



TRANSLATION AS PROTEST

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Abstract: -« *Nowhere in Hindustan is the language of the village the same as the language of the court and the school* »

India is a multicultural and multilingual country. There are more than 1600 languages spoken in India. We all speak at least two or three languages in our daily life, so translation is not something new for us. Normally, we consider that translation is just a transfer of a code from one language to another. But it is not the true picture of the reality. In Indian context, the equivalent terms defining the word 'Translation' represent different connotations. Besides, the strategies used by the translators are also not the same. There are many nomenclatures to define the process of translation. For example, the word 'Rupantar' signifies the change in form while 'Anuwad' stands to say afterwards. The word 'Bhashantar' marks the change of code from one language to another. They are several other words also like 'Sahsrijan', 'Sweekaran', 'Bhawanuwad', 'Tarzumaan', 'Anukaran' etc.

Keywords: Translation, Protest, Multilingual, Rupantar, Bhawanuwad.

INTRODUCTION :

There are two types of translations: pragmatic translation and literary translation. In the first category, a translator is required to transmit the information from one language to another. But in case of literary translation, the translator has to take several factors into consideration like ideology of author, targeted public and culture, geographical and political aspects and so on. The genre 'Literary Translation' which was earlier known as an equivalent term of 'word-to-word translation of a literary work' has been replaced by a new perspective which reveals "a medium of re-creation of all possible original expressions of the author". This tendency has always been prevalent in India since long time back. This type of 're-creating a new version of an original work can be identified as 'Transcreation' which is a kind of literary-translation.

LITERARY TRANSLATION: AN INTENTIONAL ACT?

Whatever may be the approaches of literary translation, it has been observed that literary translation is never an innocent act. A literary text is always chosen with some specific reasons. As rightly stated by Heuson Lane and Jackey Martin:

"A source can never be regarded as an innocent document. As it has been chosen to be translated, it is thought of in most cases as a read document whose purpose of communication has already been defined."

For example, during the colonial period, certain Indian translators had chosen the texts of some foreign authors (Moliere, Goethe, Tolstoy, Alexander Dumas, Anatole France, Victor Hugo, Maupassant, Gorky, Chekhov and others) as a medium of protest against the British. It has provided us with a different cadre of literature which has helped the liberation of Hindi literature from the hegemony of English- language of the colonizers.

This type of translation had been done in a difficult time of Indian colonial history. From French literature, we have an example of a translated version of *Thaïs* (1890) of Anatole France as *Ahmkar* (1924) by Premchand, *La Tulipe noire* (1850) of Alexandre Dumas as *Quaidi* (1931) by Risabhcharan Jain, *Quatre-vingt-treize* (1874) of Victor Hugo as *Balidaan* by Ganesh Shankar Vidyardhi.

Interestingly, in all three translated works, we see a feeling of protest against the British. Being closely associated with the Indian Independence Movement, the translator Ganesh Shankar Vidyardhi was very much fascinated by the French Revolution of 1789 and he wrote a very long note glorifying the French Ideals for the Indian public in the preface of his translated version. Also, he promoted the idea of nationalism and sacrifice for country by taking inspiration from Europe. One interesting thing to be noted is that he never mentioned in his work that he translated a French text through its English version.

In the same way, the choice of Premchand to translate a French novel titled "*Thaïs*" of Anatole France was also an intended choice which contributed to change the paradigm of cultural transmission in India during the colonial period around the beginning of 20th century. About this work of Premchand, Harish Trivedi rightly remarked as:

« *A French text has been used by a Hindi Translator as a kind of stick with which to beat English literature.* »

Now I shall be focusing upon the reasons which prompted Hindi translators to choose French texts to translate and how it can be seen as a medium of protest against the British.

PRINCIPAL REASONS:

According to Premchand, French Literature is the best among all the literatures available in Europe. He had chosen this French novel because he could not find a better work in English. He considered Anatole France as one of the best French authors and "*Thaïs*" as his 'magnum opus'. For this reason, he declared in the preface of his translated version as:

« यूरोप में फ्रांस का सरस साहित्य सर्वोत्तम है. फ्रेंच साहित्य में अनातोले फ्रांस का नाम अगर सर्वोच्च नहीं तो किसी से कम भी नहीं और थायास उन्ही महोदय की एक अदभुत रचना है— हॉ, ऐसी विलक्षण साहित्यिक कृति को अदभुत ही कहना उपयुक्त है. »

(The lucid literature of France is best in Europe. Anatole France is one of the best authors of French literature and "Thaïs" is an exceptional creation by him. Certainly, this magnificent work deserves to be known as exceptional.)

