the novelist and short story writer first wielded her pen at the age of nine. When she wrote for a social order based on equality without class, caste, religion or sex discrimination, some of her critics branded her as a communist and some as feminist. But she says "I am a humanist; men and women have been created differently for the healthy functioning of society.

Pratibha's contribution to the genre of Odia novel and short story is quite magnificent not only in terms of volume, but also in terms of its uniqueness. Her outstanding contributions to literature have earned her several prestigious awards and recognitions. She has been conferred the Padmashree honour by the Government of India, Moorthidevi award by Bharatiya Jnanpith and the Sahitya Akademi award by the Odisha Sahitya Akademi.

Her short stories and novels have been adapted for Radio plays, TV serials and films. She has 21 novels, 22 short story collections and 10 travelogues along with some books for children to her credit. About 300 short stories have been published in literary journals of repute in Odia and other Indian languages during the last 30 years. Apart from creative writing, she has written many research articles on Education and Psychology. She has active interest in social reform and has fought against social injustice on many occasions.

Among the contemporary fiction writers from Odisha, Pratibha Ray is the best known voice. She is one of the major fiction writers in India. Ray excels in the leisurely unfolding of the drama and human emotions in her short stories and novels... The focus of attention in the bulk of these realistic works is not on the 'happening' though there is the inevitable tour de force in many novels especially in short stories, as in the best of Chekhov or O 'Henry.

The novel *Magnamati* creates the poetry of the earth in the language of the fisherfolk of Erasama. The unsophisticated and colloquial vocabulary is woven into a new paradigm of life where the rivers, trees, fish, nets, rituals and pain, hunger horror and helplessness intone the native language of the earth. *Magnamati* is, perhaps, the greatest earth novel written in any language in the world and, by God, it is a masterpiece.

Her observations on human nature, on moments of man's transgression of moral limits, are poignantly put down in an effective blend of detachment and empathy. The work is considered a worthy contribution to Indian short fiction in Odia.

Ray began her creative career as a young poet and wrote her first novel as a novice, titled "Barsha-Basanta-Baishakha" (*The Rain, Spring and Summer*, 1974) immediately captured the hearts of Odia readers. Later, even as she branched out to explore the more hidden recesses of the human psyche and character, she contributed to use the same colloquial style with an eye for the odd detail that became the hall-mark of her fiction, including the best of her tales. Although her literary focus is on psycho-social analysis of people, tribes and characters, Pratibha grapples with issues of contemporary relevance, oppressive surroundings, overpowering tension of modern life, corruption and degeneration of values in every sphere, a growing hedonism and the alienation of the individual in a complex modern society. Ray is powerfully drawn to history and legends and often builds intricate narratives around themes that are part of the racial consciousness.

Researching in the realms of mythology, Pratibha reconstructed the life of Draupadi, the enigmatic heroine of Mahabharata in a feminist mode in her successful novel *Yajnaseni*. Written in an epistolary mode, the novel, made an important contribution to this genre at the all India level.

In *Yajnaseni*, Pratibha Ray has written a brilliant novel around the fascinating character of Draupadi. In the novel, Draupadi not only remains anchored in the epic but also rises out of its pages to become our contemporary and extremely relevant to our times. Pratibha Ray makes a determined effort to present a balanced portrayal of the epic character and brings to the surface the broader and deeper aspects of Draupadi's mind that lie submerged in the majestic sweep of the grand Mahabharata.

"Attachment blinds a person. But to proceed onwards, some attachment, some desire for a results does exist within a person. Therefore, like a blind man, without considering what is right and what is wrong, he keeps walking on the path, just like us."

Ray's stories are unsparing in their indictment of social evils and injustice. Bigotry and obscurantism of all kinds are her particular bete-noir as in "The Other God", a story that offers a savage critique of the so called "civilized" behaviour of man. In this story as well as the equally moving "The Untouchable God", Ray shows us the evil side of blind religiosity that negates the drive for human fellowship. While a faith in the genuine spiritual is always affirmed, such as in the story "Chandrabhaga and Chandrakala" (Weaning of the moon), a great many of the tales seem to question the claims of tradition and authority. In Ray, such interrogation often leads her to question patriarchal modes of conduct and belief. She, of course, chooses to describe herself as pro-woman rather than as a feminist.

Pratibha has 21 novels, 24 short story collections, 10 travelogues, 2 books of thought provoking Essays, 1 collection of lyrics, 1 poetry collection and her widely read and highly appreciated autobiography along with some books for children and neo-literates to her credit.

Among the contemporary fiction writers of Odisha, Pratibha Ray is widely translated, perhaps the best known and widely read voice in Odisha and India. Her translated works appear regularly in different Indian languages.

Pratibha's novels contain a variety of subject matter and interest. At the same time, she has adopted appropriate techniques to suit the particular theme and discourse. Her motivations too, vary, and she tries to bring different levels of perception in one structure.

Translation from the original Odia to the English language would not have been easy. It demands a deep understanding of both grammar and culture. Translators need to know the rules of a language as well as the habits of the people who speak it.

In the result of qualitative *and contrastive analysis* we have found out that any text is translatable due to the general principles of translation: the requirement to reproduce the original strophic form, find similar rhythmic forms, maintain the historical and national style. Translators assume something in one language/culture can be communicated, "borne across" and recovered in another language/culture.

Translators owe "fidelity" to the "prior" text/author--to the original author's purposes, what the author wants from readers, how the author envisions readers, the processes and modes of creative production with the author's culture, the arrangement and materials of the prior text, etc.

Some common problems faced by translators are ambiguity, structural and lexical differences between languages, and multiword units like idioms and collocations. Other

problems include the sheer size of the undertaking, as indicated by the number of rules and dictionary entries that a realistic system will need, and the fact that there are many constructions whose grammar is poorly understood, in the sense that it is not clear how they should be represented, or what rules should be used to describe them. Moreover, even where there is a reasonable description of a phenomenon or construction, producing a description which is sufficiently precise to be used by an automatic system raises non-trivial problems.

When a word has more than one meaning, it is said to be lexically ambiguous. When a phrase or sentence can have more than one structure it is said to be structurally ambiguous. Ambiguity is a pervasive phenomenon in human languages. It is very hard to find words that are not at least two ways ambiguous, and sentences which are (out of context) several ways ambiguous are the rule, not the exception.

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