Secondly, Premchand was very much fascinated by the profound writing style of the Anatole France. He admits in his preface that the characters portrayed by the author leave a permanent impression upon our memory. Premchand believes that the author has rightly depicted the moral fall of a saint/monk and for this depiction; he must have an exceptional vision because it is very difficult for an ordinary person to explain the sentiments and hidden desires of a monk. The monk followed his religion blindly and he develops a notion of pride believing that he can emancipate a soul. Premchand appreciates also the depiction of *Thaïs's* character and he praises the way France has minutely expressed the emotions and feelings of a prostitute.

But if we examine the preface of the translated version, we come across with the facts that it was not only the exceptional writing style and richness of language which prompted Premchand to choose this work for translation rather his choice was also linked with the similarity between Indian and French culture and specially his profound hatred towards the British. As he declares openly:

« हमने इसका अनुवाद केवल इसीलिए किया है कि हमें यह पुस्तक सर्वोत्तम प्रतीत हुई और हमें यह कहने में संकोच नहीं है कि इससे सुन्दर साहित्य हमने अंग्रेजी में नहीं देखा। »

(We have done this translation uniquely because this book seemed exceptional to us and we do not have any hesitation to declare that we did not see such a beautiful literature in English language.)

So, the choice of a French author was politically motivated. Premchand considers Anatole France better than other English authors and he estimates that his translation can open the horizons for Indian audience who wants to read literature coming from other languages excluding English.

Also, it is very interesting to note that Premchand declares in his preface that he is against the idea of Indianising a text and that he always tried to follow the original text but we find despite his declaration that he has changed certain proper nouns and also the contexts of persons and events. Premchand justifies these amendments saying he has done that intentionally in order to make them fit for the Indian audience. The most striking example of his creativity is the translation of main title of the book which was changed from "*Thaïs*" to "*Ahmkar*". Premchand has interpreted the text as per his ideology and belief. For him, *Thaïs*, name of a prostitute/court dancer was not such important. What was important for him was the spiritual failure of a proud monk, a favorite theme of Indian mythologies and peoples.

On the other side, Risabhcharan Jain has translated "*La tulipe noire*" of Alexandre Dumas as "*Quaidi*". In this case, the translator has tried to focus on the theme of love between the protagonists rather than focusing on the search of a black tulip flower. As he declares in his preface:

« ड्यूमा के "ब्लैक ट्यूलिप" का हिंदी अनुवाद मैंने किया है. इस का हिंदी नाम मैं समझता हूँ, ठीक ही है. कैदी

कर्निलास की प्रेम-कथा ही दर असल इस उपन्यास का "थीम" है।»

(I have translated the Black tulip into Hindi. I believe the title "Quaidi" in hindi is justified because the love story of prisoner Cornlius is the main theme of this novel.)

For Jain, the theme and story of the search of Black tulip were not important for Indian audience. Rather he believes that the love-story of prisoner contains more significance for Indian people. In his words:

« हेग में जो हुआ , उसे भूलिए और डोर्ड में चलिए , जहाँ हमारी कहानी का नायक , कर्निलास-डी-विट का धरम-पुत्र , वान बैरल रहता है।»

(Let's forget what has happened in Hague, let's move towards Dord, where the main hero of our story Van Baerle, the God-son of Cornlius de witte, resides.)

Besides, Jain has translated certain passages of original text making them comparable to Indian independence movement in order to touch the Indian audience. We can compare the cold condemnation of Baerle with that of Bhagat Singh-Sukhdev-Rajguru. In his proper words:

« वह उन वीर पुरुषों में से था , जो सब प्रकार के कष्ट सिर झुका कर सह लेते और हँस देते हैं। उसने चुपचाप उन अमानुशिक अत्याचारों को सहन कर लिया और "उफ" तक न की।»

(He belonged to that class of courageous people who sustain all types of oppressions by laughing. He suffered all brutal tortures and did not utter a single word.)

Jain's translation is an intentional attempt to touch the sensibility of Indian audience of pre-independence era. We can relate some lines in the translated version with Mahatma Gandhi's ideology, like: « मैं निर्दोष हूँ , और शान्ति तथा संतोष के साथ फैसले की प्रतीक्षा करूँगा!।»

(I am innocent and I will wait for the judgment with patience and peace.)

Again,

« अगर निर्दोष को दोषी समझकर दण्डित किया जाए , तो उसका धर्म है कि शांति और आनंद के समय मृत्यु का आलिङ्गन करे , क्योंकि उस दशा में वह मृत्यु नहीं , बलिदान है।»

(If State punishes an innocent considering him guilty, it is the duty of the innocent to accept the capital punishment with open arms because on that case, it is not a death, it is sacrifice.)

Also, the sentence formulation of Jain indicates the oppressive nature of the British Government and its Rowlett Act on that period of time. For example:

« चाहे तुम अपराधी हो या निरपराध , कल मुकदमा शुरू हो जायेगा और परसों फैसला सुना दिया जायेगा , समझे? आज-कल यह काम जल्दी निबटाया जाता है।»

(Whether you are a criminal or not, the tribunal will start from tomorrow onwards and a day after tomorrow, the judgment will come, have you understood? Now-a-days, these types of works are done quickly.)

Again,

« जज वहाँ न्यायी नहीं थे. वे तो दंड देने के लिए नियुक्त हुए थे. छोड़ने के लिए नहीं।»

(Judges were prosecutor not judges, they were appointed there to punish and not to set free any one.)

Further, Premchand applied changes in names of characters also. For example, the most visible case apart from the main title is the adaptation of name of the protagonist "Paphnuce" which was translated as "Paapnashi". Obviously, a French name 'paphnuce' would not have an Indian relevance as an Indian name 'paapnashi' (destroyer of sin) could have enjoyed. The term 'paapnashi' is given to the protagonist who believes that he can save people from sin. This character reminds us of some great Indian saints from the Puranas/Mahabharata/Ramayana who faced moral defeat/failure at the end just because they started considering themselves more important than the Almighty. For example, in Indian tradition, we are quite familiar with mythologies according to which, excess of everything is bad. It was the extreme pride of Ravana which caused his death by Lord Rama in the Ramayana. It was the excess of greediness of Duryodhana which ultimately turned into his failure at the end of the Mahabharata. It was the excess of unlimited desire of Trishanku which prevented him from entering into Heaven replacing the God-king Indra. Other great saints like Vishwamitra, Narad, Bhrgu etc had faced their moral defeat at the end just due to their excess pride. Hence, relating a French character with Indian tradition was an intentional act.

Premchand used his creativity to change the context in order to revolt against the colonizers through the medium of translation. An example of this manipulation is evident when he took the liberty to transcreate a name "Ahmes" like "Ahmad"—a muslim name. However, Premchand forgot the fact that the story of Thais was written in a time period 1st century after Jesus Christ and Islam Religion has evolved after 7th century. Hence it was a deliberate attempt by Premchand to show the fraternity between Hindu-Muslim communities during the colonial period.

Other proper nouns have also been translated keeping in view the Indian context like, « Thébaïde » name of a place as « Tapo-bhoomi », the chief of monks « Palémon » as « Palam », another monk « Macaire » as « Makara », a lady monk « Mæroé » as « Meera », « Jérusalem des Sables » name of a place as « Shaanti-kutir », « Antinoë » as « Dharamashram » « Anachorète et cénobite » as « Tapasvi », name of sweet « Des gâteaux de miel » as « Gulgule » and so on in order to give the local touch to a foreign text.

In the case of Jain's translation, 'Quaidi', however Jain has avoided to translate proper nouns, but at one

instance, just to show the protest against the British, a villainous character, “le Prince Guillaume d’ Orange” has been translated as ‘Prince William of Orange’, a title related to the oppressive British crown and Government.

Interestingly, Jain and Premchand had never mentioned that they took the help of English version to translate a French text. They changed the entire focus of the original work in their translated version to give it a patriotic flavor. They used Hindi translation of French literature to mark their protest against the colonizers. We should also not forget that the very idea of Freedom-Liberty-Nation-State et al have reached to the Indian soil through the medium of translation from various literatures. So, the role of translation in nation-building has always been pivotal.

These days, translation is still being used as protest not against any colonial power but against the social evils like problems of the marginals of our society viz. the downtrodden-children-woman. For example, Prabha Khaitan has translated Simone de Beauvoir’s “Le deuxième sexe”(1949) as “Stree: Upekshita”(1990), Yugaank Dhir has translated “Madame Bovary” (1857) with the same title into Hindi, Gopikrishna Gopesh and Lal bahadur Verma have translated Victor Hugo’s “Les misérables”(1862) as “Vipada ke Maare”(2008) and the list is very long. I am working on these novels and their Hindi translation as a part of my PhD Research programme under the guidance of Prof. Kiran Chaudhry at the Center for French and Francophone Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.



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